

DAG

Devon Association  
*of* Governance



Confederation  
of School Trusts

# Next-gen governance

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November 2024





**Starting with the 'why' - why does governance matter?**

# Why is governance so important? Floodlight attention

## Spotlight attention

Task-oriented

Fragmented

Regulation-oriented

Metrics, quantification,  
measuring and monitoring

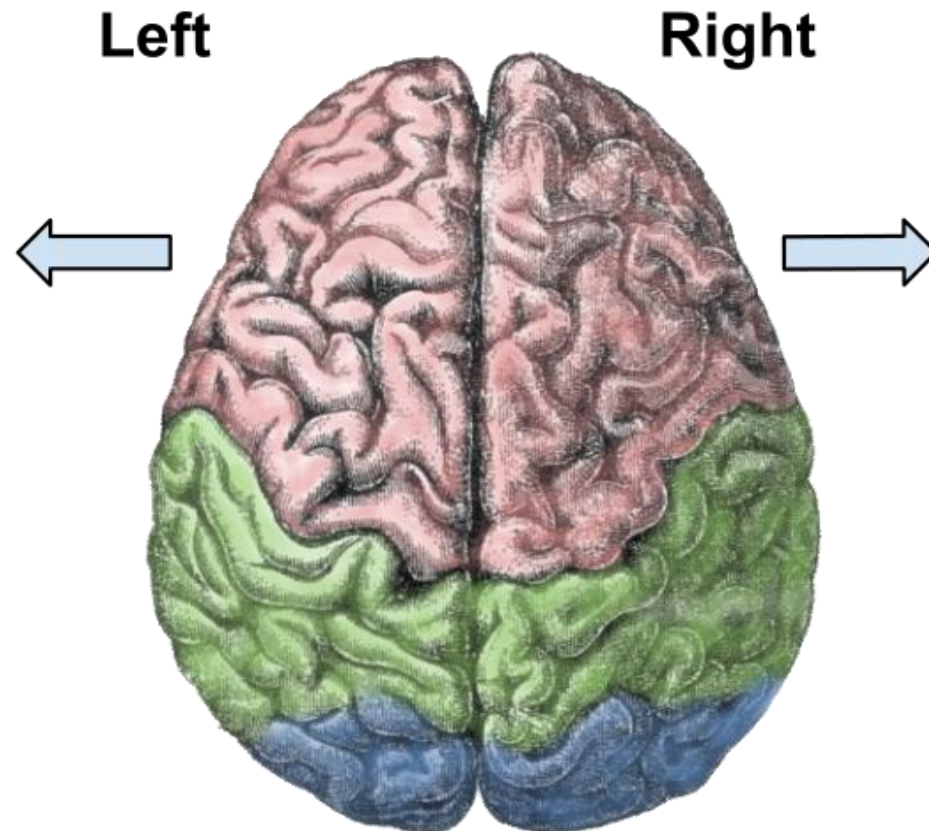
Categorised

Bureaucratic

Abstract

Reductive & rule-bound

## Brain lateralisation



## Floodlight attention

Pattern-oriented

Holistic

Professional judgement

Contextualised

Depth

Nuanced

Emotionally intelligent

Relational

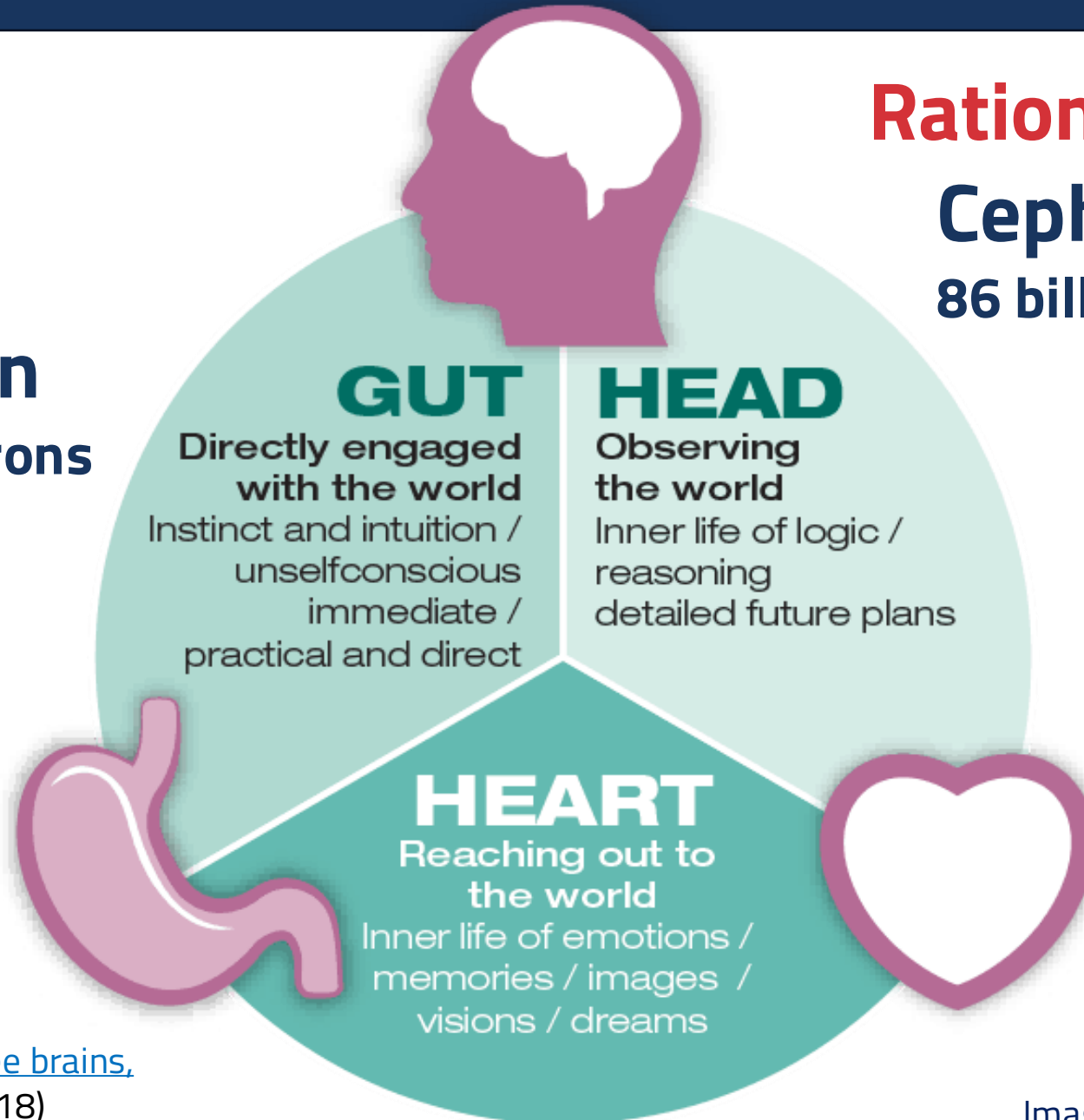
Connected

# Governance needs to listen to all three brains

**Intuition &  
Wisdom**

**Enteric brain**  
100 million neurons

**Rational thought**  
**Cephalic brain**  
86 billion neurons



**Emotion &  
connection**

**Cardiac brain**  
40,000 neurons





**Next-gen governance - why now?**

## Academy Trust Governance Code

created 'by the sector, for the sector'  
based on Charity Governance Code

### **Fundamental principle**

**Principle 1:** Delivering the academy trust charitable objects

**Principle 2:** Leadership

**Principle 3:** Integrity

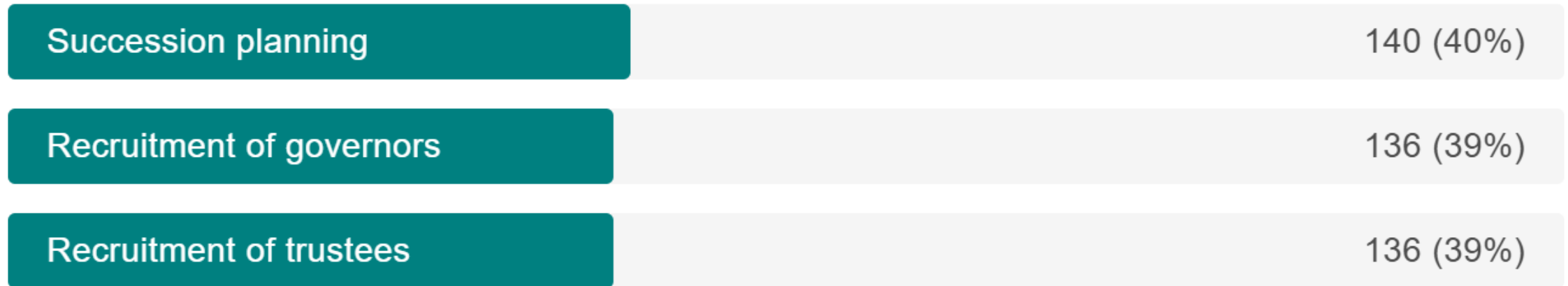
**Principle 4:** Decision making, risk and control

**Principle 5:** Board effectiveness

**Principle 6:** Equality, diversity and inclusion

**Principle 7:** Openness and accountability

## Areas of focus in governance, as reported by over 400 CEOs

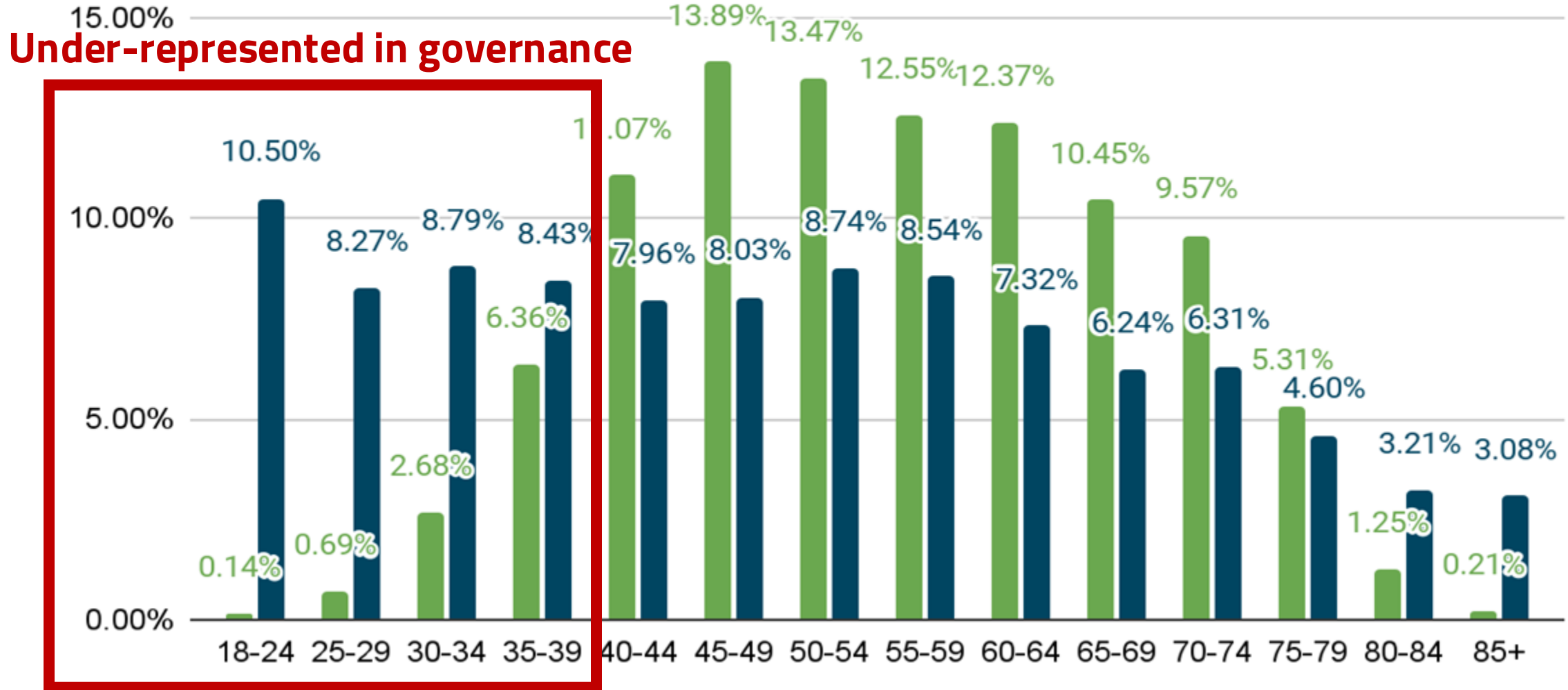


# Under 40's are missing in governance

Age

Source: [Survey of 22,000 governance volunteers](#), GovernorHub (2024)

