



SEEKING AN INSPIRING PRINCIPAL

To lead Haberdashers' Abraham Darby, a non-selective secondary academy serving the Ironbridge Gorge community in Madeley, Telford.

The Haberdashers' West Midlands Academies Trust (HWMAT) is an aspirational school trust currently supporting two secondary schools and an independent preparatory school in Newport and Telford. HWMAT's vision is to develop into a significant and highly regarded group of schools based around these geographic hubs and providing outstanding opportunities that will help students in the local area to realise their full potential. The Trust harnesses the educational expertise offered by its sponsor, The Haberdashers' Company, which operates schools nationally in London, Wales and the Midlands.

HWMAT now seeks an inspiring Principal to lead Haberdashers' Abraham Darby, a vibrant, non-selective secondary academy serving the Ironbridge Gorge community in Madeley, Telford. The appointee will build on the school's strong tradition of delivering education in the widest sense, continuing to raise standards and expand opportunity for a diverse student population.

The new Principal will be a creative, determined and empathetic leader with a track record of success in effecting positive change and high standards. She or he will be a keen strategist, with the intellect and personal authority to lead and develop a thriving, inclusive comprehensive academy; and have the open communication style to build close connections with all stakeholders including families, The Haberdashers' Company and wider partners. The appointee will have the highest expectations of themselves as well as those around them and be flexible, energetic, and resilient. Above all else he or she will demonstrate a profound resonance with the transformative power of high-quality education.



Haberdashers'
**WEST MIDLANDS
ACADEMIES TRUST**



Photo: Will Lockley-Gardiner



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Strengths and Areas for Development

1. School at a Glance

School type	Academy converter (secondary, coeducational, ages 11-18, with sixth form)
Trust / sponsor	Haberdashers' West Midlands Academies Trust (HWMAT); CEO Brynley Evans; Board of Trustees chaired by Mark Searles. Sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers.
Current Principal	Joanne Edgar
Location	Ironbridge Road, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire TF7 5HX
Number on roll	1,058 pupils (close to national average 1,067); capacity 1,100
Disadvantaged (FSM)	45.05% of pupils are eligible for free school meals - well above the national average of 28.9%
SEND	2.84% with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan; 12.57% receiving SEN support - both close to national averages.
Estate	Modern, purpose-built school building, approx 15 years old
Budget position	Balanced, providing financial stability to invest in improvement priorities
Values	Aspiration, Respect, Excellence (ARE) Vision: "Success for All"
Ofsted inspection	24 February 2026 (published 29 April 2026) - new report-card format. Safeguarding standards met; 6 of 7 graded evaluation areas judged 'Needs Attention'

2. About the Trust and the School

The Trust and Sponsor

Haberdashers' Abraham Darby is part of the Haberdashers' West Midlands Academies Trust (HWMAT), and, through its sponsorship arrangements, part of the wider national family of schools associated with the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers - a family that includes both private and state schools in

London and Wales. This affiliation gives the school access to a network of high-performing schools, shared expertise, professional development and governance support, and a long tradition of academic ambition and civic purpose.

The Trust and its sponsor are committed to supporting the leadership and improvement of Haberdashers' Abraham Darby: the sponsor directly funds ASPIRE, an innovative sixth-form mentoring initiative delivered in partnership with the Trust, and the incoming Principal will have the backing of both the HWMAT Board of Trustees and its executive team.

The School

Haberdashers' Abraham Darby is a coeducational secondary school with a sixth form, educating around 1,058 pupils aged 11-18 in Madeley, Telford. The school converted to academy status in 2009 and is sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers. It occupies a purpose-built, modern school building and serves a community with well-above-average levels of socio-economic disadvantage - 45.05% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, against a national average of 28.9% - alongside a broadly average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school is anchored by three clear values - Aspiration, Respect and Excellence (ARE) - and a vision of "Success for All" that runs through its curriculum, pastoral system and extra-curricular offer. It has a genuinely thriving extra-curricular programme, with particular strength and a track record of external success in music (including its Abraham Darby Showband), rugby, and a fast-growing netball programme, alongside Duke of Edinburgh's Award, cadets and a strong sixth-form enrichment offer. The school also benefits from a growing alumni network who return to support current pupils through mentoring, careers talks and work experience.

