

New Insights into the School Estate

The School Estate
Practitioner Survey 2025

Jo Marchant MBE and Jonathan Jones MCIOB



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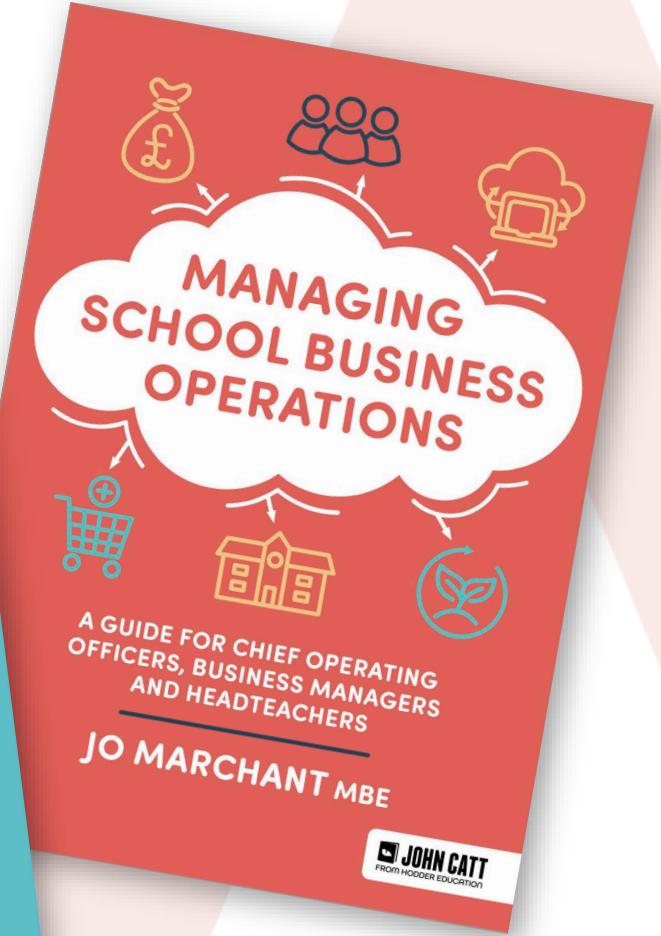
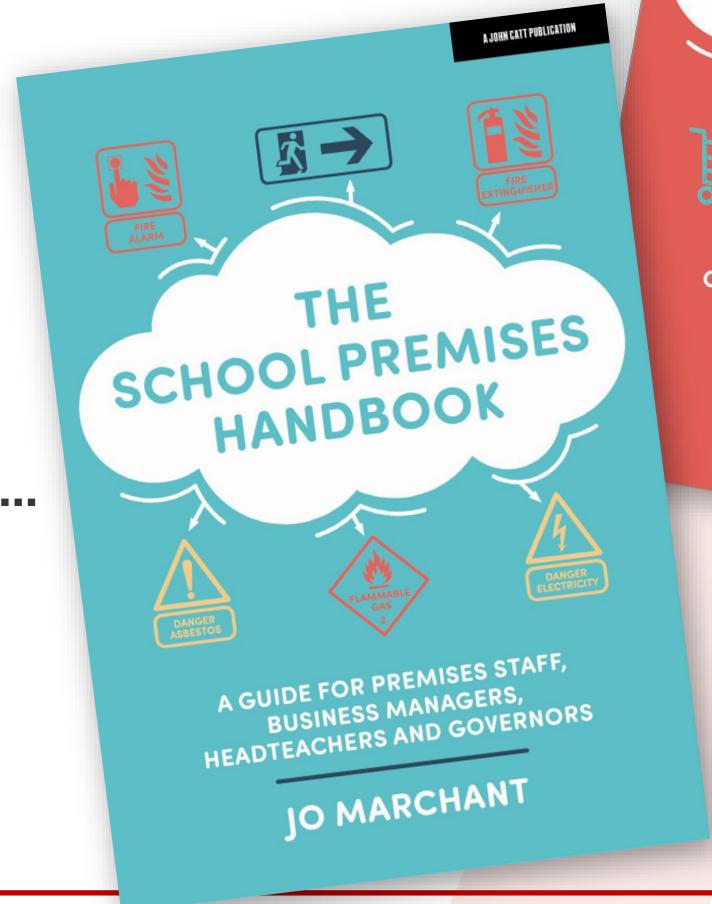
Jo Merchant MBE

MA, MBA, FISBL

Estates Professional and Author of...