■ GovernorHub data ■ Census 2021

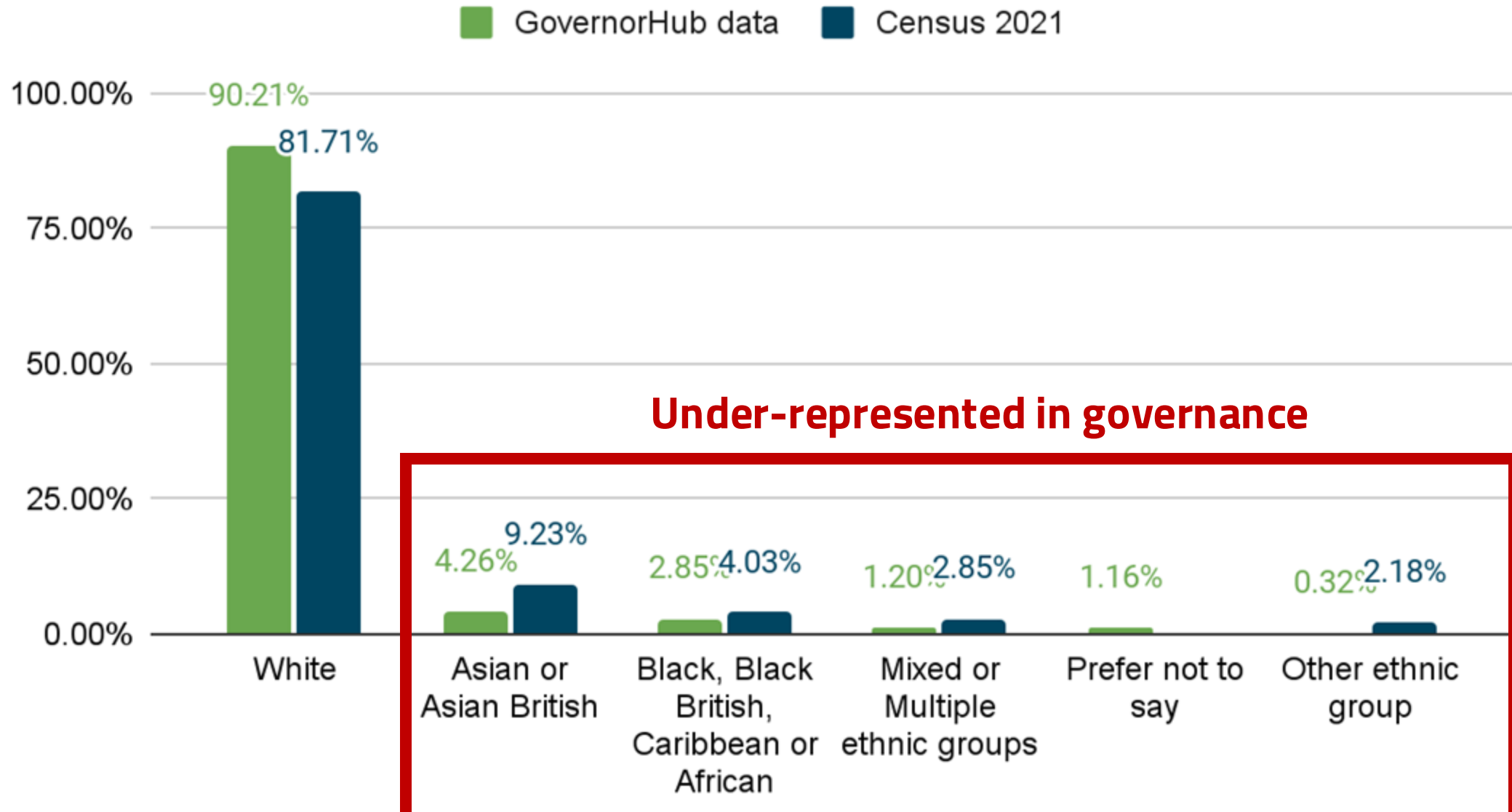




# School governance is too white

## Ethnicity

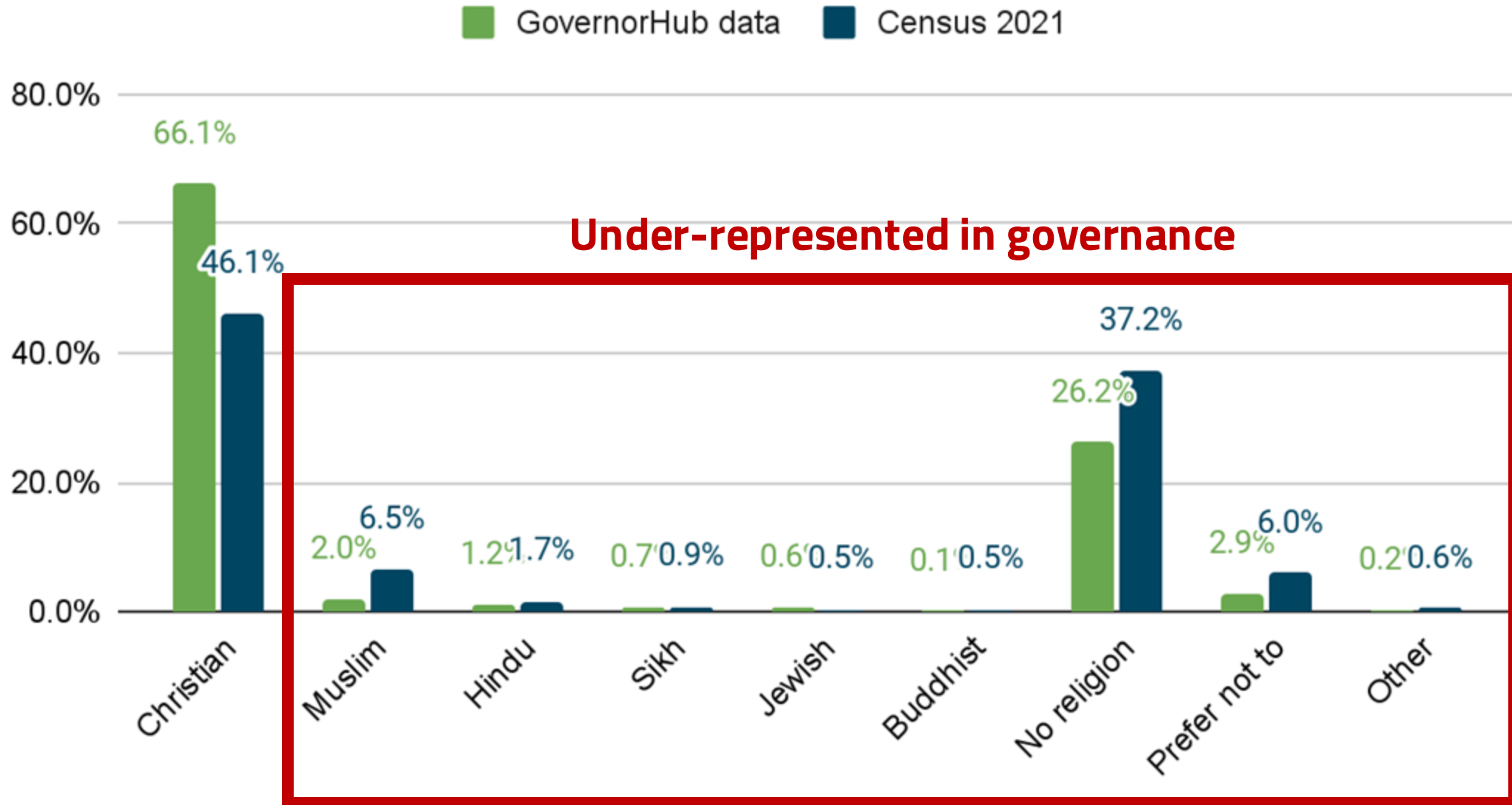
Source: [Survey of 22,000 governors](#), GovernorHub (2024)



# School governance is predominantly Christian

## Religion

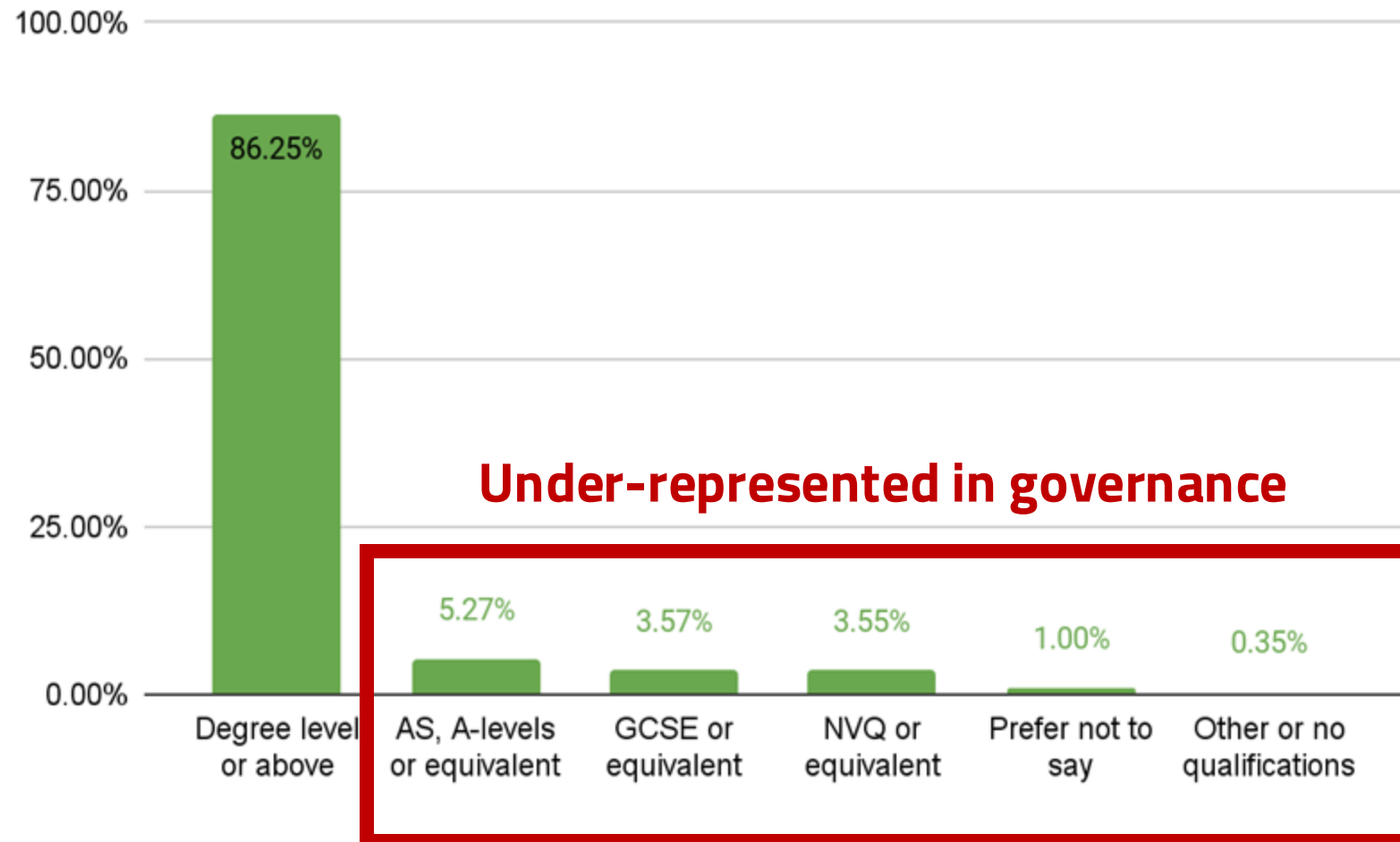
Source: [Survey of 22,000 governors](#), GovernorHub (2024)



