

# SSAT School Culture Survey 2026 – Findings Report

Final Report



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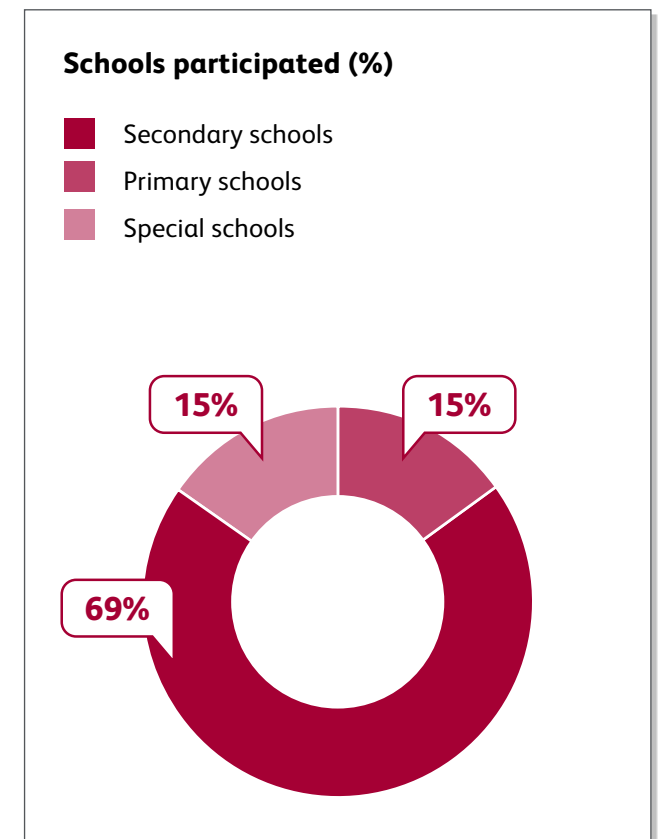
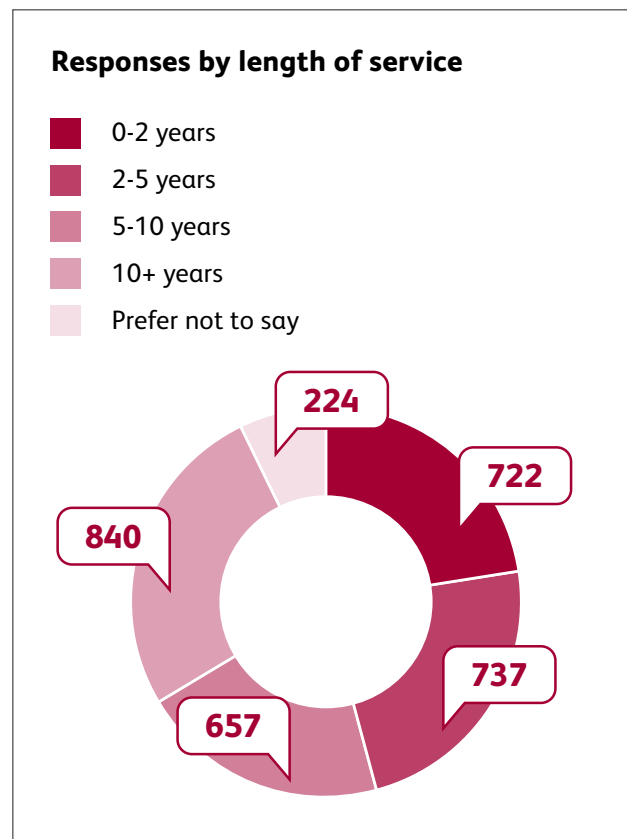
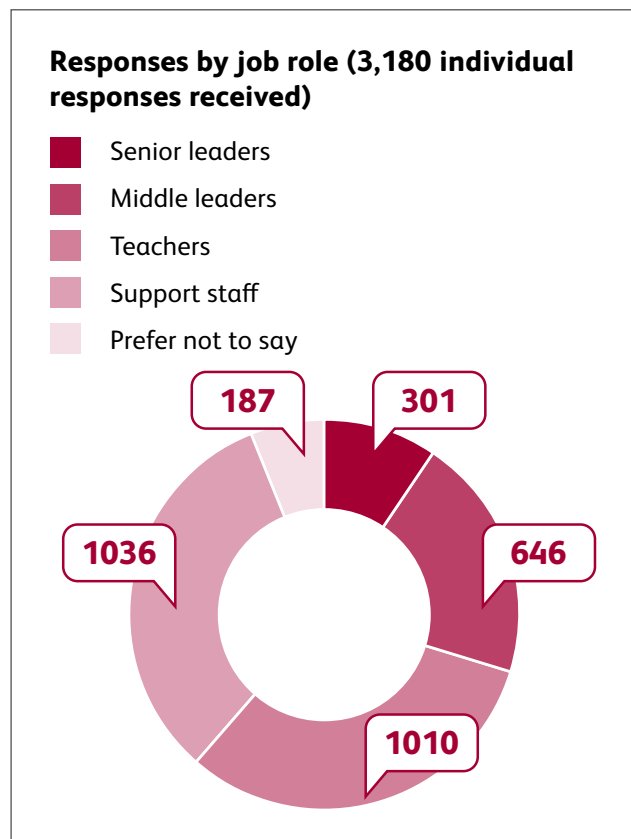
# Introduction

We are delighted to present the findings of the SSAT School Culture Survey 2026. This is the third year that we have included the School Culture Survey as an SSAT membership benefit and published findings. This year we received 3,180 responses from 52 schools. We would like to thank all the schools and individuals who participated and completed the survey.

