

School uniform and clothing in Scotland

**Guidance for schools and education
authorities**

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Ministerial Foreword



The Scottish Government is committed to making sure that our children and young people have the best possible start in life. The clear ambition of this Government is to achieve excellence and equity for all our children and young people, ensuring that they are happy, safe, respected, and included at school. To do this, it is vital that we create inclusive, welcoming, and equitable learning environments that support pupils to participate fully in their education and achieve their full potential.

Decisions about school uniform and clothing policy play a key part in this. Those decisions must put pupils' health, wellbeing and happiness at their heart and address disadvantage by removing barriers to school education. This will help to ensure that every pupil, regardless of their background or circumstances can go to school feeling comfortable, confident, and ready to learn.

This guidance seeks to support schools to achieve these aims. It aligns to wider measures to support inclusion and equality in education, tackle child poverty and take action to address the climate emergency. The guidance is designed to support schools to work with their school community to implement inclusive and equitable uniform and clothing policies that recognise and meet the needs of pupils, minimise costs for families and support actions to protect the environment.

I am very grateful to all those who responded to our consultation, to the pupils who shared their views and to those on the working group. Your experience and input has been invaluable in shaping this guidance.

Jenny Gilruth MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The guidance refers to both school uniform and school clothing throughout. This is intended to capture **any** items of clothing or footwear that are worn during the school day. This may include traditional items of uniform; clothing for physical activity and sport; clothing to participate in outdoor learning or; clothing worn to attend school trips or participate in activities or occasions either as part of the school day or in the wider school community.

Status of the guidance

This guidance is non-statutory. It applies to all public schools in Scotland and is intended to support schools and education authorities to make local decisions about their school uniform and clothing policies.

This guidance is also available to grant-aided and independent schools to consider when developing their school uniform and clothing policies. Grant-aided and independent schools are strongly encouraged to take account of this guidance when reviewing uniform and clothing policies in their schools. Early Learning and Childcare settings that have a uniform or clothing policy may also find this guidance helpful.

An executive summary has been developed to highlight the key messages from this guidance. This is available here: [A summary of guidance for schools and education authorities](#).

Resources designed to communicate the key messages from this guidance with parents and carers and with pupils have also been developed. These can be accessed at the following links: [Guidance on school uniform and clothing: information for parents and carers](#) and [Guidance on school uniform and clothing: information for pupils](#).

Purpose

Responsibility for school clothing and uniform policy usually sits with individual schools. The purpose of this guidance is to support headteachers, school leaders and education authorities to work collaboratively with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff to design, review and implement affordable and sustainable uniform and clothing policies which recognise the individual needs, circumstances and identities of all pupils. The guidance is not exhaustive. It is intended to help schools to make local decisions about their uniform and clothing policies within the context of relevant policy and legislation and taking account of the circumstances in their own individual settings.

The guidance sets out the key principles which should underpin uniform and clothing policies and provides further information on specific issues that schools are expected to consider in the development, review and implementation of these policies. The guidance signposts to other relevant sources, legislation, guidance and resources throughout. It provides guidance to schools on sharing information about their policies with families and responding to any concerns that may arise. It also provides

guidance on how schools can support and encourage pupils to observe their uniform or clothing policy. Schools should ensure that all staff are aware of this guidance and support them to implement its key principles.

Development of the guidance has been supported by the [School Uniform Working Group](#) and is informed by [consultation and engagement](#).