# School governance is too higher educated

Source: [Survey of 22,000 governors](#), GovernorHub (2024)

## Highest level of education



**Under-represented in governance**

## Census 2021

**Level 4 or above: 34%**  
HNC/bachelor's/postgraduate or above

**Level 3: 17%**  
2 or more A-levels or equivalent

**Apprenticeships: 5%**

**Level 2: 13%**  
5 or more GCSEs, grade A to C or 9 to 4

**Level 1: 10%**  
1 to 4 GCSEs, grade A to C or 9 to 4

**Other qualifications: 3%**

**No qualifications: 18%**

# Our analysis of our external reviews of governance

Domain	Elements
<b>Board leadership</b>	Purpose and direction Culture and values People and workforce Making good decisions Civic trusts and community anchoring
<b>Structures</b>	Significant separation Division of responsibilities Delegations Local governance Succession, appointments and diversity
<b>Accountability</b>	Educational quality and improvement across the trust Fiduciary duty and financial governance Audit, risk and internal control Setting remuneration External accountability
<b>Care and compliance</b>	Acting within powers Regularity, propriety and value for money Conflicts of interest and related party transactions Safety and safeguarding, welfare and wellbeing Care, skill and diligence – and the bond of trust

Source: [Governing a School Trust](#)



- How will trust governance need to **evolve to keep pace** with the changing landscape?
- Do we have the **skills and knowledge** amongst our current leaders to effectively envisage and plan for the future?
- Will there be a **leadership gap** and if so, what implications?
- Will **emerging governance leaders** be attracted to our current structures and practices of governance?
- How might the **values and expectations** of emerging governance leaders shape future governance?

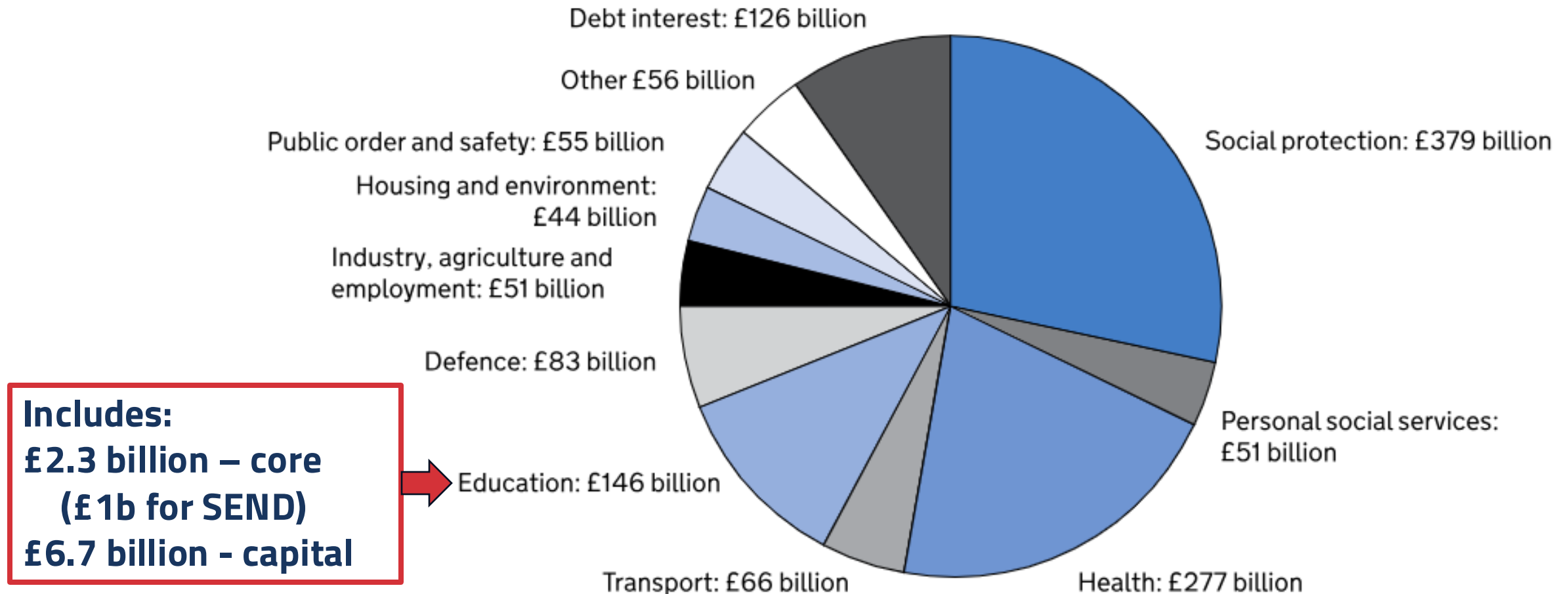
**Will our current approach  
be able to solve our  
wicked problems?**