All participating schools have received an individual school report and can use this findings report to benchmark their responses against the wider metrics. Schools who also participated in 2024 and 2025 will be able to compare their school findings across participating years.

## The Big Picture

The SSAT School Culture Surveys were completed in the Spring Term between 9th February and 13th March 2026.



# Headlines

Overall the headline data for 2026 consolidates the findings from 2024 and 2025. The average score (out of 5) attributed by respondents to each statement remained within 0.1 of scores from previous years (10 scores are unchanged across all three years).

The majority of responses (2,569 out of 3,180) came from staff working in secondary schools and this affects the overall findings and headline figures. **Those working in primary or special schools will be interested in the relevant data sets for their context.**

**Secondary schools overall data remains largely unchanged across 2024, 2025 and 2026.** This is interesting as replicability is often difficult to show, and the consistency in findings provides confidence in the overall emerging trends. At system level, it might suggest that overall school culture is deeply embedded and difficult to shift. For example, issues of workload and behaviour have been highlighted as national concerns for many years.

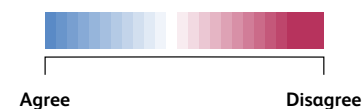
However, below the headlines there are significant variations across individual schools and school types. For participating primary schools responses in 2026 are significantly more positive than in 2025 and higher than in 2024. Responses from special schools show a gradual but continuing upward trend in 2025 and 2026. For both primary and special schools comparative findings are less robust, as the sample size is much lower than secondary.

Comparative data table (all schools) across 2024, 2025 and 2026. Overall scores for each statement.



	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>2026 Overall</b>	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.6
2025 Overall	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.6
2024 Overall	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.4	3.6

Comparative data table by school type for 2026. (Overall, Secondary, Primary, Special)



	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall</b>	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.6
Secondary	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.6
Primary	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.6
Special	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.7

<b>Overall highest scores (based on % average ratings for each question).</b>	
<i>Q1: The school has a clear vision and moral purpose (4.3 out of 5).</i>	<b>90% strongly agreed or agreed.</b>
<i>Q11: There are positive professional relationships within my team (4.3 out of 5).</i>	<b>87% strongly agreed or agreed.</b>
<i>Q6: This is a caring school (4.3 out of 5).</i>	<b>85% strongly agreed or agreed.</b>
<b>Overall lowest scores (based on % average ratings for each question)</b>	
<i>Q18: Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness (3.2 out of 5).</i>	<b>28% disagreed or strongly disagreed.</b>
<i>Q16: My workload is manageable (3.3 out of 5).</i>	<b>24% disagreed or strongly disagreed.</b>
<i>Q19: Behaviour management systems are effective (3.4 out of 5)..</i>	<b>26% disagreed or strongly disagreed.</b>

Due to changes to the Ofsted inspection framework, analysis by inspection grades is not included in this years report.

**The three highest and lowest scoring statements remained the same as 2025.**

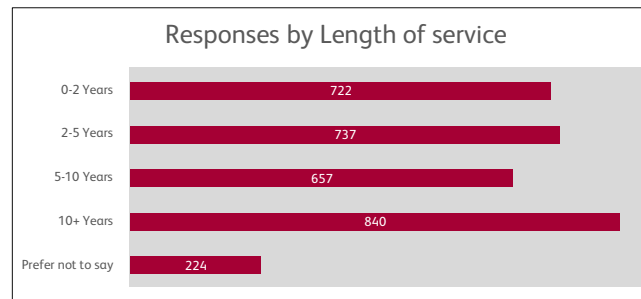
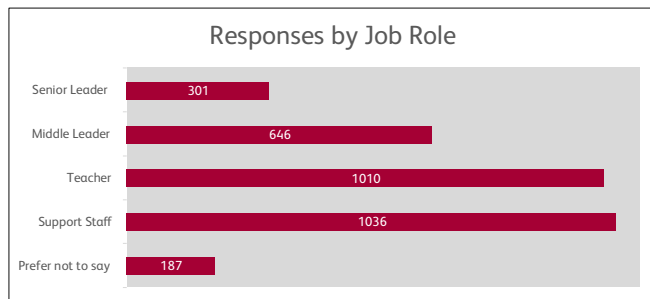
**Findings:**

- ▶ The highest scores were received for the questions relating to **Vision, values and moral purpose.**
- ▶ The lowest scores were received for the questions relating to **Operational management.**
- ▶ Senior leaders continue to score more positively than those in other job roles across all statements (one exception: Q16 My workload is manageable. Support staff score 0.1 higher at 3.7 compared to Senior Leaders at 3.6).
- ▶ Middle leaders are still most concerned about workload (Q16: average score of 3.0 out of 5).
- ▶ Support staff felt they had fewer opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development than other job roles and receive less regular feedback that supports their development.
- ▶ Q13 “I receive regular feedback that supports my development” continues to be an area of concern, with only 18% strongly agree and 40% agree. (Average score of 3.5 out of 5).
- ▶ Those who selected the ‘Prefer not to say’ option scored lowest across all questions. The breakdown by job roles refers to those who provided them.

