



IMP Software

MAT Executive Pay Benchmarking Report 2026

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Introduction



IMP Software builds purpose-built financial planning and management tools for multi-academy trusts. Our unified platform covers budgeting, integrated curriculum and financial planning (ICFP), purchasing, and finance, trusted by over 570 trusts and more than 6,000 schools across England.

That scale gives us something no one else in the sector has: the largest MAT-focused financial dataset available. We take the responsibility that comes with it seriously. This report exists because we believe that data should help to inform our customers and the sector, not sit locked inside a platform.

Executive remuneration in the MAT sector is evolving. Trusts are growing, organisational complexity is increasing, and regulatory scrutiny is sharpening. Boards need to set CEO and CFO pay that is evidence-based, proportionate to role and responsibility, and aligned with what others of a similar size and context are paying. The DfE's guidance on setting executive salaries makes the same point: structured benchmarking supports better decision-making, and where pay sits at the higher end, boards should be able to explain why.

This report sets out CEO and CFO salary distributions across MATs in England. It draws on 417 CEO records and 406 CFO records. Salary data is anchored to 1 September 2025 and reflects gross pay at 1.0 FTE, excluding employer oncosts and pensions.

We measure trust size using weighted total pupils. Special schools and alternative provision settings attract significantly higher funding per pupil than mainstream schools, so their pupils are counted at three times the weight of mainstream pupils. This is not a precise science, but it gives a more accurate picture of organisational scale than treating all pupils as equivalent.

This report is shaped by the sector it serves, and we want to keep it that way. To help us understand where this benchmarking adds the most value, and where we can take it further, please take five minutes to complete a short survey. Your input will directly inform what we cover, how we present it, and what we prioritise in future editions.

[Complete the survey here.](#)

Will Jordan,
Co-founder & CEO, IMP Software

CST Foreword



We all have a human desire for stories, to reduce complex issues to simple tales of good and bad, to find narratives that fit our beliefs. That is as true when it comes to the pay of senior trust leaders as any other issue in education. Picking out salaries of chief executives makes for easy headlines for media coverage, often quite divorced from considering the work they do.

This report provides some valuable context to those discussions, demonstrating the range of pay, and some of the factors that influence it.

Its analysis offers a deep dive into chief executive and chief finance officer pay. It sits alongside the annual, wider, salary survey that CST has published in recent years to provide useful evidence for trust boards when considering salaries for their executive teams.

The truth is that we need high quality leaders in our trusts, and the leadership they bring can make a significant and tangible difference to the lives of staff and students.

We should support pay for everyone in education that recognises their skills and what they contribute, directly and indirectly. We want talented teachers to lead departments, to join senior leadership teams, to become principals, and, yes, to inspire across whole trusts. We want to learn from and bring in expertise from people-centred organisations outside of education, too.

Many who work in our schools and our trusts – across all roles – choose to do so because they dearly value the mission of education. Pay is not the driving factor, but it should not be a penalty either.

This report, and other data, can help trust boards make pay decisions that are transparent, proportionate and defensible – and above all fair, to both trusts and to talented colleagues across the sector.

Leora Cruddas CBE,
Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts

Salary by trust size

Organisational scale is the primary driver of executive salary levels in the academy trust sector. The DfE’s own guidance recognises that larger trusts carry greater responsibilities and may require additional expertise to manage effectively, with trust size a key factor in determining appropriate pay levels.

This section presents CEO and CFO median salaries by trust size, measured by pupils. Trusts are grouped into six size bands, ranging from under 1,250 pupils to 10,000 and above. The analysis covers England, excluding London.

CEO salaries

CEO median salary increases with trust size, as you would expect. The smallest trusts, those with under 1,250 pupils, record a median CEO salary of £120K. The largest, those with 10,000 pupils and above, record a median of £200K. That is an increase of £80K, or 67%, across the size range.