**Wicked problems**

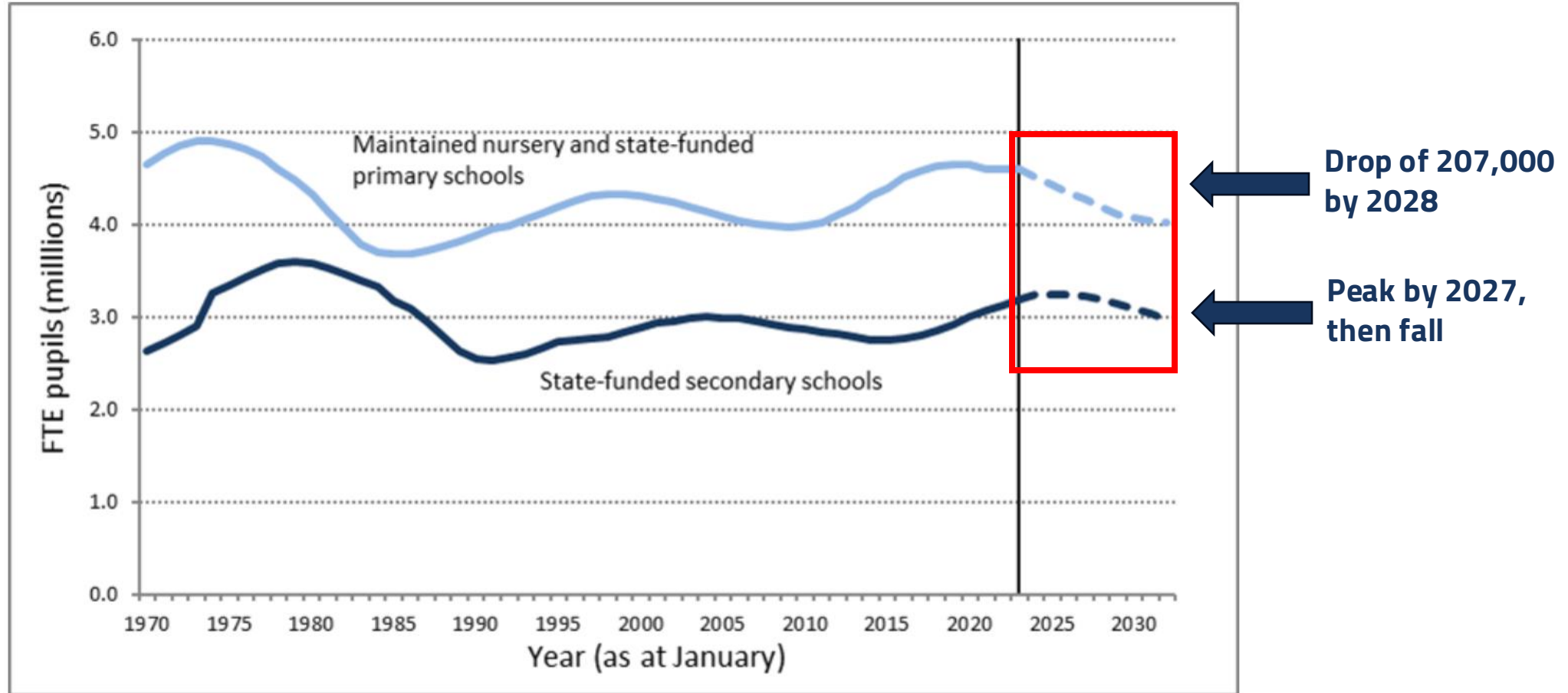
# Wicked problems – under-resourcing

**Chart D.2: Public sector spending 2025-26**



# Wicked problems – decline in birth rates

## National pupil projections

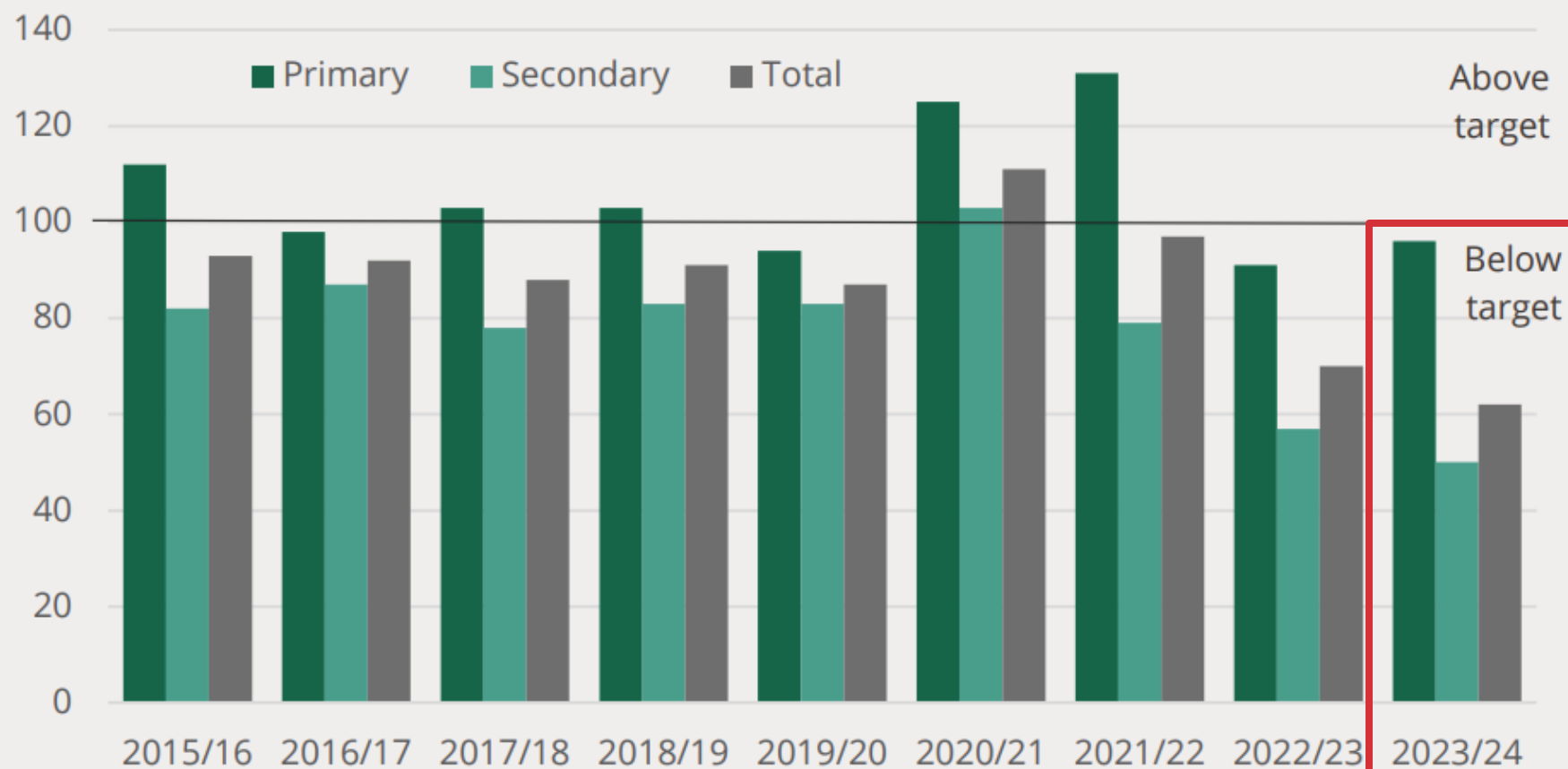




# Wicked problems – teacher recruitment

## Total ITT target only reached once in last 9 years

% of central target reached in England



### Subjects hardest hit:

Business studies – 16%

Physics - 17%

DT - 27%

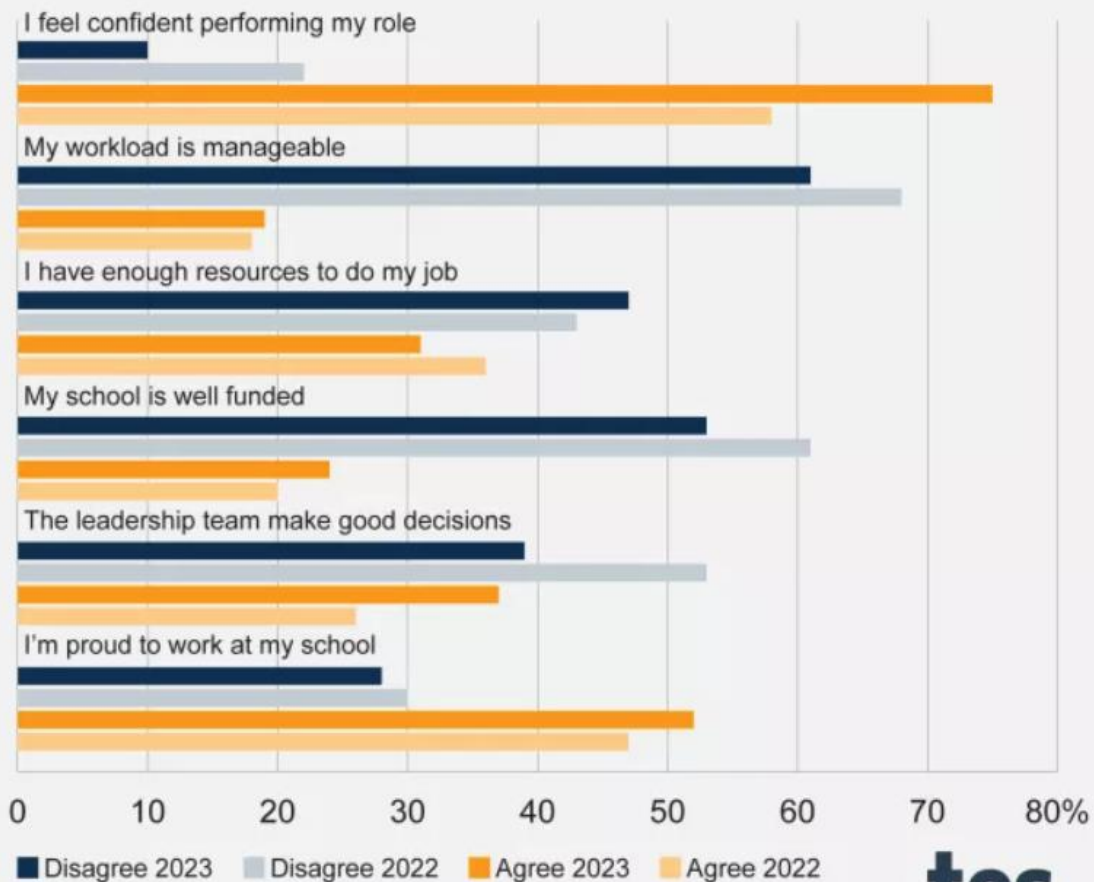
Music – 27%

MFL - 33%

Computing - 34%

# Wicked problems – teacher retention

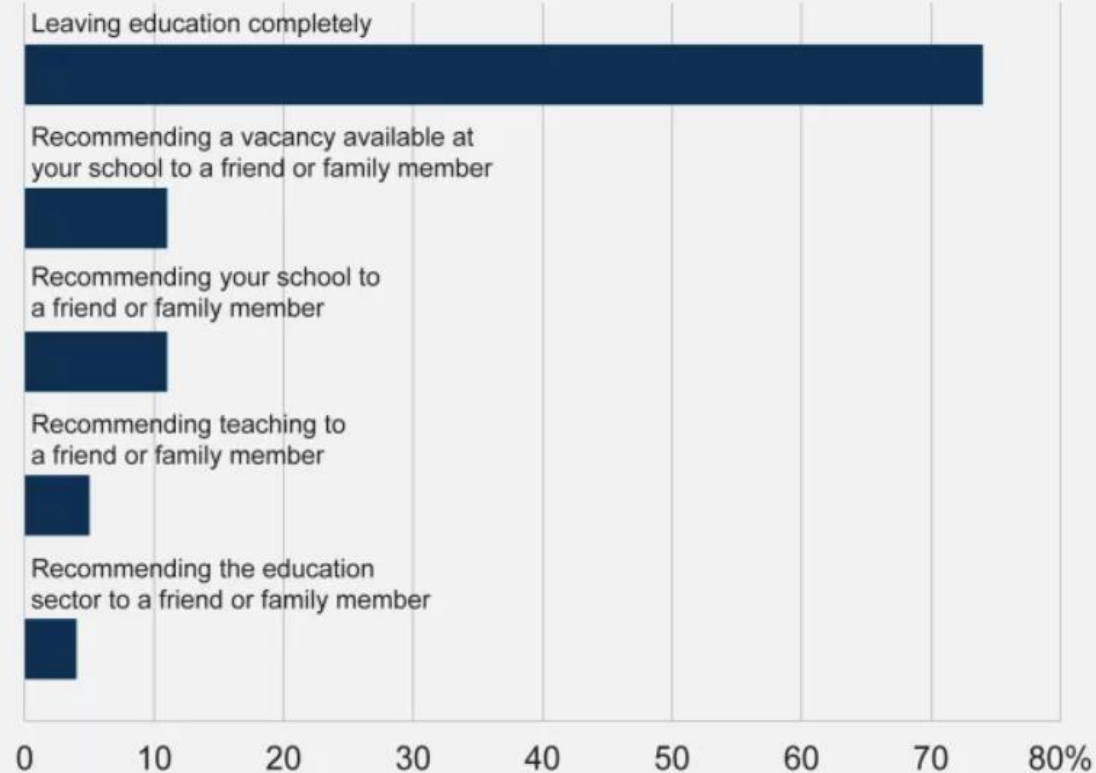
## Tes Schools Wellbeing Report: key findings in 2023 compared with 2022



Source: Tes Schools Wellbeing Report 2024

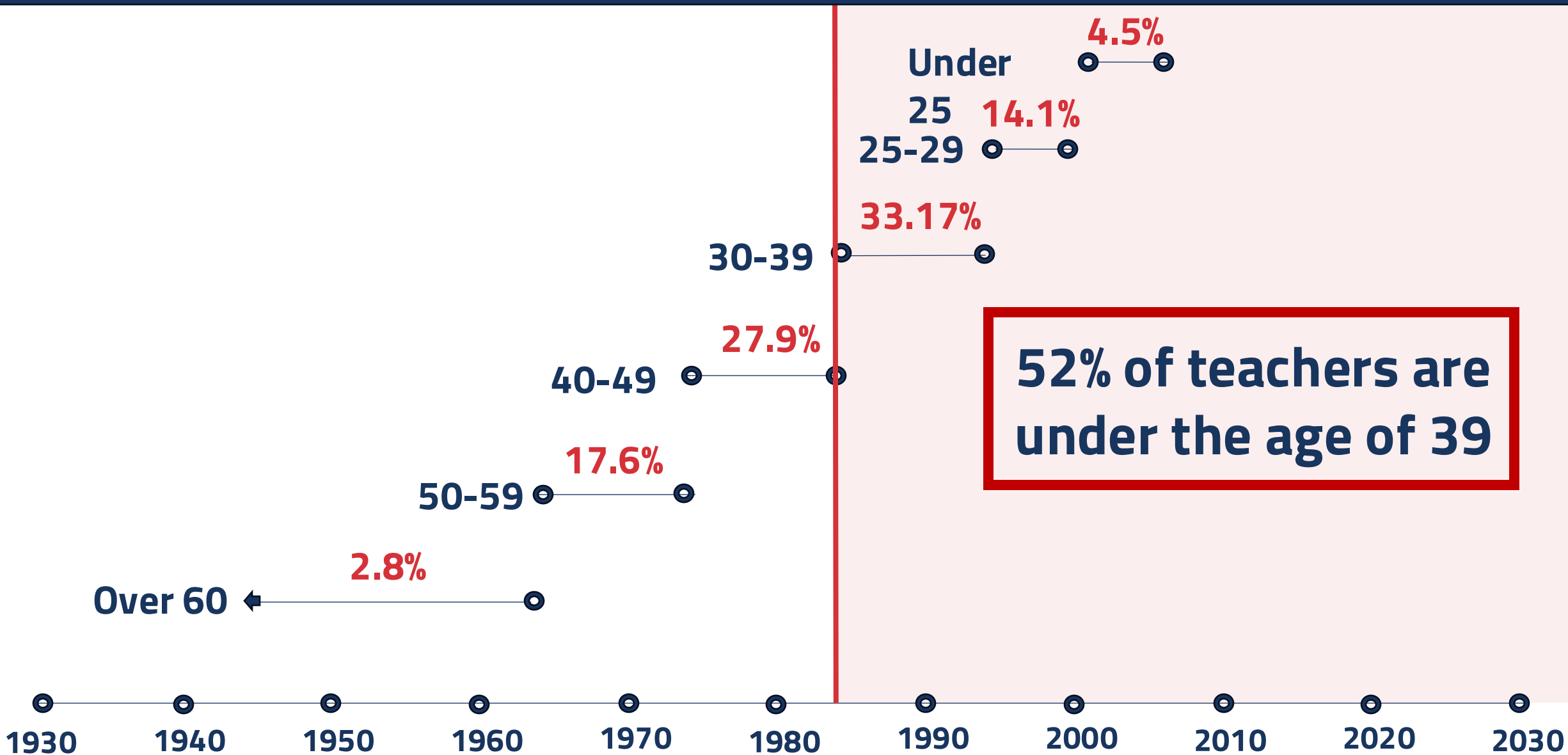
## Have you considered any of the following in the last 12 months in your current role?