# All schools

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 3180



## Response spread per question

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	42%	48%	7%	2%	1%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	32%	49%	11%	6%	2%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	38%	46%	10%	5%	2%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	32%	46%	14%	7%	2%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	28%	46%	19%	5%	2%	
Q6	This is a caring school	45%	40%	10%	4%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	31%	37%	16%	11%	5%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	38%	37%	16%	7%	2%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	26%	43%	17%	11%	3%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	24%	42%	20%	10%	3%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	46%	41%	8%	4%	1%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	26%	46%	18%	9%	2%	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	18%	40%	22%	15%	5%	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	25%	41%	20%	9%	4%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	31%	45%	19%	4%	1%	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	11%	44%	20%	18%	6%	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	13%	45%	25%	12%	4%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	11%	32%	30%	21%	7%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	15%	40%	21%	16%	8%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	19%	41%	22%	13%	4%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.8	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.5	3.6	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.2
Middle Leader	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.9	4.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.5
Teacher	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.2	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.5
Support staff	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.8	3.4	3.5	4.1	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.5	2.7	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.8	3.3	2.8	3.1	3.6	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.9
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.8
2-5 Years	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.6
5-10 Years	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.9	4.0	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.6
10+ Years	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.8	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.8	3.3	2.9	3.0	3.6	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.6	2.8

### Question key

Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	
Q6	This is a caring school	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# Findings by school phase and type

# Secondary

Secondary schools made up the majority of all respondents with 36 schools participating, and 2,569 individual responses.

The overall findings across all statements remain consistent and largely unchanged across 2024, 2025 and 2026.



	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
2026 Secondary	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.6
2025 Secondary	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.6
2024 Secondary	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.6	3.8	4.0	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.7

## Overall highest scores (based on % average ratings for each question)

The highest scoring statements were the same as the overall findings.

- ▶ **Q1: The school has a clear vision and moral purpose (4.3 out of 5). 89% strongly agreed or agreed.**
- ▶ **Q11: There are positive professional relationships within my team (4.3 out of 5). 87% strongly agreed or agreed.**
- ▶ **Q6: This is a caring school (4.2 out of 5). 83% strongly agreed or agreed.**

## Areas of challenge:

These are the same three areas identified in 2025.

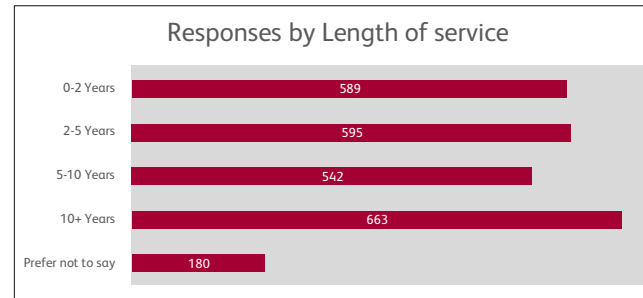
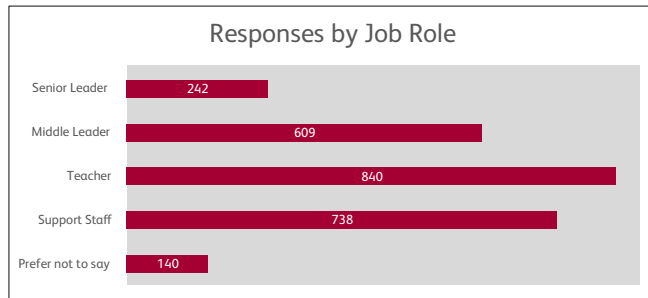
- ▶ **Q18: Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness. 23% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed. Overall score 3.1 out of 5. Teachers and middle leaders scored lowest (3.0 out of 5). Senior leaders scored highest (3.9).**
- ▶ **Q16: My workload is manageable. 20% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. Overall score 3.3 out of 5. Middle leaders scored lowest (3.0 out of 5), followed by teachers (3.2) and support staff (3.6) Senior leaders scored highest (3.6).**
- ▶ **Q19: Behaviour management systems are effective. 18% disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed. Overall score 3.3 out of 5. Teachers and middle leaders scored lowest (3.2 out of 5), followed by support staff (3.3). Senior leaders scored highest (4.2).**

\*Those who selected the 'Prefer not to say' scored lowest across all questions. The breakdown by job roles above refers to those who provided them.

# Secondary schools

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 2569



## Response spread per question

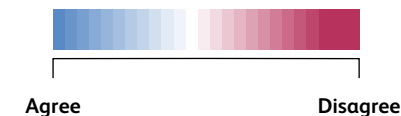
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	42%	47%	7%	2%	1%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	32%	48%	12%	6%	2%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	36%	47%	10%	6%	1%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	31%	46%	14%	8%	2%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	28%	46%	19%	5%	2%	
Q6	This is a caring school	43%	40%	10%	4%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	30%	37%	16%	12%	5%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	38%	36%	17%	7%	2%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	26%	42%	17%	11%	3%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	23%	42%	21%	11%	3%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	46%	41%	8%	4%	1%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	25%	47%	18%	9%	2%	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	18%	40%	21%	16%	6%	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	24%	42%	20%	10%	4%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	28%	45%	21%	4%	1%	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	10%	42%	21%	20%	7%	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	13%	45%	25%	12%	4%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	10%	30%	29%	23%	8%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	14%	39%	20%	18%	9%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	18%	42%	22%	14%	4%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.4	3.6	4.3	3.9	4.2	4.2
Middle Leader	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.5
Teacher	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.2	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.5
Support staff	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.7	3.3	3.4	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.4	2.5	2.9	2.8	2.7	3.8	3.2	2.7	3.0	3.4	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.7
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.8
2-5 Years	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.6
5-10 Years	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	3.1	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.6
10+ Years	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.7	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.6	3.0	2.8	2.7	3.8	3.3	2.8	3.0	3.5	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.7

### Question key

Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	
Q6	This is a caring school	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# Findings by school phase and type

# Primary

There was a small increase in participation among primary schools in 2026, with 8 schools, and 268 individual responses. After a significant dip in scores in 2025, all statements were rated much higher in 2026, reaching their highest satisfaction ratings so far. The small sample size may explain the fluctuation in scores.