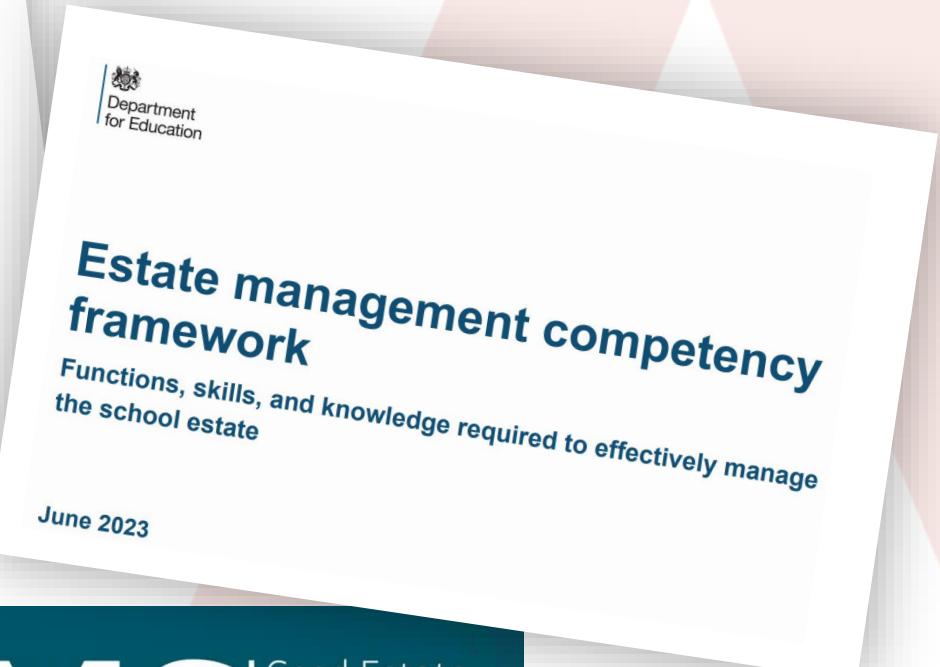
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New Insights into the School Estate

Context and Rationale



Context and Rationale

The education estates service offer:

Estate management

Low condition need:
preventative maintenance

Condition, resilience and decarbonisation

Medium condition need:
repair, replace and retrofit

Build and rebuild

High condition need:
build and rebuild

Data and digital – Estate management portal

Method and Reliability

- **Survey designed February 2025**
- **Piloted and reviewed**
- **Roll-out March and closed end of Summer Term**
 - Email campaign
 - Conferences
 - Existing clients and contacts
- **216 responses**
- **Results are GENERALLY accurate to +/-6.67% at the 95% confidence level**

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THE SCHOOL ESTATE PRACTITIONER SURVEY 2025

Welcome to our Survey

MAC, in partnership with Jo Marchant MBE, have collaborated to undertake the first 'School Estate Practitioner' survey. We're interested in hearing about your school estate and ask that you spare 5mins to complete our online survey.

We really value your professional insight and welcome your input.

All responses will be treated confidentially, and we will present the results in October at the Education Estates Conference and via MAC's website and social media channels.

As always, if you need any estates advice or support, please get in touch, and one of our local professionals will be happy to help.

Jonathan Jones, National Education Director
MAC Construction Consultants



We really value your professional insight and welcome your input and would be very grateful if you could spend just five minutes completing our survey [here](#).

By taking the survey, you can be entered into a draw to win 1 of 50 copies of 'The School Premises Handbook' written by Jo Marchant MBE.

Exhibitions and Conferences

We will be at all of the major conferences and events for the sector during this term so do come along and see us.

Highlights will include Jonathan Jones speaking at the various events marked (*).