The school is backed by a genuinely supportive Trust - both the HWMAT Board of Trustees and the executive team - and by its sponsor, the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers. The Local Governing Body includes skilled, experienced governors who combine strong



support with rigorous, informed challenge. The school benefits from constructive relationships with the Department for Education, Telford & Wrekin local authority and neighbouring schools. Staff work hard, and there is a real and growing appetite across the local community - parents, alumni and local employers - to support the school and help it improve outcomes for every pupil.

The Pathways Provision ('ADAPT') at Haberdashers' Abraham Darby is a nurture-based support programme for the school's most vulnerable learners, combining small-group teaching (1:6 staff-to-pupil ratio), dedicated facilities, vocational and enrichment opportunities, and pastoral care to help students belong, thrive, and achieve academically and socially. This provision is supported by a generous financial contribution from the Haberdashers' Company.

The successful candidate will be joining at a pivotal and highly visible moment: the Trust and governors are seeking an exceptional, values-driven Principal who can convert genuine, evidenced progress on attendance and behaviour — and the strong foundations of values, governance, community support and financial stability already in place — into consistent, embedded improvement across curriculum, teaching, inclusion and leadership, in order to move the school from 'Needs Attention' to at least the 'Expected Standard' across all areas at the next inspection, and, more importantly, close the outcomes gap for every pupil, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have SEND.

The school's most recent inspection took place on 24 February 2026 (published 29 April 2026), under Ofsted's renewed inspection framework and report card format:

Evaluation area	Outcome
Safeguarding	Standards met
Post-16 provision	Expected standard
Achievement	Needs attention
Attendance and behaviour	Needs attention
Curriculum and teaching	Needs attention
Inclusion	Needs attention
Leadership and governance	Needs attention
Personal development and wellbeing	Needs attention

This follows a June 2023 inspection (Requires Improvement overall) and a November 2024 monitoring visit.

The full report is available [HERE](#)

Inspectors found genuine signs of an improving trajectory - attendance has improved over three years (persistent absence down from 34.7% in 2022/23 to 27.2% in the first two terms of 2024/25), behaviour in lessons is usually calm and orderly, and suspensions have reduced, albeit from a high base. A recent staff and senior management restructure has given the school sharper focus and clearer lines of accountability, although - as Ofsted noted - it has also slowed the pace at which some improvement strategies have embedded. The school has set a balanced budget providing a stable platform for school improvement. A School Improvement Plan is already in place, with clear, agreed priorities that closely mirror Ofsted's findings.

3. Strengths and Signs of Progress

The February 2026 report, three-year data trends and the school/Trust's own evidence, shows a school with real foundations to build on and early evidence that recent strategies are starting to work:

Clear, well-embedded values - Aspiration, Respect and Excellence, with a "Success for All" vision already understood across the school.

Active Trust and sponsor investment - HWMAT Board and executive support, plus the sponsor-funded ASPIRE sixth-form mentoring programme.

Skilled, experienced governors - combine genuine support with rigorous, informed challenge.

Thriving extra-curricular activity - particular strength in music (including the Abraham Darby Showband), rugby and a growing netball programme.

A stable operational platform - a recently restructured leadership team, a balanced budget and a School Improvement Plan already aligned to Ofsted's findings.

Strong community backing - hard-working staff and an active alumni network, including local employers, with real appetite to support the school further.

Safeguarding standards are met - inspectors found an open, positive culture in which concerns are identified and acted on.

Attendance is improving - persistent absence down from 34.7% to 27.2% over three years.

Behaviour in lessons is usually calm and orderly - suspensions have reduced, albeit from a high base.

Post-16 provision meets the 'expected standard' - exam results, strong careers

guidance, planned work experience and high progression to chosen destinations.