Statements covering ‘Vision, values and moral purpose’ scored particularly highly. The same concerns were present in the Operational Management category.



	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
2026 Primary	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.6
2025 Primary	3.8	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.1	4.0	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.5	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	3.2
2024 Primary	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.4	2.4	3.8	3.6	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.0	3.2	2.8	3.0	3.5

## Overall highest scores (based on average score for each question)

- ▶ **Q6: This is a caring school (4.4 out of 5).**  
50% strongly agreed and 40% agreed.
- ▶ **Q11: There are positive professional relationships within my team (4.3).**  
49% strongly agreed, 39% agreed.
- ▶ **Q3: This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive (4.2 out of 5).**  
40% strongly agreed and 47% agreed.
- ▶ **Q1: The school has a clear vision and moral purpose (4.2 out of 5).**  
37% strongly agreed 54% and agreed.
- ▶ **Q15: The school actively builds strong relationships with families, the local community and other schools (4.2 out of 5).**  
36% strongly agree and 51% agree.

## Areas of challenge (selected findings):

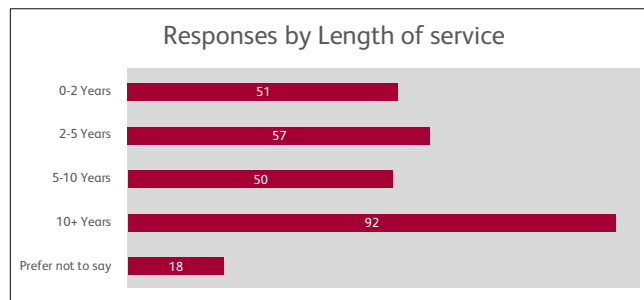
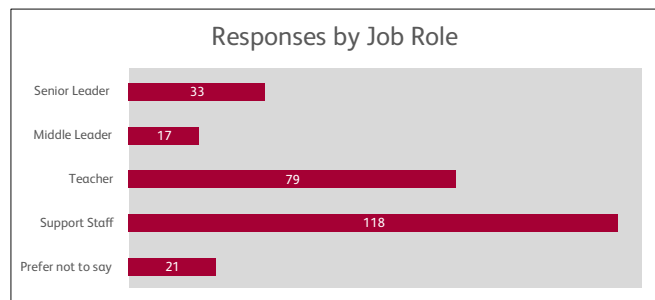
The lowest scores were received for Q18, Q19, Q16. These are the same as in 2025.

- ▶ **Q18: Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness (3.4 out of 5).** 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Teachers scored lowest (3.2), followed by support staff (3.5). Senior leaders scored highest (4.1).
- ▶ **Q19: Behaviour management systems are effective (3.5 out of 5).** 11% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. Teachers scored lowest (3.1), followed support staff (3.5) Senior leaders scored highest (4.1).
- ▶ **Q16: My workload is manageable (3.5 out of 5).** 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Teachers scored lower 3.2, Middle leaders scored 3.5. Senior leaders (3.8) and support staff (3.8) scored highest.

# Primary schools

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 268



## Response spread per question

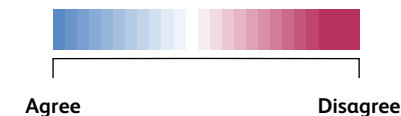
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	37%	54%	5%	2%	1%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	28%	57%	10%	3%	1%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	40%	47%	9%	2%	2%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	32%	53%	11%	2%	2%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	27%	52%	17%	3%	1%	
Q6	This is a caring school	50%	40%	6%	1%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	31%	39%	20%	6%	4%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	37%	44%	11%	5%	3%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	29%	46%	15%	8%	2%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	28%	48%	14%	6%	4%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	49%	39%	7%	3%	1%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	31%	49%	11%	8%	1%	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	17%	44%	23%	12%	3%	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	29%	39%	22%	7%	2%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	36%	51%	9%	1%	2%	
Q16	My workload is manageable	12%	49%	22%	13%	4%	Operational Management
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	13%	51%	25%	7%	4%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	11%	42%	30%	13%	4%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	12%	45%	25%	11%	7%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	19%	43%	22%	12%	4%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.6
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.8	4.6	3.8	4.4	4.1	4.1	4.3
Middle Leader	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.8	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.6	3.9	4.7	4.3	3.5	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.9
Teacher	4.1	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.3	3.8	4.2	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.3
Support staff	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.1	3.6
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.0	3.9	4.4	3.9	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.7	3.9	4.3	3.7	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.6
2-5 Years	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.4	3.8	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.0	3.6	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.6
5-10 Years	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.9	4.4	3.9	3.3	3.8	4.1	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.4
10+ Years	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.5	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.7	3.9	4.2	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.8
Prefer not to say	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.3	2.9	2.9	3.7	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.7	2.6	2.9	2.6	3.1	3.4

### Question key

Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	
Q6	This is a caring school	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# Findings by school phase and type

# Special

There were 8 participating special schools, consisting of 342 individual responses. A high proportion of the responses were from support staff (180). The overall trends for special schools show a steadily improving picture with nearly all statements receiving higher scores than in 2024 and 2025. The only statement that is not rated more highly than in 2024 is Q19 Behaviour management systems are effective.



