



Department of

Education

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SCHOOL UNIFORMS GUIDELINES

School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act
(Northern Ireland) 2026

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Glossary of terms used in the School Uniforms Guidelines

Branded items – The term “branded item” refers to an item of clothing with distinctive characteristics. It includes clothing of particular makes or brand name, or which has a particular logo – either school-specific or from large sportswear companies – or unique combinations, colours or fabrics or with unique badges, emblems or markings.

Excessive costs – in these guidelines this term means higher costs than lower income households can reasonably be expected to afford and/or costs generated by the requirements for specific items whether branded or not.

Lower income households – for the purposes of these guidelines, the Department considers it reasonable for households where children are eligible for free school meals to be defined as lower income households when considering the threshold for the total cost of uniform items pupils can be required to wear. The eligibility threshold for free school meals can be found here: [Apply for Free School Meals / Uniform Grants | Education Authority Northern Ireland](#).

Manager of a school – defined in section 11(1)(c) of the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act as the person or authority responsible for the management of the school, including where known as—

- (i) the Board of Governors, or
- (ii) the proprietor.

Parents – unless otherwise specified, means parents of pupils who are registered at the school. The legal meaning of parent as set out in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 also applies i.e., those with parental responsibility for or who have care of a child, as does “guardian” under section 1(3)(a) of the Act.

Pupils – unless otherwise specified, means pupils who are registered at the school.

Specific styles – this includes footwear, branded items, unique combinations, colours or fabrics.

Unfair costs aspects – this means any aspect of a school’s uniform policy which could raise questions about the excessive cost of a uniform – either individual items or sets of clothing or all items or sets of clothing required for individual pupils – or unreasonable costs arising from limited choice for parents about where to purchase uniforms. Special regards will be given to significantly higher costs of specific styles of items and non-affordability to lower income households.

Uniform suppliers – this term relates to any manufacturer, retailer and/or stockist who supplies school uniform items including PE/games kit. It includes independent retailers, chains of retailers, supermarkets, and sportswear companies. If the school itself is supplying uniform items to parents, then it is included.

Introduction

1. The School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026 (the Act) requires the Department of Education (the Department) to issue official guidelines for school uniform policies. This document sets out those guidelines.
2. These guidelines are legally binding. Section 7 of the Act requires that all grant-aided and independent primary and post-primary schools must adhere to them. This includes the preparatory departments of grammar schools. The manager of a school is responsible for ensuring compliance and keeping records to show how the school meets these requirements.
3. Schools can choose whether to have a uniform, however, any school that does must ensure its uniform policy complies with these guidelines.
4. Schools are required to explain the reasons behind their uniform choices in a published policy on their website. This complements existing requirements under the Education (School Information and Prospectuses) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.
5. If the Department finds that a school is not following these guidelines, it can issue a formal direction requiring the school to comply. Schools will also note that any individual can raise a complaint with the Department if they believe a school is not adhering to the statutory requirements or following these guidelines.

Aim and Purpose of the Guidelines

6. Almost all schools in Northern Ireland choose to have a uniform and the Department recognises the value of school uniforms in promoting a sense of identity, community and belonging within the school community. A uniform can also act as an equaliser among pupils and reduce pressure on families to provide their own clothing. However, it is essential that uniform policies do not place undue financial pressure on families, particularly those on lower incomes.
7. The purpose of these guidelines is to support schools in developing and implementing uniform policies that are fair, inclusive and sensitive to the financial circumstances of families.
8. The five principles underpinning these guidelines are to:
 - i. **Ensure Affordability and Accessibility**
Uniform policies must be affordable for families, especially those eligible for free school meals. Schools should minimise excessive costs and ensure that uniform items are widely available from multiple suppliers.
 - ii. **Promote Equality and Inclusion**
Uniform policies must comply with human rights and equality legislation. Adjustments must be made for pupils with disabilities or Special Educational

Needs (SEN) and no pupil should be disadvantaged due to affordability issues.

iii. **Support Comfort and Practicality**

Uniforms should be comfortable, practical and suitable for all seasons. They should support pupils' participation in learning, play and physical activity.

iv. **Encourage Transparency and Consultation**

Schools must consult with parents, pupils and other stakeholders when developing or reviewing uniform policies. They must also publish clear information about uniform costs, suppliers and the rationale behind uniform choices.

v. **Safeguard Participation and Wellbeing**

Uniform costs must not reasonably deter pupils from applying to a school or participating in school activities. Pupils should not be penalised for uniform breaches caused by affordability issues.