Overall responses from UK school staff



Source: Tes Schools Wellbeing Report 2024

# Wicked problems – changing expectations from work



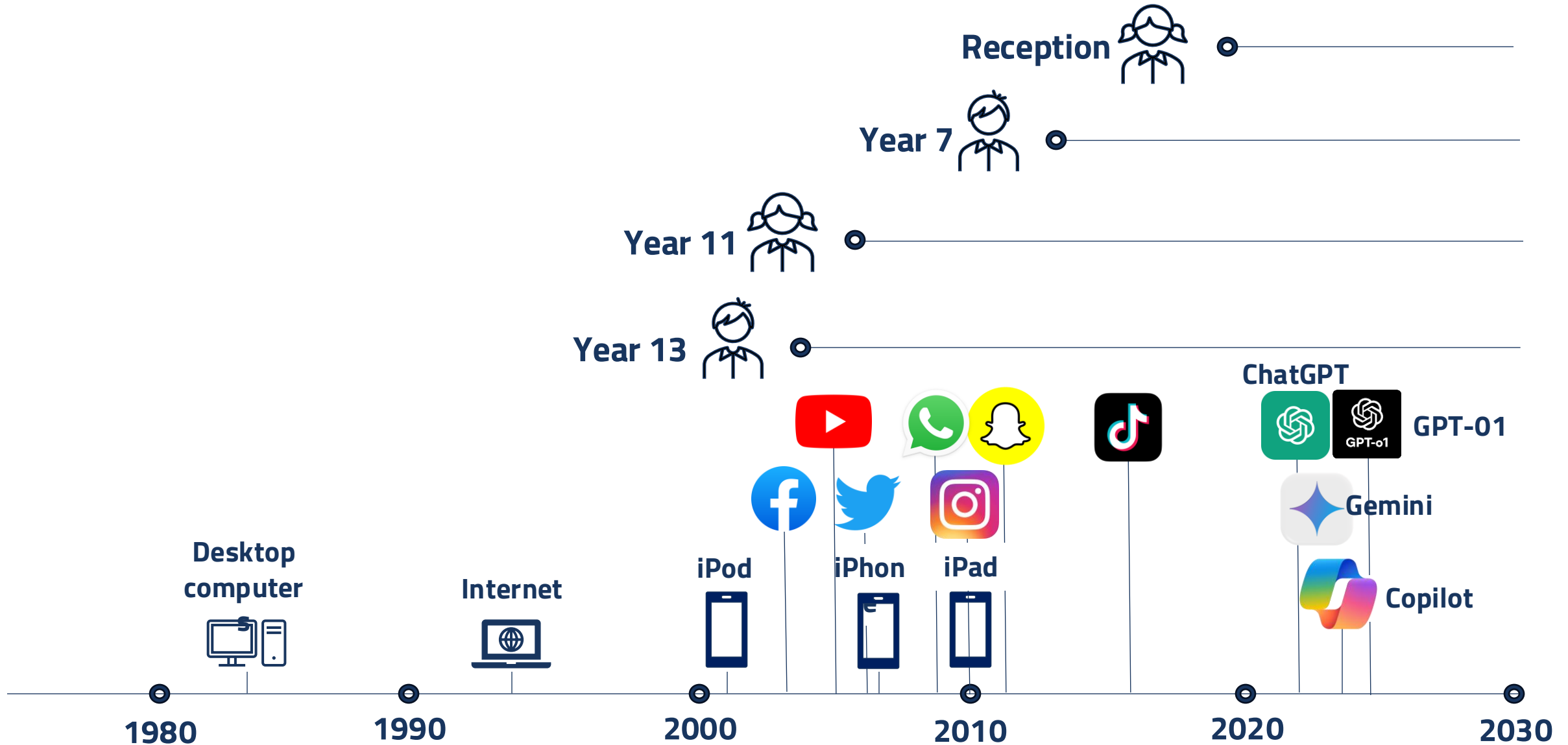
**52% of teachers are under the age of 39**

People have **three basic psychological needs** that are essential for growth and development:

- **Agency:** The feeling of having choice and willingly endorsing one's behaviour
- **Competence:** The experience of mastery and being effective in one's activity
- **Relatedness:** The need to feel connected and a sense of belongingness with others

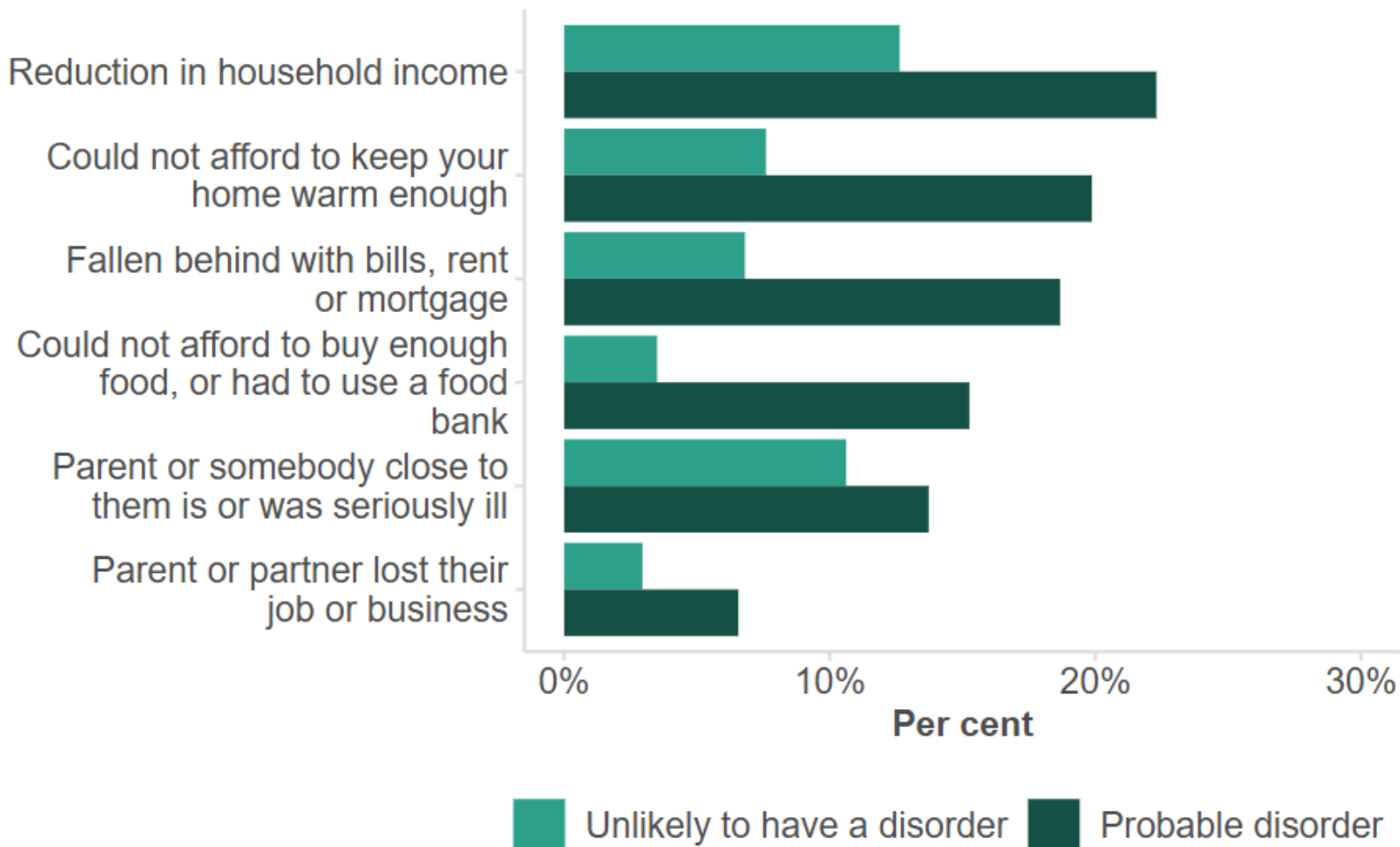


# Wicked problems – pace of technological change



## Household circumstances for children

Per cent of children living in a household that experienced the specific changes by mental health of child

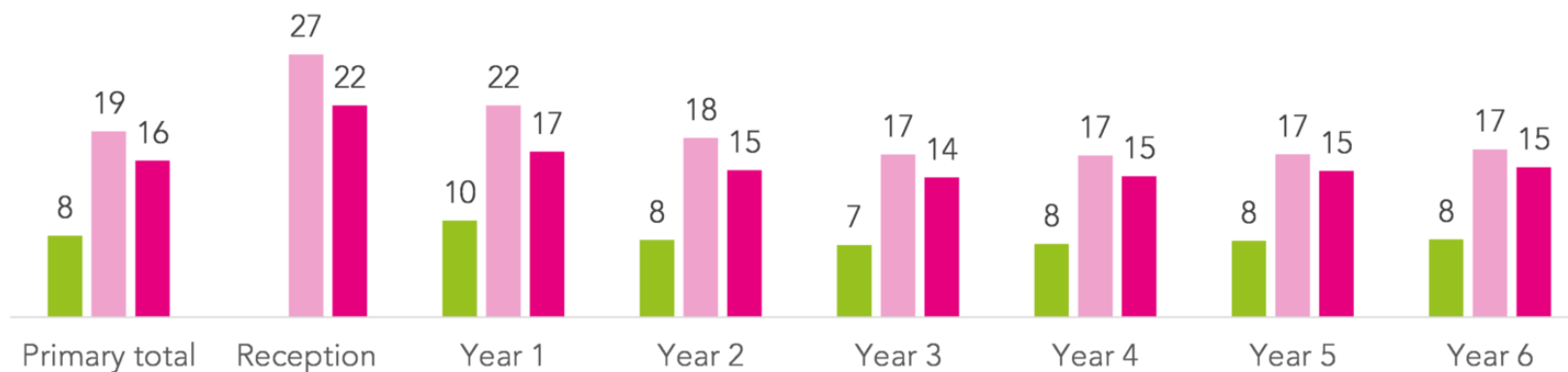


# Wicked problems – persistent absence

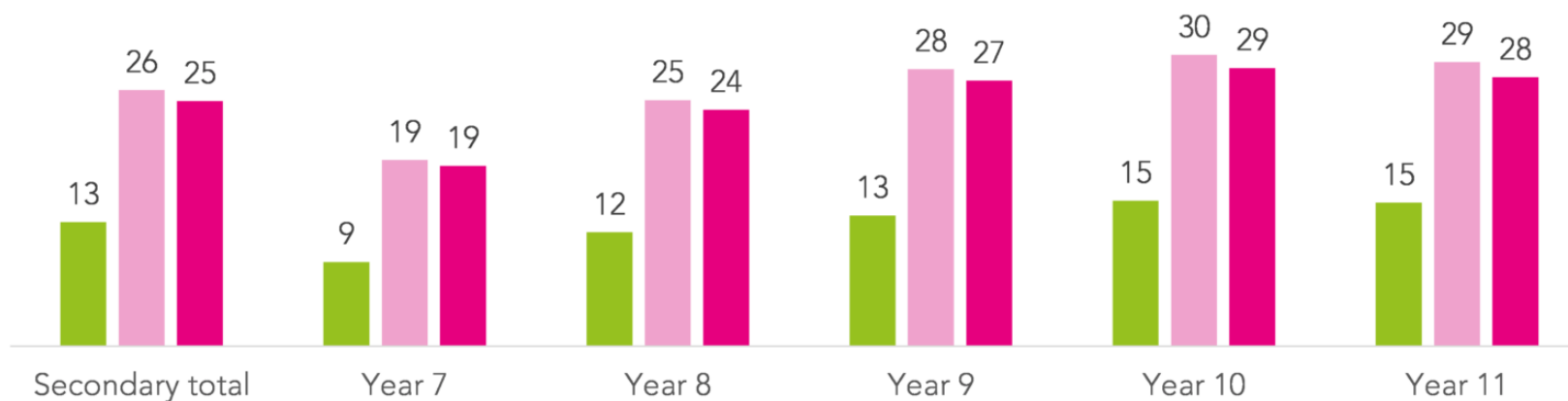
% pupils missing 10%+ of sessions by year group and academic year  
Attendance Tracker mainstream schools, Autumn and Spring Terms (18/19 from DfE figures)

■ 2018/19 ■ 2022/23 ■ 2023/24

Primary year groups



Secondary year groups



# There is no cavalry coming over the hill





**Charitable object:** “To advance education for the public benefit”

**A civic mindset involves asking a few simple questions:**

- What is **putting pressure** on the children, young people and communities my schools serve, and **impacting negatively** on their capacity to learn?
- The core purpose of schools is to advance education for public benefit, but what are the **factors that may be mitigating against this?**
- Who are the **civic organisations or actors** that need to **work together** to address this issue (or these issues)?