	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
2026 Special	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.7
2025 Special	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.0	3.9	4.3	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.8	3.5	3.8	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.8	3.5
2024 Special	4.1	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.6	4.0	3.8	3.2	3.7	4.0	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.8	3.4

## Overall highest scores (based on average score for each question)

- ▶ **Q6: This is a caring school (4.4 out of 5).** 58% strongly agreed and 32% agreed.
- ▶ **Q3: This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive (4.4 out of 5).** 52% strongly agreed and 38% agreed.
- ▶ **Q1: The school has a clear vision and moral purpose (4.3 out of 5).** 47% strongly agreed and 43% agreed.
- ▶ **Q15: The school actively builds strong relationships with families, the local community and other schools (4.3 out of 5).**

## Areas of challenge:

The lowest scores were received for Q18, Q13, Q17.

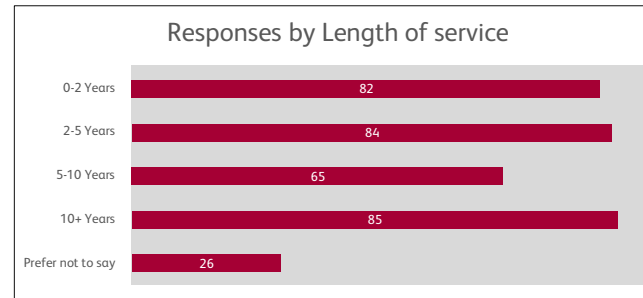
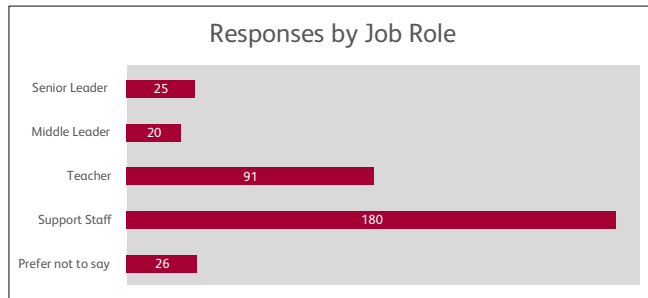
- ▶ **Q18: Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness (3.4 out of 5).** 11% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. Teachers scored lowest (3.2). Senior leaders scored highest (4.0).
- ▶ **Q13: I received regular feedback that supports my development (3.6 out of 5).** 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Support staff scored lowest 3.5 followed by teachers 3.6 and middle leaders 3.7. Senior leaders scored highest at 4.3.
- ▶ **Q17: There is a measured approach to change (3.6 out of 5).** 11% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. Teachers scored lowest (3.5), followed by middle leaders (3.6) and support staff (3.7). Senior leaders scored highest at 4.5.

This represents a slight change, as Q13 and Q17 now enter the lowest three scoring statements. Previously Q16 and Q20 occupied these places.

# Special schools

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 342



## Response spread per question

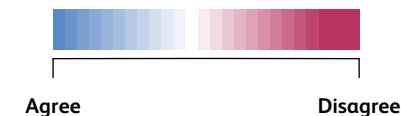
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	47%	43%	7%	2%	2%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	37%	46%	8%	6%	2%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	52%	38%	7%	2%	2%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	38%	44%	13%	4%	2%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	33%	45%	16%	5%	1%	
Q6	This is a caring school	58%	32%	6%	2%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	35%	33%	18%	9%	4%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	40%	35%	18%	6%	1%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	26%	47%	17%	6%	4%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	29%	42%	18%	7%	4%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	43%	41%	12%	3%	2%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	30%	41%	20%	8%	2%	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	18%	40%	24%	13%	4%	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	31%	40%	20%	7%	2%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	47%	42%	8%	1%	1%	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	17%	56%	14%	11%	2%	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	17%	44%	25%	11%	3%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	14%	38%	33%	11%	3%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	21%	44%	22%	11%	2%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	25%	35%	25%	12%	3%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.6	3.9	4.3	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.7
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.3	4.8	4.7	3.7	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.5
Middle Leader	4.2	3.9	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.9	4.0	4.2	3.7	3.7	3.9	4.2	3.4	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.6
Teacher	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.0	3.8	4.3	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.8	4.2	3.6	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.5
Support staff	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.5	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.5	3.9	4.4	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7
Prefer not to say	4.3	3.7	4.2	3.8	3.6	4.2	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.8	3.3	3.0	3.3	4.3	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.0
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.6	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	4.0	3.7	4.0	4.5	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.8
2-5 Years	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.1	3.7	4.1	4.3	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7
5-10 Years	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.6	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.0	3.7	4.1	4.4	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7
10+ Years	4.1	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.9	4.2	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.9	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.8	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.3	3.1	3.1	4.1	2.9	2.6	2.7	3.2	3.0

### Question key

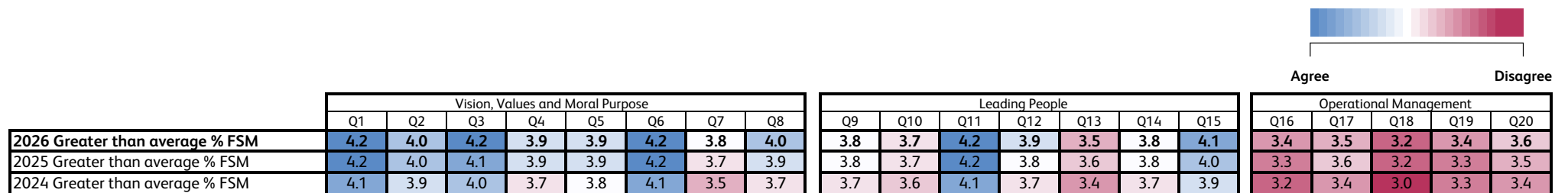
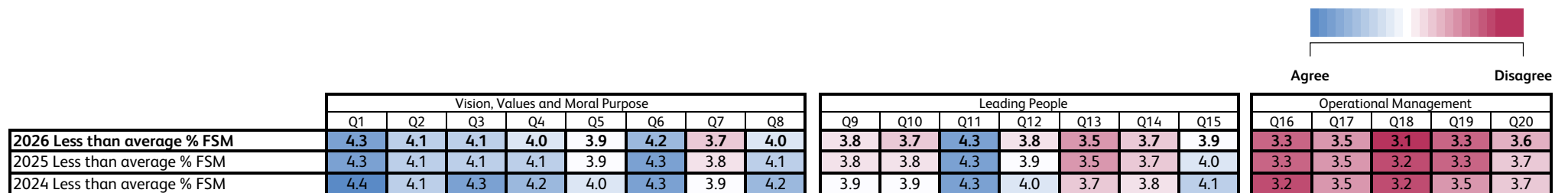
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	
Q6	This is a caring school	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# Free School Meals