9. By setting out these requirements detailed in the guidelines below, the Department aims to create a consistent, fair and transparent approach to school uniforms across Northern Ireland, ensuring that each school's uniform policy supports all pupils to access education without financial barriers.

Statutory Duties and Definitions

10. These guidelines have statutory effect from 20 February 2026, and the legislation requires that all managers of schools and all staff involved in creating, reviewing, implementing or enforcing the uniform policy must follow them.
11. The manager of a school is responsible for ensuring the necessary actions are taken, but they do not have to carry out every task personally.
12. Section 2 of Act gives the Department the authority to set out what is to be regarded as reasonable or unreasonable in a school's uniform policy. These terms are therefore used in this guidance with the authority provided by Section 2.

Guideline 1

School uniform policies must ensure uniforms are affordable for families on the lowest incomes and do not impose unfair costs.

What this means

13. The legislation requires these guidelines to address any aspects of school uniform policies that may result in unfair costs. Schools must avoid unfair costs in their uniform requirements to avoid placing unreasonable financial pressure on families.
14. In the legislation, 'unfair costs' refer to any part of a uniform policy that, in the Department's view, could lead to excessive or unreasonable expenses for families. This includes:
 - High costs for specific items or full uniform sets.
 - Limited availability from retailers, which restricts choice and can drive up prices.
15. The Department must pay particular attention to:
 - Evidence that specific styles are significantly more expensive than generic alternatives.
 - Widespread affordability issues among lower income households.
16. While schools may not know individual family incomes, they should use eligibility for Free School Meals as a general benchmark for affordability.
17. Affordability of course varies between families, even among those with low incomes, due to factors like housing costs, debt, and family size. Schools are encouraged to consult with parents to understand financial pressures and gather views on affordability. As a guide, some affordability frameworks suggest that uniform costs should not exceed 5% of a family's monthly income.
18. Schools may consider the uniform grant payment when assessing affordability but also need to be mindful of those families with income slightly above the payment threshold, who will not be eligible for the uniform grant.
19. Schools can choose to support parents with the cost of uniform items at their own discretion. When the Department is assessing unfair costs, the key factor is the cost to the parent. A more expensive item may be acceptable if the cost is offset by a subsidy or made available through a school-run loan scheme for example.

20. In considering unfair costs, the Department will also particularly consider the following:
- If more than one option of a uniform item is made available for parents to choose from, there should be no material difference for pupils wearing it due to the cost of the uniform item chosen.
 - Uniform costs should be equitable across genders, with no material cost difference for boys and girls in the school.
 - Any differentiated uniform items to recognise achievement or distinguish between year groups and/or key stages in a school (for example an honours or sixth form blazer) should be optional and not generate excessive costs for parents. The Department considers it unreasonable for any such uniform item to cost materially more for parents than the standard uniform items required for other pupils. Such items should be included in the uniform policy and consultation.
21. If a parent, or anyone else, identifies a lower cost but comparable version of a uniform item that is of similar quality and widely available, the school must consider revising its uniform policy to include that lower price item. The Department expects schools to base uniform costs on the most affordable appropriate option.
22. If a school continues to require more expensive items without justification, it may be in breach of these guidelines and the Act. In cases where the manager of a school is found not to be adhering to the guidelines, the Department is required to issue a formal direction to the school, which will be published and include the school's name. To avoid this, schools should always aim to identify and use the lowest-cost version of each uniform item.

Guideline 2

School uniform policies must comply with relevant human rights and equality legislation, including appropriate adjustments being made for pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

What this means

23. Schools must be aware of the laws which protect individuals from unlawful discrimination including human rights, race, sex and disability. These legal obligations form the foundation of these guidelines and must inform how schools implement the requirements of the Act.
24. For pupils with SEN or disabilities, particularly where these manifest as sensory issues, reasonable adjustments that do not generate additional costs over the uniform requirements for other pupils should be available. This could mean making the uniform available in a different fabric or with alternative fastening or

adapting the overall uniform design to ensure it remains accessible and affordable for all pupils.

25. When creating uniform policies, schools should also consider the risk of indirect discrimination. This occurs when a rule applies to everyone but unfairly affects certain groups—such as those of a particular gender, race, religion, or belief—who may struggle to comply with it in practice.

Guideline 3

School uniform policies must ensure that uniforms are comfortable, practical, easy to maintain and suitable for all seasons.