October:

2 October - (*) BASBM Conference - Edgbaston Cricket Ground
14/15 October - (*) Education Estates Conference, Manchester Convention Centre
16/17 October - Confederation of School Trusts, ICC Birmingham
16 October - EdExec Live - South West (Gloucester and Bristol)
16 October - Schools North East Annual Conference - St James's Park, Newcastle upon Tyne
23 October - EdExec Live - York and Humber, Radisson Hotel, York

November:

7 November - (*) Conferences South West - Future Skills Centre, Exeter
19/20 November - Schools and Academies Show - NEC Birmingham
27/28 November - ISBL National Conference - Hilton Metropole, Birmingham

December:

2 December - ABLE Conference - Eastwood Hall, Nottingham
3 December - The National Schools Awards - House of Lords, London

[www.macconsultingltd.com](#)

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Tell us about your school estate by completing our 'School Estate Practitioner Survey'

We really value your professional insight and welcome your input
To take the survey scan the QR code below



By taking the survey you will be entered into a draw and you could win 1 of 50 copies of 'The School Premises Handbook' written by Jo Marchant MBE



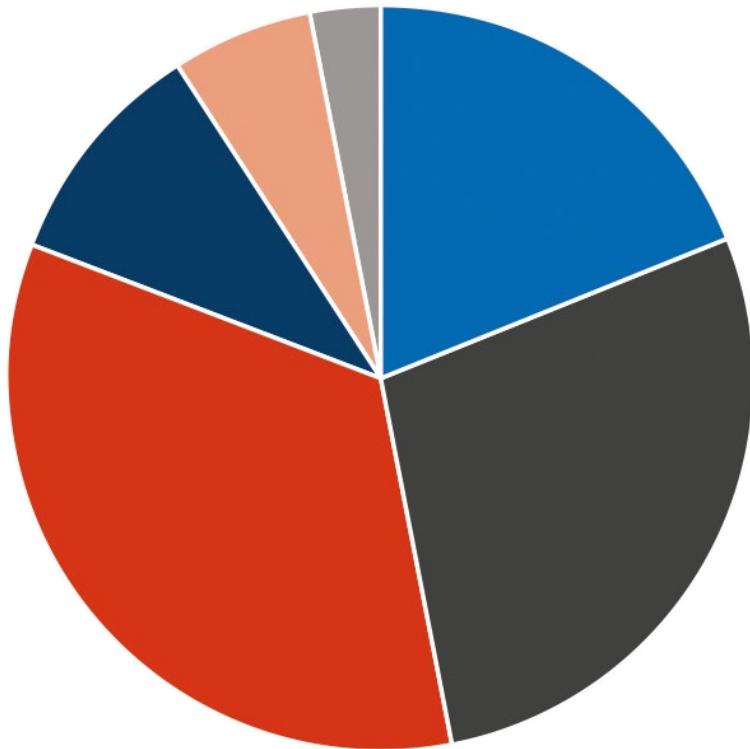
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Characteristics of Respondents

Roles

What is your job title?