Leaders evaluate the curriculum and their own performance accurately - with clear, appropriate priorities understood and supported by governors and the Trust.

Growing pastoral capacity - including external mental health partnerships and a personal development programme covering statutory RSHE requirements.

4. Areas for Development

Six of the seven graded evaluation areas in the most recent Ofsted inspection were judged 'Needs Attention'. The report is clear that the central issue is inconsistency of implementation, not an absence of a plan.

Achievement - pupils' attainment and progress remain below national averages at the end of key stage 4 (2024/25 GCSE English/maths grade 5+: 31.7% vs. 45.4% nationally; Attainment 8: 37.7 vs. 46.0; Progress 8 -0.74 vs. -0.03 in 2023/24). Pupils sometimes move on before securing key knowledge, and tasks do not consistently provide sufficient challenge.

Attendance and behaviour - despite improving trends, overall attendance and persistent absence both remain above national averages, and behaviour between lessons and in a minority of interactions with staff is inconsistent. Vulnerable pupils do not always receive support matched to their needs.

Curriculum and teaching - implementation is inconsistent across lessons and subjects; teachers do not always clarify learning purpose, match tasks to pupils' prior knowledge, or use assessment and feedback effectively to address misconceptions.

Inclusion - while leaders are committed to inclusion and have strengthened systems for identifying pupil needs, adaptive teaching for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is inconsistently implemented, and relationships with some families are underdeveloped. The disadvantaged-pupil gap is wide and persistent (e.g. -36.5 percentage points in English/maths GCSE grade 5+ against non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in 2024/25).

Leadership and governance - leaders, governors and the Trust share an accurate

understanding of the school's trajectory and priorities, but a significant staffing restructure has slowed the consistent embedding of improvement strategies, and some staff report high workload from recent improvement initiatives.

Personal development and wellbeing - delivery and recall of the personal development ("Insight") programme varies in places, and while enrichment participation has risen for most groups, take-up among pupils with SEND remains a priority.

Post-16 outcomes - are more mixed than post-16 provision quality alone suggests: destinations after 16 (84% in 2023, provisional) and A-level average point score have both lagged national averages in recent years, though the most recent year shows results close to average.

5. Key Performance Data (published DfE data, most recent 3 years)

GCSE outcomes - English and maths grade 5 or above

Year	This school	National average	Comparison
2025-26 prov.	27.7%	45.4%	Below
2024-25	31.7%	45.4%	Below
2023-24	34.7%	45.9%	Below
2022-263	23.6%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8 and Progress 8

Year	Attainment 8 (school)	National average	Comparison
2025-26 prov.	34.4%	46.0%	Below
2024-25	37.7%	46.0%	Below
2023-24	39.7%	45.9%	Below

Progress 8: -0.74 in 2023/24 and -0.89 in 2022/23, against a national average of -0.03 in both years - both Below.

Persistent absence

Year	This school	National average	Comparison
2024-25 (2 term)	27.2%	21.9%	Above (i.e. worse)
2023-24 (3 term)	32.9%	25.6%	Above (i.e. worse)
2022-23 (3 term)	34.7%	26.5%	Above (i.e. worse)

Note: for absence measures, "Above national average" means more pupils are absent than average - i.e. this is the unfavourable direction, not a strength. The trend is nonetheless improving year-on-year.



Disadvantaged pupils' outcomes gap

Year	Disadvantaged (school)	Non-disadvantaged (national)	Gap
2024-25 (revised)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2023-24 (final)	26.8%	53.1%	-26.3 pp
2022-23 (final)	15.9%	52.4%	-36.6 pp

Figures show the percentage of disadvantaged pupils at the school achieving grade 5+ in English and maths GCSE, compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

6. What It's Like to Be a Pupil (Ofsted)

Inspectors reported that pupils generally enjoy attending the school and feel safe and cared for by staff who listen and act on concerns. The school's values — Aspiration, Respect and Excellence — were reflected in calm, courteous relationships in lessons. Most pupils engage well with an ambitious curriculum, although consistency of challenge and checking for understanding varies between subjects, and adaptations for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are not always applied consistently. Behaviour in lessons continues to improve, supported by clearer routines and a strengthened rewards system, although some disruption persists in a minority of lessons and, more often, outside classrooms. Attendance is rising but remains a live issue for a significant minority of pupils. Pupils spoke positively about careers guidance, enrichment (rugby, netball, music, external visits) and the personal development programme, and sixth-form students in particular experience stronger teaching, with nearly all progressing to their chosen destination.

