

# Preparing for Political Change

Julie Robinson, CEO, ISC  
[jjulie.robinson@isc.co.uk](mailto:jjulie.robinson@isc.co.uk)  
[www.isc.co.uk](http://www.isc.co.uk)



1

## Associations



## Affiliates



2

**THE IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ON THE UK ECONOMY**

- All Independent schools: 2,559 schools (1,371 schools)
- ISC schools: 1,371 schools
- Total GVA: £16.5 bn
- Demand-side support for GVA: £14.1 bn
- GVA supported by non-British pupils: £2.1 bn
- Annual savings to taxpayer: £3.8 bn
- Wider contribution to the economy, society, and state-funded education: £4.4 bn
- Jobs: 328,050
- Annual tax revenues: £5.1 bn
- Annual tax revenues: £4.3 bn

\*GVA = Gross Value Added

**Template Letters**

Please use these letters as a framework for writing to local politicians. Contact details for your local MP can be found below.

- Letter to MPs on economic impact
- Letter to MPs on Labour's VAT policy
- Letter to Councilors on economic impact

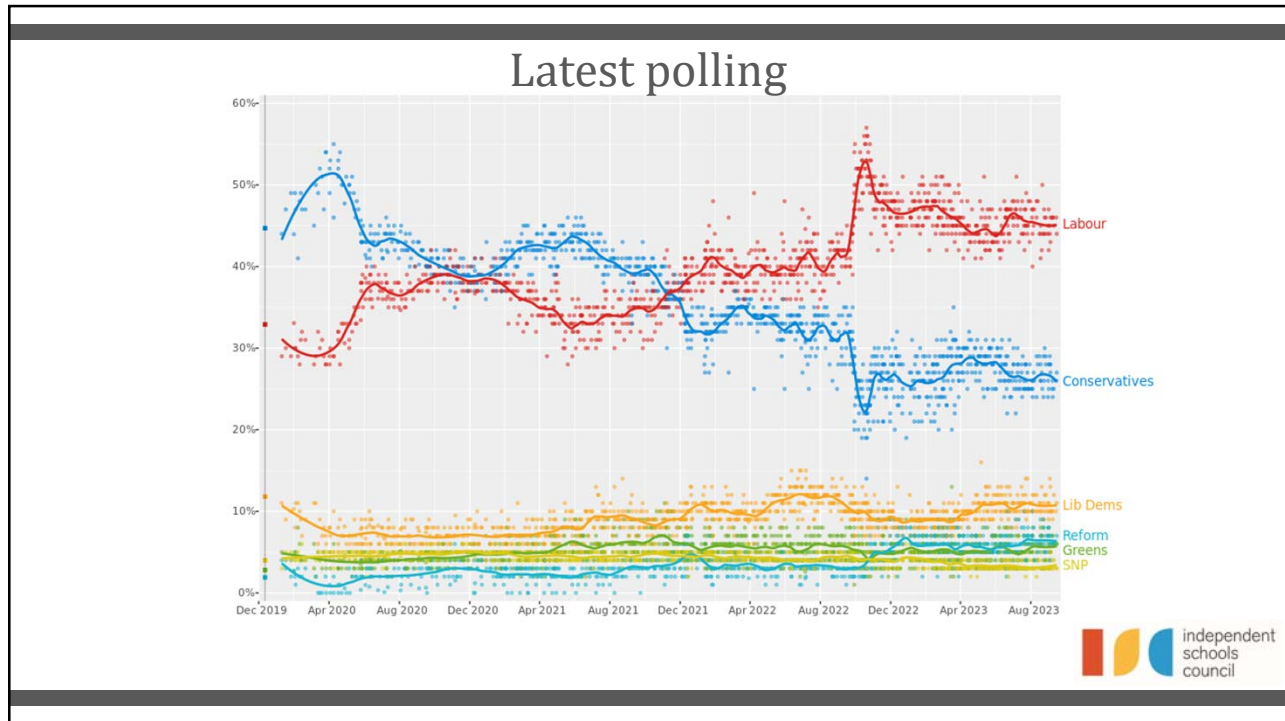
independent schools council

3

## Context

- TPS costs rising – many schools consulting and withdrawing
- Possible abolition of mandatory business rates and other charitable reliefs threat -already going in Scotland.
- VAT on school fees threat from Labour
- Fluctuating costs: fuel/energy, food, building and wages
- Teacher recruitment “crisis”
- Supply staff shortages
- Parents not immune from the cost-of-living crisis
- University contextual entry
- Ideological barrier: “the privileged few”

4



5

**2019**

**2021**

**2022**

independent schools council

6

2023

12:25 6 Sep

Sir Keir Starmer has insisted he has no "ideological" opposition to private education, adding: "We have got fantastic independent schools. I want them to thrive."