Strategic Management Role 19%

School Business Manager 28%

Estates Leadership 34%

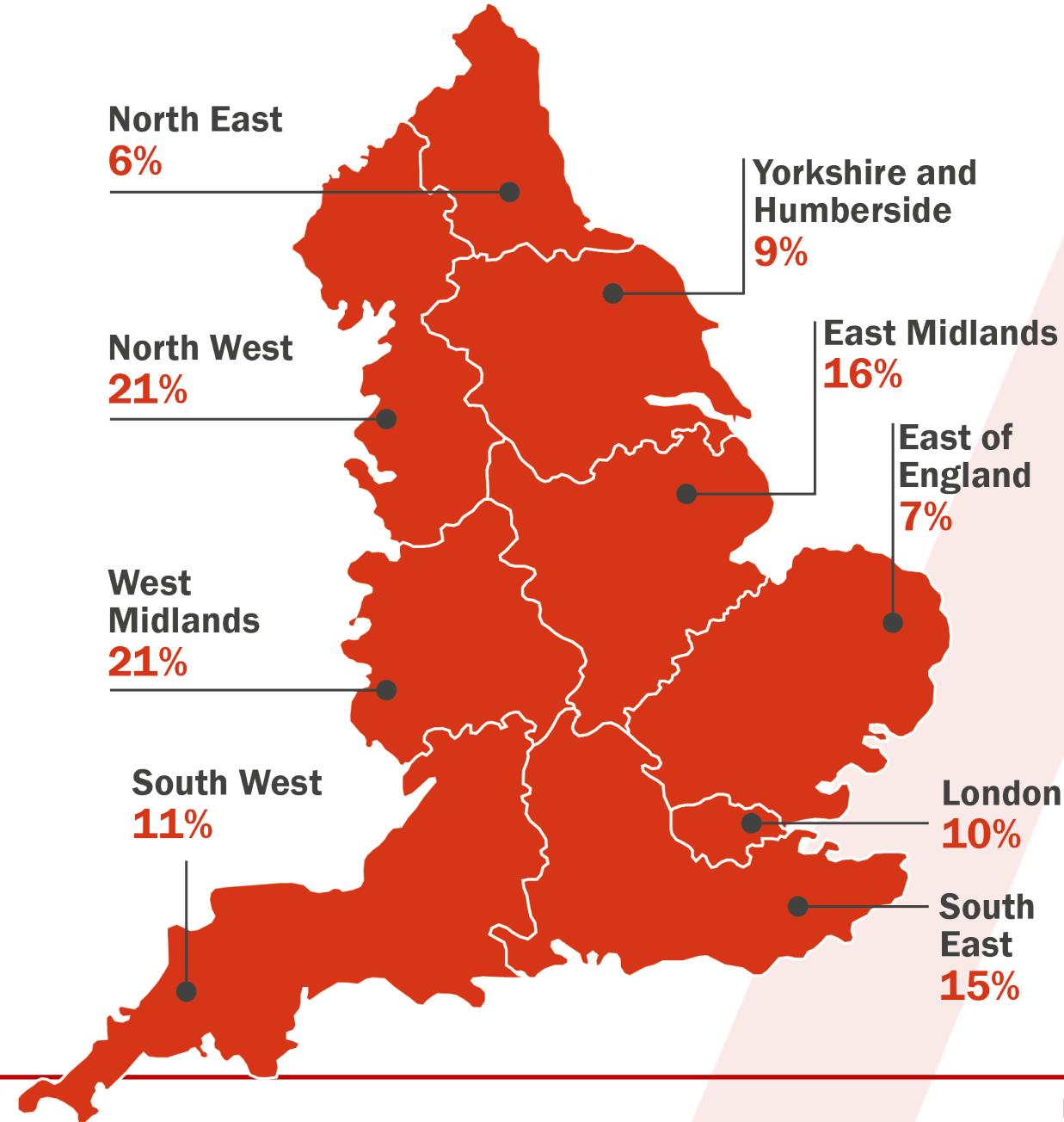
Estates Operational 10%

Teaching and Learning 6%

Other 3%

48%
have been in
this role for
less than 4
years

Regional Breakdown



Educational Setting of Respondents

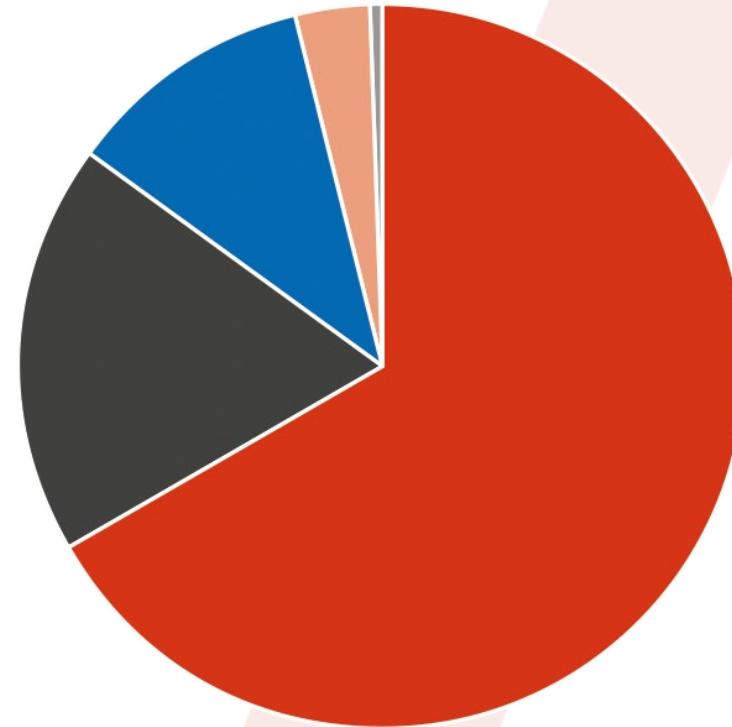
What type of educational setting do you work in?