7. Ofsted's Next Steps for the School

Ofsted set out five priorities for leaders and governors, which will form the natural starting point for the incoming Principal's improvement plan:

- Ensure actions are implemented consistently and evaluated swiftly, so that all pupils and students receive a high-quality education and raised aspirations.
- Continue to strengthen work with pupils and families to improve attendance for all.
- Ensure all staff take responsibility for correcting poor behaviour, including outside

lessons, to secure consistent high standards.

- Ensure staff consistently implement effective strategies so that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND can access and learn the full curriculum.
- Develop staff expertise in using assessment effectively to identify and close gaps in learning quickly, for all pupils and post-16 students, and ensure misconceptions are addressed promptly so pupils make at least expected progress.





PRINCIPAL

Haberdashers' Abraham Darby

Job Purpose

- To provide outstanding strategic and operational leadership that rapidly improves standards of attendance, behaviour, inclusion and academic achievement at Haberdashers' Abraham Darby.
- To build a culture of high expectations, ambition and care in which every pupil - regardless of background or need - is safe, included and enabled to achieve their full potential.
- To champion, embody and further embed the school's existing values of Aspiration, Respect and Excellence (ARE) and its "Success for All" vision.
- To lead the school as an effective, values-led member of HWMAT and the wider Haberdashers' family, working collaboratively to access and contribute to trust and family-wide improvement, expertise and resources.
- To be accountable to the Local Governing Body, the CEO and the Board of Trustees for the school's performance, finances, staffing and safeguarding.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Provide clear, compelling strategic leadership and direction for the school, working within the Trust's overarching strategy and vision.
- Develop and implement a robust school improvement plan, with a particular focus on the priorities identified by Ofsted and the Trust: attendance, behaviour, inclusion and academic outcomes.
- Model and embed the school's values of Aspiration, Respect and Excellence (ARE), and the wider Haberdashers' ethos of aspiration, service and community.

- Act as a visible, credible leader for pupils, staff, parents/carers, governors and the local community.

Standards, Teaching and Academic Achievement

- Drive rapid and sustained improvement in pupil outcomes and progress across all key stages, closing gaps for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Ensure consistently high-quality teaching, learning and curriculum design across all subjects and phases, addressing variability identified in previous inspections.
- Use assessment, data and quality assurance rigorously to hold subject and pastoral leaders to account for pupil progress.
- Secure strong outcomes in the sixth form, building on provision that already meets the Expected Standard.

Behaviour, Attendance and Inclusion

- Build on recent, evidenced progress on attendance (persistent absence down from 34.7% to 27.2% over three years) to continue closing the gap to national averages, working with families, external agencies and the local authority.
- Embed consistent behaviour systems beyond the classroom, including transitions between lessons and social times, and ensure all staff take responsibility for correcting poor behaviour.
- Ensure staff consistently and rigorously implement effective, adaptive teaching strategies so that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can access and learn the full curriculum, addressing inconsistency identified at the most recent inspection.
- Champion an inclusive culture in which vulnerable pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium and those with SEND, are identified, supported and enabled to thrive, and strengthen relationships with all parents and carers.



- Provide effective oversight of the school's use of ADAPT and alternative provision, ensuring quality and safeguarding oversight are maintained.

Safeguarding

- Act as a senior leader with lead responsibility for safeguarding, ensuring the school meets and exceeds statutory requirements (Keeping Children Safe in Education) at all times.
- Foster a culture of vigilance, early help and multi-agency working to protect and support all pupils.

