

School trusts are breaking barriers to find new solutions for their local communities

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School trusts across England are increasingly playing a key role in bringing people and services together, helping to fix problems in their local communities, says a report by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) in partnership with Browne Jacobson.

It highlights four approaches being used by academies and trusts to support pupils, parents and the broader community beyond the classroom.

The CST, the national sector body and membership organisation for school trusts, launched the publication, **School trusts as civic institutions**, at the House of Lords during a reception for school trust leaders and policy makers on Thursday 27 June.

It draws on existing examples from school trusts, featuring the work of Embark Federation, Oasis Community Learning, Windsor Academy Trust, the Reach Foundation and Dixons Academies Trust.

CST Chief Executive Leora Cruddas CBE said: "Schools' primary role will always be to educate – but children who are hungry, who don't have somewhere safe to live, or who are not getting the mental health support they need cannot fully benefit from that rich and foundational education we all want to provide.

"In many cases, schools are the only civic institutions left standing in a community. Civic working is not about schools doing everything or replacing those that have gone, but reversing that decline and working together with public services, charities and business to build new ways of supporting pupils to do better, on both sides of the school gates."

The report puts forward four distinct approaches:

- Wider education purposes approach: Working with the creative arts, local businesses, and charities to provide new opportunities for pupils, extending existing curriculum work
- Problem identification approach: Targeting one key problem for pupils or the local community – such as mental health provision - and working with other services to help make improvements
- Relational approach: Focusing on one key relationship with an external organisation, and building a deep partnership with them on a range of topics
- Community convening approach: Bringing together a broad coalition of people and organisations to tackle common problems, often through collective action

UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson supported its launch at the House of Lords.

Head of Education [Nick MacKenzie](#) said: "During a period of deep economic and social change, educational institutions are increasingly taking on a new civic leadership role as they are positioned at the heart of important issues such as placemaking, individual identity, and future education and skills need.

"School leaders can understandably be nervous because, so often, schools are expected to pick up the pieces in their communities across a range of issues outside their direct responsibility, such as poverty and mental health.

"As CST argues, the civic role of public institutions has never been more vital and it advocates a compelling case for trust leaders to take a risk and embrace a civic mindset, providing some examples of how leaders are building a more connected system right now that will

hopefully encourage, inspire and help others to do likewise.”

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