Multi-academy trust 67%

Local authority-maintained school 19%

Single academy trust 11%

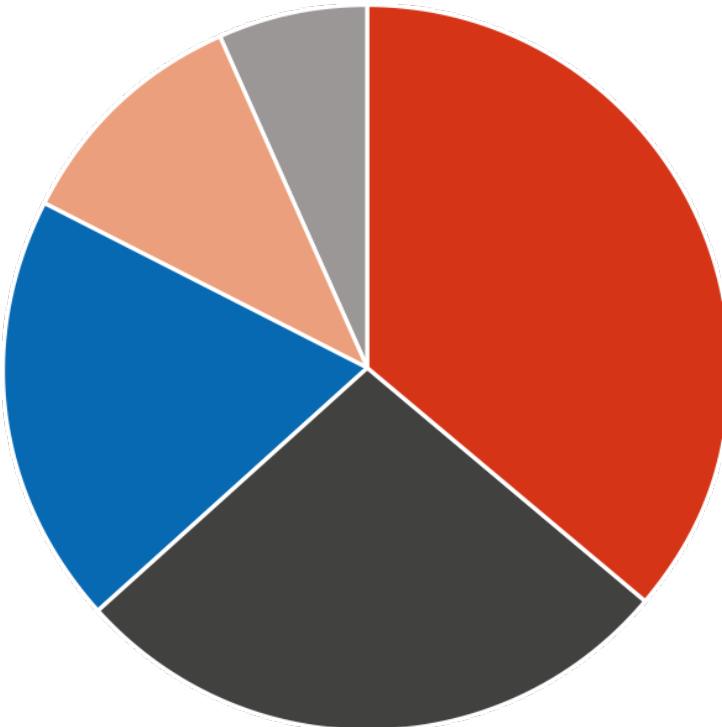
Other 3%



Educational Setting of Respondents

What is your setting's status?

Centralised or Trust Head Office 36%
Primary 27%
Secondary 20%
Other 11%
Special 6%



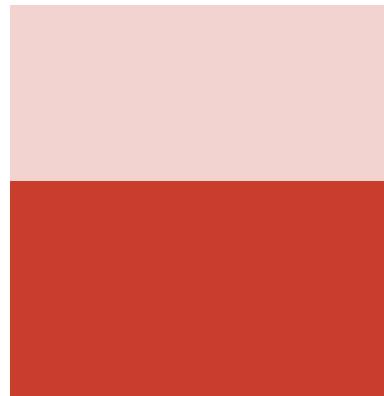
Working in a Central or Head Office setting or organisation with more pupils means that you're more likely to have a job title associated with Estates Leadership.

Smaller settings are more likely to have School Business Managers.

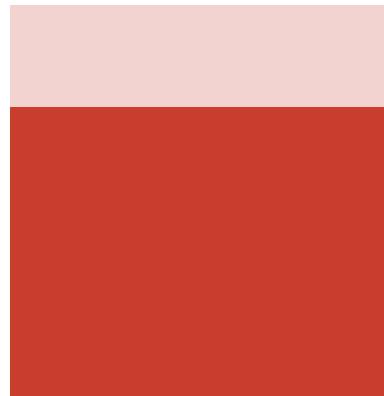


Build and Rebuild

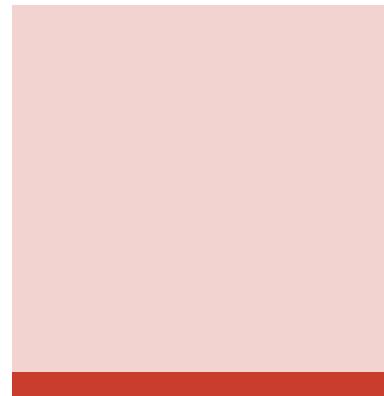
Existing New Build Blocks



More than half of respondents **55%** have had a block built or re-built in last ten years



74% state that these blocks are in Good or Excellent condition



A small proportion **6%** stated that these blocks are unsatisfactory

“Our academy was built in 2013. Whenever the heating is turned off, water leaks through the ceiling from the pipe flanges in multiple places which means we haven’t been able to turn the heating off during the summer for the past 12 years whilst we’ve been battling with the main contractor to fix this defect.”

Need for Rebuild

Two thirds of respondents believe they have at least one block that will reach 'end of life' in the next five years

“Our buildings are old, draughty, have asbestos issues, and ancient science labs. Out of 7 blocks only one is really fit for purpose.”

“Our school was built in the 1950s with a 30 year life span. End of life has long since passed.”

“I spend £200k plus every year just to patch and make do. This can't carry on!”

