



The
Haberdashers'
Company

Haberdashers' Curriculum & Assessment Review Response

Key Challenges

These are the key barriers and limitations that need to be overcome:

1. Narrowing of the Curriculum

- High-stakes accountability measures like the EBacc and Progress 8 prioritize a limited set of subjects, marginalising creative, vocational, and interdisciplinary pathways.
- Diversity and representation in the curriculum remain inadequate, failing to reflect the lived experiences of modern pupils.

2. Over-Reliance on Terminal Exams

- Assessments predominantly measure memory rather than real-world application or skills like teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving.
- Practical components in science and oracy in English have been deprioritised, diminishing their role in fostering essential skills.

3. Socioeconomic and Systemic Barriers

- Inequalities in school resources, outdated exam specifications, and rigid accountability frameworks disproportionately impact disadvantaged and SEND learners.
- Vocational pathways remain undervalued compared to academic routes, limiting opportunities for many students.

4. Limitations of the Current Curriculum

The standard curriculum and qualification pathways often fail to adequately prepare students for the complexities of modern life and work. This gap has necessitated the development of supplementary programmes like the Haberdashers' Advantage and the Habs Diploma, which aim to address these deficiencies:

- **Haberdashers' Advantage:** Focuses on cultural capital, leadership, communication, employability and other essential soft skills often neglected in the standard curriculum.
- **Habs Diploma:** Introduced by HES, this programme provides students with opportunities to develop skills such as critical thinking, global awareness, and cultural appreciation, alongside practical competencies like coding, finance, and leadership.



There are four important limitations to the current Curriculum that need to be addressed

Executive Summary

This response from the Haberdashers' Company reflects insights from its diverse network of schools, including the Haberdashers' Academies Trust South (HATS), Haberdashers' West Midlands Academies Trust (HWMAT), Haberdashers' Monmouth School (HM), and Haberdashers' Elstree Schools (HES).

Haberdashers' schools operate across a wide variety of contexts, including MATs in areas of high relative deprivation and independent schools. It also incorporates input from Company members, who are business leaders, professionals, and governors linked by the shared Company purpose of: **“Empowering young people from every background to achieve their potential through our schools and communities.”** Our submission is grounded in evidence gathered from trust and school senior leaders, school staff surveys, and contributions from Company members.

Underlying principles:-

- We define curriculum as “the totality of our children and young people’s Haberdashers’ Experience,” encompassing everything that happens to students at school. This vision seeks to ensure that the experience is rigorous, fun, and academic, reflecting our belief in “ambition for all.”
- Haberdashers’ position on the much-debated knowledge/skills dichotomy is clear: knowledge and skills are interdependent. A strong foundation of knowledge is essential to develop the skills necessary for critical thinking, analysis, and communication.
- Our response emphasises a curriculum that balances rigorous academic content with the development of broader competencies to prepare pupils for the challenges of the modern world.
- Our response is driven by ambition for our students, commitment to equitable access to quality education, fostering pupil well being, and aligning education with contemporary societal and workforce needs.





Recommendations for Reform

These are the changes suggested:

1. Broader Curriculum

- Expand or promote subject offerings to include creative, vocational, and interdisciplinary options, ensuring all students can pursue their passions and strengths.
- Integrate diverse voices and perspectives into core subjects, reflecting modern society and fostering inclusivity.
- Include an intentional character programme within the curriculum to develop soft skills.

2. Diverse Assessment Models

- Introduce a broader "assessment diet," including coursework, projects, collaborative evaluations, and practicals, to capture a wider range of skills.
- Reassess GCSE content to reduce content overload and encourage deeper learning.

3. Equitable Qualification Pathways

- Elevate vocational qualifications to parity with academic routes, emphasizing their value for workforce readiness and lifelong learning.
- Foster partnerships with employers to design programmes that reflect real-world demands.

4. Collaboration and Professional Development

- Promote collaboration between state and independent schools to share best practice and promote innovation.
- Invest in professional development to empower teachers with innovative strategies and support their well being.

5. Technology Integration

- Leverage AI and digital tools to modernise assessment practices, reduce teacher workload, and enhance personalised learning.
- Address the digital divide to ensure equitable access to technological resources and training.





Vision for Education Reform

Haberdashers advocate for evolution, not revolution, in education reform. We prioritise stability, gradual implementation, and alignment with a long-term vision.

Key pillars include:-

- **Unified Purpose:** Establishing a shared understanding of education's role in preparing pupils for life, work, and citizenship.
- **Support for Teachers:** Reducing workload, fostering autonomy, and enhancing professional development to ensure teacher retention and effectiveness.
- **Alignment with Workforce Needs:** Bridging the gap between education and industry by integrating skills like adaptability, communication, and digital literacy into the curriculum.

Conclusion:-

Education reform must be intentional, inclusive, and collaborative. We need to revisit why education is important to us—our **'why.'** This will help build a coherent and inspiring education system that aligns with the needs of society and the economy. The Haberdashers' network urges policymakers to embrace a thoughtful, long-term approach to reform, ensuring education evolves to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world while remaining rooted in equity, excellence, and opportunity for all learners. Education reform must be a journey, not a race. We need to take the time to get it right for our pupils, our teachers, and our society.