Staff Leadership and Development

- Recruit, retain, develop and performance-manage a talented staff team, building leadership capacity and succession at all levels.
- Build a positive, ambitious and sustainable staff culture that supports wellbeing while maintaining high expectations and accountability.

Governance, Trust and Community Engagement

- Work in close partnership with a skilled, experienced Local Governing Body that combines genuine support with rigorous, informed challenge, providing accurate, timely and honest information to support effective governance.
- Engage fully as a member of HWMAT's leadership community and the wider Haberdashers' family of schools, sharing practice, collaborating on school improvement and drawing on network expertise and resources, including sponsor-funded initiatives such as ASPIRE.
- Build on and widen relationships with parents/carers — including families who are currently harder to reach — as well as with alumni, feeder primary schools, post-16 destinations, employers and the local community, and with the Department for Education, Telford & Wrekin local authority and neighbouring schools.
- Manage the school's budget and resources effectively and in line with Trust financial policies, ensuring continued value for money and financial sustainability.

Person Specification

Applicants will be assessed against the following criteria through the application form, references, assessed tasks and interview.

Qualifications

Essential

- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or equivalent.
- A relevant degree.

Desirable

- National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) or equivalent.
- Evidence of further relevant professional development in leadership.

Experience

Essential

- Significant experience as a senior leader in a secondary school, with a track record of raising standards.
- Experience and track record of improving academic standards.
- Experience and track record of successfully improving pastoral standards including attendance and behaviour in a challenging context.
- Experience of improving SEND/inclusion provision, or of working closely with SENDCo(s) to drive improvement.
- Experience of leading through an Ofsted inspection or equivalent external review process.

Desirable

- Prior headship or deputy headship in a school judged to Require Improvement or facing similar challenges, with evidence of subsequent improvement.
- Experience of working within a multi-academy trust.
- Experience of leading a school with a sixth form.
- Experience of working with communities with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.



Skills and Knowledge

Essential

- Deep knowledge of what constitutes high-quality teaching, curriculum and assessment.
- Strong, current knowledge of safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Ability to analyse data and use evidence to drive rapid, sustained improvement.
- Strong financial and operational management skills.
- Excellent communication skills, able to engage and inspire pupils, staff, parents/carers and governors. Knowledge of effective strategies for reducing persistent absence.

Desirable

- Knowledge of effective strategies for reducing persistent absence
- Experience of trust governance structures and working within a scheme of delegation.
- Understanding of the Haberdashers' family of schools and the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers.

Personal Qualities

Essential

- Resilient, determined and unafraid to make difficult decisions in the best interests of pupils.
- High personal and professional standards, and a strong moral purpose.
- Ambitious for every pupil, with an unwavering belief that background should never limit achievement.
- Collaborative team player, willing to be a full and active member of the Trust and Haberdashers' family.
- Committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Unconditional commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Desirable

- Genuine alignment with, and enthusiasm for building on, the school's existing values of Aspiration, Respect and Excellence.
- Evidence of building strong community relationships in a challenging local context.
- Experience of leading organisational culture change.



Terms of Appointment

Post: Principal

Contract: Permanent

Start: September 2027

Hours: Full-Time

Salary: The pay range for this post is L27 (£98,106*) to L35 (£119,350*), commensurate with experience. (*subject to 2026/2027 pay awards)

Employment terms: National Teachers Pay and Conditions; Headteacher Standards and any relevant employment legislation.

Pension: Membership of Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Training, Induction and Support: The successful candidate will be supported with a full induction programme, including any necessary additional training and mentoring to be provided by the school, Haberdashers West Midlands Academy Trust, and other external organisations.

How to Apply

By application form and letter. Completed applications should be returned to the HR Manager - deborah.tudor@taw.org.uk

Deadline for applications: Tuesday 13th October 2026 by 12pm

Interviews: will take place on Wednesday and Thursday 21- 2nd October 2026

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the post or visit the school, please contact the Principal's PA and HR Manager, Mrs Debbie Tudor by email: deborah.tudor@taw.org.uk