A brief comment on the impact of Free School Meals (FSM) on School Culture Survey findings. There were similar numbers of responses from those with more than 25.7% FSM (1,423 responses) and those with fewer than 25.7% FSM (1,692 responses).

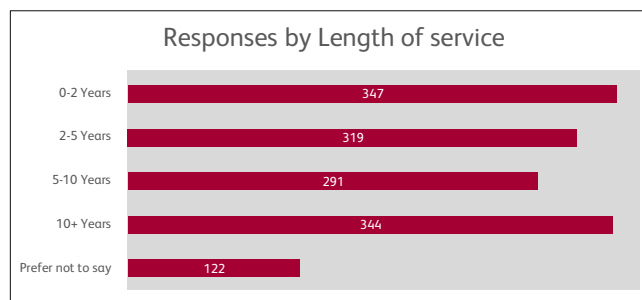
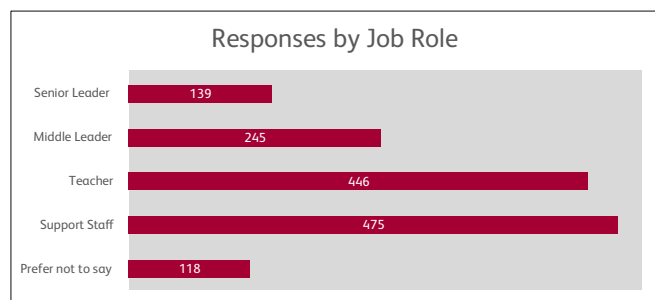
The average scores given (out of 5) were very similar across both groups. In 2026, all scores were comparable within 0.2. Schools with higher percentages of Free School Meals score higher in Q3, Q7, Q12, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q18 and Q19 but lower in Q1, Q2, Q4, Q11.



# FSM - Greater than 25.7%

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 1423



## Response spread per question

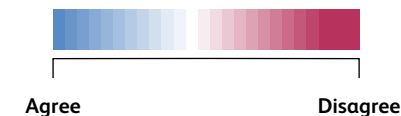
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	42%	47%	7%	2%	2%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	31%	50%	11%	7%	2%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	40%	45%	8%	6%	1%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	30%	46%	14%	8%	2%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	29%	46%	18%	6%	1%	
Q6	This is a caring school	46%	39%	9%	4%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	33%	35%	16%	11%	5%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	37%	35%	17%	8%	3%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	27%	42%	16%	11%	4%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	26%	40%	19%	11%	4%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	45%	42%	7%	4%	2%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	28%	44%	17%	9%	1%	
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Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	27%	41%	19%	10%	4%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	35%	44%	16%	4%	1%	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	12%	45%	19%	17%	6%	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	15%	45%	24%	12%	4%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	12%	33%	29%	20%	6%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	18%	40%	18%	14%	9%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	21%	40%	21%	14%	4%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	4.2	4.0	4.2	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.6
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.6	3.7	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.2
Middle Leader	4.3	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.4	4.0	3.6	3.9	4.1	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.3	3.6
Teacher	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.1	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.6	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.5
Support staff	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.9	3.4	3.6	4.2	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.8	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.8	3.8	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.6	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.9
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.3	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.7
2-5 Years	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.3	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.9	4.3	4.0	3.5	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.6
5-10 Years	4.4	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.0	3.6	4.0	4.2	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.7
10+ Years	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.3	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.2	3.4	3.7	3.4	3.6	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.6	3.1	3.4	3.0	3.1	3.4	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.6	3.9	3.2	2.8	3.0	3.5	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.8

### Question key

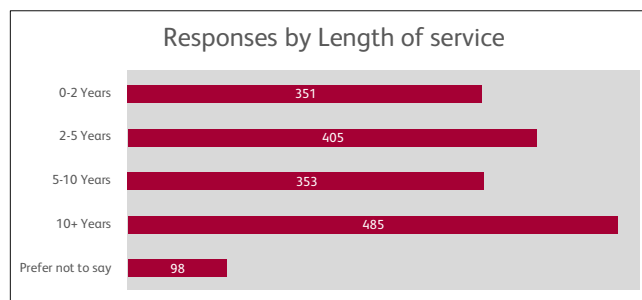
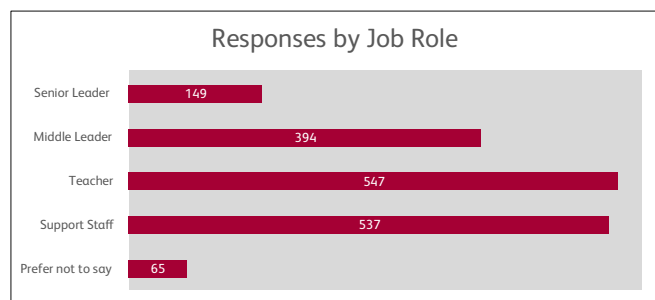
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	
Q6	This is a caring school	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	Operational Management
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	
Q16	My workload is manageable	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# FSM - Less than 25.7%