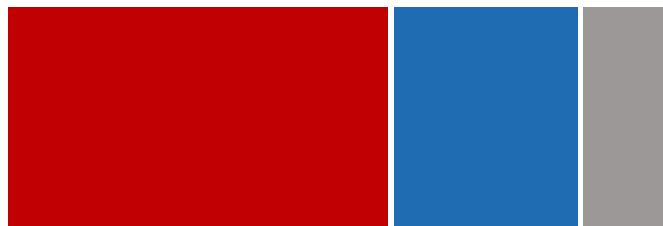
“Built 1962. Contains asbestos. Has flat roof. No internal current regulation fire doors or fire warning system. Underground pipes not at regulation depth and are substantially cracked across the site.”

Condition, Resilience and Decarbonisation



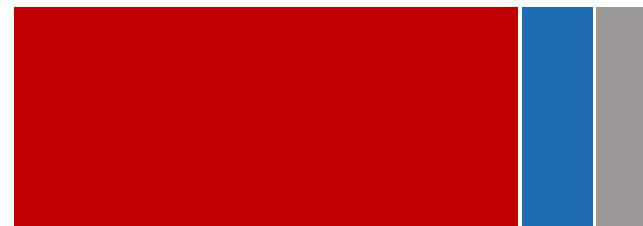
Condition Data Collection

To what extent do you think your latest Condition Data Collection (CDC) surveys reflects the condition of your buildings?



Accurately to some extent - 58%
Not accurately - 28%
Accurately - 14%

Have you had a building condition survey carried out in the last 5 years?



Yes - 79%
No - 11%
Don't know - 10%

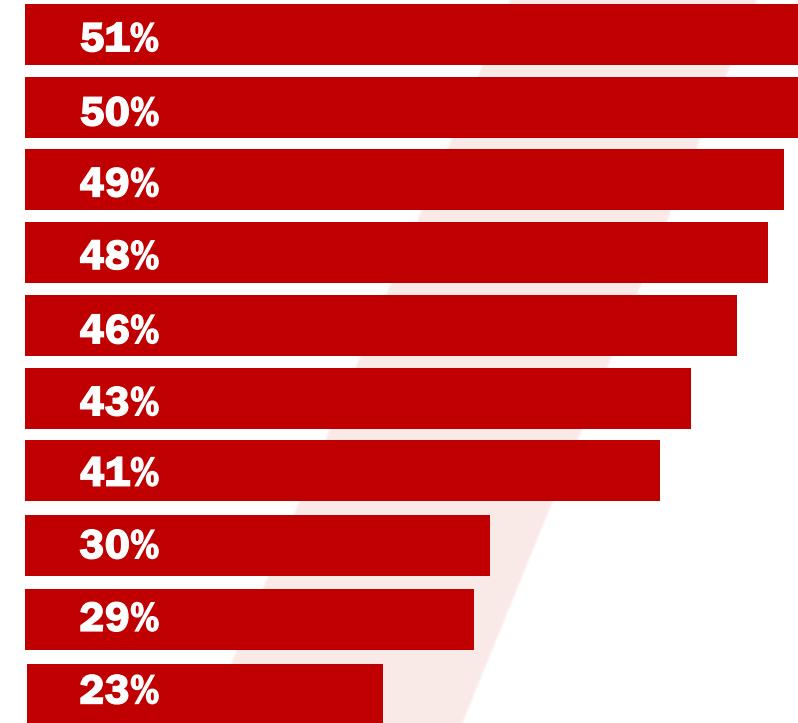
“Under CDC1 our Infant School had the lowest condition rating, but now (under CDC2) we have been re-rated to I. This does not make sense.”

“Built in 2010-11 under the BSF programme, the academy is in good internal condition. However, external areas need some work. This was not reflected on the recent CDC visit which has categorised the academy as 'A', even though there are major issues with the roof, windows, BMS etc.”

Building Condition

Element	Good	Satisfactory
Drainage	8%	41%
Heating	12%	38%
Toilets	13%	38%
Fire Doors	25%	27%
Roofs	23%	31%
Windows	17%	40%
Internal Decorations and Flooring	17%	42%
Secure Perimeter	37%	33%
Electrics	19%	52%
Fire Alarm	37%	40%

% Requires Improvement



Building Condition

“Whilst the buildings are in good condition, a lot of the windows are deteriorating.”

“Many elements are at or have passed end of life. Particularly true for roofs and heating systems.”

“Drainage is a major issue in one of the schools. Possibly due to adding on buildings over the years and most likely due to the location. During heavy rain the playgrounds get overwhelmed.”



Building Condition

"The main issue is with the roof, both in older buildings and the ones built in 2013."