*Telegraph reporting on Jewish News interview, September 2023*

### Starmer says Sunak 'won't lift a finger' to help other people's children

Sir Keir Starmer mentions six RAAC-affected schools in Essex that were on the Labour 2010 rebuild list scrapped by the Conservative government.

He says Rishi Sunak is happy to spend billions making sure there is no VAT on private school fees, but he "won't lift a finger" when it comes to other people's children.

   Share

"Our commitments to tax changes are narrow...there will be no surprises around tax policy...Really deliver for the country...Improve the delivery of public services."

*Darren Jones, MP, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
September 2023*



7

## Labour tax policy

"In the Budget next week, he [the Prime Minister] will be too weak to end his oil and gas giveaway, scrap the non-dom tax breaks and end the farce of taxpayers subsidising private schools - that is what Labour would do: a proper plan for working people".



"Conference, that is why we will end the tax breaks private schools enjoy. We will use that money to deliver the most ambitious school improvement programme for a generation".



8

# THERE IS NO TAX BREAK!



9

## **Charity law is separate from VAT**

VAT would be an additional tax on all parents paying school fees

Charity tax exemptions like MBRR can be changed without amendments to charitable status

This would mean charity-run schools are treated differently from other charities.

## **Education is tax exempt**

Adding VAT on parents' school fees is an additional and punitive tax setting us apart from almost every other country across the world