What this means

26. Schools must consider the comfort and practicality of uniforms. This is an underpinning consideration when schools are designing their uniform policies. It also forms an important part of the school's consultation.
27. School uniform items should support the general, practical aspects of school life including practical learning (taking particular cognisance of the play-based learning pedagogical approaches used at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1); support pupils to be active in travelling to and from school; and/or participate in active play at break and lunch times. Schools are permitted to have a specific uniform for PE (see Guideline 7).
28. The appropriateness of uniform items in relation to seasonal considerations needs to be reflected in the school uniform policy. The Department considers it reasonable for the school manager to ensure that its uniform is suitable for all seasons and can be easily adjusted depending on season, for example, through addition of a generic coat in winter, or removal of jumpers, cardigans and allowing removal of blazers during lessons in summer, rather than requiring separate summer and winter uniform items. This does not preclude *optional* and reasonably priced generic seasonal items such as scarves, summer dresses, or shorts.
29. The Department considers it reasonable for safety considerations to inform the design of a school uniform policy. For example, reflective strips on uniform items or ties not being required for younger pupils may assist with improving safety.
30. The Department also considers it reasonable for the manager of a school to consider the maintenance requirements for uniform items. Considerations of affordability apply, as well as the practicality of uniform items being easy to keep clean. Schools should note that acrylic blazers offer a number of benefits in this regard over wool blazers because they are lower cost, as well as easier to care for being machine washable and less likely to require dry cleaning.

Guideline 3A

From the 2027/28 policy onwards, school uniform policies are to provide the option for girls to wear trousers throughout the school year, including for PE/games.

What this means

31. Schools are to include the option for girls to wear trousers as part of their uniform throughout the school year – it is not a seasonal matter although trousers may provide greater warmth in colder months.
32. Schools are also to include the option for girls to wear trousers as part of their PE/ games uniform. This includes tracksuit bottoms, leggings, shorts, skorts or similar. If there is a particular reason a school seeks not to include trousers in the uniform design for team or individual sports, then a rationale for this needs to be provided and it is to form part of the consultation.

Guideline 4

The manager of a school must consult parents, pupils and any other group they consider relevant when devising or reviewing their school uniform policies.

What this means

33. The first school uniform policy to be drawn up and/or implemented by a school following the Act coming into operation, or the first uniform policy of a new/amalgamated school constitutes the uniform policy being devised. Subsequent uniform policies constitute review of the policy.
34. In either circumstance, the manager of a school needs to ensure that the views of all parents and pupils in the school are sought about the uniform policy. In good practice, they will ensure the format and method of consultation consider any accessibility and/or literacy issues relating to those being consulted.
35. Considering the pupil voice is a key part of developing school uniform policies. This approach reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises the importance of considering children's voices in decisions that affect them.
36. The consultation should explicitly address the requirements set out in these guidelines.
37. It will be important for the school to keep records of the consultation process, including responses received and decisions taken. An open and transparent consultation process to inform school uniform policy is important and will provide

evidence to the Department that the uniform policy is adhering to the requirements of the Act.

Guideline 5

The manager of a school must review their school uniform policies at least once every three years or more frequently if excessive costs apply.

What this means

38. At least once every three years, the manager of a school must ensure that a substantive review of the school uniform policy takes place. The review must consider adherence to each of these guidelines.
39. In undertaking this review, the manager of a school will need to take particular care that affordability for lower income households is considered.
40. At any time where a school uniform policy is reviewed, due care needs to be given to enabling a transitional period for any changes being made to uniform requirements in line with Guideline 13.
41. The manager of a school must also check annually that its uniform policy remains affordable for parents. Should any concerns be identified through this check or should the manager of a school or the Department identify any issues in regard to the school's uniform policy, then the manager of a school should instigate a review of the school uniform policy regardless of whether it has been three years since the last review.

Guideline 6

School uniform policies must minimise the number of branded items, provide reasons for their inclusion and explore cheaper alternatives.

What this means

42. The Department considers it unreasonable for any school to require a large number of branded items as part of its uniform policy where these are to be paid for by parents.
43. The Department is not defining large numbers of branded items in this set of guidelines; however, it is expected that the majority of uniform items should be generic. Further, this does not preclude such a limit being applied in future guidelines should that be deemed necessary.
44. Should a manager of a school wish to include a large number of branded items in its uniform policy then active consideration needs to be evidenced about alternative means of paying for these. This can include a school lending such

items to pupils or providing a subsidy scheme for such items. This could be through sponsorship or direct discount from a uniform supplier for example.