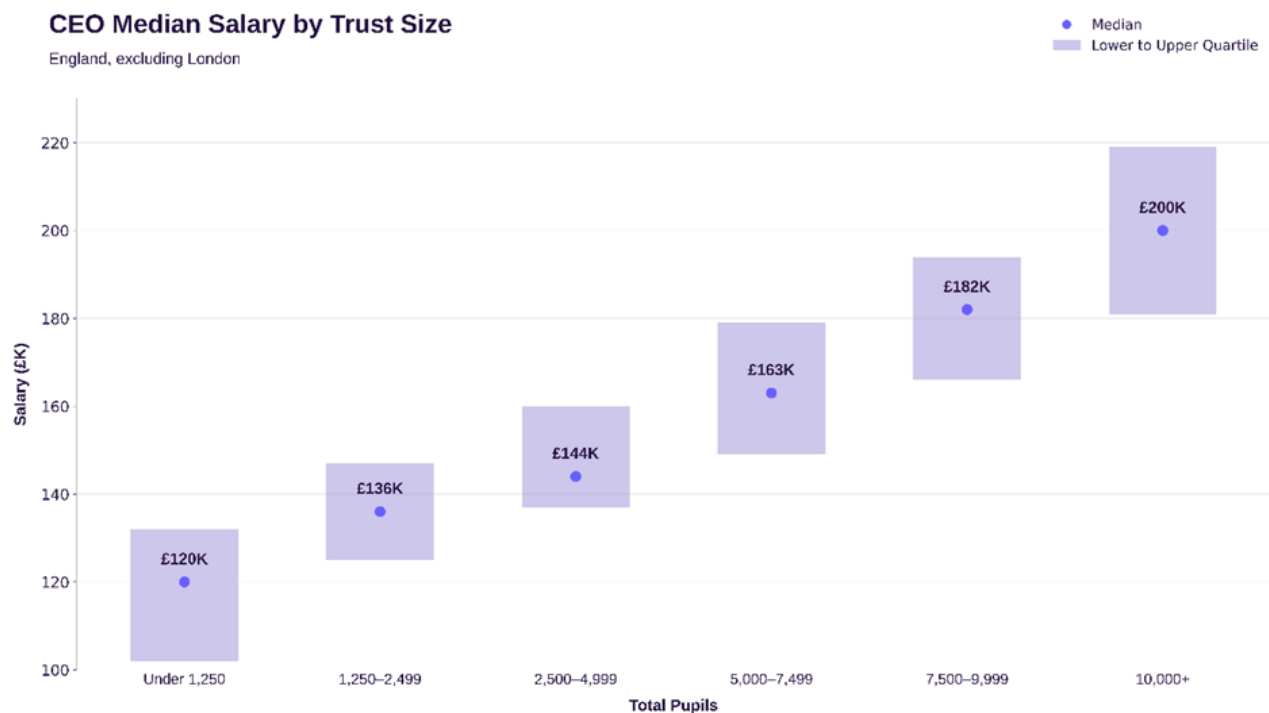


Table 1: CEO median salary by trust size (England, excluding London)

Trust size (pupils)	Median	Lower quartile	Upper quartile
Under 1,250	£120K	£102K	£132K
1,250 to 2,499	£136K	£125K	£147K
2,500 to 4,999	£144K	£137K	£160K
5,000 to 7,499	£163K	£149K	£179K
7,500 to 9,999	£182K	£166K	£194K
10,000 and above	£200K	£181K	£219K

Salary data as at 1 September 2025

CFO salaries

CFO median salary follows the same pattern, rising from £65K at the smallest trusts to £115K at the largest. That is an increase of £50K, or 77%, across the size range.