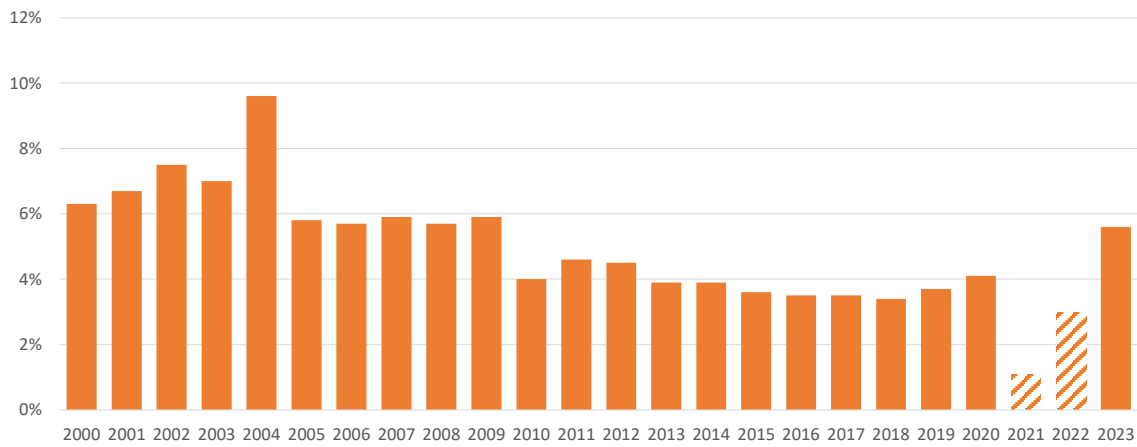
10

# THERE IS NO TAX BREAK!



11

## Fees and affordability



12

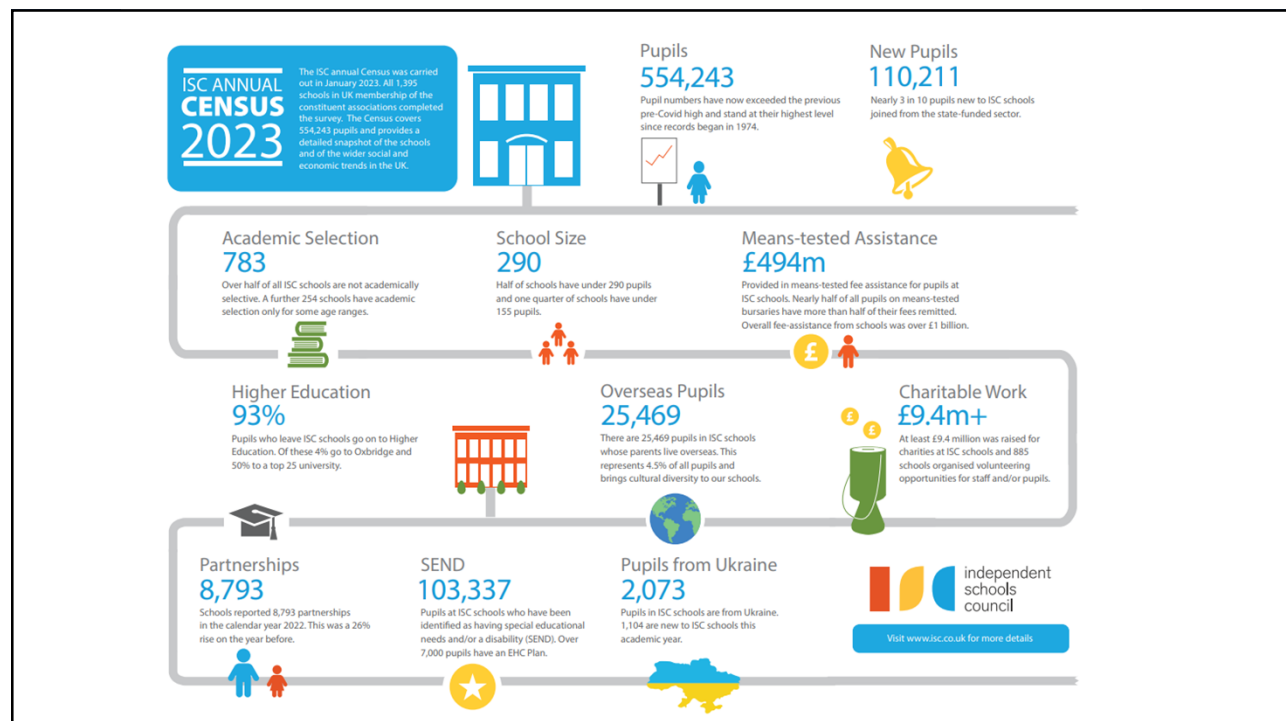
## Fee sensitivity and the impact of VAT

According to ISC's parent survey, October 2022:

- Parents are finding fees less affordable than three years ago.
- If VAT were imposed on school fees:
  - 18.8% of parents said they would have to withdraw their child from their current school.
  - 39.4% of parents said they would try to keep their child in their current school but were not optimistic
  - So: 58.2% of parents definitely or probably would leave their current school.