45. For each branded item the manager of a school wishes to include in the uniform policy, a rationale must be provided alongside the cost. Specific reference to this item should be included in the consultation conducted when this element of the uniform policy is devised or reviewed.
46. It is understood that schools may wish to have some items that are school specific, particularly post-primary blazers. There are some practical ways to achieve this whilst minimising costs, for example blazers being acrylic or a generic colour with the option of a sew on or iron on crest.
47. All pupils should be permitted to wear a non-branded coat in a range of colours advised by the school. The Department considers it unreasonable for a school to limit the outdoor coat a pupil can wear to one which is branded, including school-specific branding.
48. Schools should as a minimum aim to have generic trousers, skirts and/or pinafores, shirts and shoes that are available from a wide range of suppliers including supermarkets.

Guideline 7

School uniform policies must prioritise generic PE kit items and minimise the use of branded or school-specific PE kit.

What this means

49. All guidelines within this document apply to PE uniform (referred to as PE/games kit). Schools must ensure PE kit is affordable and accessible, especially for families on lower incomes. The provision of information about the rationale and cost to parents of the PE and games kit required will be of particular importance to the consultation process.
50. The Department is aware that an increasing level of branded PE and games kit is now in use in schools.
51. The Department considers it unreasonable for such branded PE kit to be a *compulsory requirement* of any uniform policy for primary-age children. PE kit in primary schools should consist of generic items or indeed the school's general primary uniform may also be suitable for PE. Should a primary school make an *optional* branded item available, it must not make any difference between the treatment of pupils based on this item. For example, if it is permissible to wear the branded item to school on the day of PE, it should also be permissible to wear the equivalent generic item.

52. Post-primary schools should keep branded items to a minimum and consider their affordability and value for money. In particular, the requirement for school specific or branded shorts, skorts, socks and tracksuit bottoms should be carefully considered. The Department considers it reasonable that generic options should be available for all these items even when a school *requires* school-specific or branded PE tops. This does not preclude options for branded versions of these items, but schools must not make any difference between the treatment of pupils based on whether such items are branded or generic.
53. Schools will also wish to consider carefully and consult on the rationale and need to have separate kit requirements for PE and games, though it is acknowledged that specific footwear is likely to be a requirement for particular sports.
54. Schools should endeavor to provide school owned kits for representative teams, especially if different from normal games wear. No child should be excluded from participating in a representative team or individual sport due to affordability of required kit.
55. It is also helpful to have stocks of common equipment for sports provided during PE and games such as hockey sticks, cricket helmets and pads, tennis and badminton rackets rather than asking parents to purchase these.
56. It is noted that many schools provide some specialist extra-curricular sporting activities which are not part of the PE curriculum or school games provision and require specialist clothing or equipment outside the mandatory PE/games kit. Some examples of these include fencing, horse riding, golf and Irish dancing. The Department will take a commonsense approach to these issues and such specialist clothing and equipment will not be considered part of a school's PE/games kit or need to be included in the uniform policy.

Guideline 8

School uniform policies must explain the reasons behind each uniform item, especially unusual colours and branded items, and show how these choices are affordable, accessible and reflect value for money for parents.

What this means

57. The rationale for the design of a school uniform that is to be consulted on and published. This needs to include but is not limited to an explanation about:
 - i. any uniform item of an unusual colour and its cost, identifying if this costs more than an item of a standard colour and explaining the reason it is proposed to include it in the uniform policy;
 - ii. the reason for the range of items proposed to be included in the uniform policy;

- iii. the reason for any items, including PE and/or games kit that are school-specific and/or branded and any support available to parents to either purchase these or receive them on loan;
 - iv. how widely available items are for parents to purchase;
 - v. whether there is scope for parents to purchase uniform items at different points throughout the school year, rather than at the outset;
 - vi. how the uniform supports comfort, practicality and engagement in the curriculum for pupils.
58. The manager of a school needs to demonstrate to their parents that the choice of uniform items has been thought through and how it meets the requirements of these guidelines and the Act.

Guideline 9

School uniform policies should support the lending of uniform items to pupils.

What this means

59. Where it is possible for schools to arrange for, or support the loan of, uniform items to pupils this is to be encouraged. This is especially relevant for those representing the school, particularly in competitive sports. The Department considers this to be a practical measure that can help manage affordability for parents.

Guideline 10

School uniform policies must support access to uniform banks for reused items.

What this means

60. The Department considers it reasonable in terms of affordability and sustainability for parents and pupils to have access to high quality, pre-used uniform items. The operation of a clothing bank, either by the school directly, or via local/community groups is a further practical measure that can help manage affordability for parents whilst supporting the environment.