## Summary of number of responses

Total Responses 1692



## Response spread per question

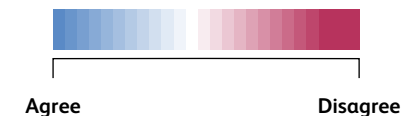
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	42%	48%	7%	2%	1%	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
Q2	The values of the school are shared and lived	33%	49%	12%	5%	2%	
Q3	This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive	35%	48%	11%	5%	1%	
Q4	There is a culture of excellence and continuous improvement	32%	47%	14%	6%	1%	
Q5	Leaders take a proportionate view of external inspection	27%	47%	20%	4%	2%	
Q6	This is a caring school	43%	41%	10%	4%	2%	
Q7	I feel valued and my well-being is supported by the school	28%	39%	17%	12%	5%	
Q8	I would recommend this as a good place to work	38%	38%	16%	6%	2%	
Q9	Senior leaders are approachable and communicate effectively keeping staff informed	25%	44%	18%	10%	3%	Leading People
Q10	Leaders empower staff to work at their best	22%	44%	21%	9%	3%	
Q11	There are positive professional relationships within my team	46%	40%	9%	4%	1%	
Q12	There are good opportunities to collaborate with colleagues	24%	48%	18%	8%	2%	
Q13	I receive regular feedback that supports my development	16%	41%	23%	14%	6%	
Q14	I have opportunities to participate in high quality professional learning and development	23%	42%	22%	10%	4%	
Q15	The school actively builds strong relationships with families the local community and other schools	26%	47%	22%	4%	1%	Operational Management
Q16	My workload is manageable	9%	44%	21%	20%	7%	
Q17	There is a measured approach to change	12%	46%	27%	12%	4%	
Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	9%	31%	30%	22%	8%	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	12%	40%	23%	18%	7%	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	17%	43%	22%	13%	4%	

### Analysis by role and length of service

	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose								Leading People							Operational Management				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
<b>Overall score</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>By Role</b>																				
Senior Leader	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.4	3.5	4.3	3.9	4.1	4.2
Middle Leader	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.8	4.1	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.9	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.5
Teacher	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.5	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.1	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.5
Support staff	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1	3.9	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.2	3.7	3.4	3.4	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.6
Prefer not to say	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.2	3.6	2.6	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.7	3.2	2.7	3.0	3.6	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.7	2.9
<b>By length of service</b>																				
0-2 Years	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.9	4.3	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.8
2-5 Years	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.2	3.9	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.5
5-10 Years	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	4.2	3.6	4.0	3.8	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.1	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.4
10+ Years	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.3	3.8	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.6
Prefer not to say	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.6	2.9	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.7	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.7	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.8

### Question key

Q1	The school has a clear vision and moral purpose	Vision, Values and Moral Purpose
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Q18	Systems and processes reduce workload and increase effectiveness	
Q19	Behaviour management systems are effective	
Q20	Excellent work is recognised and celebrated	



# Commentary

We hope that the School Culture Survey data provides some interesting insights into staff perceptions in schools. We encourage all participating schools to approach the survey findings with curiosity, and caution. We understand that the data offers only a snapshot of culture and is incomplete. There will be many factors that contribute to the participant responses, at both individual school level and across wider data sets. There are various ways the data can be interpreted and correlations can be made. While correlation does not prove causation, it presents us with areas for further reflection, analysis and consideration.

Below are some of the main points and hypotheses from this year's survey responses.

- ▶ **The overall 2026 School Culture Survey results (all participant data across all participating schools) reinforce the survey findings from 2024 and 2025.**
  - ▷ *Hypothesis 1:* The continuity of findings across three years suggest that these are indicative of wider school culture in England. At high level it appears that staff perceptions of school culture remain relatively unchanging and slow to shift. Some trends are now well established, the highest and lowest scoring statements are unchanged.
- ▶ **Although overall trends appear to be quite fixed, at individual school level staff responses cover a wider range of scores and satisfaction.**
  - ▷ *Hypothesis 2:* There are school 'outliers' where staff responses are outside the normal range. At the upper end, these positive 'outlier

schools' may have interesting stories to tell about how they are addressing problematic issues, such as workload and behaviour management.

- ▶ **Operational Management continues to be the area of greatest concern for staff. The lowest scoring statements related to: systems and processes (Q18), workload (Q16) and behaviour management (Q19).**
  - ▷ *Hypothesis 3:* The key challenges for staff working in schools remain the same and contribute to the ongoing teacher recruitment and retention issues facing the education sector. Middle leaders and teachers are most concerned about workload, bureaucracy and behaviour management.
- ▶ **Senior leaders continue to consistently have a far more positive view of culture than other staff working in school. The average score across all statements for senior leaders was 4.4 out of 5.**
  - ▷ *Hypothesis 4:* The 'IKEA effect' suggests that if you are involved in building something, you are likely to view it positively and value it more. Leaders 'set the weather' and they like to think that what they do is good. They have greater agency to effect change and we know that this contributes to motivation. School leaders may also feel a greater pressure to respond positively to questions, both because they are in a position of leadership and there are fewer of them.
  - ▷ *Hypothesis 5:* It is particularly important for school leaders to provide opportunities for staff voice and to engage meaningfully with the feedback received. School leaders are prone to view the

school (and the impact of their decision-making) more positively than others, and may become detached from other staff in the school. This may increase perceptions of 'them and us' and erode relational trust.