13



14

## Conservative policy

"The government has no plans to change the tax status of independent schools"

14 September, 2023  
Financial Secretary to the Treasury  
Victoria Atkins MP



*"Whenever the Leader of the Opposition attacks me about where I went to school, he is attacking the aspiration of millions of hard-working people in this country. He is attacking people like my parents. This is the country that believes in opportunity, not resentment."*



15

Liberal  
Democrats

Labour

Conservatives



16





# Private matters

**An investigation into independent schools and charitable status in England**

Tom Richmond and Eleanor Regan  
July 2023




## A NEW REPORT FROM EDSK

17

### EDSK report, 2023, main findings:

- The independent school sector is very diverse
- Significant misunderstandings around charitable status / public benefit
- More fee assistance than ever but unclear if benefitting the poorest households
- Well-intended partnerships but lack of transparency around resources & impact
- Public want independent schools to help more state schools & disadvantaged students



18

# EDSK Recommendations

**NO LEGAL GROUNDS TO REMOVE THEIR CHARITABLE STATUS**

**INTRODUCE NEW 'PUBLIC BENEFIT' TEST THAT PRIORITISES POOREST**

**Charitable independent schools**

**FULL TRANSPARENCY ON FEE ASSISTANCE  
(e.g. WHO GETS IT?)**

**PUBLISH MORE DETAILS ON PARTNERSHIP COSTS, FREQUENCY AND SCALE**



19

EDUCATION

## Private-state school partnerships are 'superficial', study says

Report suggests charitable partnership work from private schools is often unevicenced and does not involve deeply collaborative work



Many partnerships between private and state schools involve joint football matches or invitations to music concerts  
ALAMY

## PEPF 2023



20

## Taking advice and exploring mitigations

- Research – data and analysis, surveys, pulse polling, focus groups
- Media & Communications – developing and adapting messaging
- Policy – Ministerial meetings, policy makers and permanent departmental staff
- Public Affairs – MP engagement & ‘lobbying’
- Web – resources for schools to support local messaging for MPs, Candidates and Councillors

Independent schools council

Celebrating Partnerships 2022

Annual report of cross-sector partnership work between independent and state schools

THE IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ON THE UK ECONOMY  
DECEMBER 2022

Template Letters

Please use these letters as a framework for writing to local politicians. Contact details for your local MP can be found below.

Letter to MPs on economic impact

Letter to MPs on Labour's VAT policy

Letter to Councillors on economic impact

Template letter to help you write to your MP about your school's contribution to the local economy.

Template letter to help you write to your MP about Labour's VAT on school fees policy.

Template letter to help you write to your Councillors about your school's contribution to the local economy.