Introduction

A positive school ethos and culture is essential to support pupils' learning, health and wellbeing. The culture and ethos of a school is not created by its school uniform. However, in the context of an inclusive and welcoming school culture, a shared uniform can play a positive part in school life. It can support pupils to identify with their school's culture, and feel accepted, respected and connected to their school. In such a culture, uniform may also help to support equity and inclusion, create routines for pupils to support their school attendance, reduce stigma and peer pressure and support anti-bullying approaches. It can help pupils to feel safe at school, supporting safeguarding measures and easier identification of strangers on school premises.¹

However, it must also be recognised that school uniform is a barrier to participation and engagement for some pupils. For example, some pupils, such as those with particular health conditions or who are neurodiverse, may find it challenging to wear certain types of clothing or materials. Other pupils, such as those from a particular faith group, may feel that uniform restricts their identity and individuality. Some families may face financial challenges in accessing uniform which can highlight social or economic differences between pupils, and could lead to increased stigma, peer pressure and bullying.²

Schools are expected to take all appropriate steps to promote an inclusive and equitable environment for their pupils that recognises and responds to their individual needs and circumstances and promotes pupil's rights, identity, voice and choice.

All schools should have an affordable and sustainable uniform or clothing policy which meets the needs of their pupils and wider school community and is centred on pupil comfort, happiness and freedom to learn and play. Their policy should build on current good practice and be developed and delivered in accordance with this guidance and in consultation with pupils, parents, carers, teachers, school staff, and other relevant individuals or groups³.

¹ [Analysis of Responses - School uniform: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

² [Analysis of Responses - School uniform: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

³ This may include community groups, faith organisations and Black and minority ethnic groups.

Key principles

All school uniform and clothing policies should be informed and underpinned by the following key principles.

School uniform and clothing policies should:

- be informed by the views of pupils
- be informed by the views of parents, carers, teachers and school staff
- minimise the cost of school uniform and clothing for families
- consider and commit to fair and environmentally sustainable approaches
- support an inclusive, welcoming and equitable school culture
- promote equality, including recognising specific matters relating to religion and belief, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity
- eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation and engagement of pupils in school education
- apply to all school clothing, including PE and senior phase
- recognise the need for practicality, including in relation to weather and seasonal needs
- recognise and build upon current good practice within schools
- support and encourage pupils to observe school uniform and clothing policies, while recognising their individual needs, circumstances and identity
- continue the position of no legal requirement upon pupils to wear school uniform

Policy and legislative context

There is no legal requirement for pupils to wear uniform when attending school in Scotland. Schools are encouraged to have a uniform or clothing policy in place for the reasons set out in the introductory section. These policies should always be affordable and sustainable and promote and support an equal and inclusive culture within schools, recognising the individual needs of pupils.

Decisions about school uniform and clothing policy are the responsibility of individual schools. These decisions should be taken in collaboration with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff, and within the context of relevant policy and legislation. This is briefly summarised below, with more detail provided in [Annex A](#).

Education

Scotland has a strong legislative and policy framework, underpinned by the principles of equity and inclusion and a rights-based approach to education. This focuses on [Getting it right for every child](#) and working together to overcome barriers to learning to support pupils to reach their full potential, regardless of their background or circumstances. This includes [Keeping the Promise](#) to care experienced children and young people to ensure that they “grow up loved, safe and respected.”

As part of an [empowered system](#), all those who are involved in the education of children and young people, including pupils themselves, are vital partners, working together to improve outcomes for learners. Education authorities must promote the involvement of parents and carers in the education of their children. Parent Councils play an important role in the development and implementation of school policies and education authorities have a legal duty to promote the establishment of, and support the operation of Parent Councils.⁴ Teachers and school staff are also key partners. They should be given time to contribute meaningfully to the development and review of uniform and clothing policies and be empowered to support a positive culture that recognises and responds to the needs of all learners, working collaboratively to support pupils to be the best they can be.

Children’s rights

Education in Scotland is further underpinned by a rights-based approach. The principles of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) should be embedded within school policies. The Convention should be considered as a whole. However, in the design of uniform and clothing policies, education authorities and schools should have particular regard to Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 12 (respect for the views of the child), Article 13 (freedom of expression) and Article 28 (right to education).

Tackling child poverty

As part of our wider ambitions to create a [wellbeing economy](#), the Scottish Government is committed to addressing child poverty. The [Child Poverty Strategy](#) and its [delivery plan](#) set out a range of measures designed to address inequality, and disadvantage, and meet the ambitions and requirements of the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#). Alongside this, there is a firm commitment to improve outcomes for pupils impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the [poverty-related attainment gap](#).