"Repair work required on brickwork, boundary, drainage, kitchen very outdated and requires major refurbishment, playground needs re surfacing, fire doors need updating"

"Three storey secondary building, poorly built with thin walls and unsuitable doors. M&E had been installed wrong but as it was completed just before covid, so by the time we were using the building at full capacity all the warranties had expired. Bad plumbing and limited fire stoppage. The list goes on."



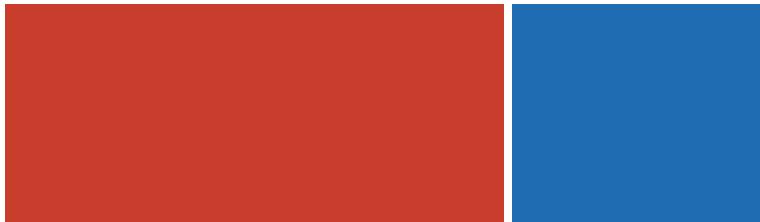
Block Closures

More than three quarters (77%) of respondents have had to close a block due to a serious building condition issue in the last three years

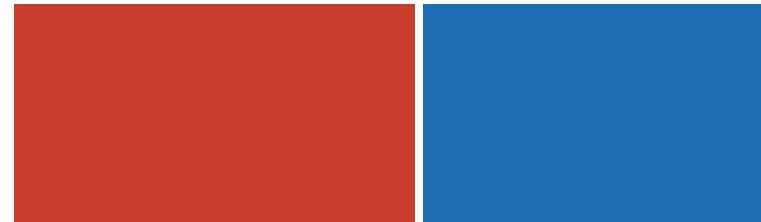
- *“Small roof collapse due to heavy rainfall on a flat roof with inadequate drainage.”*
- *“Flooding of an entire school causing closure for 2 terms.”*
- *“Canteen closed from panel falling off the wall at second storey level in our new build.”*
- *“Small block required replacement due to structural defects (not identified in CDC).”*
- *“Classroom ceiling fell in last month.”*

Decarbonisation

Do you have a Heat Decarbonisation Plan for any of your sites?



Do you have a Climate Action Plan for any of your sites?



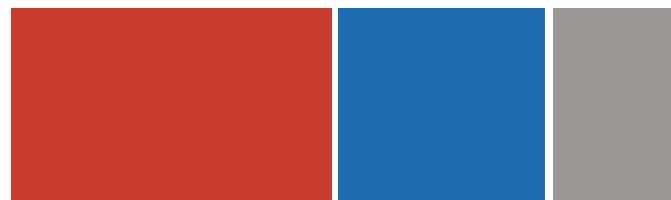
- **Bigger organisations are more likely to have HDPs**
- **If you have a HDP you are more likely to have a Climate Action Plan**



Estate Management

GEMS and Estate Management Competency Framework

To what extent do you use the DfE Good Estate Management for Schools documents?



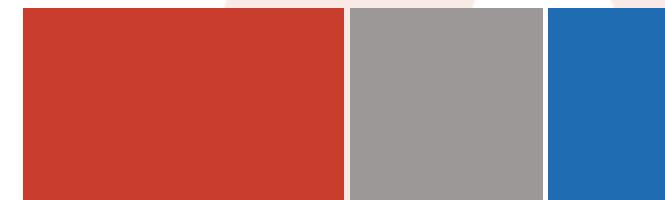
Sometimes 50% **Regularly** 30% **Never** 20%

Are you aware of the DfE Good Estate Management Competency Framework?



Yes 72% **No** 28%

To what extent do you use the DfE Estate Management Competency Framework?



Sometimes 60% **Never** 21% **Regularly** 19%

- Respondents who use GEMS are more likely to be aware of the EMCF and use it.
- There is a significant relationship between using GEMS and using EMCF
- Those in Strategic and Estates Leadership roles are more likely to be aware of the EMCF

GEMS and Estate Management Competency Framework

National Audit Office 2023

“From 2021, DfE began to ask school leaders about the value of GEMS and found that around two-thirds were aware of the manual and used it. Stakeholders responding to our consultation exercise generally expressed positive views about GEMS”

Capital Advisers Programme, 2024

“On average, trusts that were using GEMS to support their estate management practices received fewer CAP recommendations and were generally adopting more effective estate management principles in comparison to trusts that were not using the guidance.”