## Wider educational

- Cultural and curriculum projects
- International education projects
- Business and employer links

## Problem identification

- Finding a strategic focus
- Analysing the problem
- Creating and co-constructing solutions

## Relational

- Building inter-organisational relationships
- Mutually decide on resource prioritisation towards mutually defined goals

## Community convening

- Bringing together community actors to act collectively to address common challenges

**Which of these  
do you think  
might have the  
biggest impact on  
your schools?**

- **Poverty, mental health, absence**
- **Funding pressures**
- **Declining pupil numbers**
- **Teacher recruitment & retention**
- **Pace of technological change**

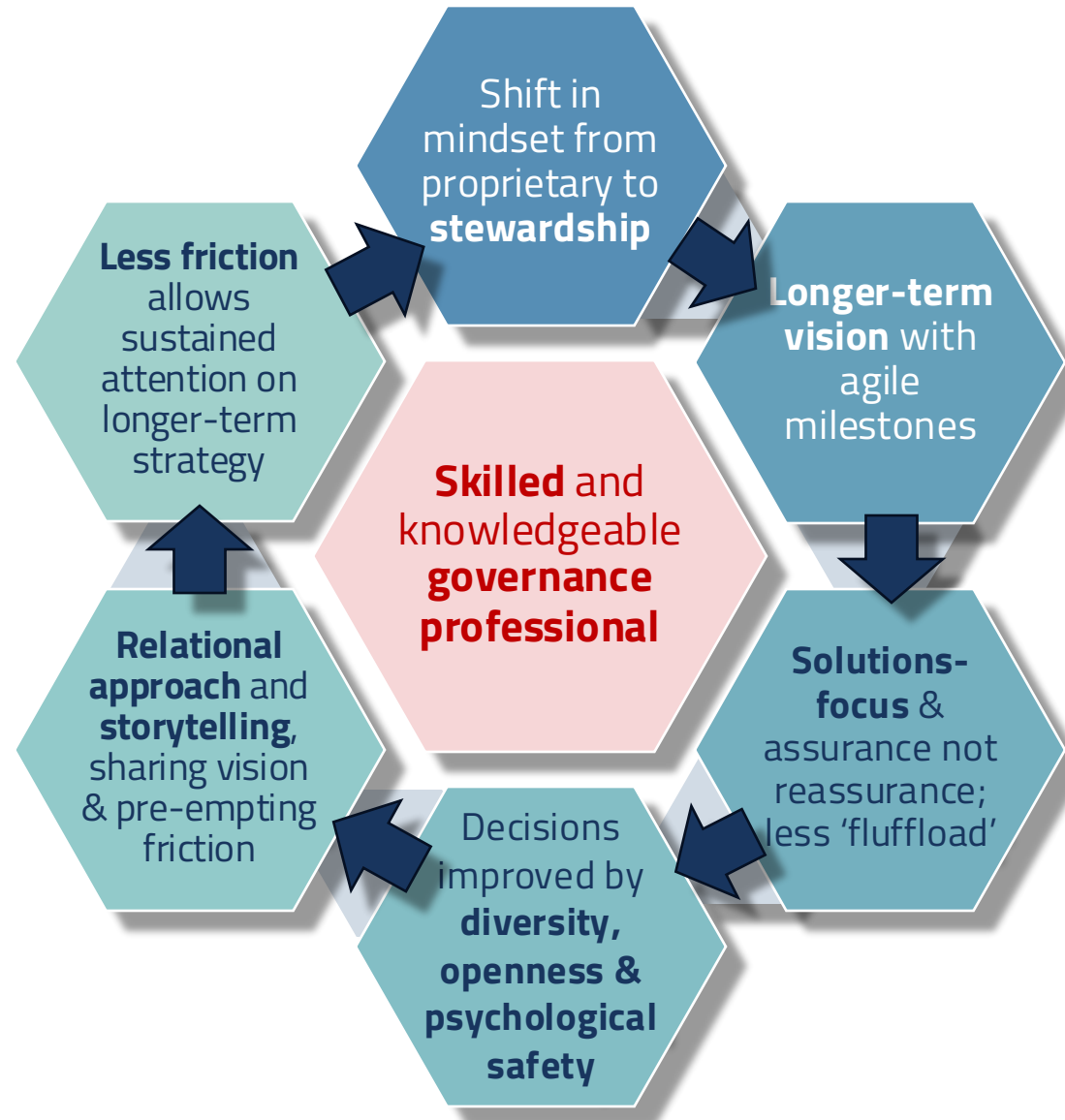


**What is 'next-gen governance'?**

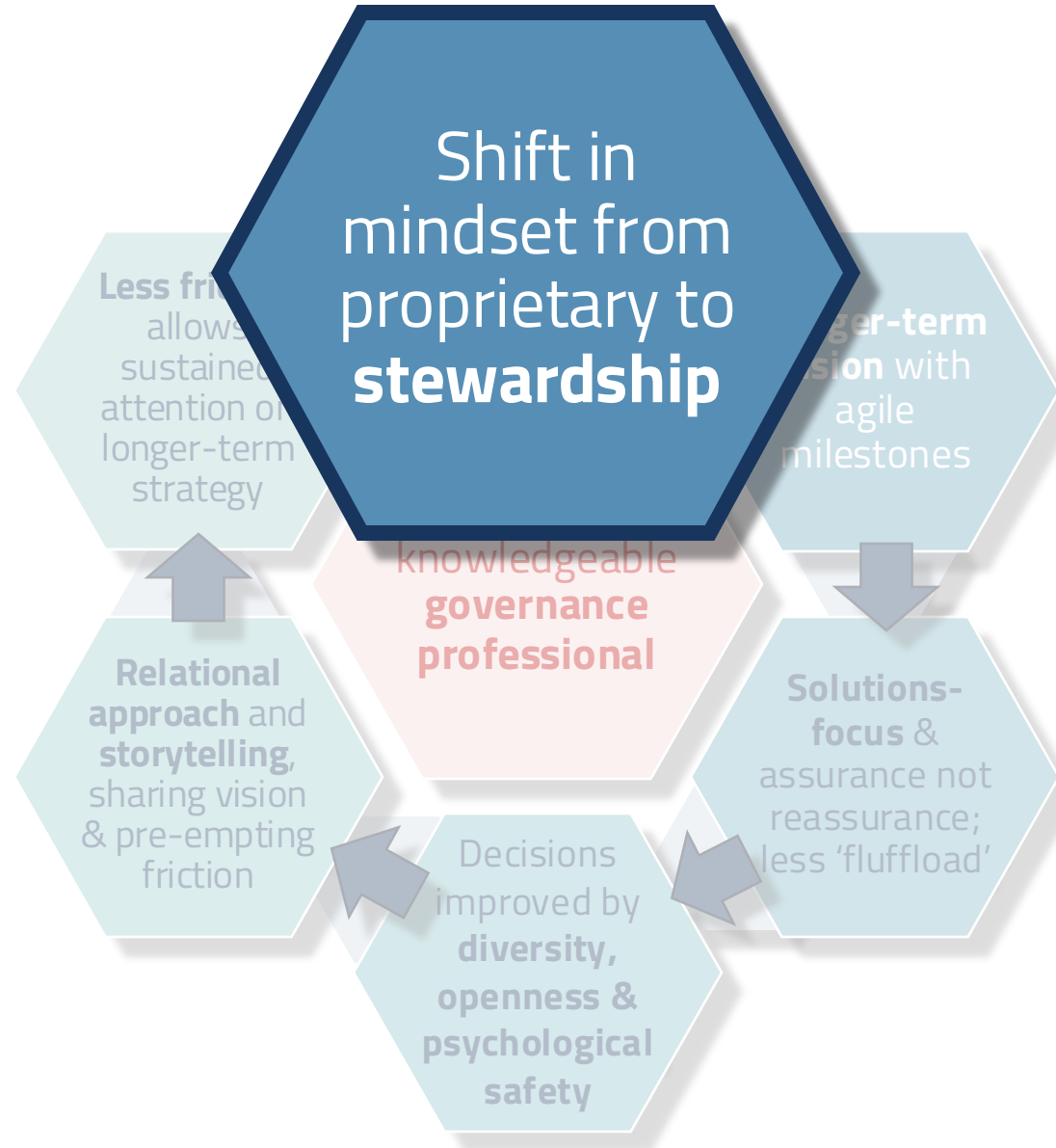
**New public management has run its course.** What we need now:

- **Designing for complexity**, rather than the simple and linear
- Understanding **human behaviour is intrinsically motivated**, rather than external rewards, targets and sanctions
- **Building for resilience to unlock prevention**, not always seeking to deliver more efficiency
- **Experimentalism**, not command and control

# Our theory of change



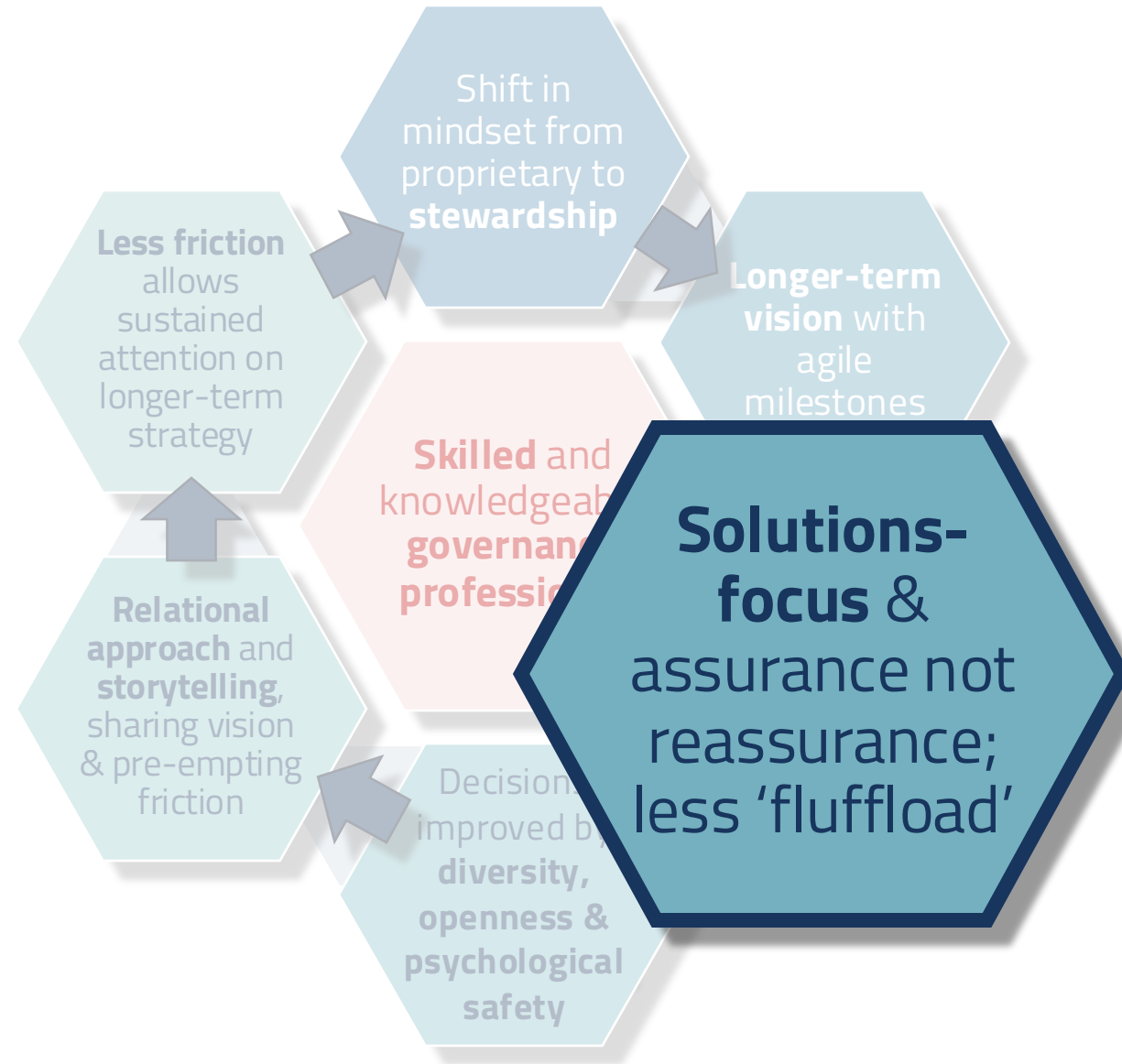




# Shift in mindset towards stewardship

Stewardship	Proprietary
We / our	I / me
Greater good	Personal benefit
Supervising or managing something entrusted to you	The right or entitlement to possess something
We are custodians.	I'm in charge.
Thinking beyond the present	Thinking mainly about the present
Accountability to others first	Accountability to yourself first
Ready and prepared for someone else to take over	Inability to 'let go' when time is up