To support these aims, the Scottish Government in partnership with local government have a joint agreement to provide a minimum amount of school clothing grant to eligible families to help them to meet the cost of school clothing. In 2024/25, the minimum amount is £120 for eligible primary school pupils and £150 for eligible secondary school pupils. Further information on school clothing grant is available here: [Help with school clothing costs](#)

⁴ [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Equalities

The [Equality Act 2010](#) places specific requirements upon education authorities, managers of grant-aided schools and proprietors of independent schools to prevent unlawful discrimination in their schools based on protected characteristics.⁵

[Section 149](#) of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty and the requirements placed upon education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Involving children and young people

As part of a rights-based approach, schools must ensure that the views of pupils are heard and taken into account in the design, implementation and review of school uniform and clothing policies.

What have pupils told us?

Pupils have told us⁶ that they want to be free to move and play as well as be comfortable to help them enjoy their learning. They told us that it is important that the clothes they wear to school suit the weather and are comfortable and practical to allow them to participate in all types of activities at school. Some pupils spoke about feeling uncomfortable or self-conscious in some types of clothing or feeling insecure or embarrassed when wearing clothing made from thinner materials, such as shirts. Others expressed worries that they might be made fun of for how they look, and that this may prevent them from wanting to wear certain things or participate in certain activities. Some pupils spoke about clothing being restrictive and impacting on their ability to participate in learning or play. Other pupils also spoke about the importance of being able to express themselves and develop their own identity. A number of pupils highlighted the cost of uniform and wanted it to be inexpensive and easy for their families to buy. Many pupils felt that giving them a choice in the uniform and clothing they wear and involving them in decisions and discussions about schools' policies were key to supporting their wellbeing and comfort. They also thought that there should not be negative consequences for those not wearing uniform recognising that the reasons for this might be outwith their control.

It is vital that schools create meaningful opportunities to involve pupils in decisions and discussions about their uniform and clothing policies. Schools should support pupils to share their views about the design and style of uniform and clothing and support discussions about affordable and sustainable approaches which meet the

⁵ The protected characteristics under the schools' provisions are: disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

⁶ [Engagement with children on school uniform - The Children's Parliament, June 2023](#)

needs of pupils and the wider school community. As part of an inclusive and equitable culture, ongoing engagement with pupils is essential to identify and address any barriers that they face to clothing or uniform.

There are many ways in which schools can engage meaningfully with their pupils on these issues. Schools are best placed to decide on the approach that will work best for their pupils. In doing so, schools should make sure that their approach is inclusive of pupils with a range of lived experience and that it is flexible to address barriers to participation.

The Scottish Government has developed guidance to support the involvement of children and young people in decision making. This is available here: [Decision-making: children and young people's participation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/decision-making-children-and-young-people/participation/pages/1.aspx). Children in Scotland have also produced a resource to support meaningful participation and engagement of children and young people. This is available here: [Meaningful Participation and Engagement of Children and Young People](https://www.gov.scot/publications/meaningful-participation-and-engagement-of-children-and-young-people/pages/1.aspx).

Alongside engagement with pupils, education authorities and schools should engage with parents and carers, including any Parent Council where applicable, when considering uniform and clothing policies. Further information on this is available in the [consultation section](#) of this guidance.