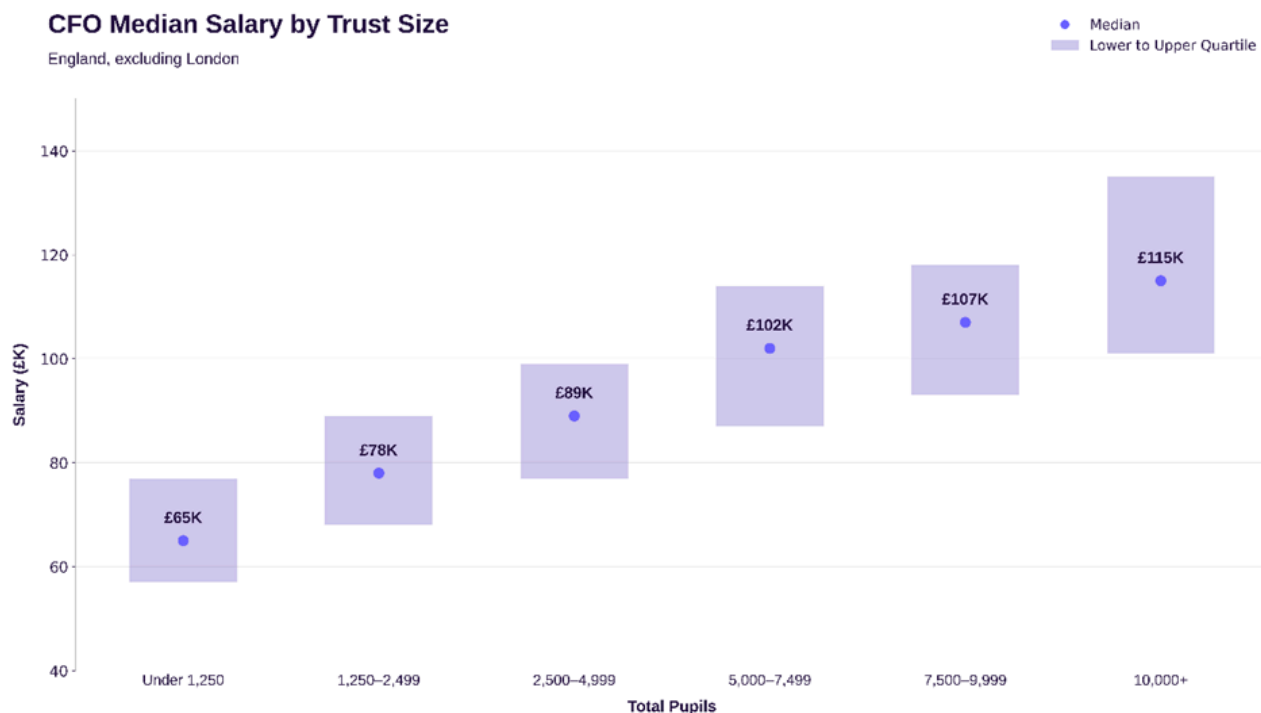


Table 2: CFO median salary by trust size (England, excluding London)

Trust size (pupils)	Median	Lower quartile	Upper quartile
Under 1,250	£65K	£57K	£77K
1,250 to 2,499	£78K	£68K	£89K
2,500 to 4,999	£89K	£77K	£99K
5,000 to 7,499	£102K	£87K	£114K
7,500 to 9,999	£107K	£93K	£118K
10,000 and above	£115K	£101K	£135K

Salary data as at 1 September 2025

Each table also presents lower and upper quartile figures alongside the median. These give remuneration committees a sense of the spread of pay within each band, and a clearer picture of where their trust sits relative to peers of a similar size. A trust at the upper quartile is not necessarily paying above what is appropriate, nor is a trust at the lower quartile automatically underpaying. The figures are a starting point for informed discussion, not a target to move towards.

Salary data alone does not capture the full picture. Remuneration committees will rightly consider a range of factors, including the scope and complexity of each individual's role, alongside benchmarking data when determining appropriate pay. This report provides one piece of that evidence base.

CEO-to-CFO differential

Across all regions pooled, the median CEO salary is £151K and the median CFO salary is £91K, representing a CEO-to-CFO differential of 66%. We also examined this differential across each pupil band. The differences were not sufficiently material to warrant reporting separately.

For remuneration committees, the differential provides a useful internal relativity check. Where a board has already established a view on the appropriate salary for its CEO, the sector differential provides a reference point for assessing whether CFO pay is proportionate. This allows both roles to be considered in relation to each other, rather than benchmarked entirely in isolation.