Schools Together

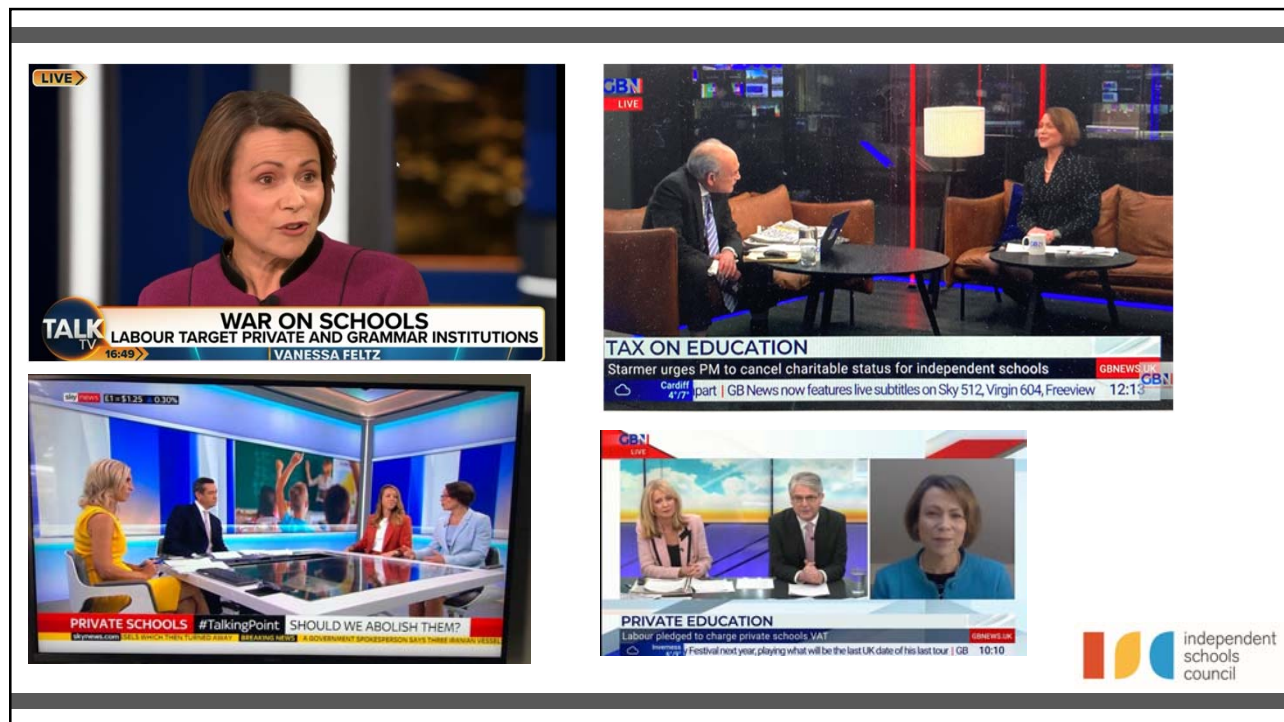
independent schools council

21

## ISC at Party Conferences



22



23

## Public perception based on ISC-commissioned Public First polling, 2022

- There is strong support for the principle of independent schooling in the UK. **80%** believe in the right to educate independently.
- There is less sympathy for existing tax arrangements. **67%** are unhappy with charitable status, or want us to do more.
- Preferred interventions are access – **37%** say bursaries most important, **37%** say sharing facilities.
- The large majority of the participants in the polling ISC commissioned in 2022 supported the right to pay for your child's education, even core Labour voters. For us, parental choice polls well.
- For Labour, “removing the tax breaks that private schools enjoy” polls well

24

## THERE IS NO TAX BREAK!



25

## Telling the real story-the benefits of independent schools more widely

- The public are more supportive of independent schools when they know a local one.
- It remains important that schools communicate community and partnership work – stress how the entire community can access the benefits of a local school.
- Schools should be specific when warning about the effect of VAT policy –**we don't want to frighten off** parents, but we do want politicians informed.



26

[www.schoolstogether.org/](http://www.schoolstogether.org/)

Schools Together

SITE SEARCH FIND AN ISC SCHOOL BY NAME LOGIN/SIGN UP

HOME ABOUT PARTNERSHIP MAP CASE STUDIES BEST PRACTICE FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS EVENTS MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Search state/independent school partnerships  
6,384 case studies

eg. 'London', 'N10', St Albans Select a category

VIEW PARTNERSHIPS

independent schools council

27

School Partnerships Alliance

Home About us Meet the team Innovation Hub CPD and consultancy Our Champions Membership News Contact

**Oliver Blond**  
Chief Executive Officer

Read bio

Oliver has led prestigious schools in both the state and independent sectors for seventeen years, as Head of The Henrietta Barnett School in Barnet, named State School of the Year during his tenure, and Head of Roedean School, a day and boarding school in Brighton. He is the Academic Director and a founding member of the PTI (formerly The Prince's Teaching Institute), an