# Our theory of change



# Caused by stress-inducing fluffload?

**78%**

of all education staff are stressed  
(3% increase on 2022)

**89%**

of all senior leaders (rising to 95%  
among headteachers) and 78% of  
school teachers reported feeling  
stressed

**78%**

of school teachers are stressed (6%  
increase on 2022 and the highest of  
all job roles))

**36%**

of school teachers reported  
experiencing burn-out (9% increase  
on 2022)

**51%**

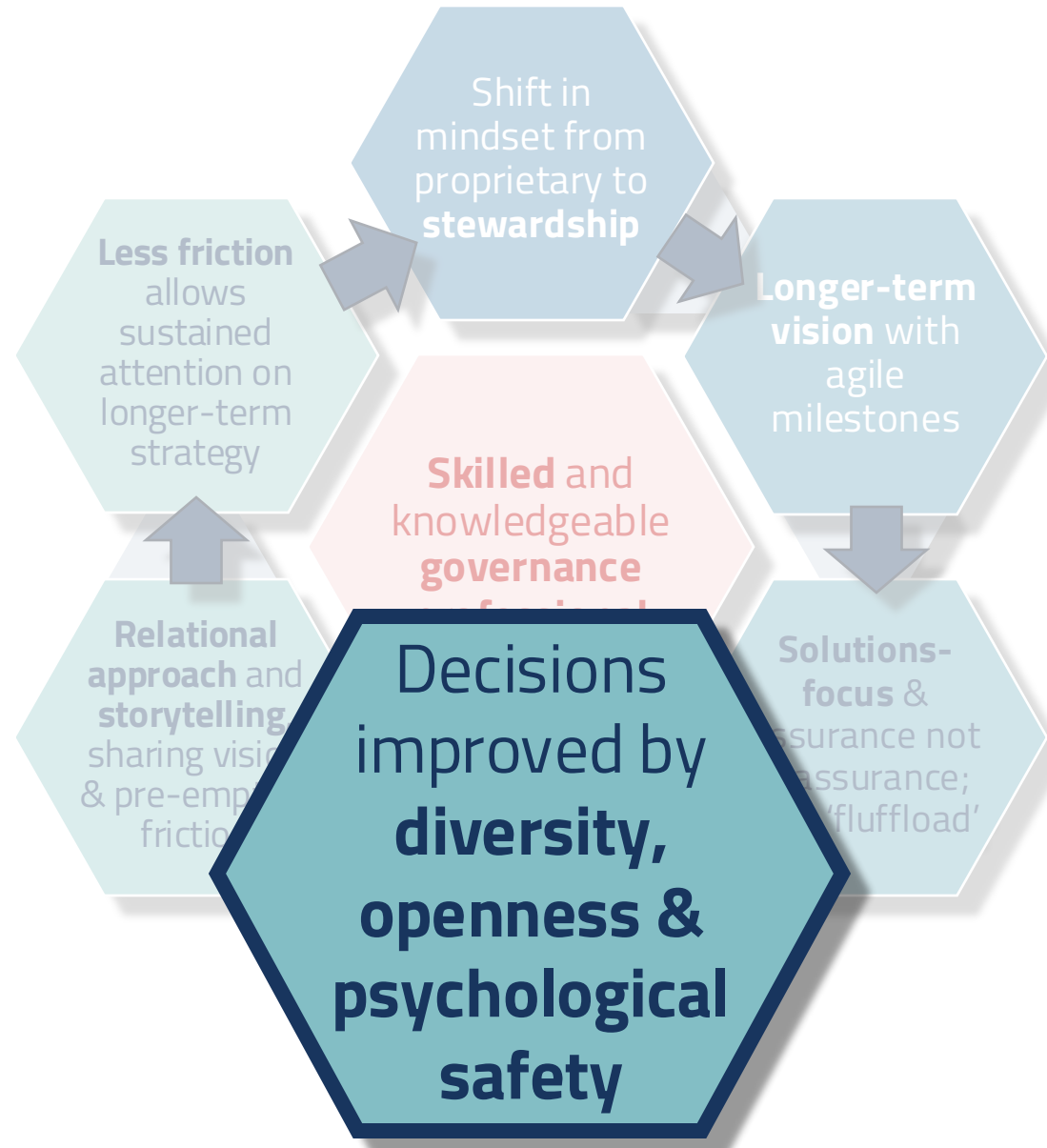
of staff experience insomnia or  
difficulty sleeping (6% increase on  
2022)

Assurance	Reassurance
'Improving'	'Proving'
Evidence-based confidence	Seeking comfort, reducing worry, placatory
Trusting	Predicated on mistrust
Values professional judgement	Values control and predictions

## What does this look like in practice?

- Revised structures, less duplication, appropriate delegations well communicated
- Minutes eliminated where possible, instead using detailed action logs
- Streamlined policies
- Shorter, well-chaired, laser sharp meetings
- Shorter, solutions-focused reporting
- **Using AI to your advantage**

# Our theory of change







**FACT**

Other than White, Christian, higher-educated individuals over the age of 40, **every other group are underrepresented in governance.**



**FACT**

Diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds contribute to **resilience & effectiveness** and better reflect the communities we serve.

Whistleblowing is too late.



# Effective, accountable and ethical governance

## Some key questions:

- Are leaders setting the right '**tone from the top**'?
- Does everyone feel safe to **suggest, question or challenge ideas**?
- Does everyone feel safe to **make mistakes and learn**?
- Do we make clear *how* we will **manage failure** (developmentally)?
- Are we accepting and resolving **differences of opinion**, without ego or resentment?
- Are we **open and accountable** for both our successes and our shortcomings?
- Are we going beyond compliance and building strong **long-lasting cultures**?

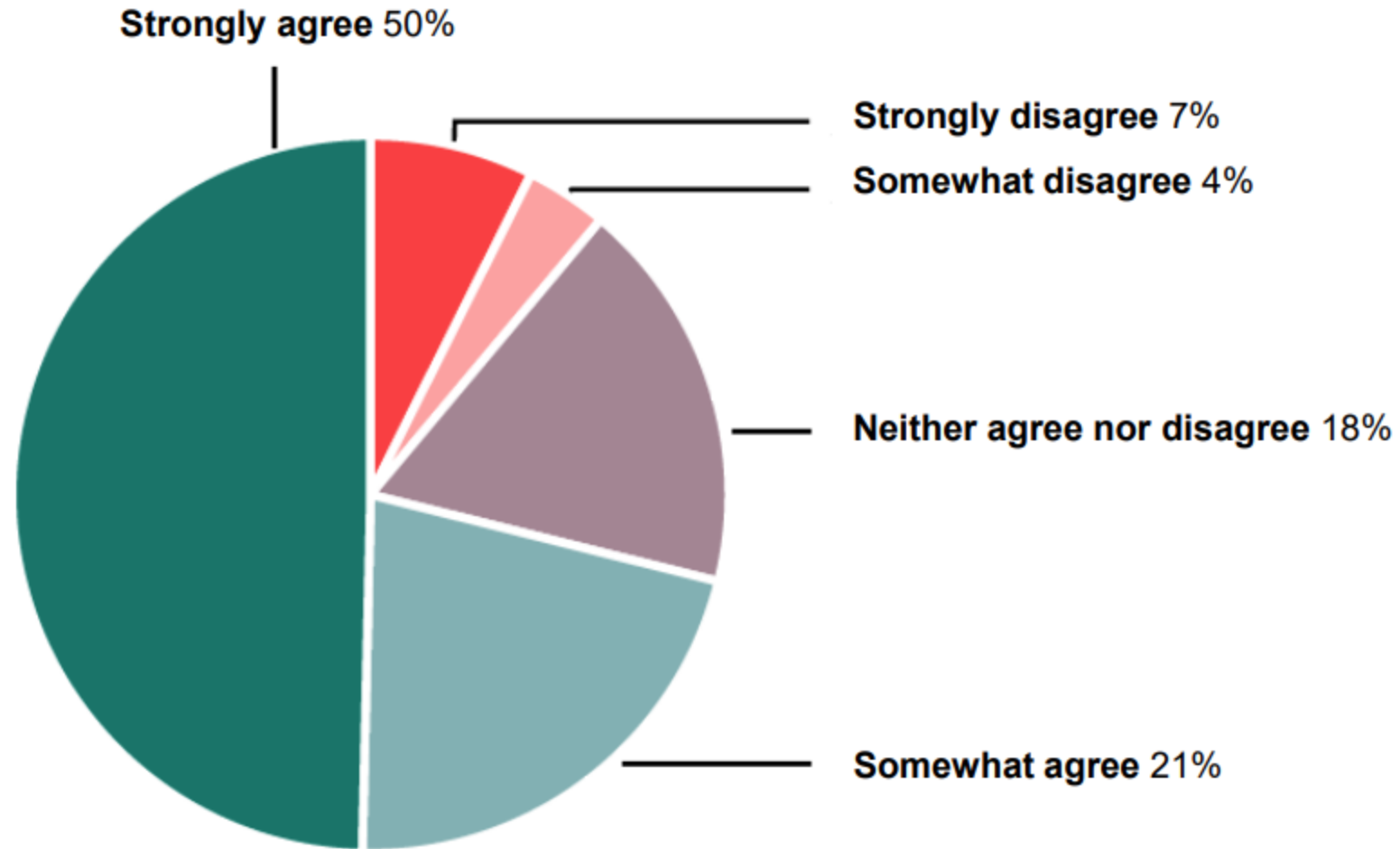


# Our theory of change



# A relational approach – could it be the key?

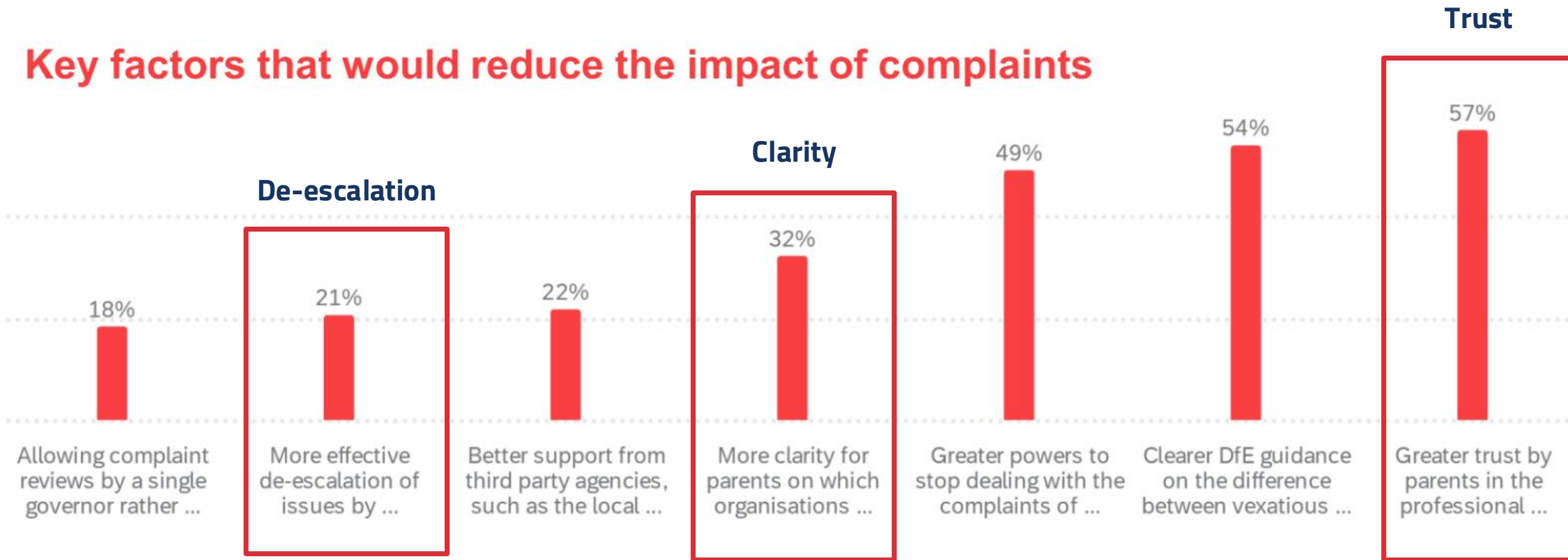
Parents and carers are quicker to escalate complaints to the formal stage of the process