Table 3: CEO-to-CFO salary comparison (all regions)

CEO median	CFO median	CEO-to-CFO differential
£151K	£91K	66%

Salary data as at 1 September 2025. All regions pooled

What this tells us

Trust size drives executive pay. CEO median salary ranges from £120K at the smallest trusts to £200K at the largest, a continuous gradient with no reversals. CFO salaries follow the same pattern, ranging from £65K to £115K across the same six bands.

CFO pay scales at least as sharply as CEO pay. CEO salaries rise by 67% from the smallest to the largest band. CFO salaries rise by 77% across the same range. That tells us CFO pay is at least as responsive to organisational scale as CEO pay.

The CEO-to-CFO differential sits at 66% nationally. Based on pooled medians across all regions, this figure gives boards a reference point for reviewing the internal structure of their executive pay.

Looking ahead

This report is the first in what we intend to be an annual series. As the dataset grows, the analysis will deepen. Future editions may explore additional dimensions such as gender pay and extend benchmarking coverage to other senior roles within trusts beyond CEO and CFO. The goal is to build a richer, more comprehensive evidence base for the sector over time. To help shape what comes next, readers are invited to [complete a short survey](#).

Transparent benchmarking of this kind supports the sector's capacity to set and review executive pay on an informed, evidence-based basis. This is consistent with the DfE's Maximising Value for Pupils programme, published in December 2025, which identifies ensuring that MAT executive pay is proportionate and justified as part of its broader value-for-money agenda. This report contributes to that transparency by providing independent, anonymised benchmarks grounded in a robust analytical framework.

Methodology

Dataset and data sources

This analysis draws on a dataset of 823 records, comprising 417 CEO records and 406 CFO records. We extracted salary data from IMP Planner's Staff Member Records on 20 January 2026. The dataset includes salary snapshots as at 1 September 2025.

Regional classification is based on each MAT's registered postcode as recorded in the DfE's Get Information About Schools (GIAS) service, with postcodes mapped to DfE regions using postcode.io. MAT governance data, including the identification of Accounting Officers (matched as CEO) and CFOs, was sourced from GIAS governance records as at 20 January 2026. School-level data, including school type classifications, MAT membership, and pupil counts by school type, was drawn from GIAS Edubase and the DfE's academies MAT membership datasets.

Salary definition

All salary figures represent gross salary at 1.0 FTE, excluding employer oncosts and pensions. Salaries are presented in £'000s with zero decimal places.

Weighted total pupils

We measure organisational scale using weighted total pupils, calculated as: (Primary + Secondary pupils) multiplied by 1.0, plus (Special pupils multiplied by 3.0), plus (Alternative Provision pupils multiplied by 3.0). The 3x multiplier for Special and AP provision reflects the substantially higher per-pupil funding these settings attract. The 3x multiplier represents a conservative central estimate within the range supported by available evidence from the DfE, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and the Institute for Government.

Outlier exclusion

Before calculating benchmarks, we remove statistical outliers using the interquartile range (IQR) method. For each analytical group, we calculate the first quartile (Q1) and third quartile (Q3). Any salary below Q1 minus 1.5 times the IQR, or above Q3 plus 1.5 times the IQR, is excluded. This is a standard non-parametric method that does not assume salary data follows a normal distribution.

Central tendency and minimum sample size

All salary benchmarks use the median, the value at the 50th percentile of the distribution after outlier exclusion. The median is the standard measure for compensation benchmarking because it is resistant to distortion by extreme values. We require a minimum of 15 observations after outlier exclusion before reporting a median.

Trust size bands

Trusts are grouped into six size bands based on pupils: Under 1,250; 1,250 to 2,499; 2,500 to 4,999; 5,000 to 7,499; 7,500 to 9,999; and 10,000 and above. We determined band boundaries through exploratory analysis to ensure each band meets the minimum sample size requirement for both CEO and CFO roles, uses round numbers for presentational clarity, and represents genuinely different organisational contexts.

Regional scope

The trust size analysis covers England, excluding London. London trusts face materially different labour market and cost conditions and are therefore treated as a separate population. London-specific size-band benchmarks are not reported in this publication due to sample size constraints at certain band levels.



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