

School leaders significantly dissatisfied with current government policies across the board, new research reveals

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Tuesday, 11 July 2023 - Significant levels of disquiet with a number of important policy areas for the school and academies sector shown in the results of The School Leaders survey, published today by law firm Browne Jacobson. Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) funding came out as a top concern with 94% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the current situation.

The results perhaps beg the question, is the government doing enough to focus attention on the policy levers that could make a real difference to the issues causing concern for school leaders?

The key findings fell into three areas:

- **The policy landscape:** there is a clear sense that the government is not doing enough, with 94% of respondents being dissatisfied with current SEND funding and 78% discontent with SEND policy.
- **Strategic and operational priorities:** operational strategies on financial stability are a top focus for 68% of school leaders, and five of the top ten strategies related to people issues cited as the focus for the next 12 months.
- **Environmental and social impact:** 72% of respondents felt that focusing on environmental and social governance makes for a better organisation, but the costs, capacity and expertise are seen to be the main challenges in doing this.

The survey was completed by 265 school leaders in England over two weeks between 15-29 May 2023. 19% of the leaders are CEOs and Deputy CEOs, 14% are COOs and CFOs, 16% are trustees and 14% are Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Heads.

The termly School Leaders Survey findings provide insight into the key challenges and opportunities in the sector, by creating a platform for school leaders to share their views on the school system. Seven in ten (71%) respondents work or govern in a multi-academy trust, 18% in standalone academies and 11% in maintained schools.

Mark Blois, National Head of Education at Browne Jacobson, said:

'At Browne Jacobson, our education team seeks to be part of and not just serve the sector. This means our team consistently looks to make sure it is firmly rooted in the sector to ensure we have a full understanding of the core issues facing the sector, how they intersect and importantly the rapidly changing environment in which they operate. As such, we will continue to provide a platform for school leaders to express points of view, in the hope that it will support school leaders influence policy makers and their priorities.'

Nick MacKenzie, Partner in the Education at Browne Jacobson, comments:

'While the results of the School Leaders Survey are at points sobering, the importance of sharing the views of school leaders about the school system remains paramount, even if they directly challenge us all and, in particular, policy makers on their current priorities.'

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