Guideline 11

Uniforms must generally be available from multiple suppliers to ensure accessibility and affordability for families. As a minimum requirement, at least one supplier must be independent meaning they do not have any formal, contractual, or informal agreement with the school to sell uniforms. An exception to this requirement may only be made if the school manager publishes a value for money declaration.

What this means

61. It is important that open competition is supported to enable the best price for any school uniform item to be accessible to parents. The starting point for any school must be that its uniform design supports the availability of each item from as wide a range of uniform suppliers as possible.
62. Where a school identifies, through an open and transparent process, that it can achieve a better price for either individual uniform items or the overall cost of the uniform through an agreement, then the manager of a school must publish a declaration to that effect. This is to include the start and end dates of the agreement.

63. The Department considers the requirement to publish a value-for-money declaration will only be discharged if the manager of a school explicitly details the cost differentials the agreement represents compared to costs if the agreement was not in place. The cost of each item and the overall uniform cost must therefore be published as these would have been without the agreement, alongside the value for money cost achieved with the agreement.
64. A template is provided which does not preclude the provision of any additional information which a school manager wishes to include in their declaration.
65. This requirement applies from the date the Act came into operation i.e., 20 February 2026.
66. Any agreement in place before that date can run until its expiry date but not beyond. Where no expiry date has been set, the Department considers it reasonable for such an agreement to be reviewed in line with the requirements of the Act and in time for the 2026/27 school year. This information will need to be published.

Guideline 12

The manager of a school must publish and keep-up-to date the following information on their website:

- i. the school's uniform policy;**
- ii. at least once a year, any information about an agreement described under Guideline 11 unless it is a pre-commencement agreement;**
- iii. the value for money declaration if any agreement is entered into on a single and/or limited uniform supplier basis under Guideline 11;**
- iv. information about, including the outcome of, the school's consultation with parents, pupils and anyone else consulted;**
- v. the rationale for the requirements in terms of the uniform items and overall design which are set out in the uniform policy;**
- vi. the cost of each uniform item or a range of costs per item if applicable;**
- vii. the total cost of each uniform, or a range of costs if applicable;**
- viii. the uniform suppliers each uniform item is available to purchase from;**
- ix. when the school's uniform policy was last reviewed;**
- x. information about any uniform items the school lends to pupils;**
- xi. information about any uniform bank accessible to parents.**

What this means

67. The manager of a school must publish this information as a minimum requirement under the Act. It is open to them to publish any additional information they consider helpful. The underpinning principle is to ensure all relevant information is published on the school's website to provide transparency for existing parents and pupils as well as for any prospective parents and pupils.

Guideline 13

The manager of a school must permit reasonable transition periods when changing uniform requirements.

What this means

68. When a school decides to change its uniform rules and introduce new items, it is important to allow enough time for the change to happen smoothly. This gives parents a chance to get full use out of the uniforms they have already bought and helps suppliers manage their stock without waste or confusion. School leaders should speak with uniform suppliers early to plan ahead.
69. The Department considers it reasonable for the manager of a school to allow a period during which existing uniform items can be worn alongside any new uniform items being introduced.
70. The Department considers it reasonable for a manager of a school to ensure that consideration is given to the key stage of a pupil, with differentiation sensible. For example, it is reasonable that Year 1 and Year 8 pupils should be able to purchase new uniform items, while it is unreasonable that Year 7 and Year 14 pupils should be required to.

Guideline 14

Uniform costs must not reasonably deter pupils from applying or participating in school activities.

What this means

71. It is important that prospective parents or prospective pupils are not reasonably discouraged from applying to a school because of concerns about the cost of the uniform requirements.
72. No pupil should be prevented from participating in any curricular activity or representative activities because of such concerns about the cost of uniforms (Paragraph 56 is, however, noted).
73. Should the Department receive a complaint or obtain information on such matters then it will make an evidence-based assessment and will invite

representation from the manager of a school. Should the Department be satisfied that a school has not adhered to the requirements set out in these guidelines then it will direct the school to adhere. The full text of the direction, including the name of the school, is required to be published under the Act. Such a direction gives an instruction to the manager of a school which is enforceable through court proceedings if not followed.

Guideline 15

Pupils must not be penalised for uniform issues caused by affordability.

