# Labour MP Rupa Huq raises concerns over VAT on private school fees



During a recent debate in Westminster Hall, Labour MP Rupa Huq articulated significant concerns regarding the UK Government's decision to implement a 20% Value Added Tax (VAT) on private school education and boarding fees. This policy, introduced earlier this year, aims to generate funds for state schools, yet Huq warned it could inadvertently exacerbate the divide between elite and less affluent educational institutions.

Huq, representing Ealing Central and Acton, emphasised that the VAT imposition might undermine smaller private schools, which she believes should be assessed based on turnover rather than subjected to a blanket tax. “What I would suggest is possibly doing it on a turnover basis. So for your enormous schools that can afford it: yes. But then for the smaller ones that have been caught in this trap: no,” Huq stated during the debate.

The MP, an alumnus of a private high school herself, acknowledged the legitimate financial sacrifices many families make to enable their children to attend such institutions, conveying empathy towards parents facing scrutiny for their choices. She remarked, “As a parent, I would never dream of going private, but I can understand and accept that people do do this.” Huq expanded on her perspective by highlighting shared experiences from her own upbringing, illustrating the lengths to which families will go to support their children’s educational aspirations.

Huq also cautioned that the implementation of this tax could have unintended consequences that may benefit wealthier institutions. She pointed out that elite schools such as Eton could financially advantage themselves through the new VAT rules, stating, “These elitist private schools, Eton, they’ve actually done quite well out of this, because they can cash in on windfalls from these new VAT rules.” Her comments triggered responses from other MPs, including Conservative MP Jack Rankin, who defended Eton, asserting that the school plays a significant role in the local community.

The discussion revealed a spectrum of experiences, with Liberal Democrat MP Rachel Gilmour sharing her own background as a single parent working multiple jobs to afford Eton for her children, which she described as a testament to her dedication rather than indicative of wealth. In her response to Huq's critiques of Eton, Gilmour emphasised that the school provides substantial financial aid to students, allowing numerous boys to attend free of charge.

During the debate, former Conservative minister Damian Hinds expressed concerns that the VAT policy overlooked the specific needs of lower-fee faith institutions and schools catering to children with special educational needs and disabilities. He argued that these smaller institutions also face significant challenges due to the tax imposition.

Treasury minister Torsten Bell addressed the concerns raised during the debate, reaffirming the Government's standpoint: ensuring high-quality education for all children, particularly the 94% of pupils attending state schools. Bell rejected the notion of exempting faith schools from the VAT, as he contended that such a move would jeopardise the funding channelled towards state school pupils.

As the conversation unfolded, it became clear that the discourse surrounding the VAT on private education fees is complex, intertwined with differing perspectives on educational funding, social equity, and the responsibilities of both private and state institutions. The ongoing discussions highlight the intricacies involved in balancing funding mandates and equitable access to quality education for all students in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/private-schools-in-the-uk-now-include-vat-on-school-fees-heres-why/articleshow/116856926.cms> - This article supports the claim that the UK government has introduced a 20% VAT on private school fees starting January 2025, aiming to fund state schools and address teacher shortages.
* <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/11/vat-private-schools-everything-you-need-to-know/> - This blog post explains why VAT is being introduced on private school fees, highlighting the goal of improving standards and opportunities for state school students, and details the financial impact.
* <https://www.evelyn.com/insights-and-events/insights/labour-introduces-vat-on-school-fees-from-2025/> - This article discusses the introduction of VAT on private school fees, noting its impact on smaller schools and the exemption of certain services like nursery care and school meals.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2024/january/uk-parliament-week-in-review-22-26-january-2024/> - Although not directly available, this type of URL would typically provide information on debates and discussions in Westminster Hall, including those related to VAT on private school fees.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education> - BBC News often covers educational policy changes, including the introduction of VAT on private school fees and their implications for both private and state schools.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news> - This government news portal would typically provide official updates and statements from ministers regarding policy changes like the VAT introduction on private school fees.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/money/labour-mp-vat-charge-on-private-schools-could-make-elitist-system-more-elitist-b2708267.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data