**School Partnerships Alliance**

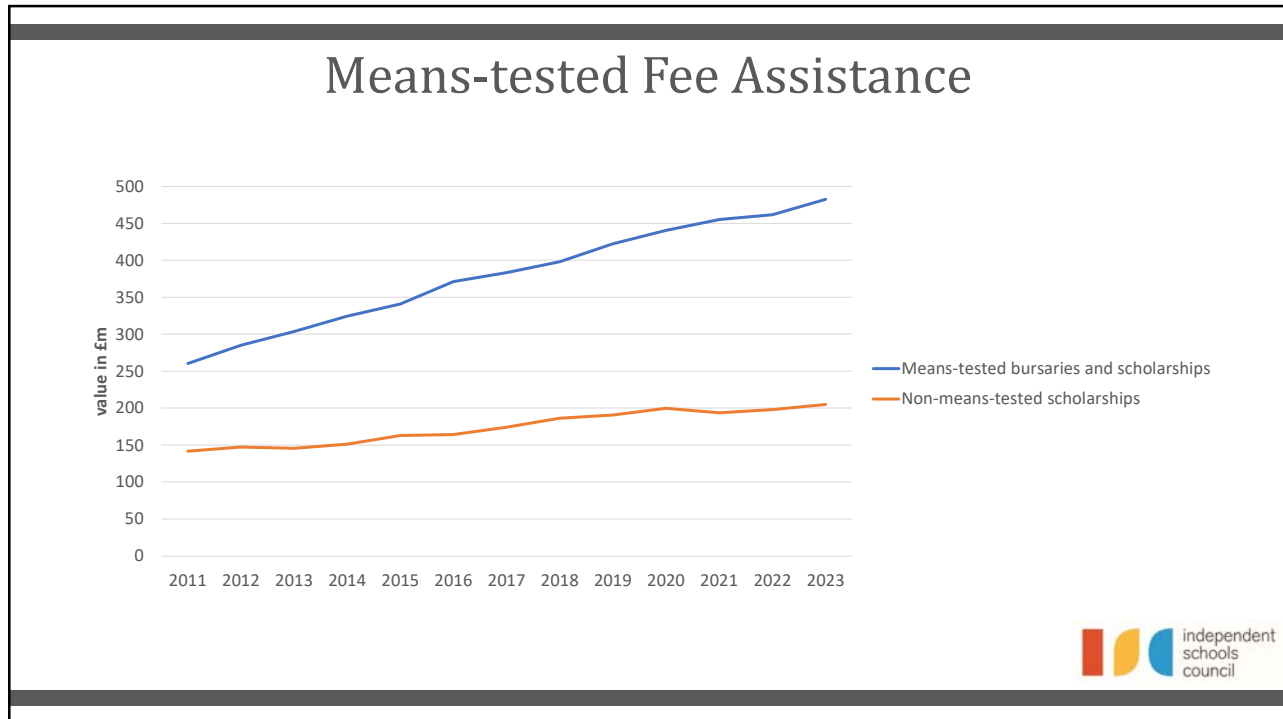
We support and promote schools of different types working together - and learning from one another - to improve outcomes for all young people.

**Improving outcomes**

We are a charity working to be a force for school improvement and the strongest pupil outcomes for all children, informed by research and driven by impact.

independent schools council

28



29

## What can schools do to support lobbying against the punitive tax policy?

- Break the stereotype: report partnership/community work
- Write to local politicians
- Meet MPs and Councillors
- Arrange visits showcasing partnership work
- Submit OE data tool economic data readouts to ISC
- Activate third party advocates



### Template Letters

Please use these letters as a framework for writing to local politicians. Contact details for your local MP can be found below.



30

## What should we be doing right now to prepare for political change?

- Assume Labour policies will happen – **prepare for the worst**  
(The timetable of implementation is unclear, but assume Labour might want to introduce at least some measures quickly)
- Ensure politicians are aware of the costs of TPS and the real effect of 20% VAT on parents' fees on schools, teachers and parents
- Invite third parties to spread the word about the negative effects these policies will have and particularly their negative impact on the state sector. Seek alternatives and consultation to promote better understanding of the consequences



31

Julie Robinson, ISC chief executive  
[ceo@isc.co.uk](mailto:ceo@isc.co.uk)

[www.isc.co.uk](http://www.isc.co.uk)  
[www.schoolstogether.org](http://www.schoolstogether.org)



School  
Partnerships  
Alliance



32