What this means

74. The Department recognises and respects the right of schools to manage their day-to-day running, including behaviour. It is, however, important that pupils are supported and not penalised if they are unable to meet uniform requirements due to financial hardship, particularly in cases where items have been lost, misplaced, or cannot be replaced immediately.
75. The Department considers it reasonable for schools to explore whether affordability is a factor when a pupil is not in full uniform. This may include making discreet and sensitive enquiries to understand the circumstances, while maintaining the pupil's dignity and privacy.
76. The manager of a school should not send a pupil home or, if practical in regard to safety, prevent them from participating in school activities such as PE or games solely due to a single breach of the uniform policy. If a uniform item has been lost, stolen or damaged, the Department again does not consider it appropriate for schools to send a pupil home solely on that basis. It is also reasonable that appropriate time should be given for the replacement of lost or stolen items.

Guideline 16

The manager of a school must provide uniform cost data and other relevant information to the Department when requested.

What this means

77. The Act places duties on the Department to report on certain key issues. These include the typical or average costs of school uniforms and individual uniform items. The Department will also monitor the extent to which school uniform policies follow the requirements set out in the Act and these guidelines.
78. To produce the required report, the Department requires the manager of a school to provide specific information when it is requested.

79. Information will initially be requested annually. It will be collected electronically and will align with the information schools are required to publish on their website. This frequency may reduce in due course.
80. Occasionally, the Department may ask for extra information. These requests will be kept to a minimum and schools will need to provide this additional data at the same time as their regular annual report.

Annex 1

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Human Rights Act 1998

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997

Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005

The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Annex 2

School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act 2026

Declaration of Value for Money under Section 3

I, INSERT NAME, make this declaration as the manager of INSERT SCHOOL NAME.

SCHOOL NAME has entered an agreement/contract (delete as appropriate throughout) for the provision of the following uniform items:

List each item being covered under the agreement/contract and its cost without the agreement/contract and with the agreement/contract e.g.

Item	Cost without the agreement/contract	Cost under the agreement/contract
e.g. Blazer	£xx	£xx

Total cost without the agreement/contract	Total cost under the agreement/contract
£xx	£xx

This agreement/ contract commences on INSERT DATE and expires on INSERT DATE.

I confirm this agreement/contract secures value for money with respect to items and sets of clothing needed by pupils at INSERT SCHOOL NAME.

Further explanatory information relevant to the assurance this agreement/contract secures value for money, including how this is achieved:

Name:

School:

Date:

Signature:

NOT PART OF THE STATUTORY GUIDELINES

Practical Ways Schools Can Reduce Uniform Costs

This document provides a practical checklist for schools to consider to reduce costs for families when developing their uniform policies.

1. Use Plain Colours

Choose standard colours for as many items as possible (e.g. white shirts, black trousers, grey socks) that can be easily bought from supermarkets or high street retailers.

2. Allow Uniform to Be Worn All Year

Avoid separate summer and winter uniforms unless optional. This reduces the number of items families need to buy.

3. Choose Acrylic Over Wool Blazers

Acrylic blazers are more affordable and are machine washable.

4. Minimise Branded or School-Specific Items

Keep branded items to a minimum and only include them when necessary. Consider sew-on or iron-on crests instead of requiring embroidered logos.

5. Avoid Expensive Styles

Choose simple styles for items like blazers (avoid braiding or trim), skirts (e.g. avoid pleats) and trousers to keep costs down.

6. Permit Plain Coats

Allow pupils to wear plain, unbranded coats in school-approved colours.

7. Avoid Separate PE and Games Kits

Use a single kit for PE and games and wherever possible avoid requiring different kits for different activities.

8. No Branded PE Kit Required for Primary Pupils

PE kits at primary school should be generic and low-cost. The school uniform itself may be suitable for PE.

9. Minimise Branded PE Kit for Post-Primary Pupils

Post-primary schools should keep branded items to a minimum. In particular, the requirement for school specific or branded shorts/skorts, socks and tracksuit bottoms should be carefully considered. It is reasonable that generic options should be available for all these items even when a school requires a school specific or branded PE top.

10. Provide School-Owned Kits for Teams

Supply kits for pupils representing the school in sports or other activities to avoid extra costs.

11. Stock Common Sports Equipment

Provide shared items like hockey sticks, cricket pads, tennis rackets, etc., for use during PE and games.

12. Support Uniform Banks and Loan Schemes

Encourage the reuse of uniforms through second-hand uniform shops or clothing banks. Offer loan schemes for temporary use items.

13. Ensure multiple uniform suppliers

Ensure uniform items are available from multiple retailers unless a value-for-money agreement is in place and published.