Source: [School Leaders Survey Findings](#), Browne Jacobson (Spring 2024)

# Relational approach - the power of over-communication

## Key factors that would reduce the impact of complaints



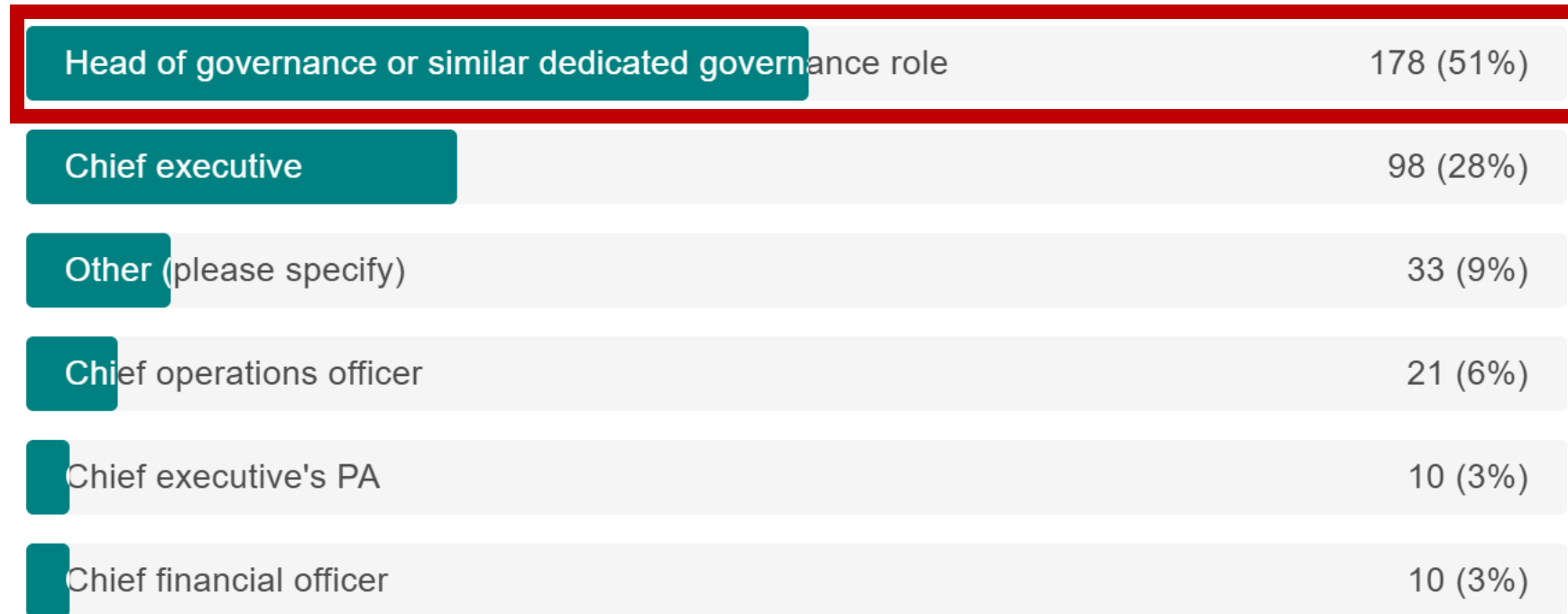
Source: [School Leaders Survey Findings](#), Browne Jacobson (Spring 2024)





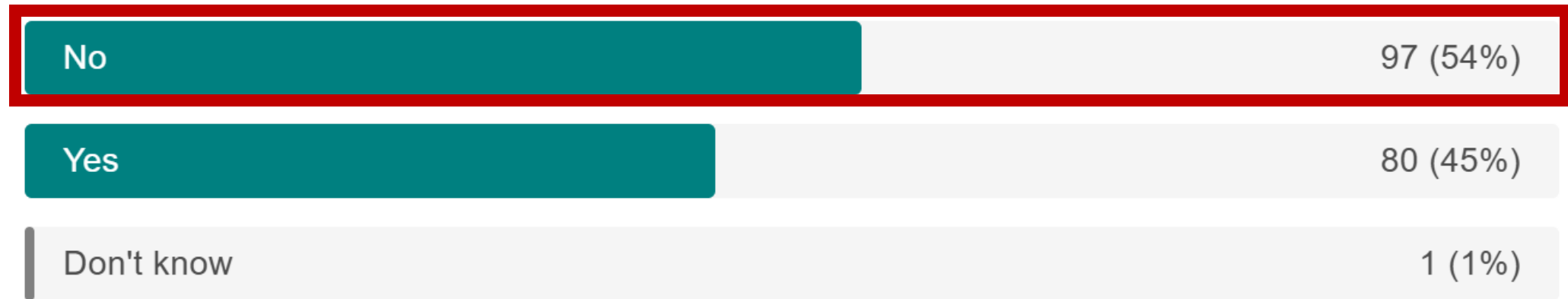
## 54) Which staff member leads on governance within your trust?

350 responses



## 55) Is your governance lead part of the trust's executive leadership team?

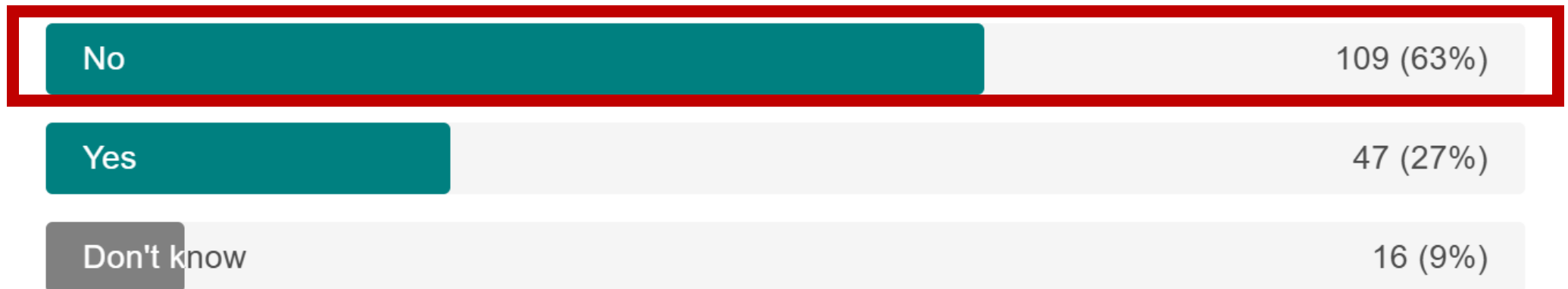
178 responses



Powered by **Edurio**

## 56) Do you plan to create a dedicated staff role to lead on governance in the next academic year?

172 responses



Powered by **Edurio**

# Next-gen governance

	✓ This	✗ Not this
<b>Mindset</b>	Stewardship, civic-minded, outward-facing	Hierarchical, proprietary, 'command & control'
<b>Strategic outlook</b>	Longer term vision with agile interim milestones	Short term and fixed strategies
<b>Decision-makers</b>	Diversity of thought, perspective, background	Homogeneity and group think
<b>Structures</b>	Brave, bold governance structures designed for now	Legacy models of governance
<b>Approach</b>	Compliance as a minimum	Compliance-focused
<b>Mechanics</b>	Sharp, tech-savvy, solutions-focused, risk-informed	Backward-looking, problem-focused
<b>Exec relationship</b>	Trusting in professional judgement	Seeking reassurance, overly operational
<b>Culture</b>	Ethical, psychologically safe, 'speak up', transparent	High-stakes accountability, need-to-know
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Relationships through communication & storytelling	Minimal engagement, misunderstanding
<b>Conflict resolution</b>	Resolved informally; mediation & restorative practice	Formal, adversarial, quickly escalated
<b>Sense-making</b>	Embracing complexity and collaboration	Insular and seeking simple solutions
<b>Governance practice</b>	Led by a skilled, experienced governance professional	Led by the executive or a non-professional



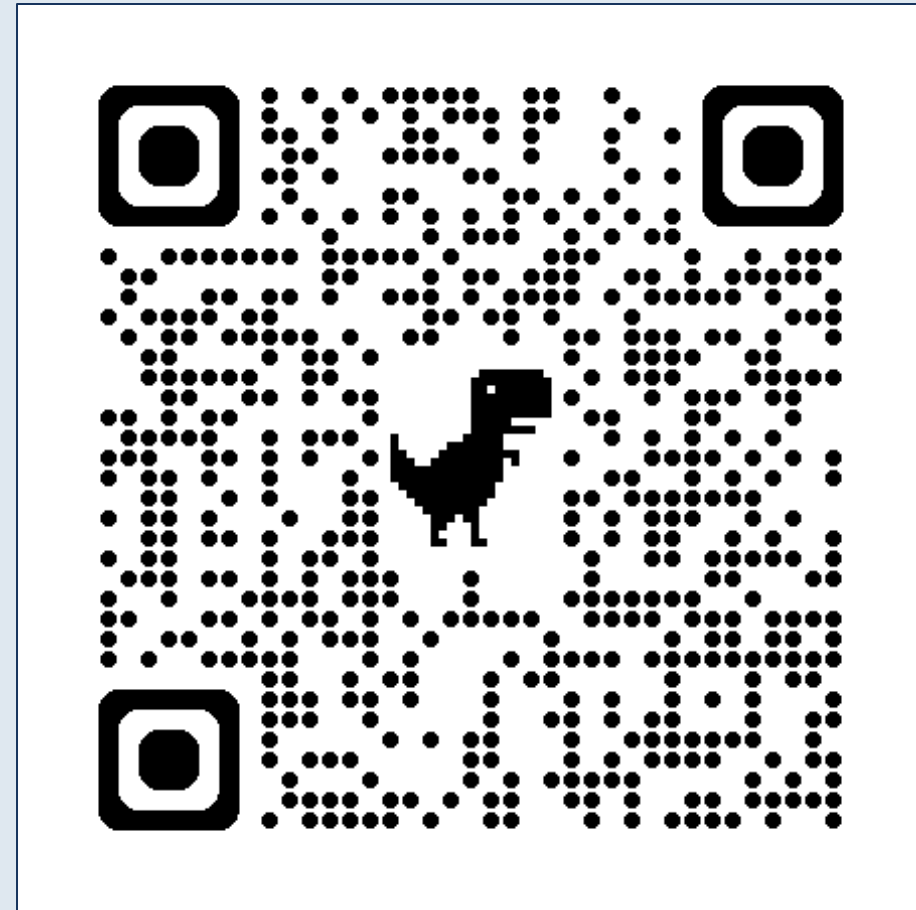
“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.”

-Kofi Annan



# Next-gen governance

## Stewardship for sustainable success



# Thank you for listening

To find out more visit  
**[cstuk.org.uk](http://cstuk.org.uk)**



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

The voice of school trusts