Recruitment

62% of respondents have experienced difficulties in recruiting estates staff in the last two years

There is some evidence that if you have more than one site, then you are more likely to have experienced difficulties recruiting staff.

“Our site team is ageing - all at 60 years old and above. Recruitment generally for good site/estates managers is poor with most looking at it as a segway into retirement- until they realise how hard and physically demanding the role is.”

Apprenticeships

**46% of
respondents
have considered
apprenticeships
for estates staff**

**Central/Head Office staff
are more likely to have
considered apprenticeships.**

**MATs are significantly more
likely to have considered
apprenticeships**

**Primary settings or those with
lower pupil numbers are less likely
to consider apprenticeships**

*“To use apprenticeships
you need a good site
manager and these are
hard to come by.
Also I need time and
there is only me.”*

Training

Is the availability of training sufficient for your estates staff?



Yes

55%

No

45%

“There is not enough training on the strategic development of estates management for Site Managers.”

“Training budgets typically focused on training teaching staff, followed by admin staff, site staff come last.”

“Lack of funding and time allocation - staff always busy and no time given to development.”

“We need more apprenticeships and targeted work placements with a proper structured career path and skills based training.”

Is estate management a priority for school leaders?

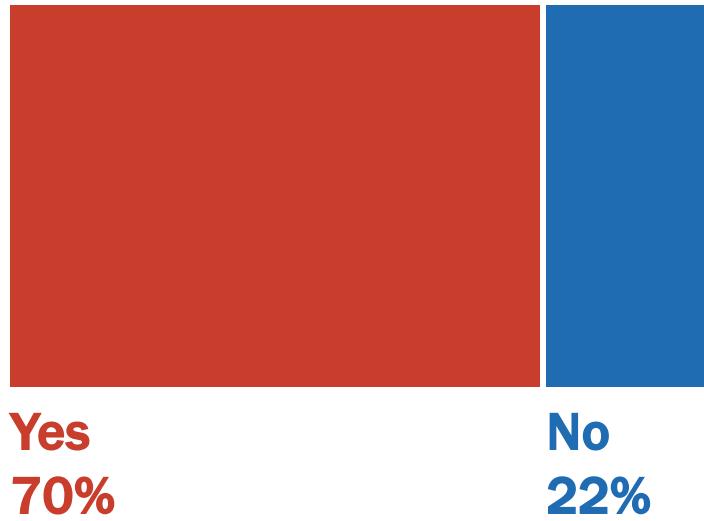


“Many school estate managers’ report that they struggle to interest school leaders (such as academy trust chief executive officers and governors) in the strategic management of the school estate”

National Audit Office 2023

Priority of Estates

Do you believe that estates is a high priority for your school/Trust leaders?



“Our Trustees take the poor state of the estate seriously. Unfortunately, due to lack of capital funding and the farce of CIF bids, there is little money to spend on this area. We have made improvements through RPA claims and now S106 funding. The situation concerns all of us.”

“It is a priority, but funding is making this more and more difficult.”

“Estates has not been well prioritised in budget consideration and planning and knowledge of compliance has been weak. GEMS has improved the focus and importance of this. Risk management needs to be better understood at board level.”



Challenges & Opportunities

Build and Rebuild

- Positive that rebuild is a priority, but delivery timescales and defect management could be improved
- Significant perception that blocks are reaching end of life.
- Substantiates findings of other studies that system builds are at risk – need for prioritisation in future maintenance and rebuild programmes

Condition, Resilience, and Decarbonisation

- There may be a misconception that the CDC is a full building condition survey so more guidance to Responsible Bodies could be helpful
- Drainage is a key issue related to extreme weather events and there is a link with the condition of toilets so funding focused on improvements would be beneficial
- Three quarters of respondents (77%) have closed a block due to a serious building condition issue in the last three years indicating that a focus on planned rather than reactive maintenance is required.
- Progress on decarbonisation was positive in relation to HDPs and Climate Action Plans but the impact of funding withdrawal is yet to be seen.

Estate Management

- Estate management capacity constraints exist for SATs and smaller MATs
- Training is insufficient and this particularly relates to higher level operations, management, and extended compliance.
- Recruitment difficulties are common for a variety of reasons including ageing population and perception of education estates as a career choice
- Apprenticeships are a positive approach to addressing the recruitment difficulties but there is a lack of management capacity.
- Overall, the interventions and policy direction from DfE has raised the profile of estates for the sector and needs to be built upon.