- ▶ **Recent changes to the Ofsted inspection framework and increasing emphasis on inclusion have not impacted on staff responses. The overall average scores given by staff for question 3 and 5 remain unchanged across 2024, 2025 and 2026.**
    - **Q3: This is an inclusive school in which all pupils can thrive (4.1 out of 5)**
    - **Q5: Leaders take a proportionate view of inspection (3.9 out of 5)**
    - ▷ **Hypothesis 6:** It is still relatively early in the inspection cycle and many schools are not yet 'in window' for inspection. Future responses to these questions will be interesting to monitor. There may be opportunities to gather further feedback on specific aspects of inclusion, such as SEN provision.
  - ▶ **There was an increase in the number of respondents selecting 'Prefer not to say' for their role, and particularly length of service. Those selecting the 'Prefer not to say' option are more likely to express negative views. For all statements the scores for 'Prefer not to say' are lower than all other categories.**
    - ▷ **Hypothesis 7:** The increase in 'prefer not to say' responses may reflect societal concerns around data and privacy, or contextual factors within schools. Staff may be concerned about being identified as expressing negative views. Where there are higher
  - ▶ **Length of service appears to have had limited impact on survey scores in 2026. This is a change from 2025 when staff with 0-2 years of service and those with more than 10 years were more positive than others. Staff with 2-5 years of service were consistently less positive in 2025.**
    - ▷ **Hypothesis 8:** Perceptions may be changing. This may present some positive news for teacher retention, particularly amidst concerns about early career stage teacher attrition.
  - ▶ **Support staff report fewer opportunities to engage in high quality professional learning (Q14) and receiving less regular feedback that supports their development (Q13).**
    - ▷ **Hypothesis 9:** Further work can be done to improve professional pathways and development for support staff. A third of all survey responses came from support staff. Support staff make up a significant proportion of school staff and play an important role across a variety of school functions.
- numbers of staff choosing this option the school culture is likely to be viewed more negatively. Schools may want to consider ways of addressing concerns and approaches to engaging positively with staff voice.

## Discussion prompts for schools and leaders

We encourage leaders to take time to analyse their school's individual culture survey report and read it alongside this summary report to provide a broader context and benchmarking.

The following questions are provided to support leaders to discuss the findings, capture reflections and consider next steps.

### For participating schools and school leaders

1. What stands out about our school data?

2. How does it compare with previous years, or other relevant data we might have gathered?

3. What curious questions might we want to ask about the data?

**4. What was the response rate as a percentage of staff? Whose views might not be represented?**

**5. What will we do with the findings? What do we need to reflect on and respond to?**

**6. Who will we share the findings with and how?**

**7. How can we build on the picture this is giving us?**

## For all schools and school leaders

1. What more can we do to address the concerns raised by staff, teaching and non-teaching, in this School Culture Survey findings report?

2. Which specific aspects of school culture do we need to prioritise?

3. How can schools leaders ensure there are further opportunities for staff voice and engagement in developing school culture?

4. What benefits might we see from improving school culture? How could this help us to achieve our goals?

5. What is the culture we want in our schools and what practical steps can be taken to build towards it?

6. What is our best next step?

We would welcome your feedback on the School Culture Survey and any suggestions for future surveys. Are there any questions that we should be asking?

Please contact us at [membership@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:membership@ssatuk.co.uk) and share your thoughts.

## Want to know more?

### Create a school culture where your people, staff and students can flourish.

Culture plays a key role in any successful team or organisation. A positive culture enables everyone to do their best work and achieve great things. It means creating a place where staff feel valued, supported, and connected. This leads to increased staff well-being and retention, higher job satisfaction and improved performance.

- ▶ Take your commitment to school culture and staff voice further by booking a supported culture review with a member of the SSAT Education Team.
- ▶ If you are a multi-academy trust, request a MAT report to explore the culture at individual school and whole trust level.
- ▶ Book a call with one of the SSAT Education Team to follow up on any of the strands within this report.

### Missed this year's culture survey?

It is not too late for member schools to participate in the SSAT culture survey for this academic year. We are keeping the survey open until the end of this term. If you would like to receive a personalised report for your school, contact us at [hello@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:hello@ssatuk.co.uk).

*“As a school leadership team, we thought we knew about our culture and ethos but wanted independent verification.*

*The SSAT audit gave us this view by working with all stakeholders it enabled us to focus on the most pressing matters that were revealed by the audit and the visit.*

*Taking part was simple yet thought-provoking and very rewarding for all involved. The findings of the report facilitated an action plan which now forms part of our school improvement plan.*

*As a school, we continue to move forward in the areas that were identified.*

*We would recommend the SSAT audit to colleagues in other schools who are looking to identify, develop and improve the culture of their schools.”*

Calday Grange Grammar School

# We are SSAT, the Schools, Students and Teachers network.

We exist to help improve outcomes for all young people. As a membership organisation of schools and academies across the UK and internationally, we work with leaders, teachers and pupils to drive school improvement and innovation, and celebrate their successes. We believe in a **truly school-led system**, with schools working in partnership across and beyond the education sector.

At SSAT's heart are our **membership networks**, bringing together school leaders, teachers and pupils. We have been working with schools for over 30 years, and continue to **offer insight and understanding** into teaching, learning and system leadership. Our **professional development** and **school improvement programmes** help leaders and teachers to further outcomes for all young people, and develop leadership at all levels across the system.

Learn more at [ssatuk.co.uk](https://ssatuk.co.uk)

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Tel: 020 7802 2300

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Registered office: Office 11, 295 Chiswick High Road, London, W4 4HH.