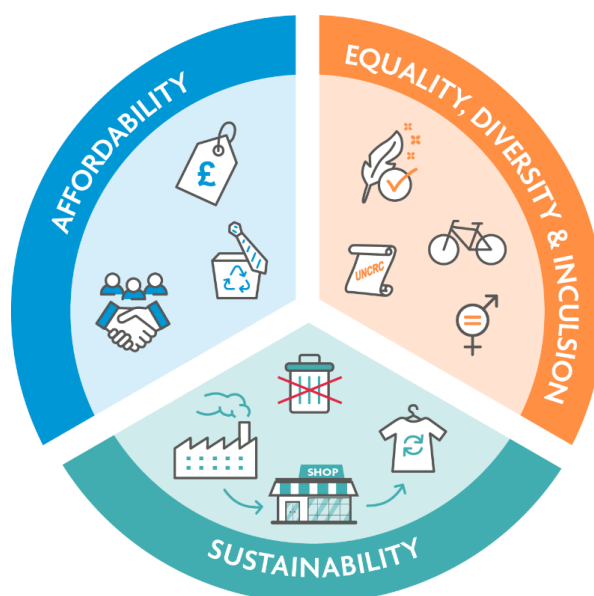
Key considerations

Summary

Pupils' comfort, happiness and freedom to learn and play should be at the centre of considerations about school uniform and clothing, alongside a focus on removing barriers to participation in school education. School uniform and clothing policies should be informed by the [key principles](#) of this guidance and in the context of [existing policy and legislation](#).

Schools should consult with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff to put in place affordable and sustainable policies that support an inclusive and equitable culture which recognises and celebrates difference and promotes a welcoming and comfortable environment for their pupils.

Schools are expected to consider and respond to three key areas in the design and implementation of their uniform and clothing policy. These are set out below alongside the key measures that schools should consider.



This is aligned to the [School Clothing: Framework for Action](#) which further highlights key considerations and presents challenge questions on each of these areas and includes links to further reading, research, and guidance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Flexible policies to help everyone feel comfortable and included at school

- Prioritise the comfort and wellbeing of pupils.
- Take a proportionate approach that avoids specifying the style of items unless there is a practical reason which supports safety, health or wellbeing.
- Recognise and support pupil individuality and choice.
- Include gender neutral options and give pupils a choice about what they wear.
- Identify and address barriers to participation and attendance, such as those arising from interrupted learning, additional support needs, health or disability, or socio-economic issues.
- Ensure compliance with legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- Consider suitability for different weather and seasons and promote outdoor learning and active travel.

Affordability

Flexible policies that limit costs for parents and carers

- Adopt policies that mean all items needed for the school year, plus a reasonable number of spares or replacements, can be bought within the amount provided by the School Clothing Grant.
- Include generic items that can be bought from a range of suppliers.
- Use generic colours that are easily available from a range of suppliers.
- Branded items of uniform and blazers should not be compulsory, nor promoted or encouraged by schools.
- Promote uptake of the School Clothing Grant among all eligible families.
- Promote pre-loved clothing as the preferred option.
- Avoid specifying the style of items unless there is a practical reason which supports safety, health or wellbeing.
- Reduce number of items required during the school day or week.
- Consider low-cost options to differentiate between pupil groups where required.
- Adopt a policy that does not change too often and only following robust evaluation and consultation.

Sustainability

Flexible policies that reduce waste and promote the reuse of clothing

- Reduce number of items needed during the school day or week
- Avoid including items that need frequent washing or are difficult to wash or dry.
- Increase opportunities for items to be reused by including:
 - generic items and colours
 - gender neutral items
 - no compulsory branded items or blazers
 - limited variation across year or pupil groups
- Promote the use of sustainable and ethical items

- Promote and support arrangements for families to access pre-loved clothing.
- Support opportunities for pupils to be involved in sustainable clothing initiatives.
- Take actions to protect clothing and footwear to extend its life.

The following sections set out further detail on these key considerations. It should be recognised that these matters overlap and intersect. The three key strands should be considered as equally important, with decisions about school uniform and clothing policies taken holistically to achieve a balanced and integrated approach that addresses the needs, circumstances and identities of the school community and reflects the [wider values of Scottish education](#).

These matters also interact with other important considerations, such as weather and seasonal suitability and clothing for special occasions and school trips. Guidance on these matters is set out in [later sections](#) of this guidance.

It is important that schools have robust arrangements in place to regularly review their uniform and clothing policies to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of pupils and the school community and align to broader policies which support action to tackle child poverty and achieve the aims of Net Zero.

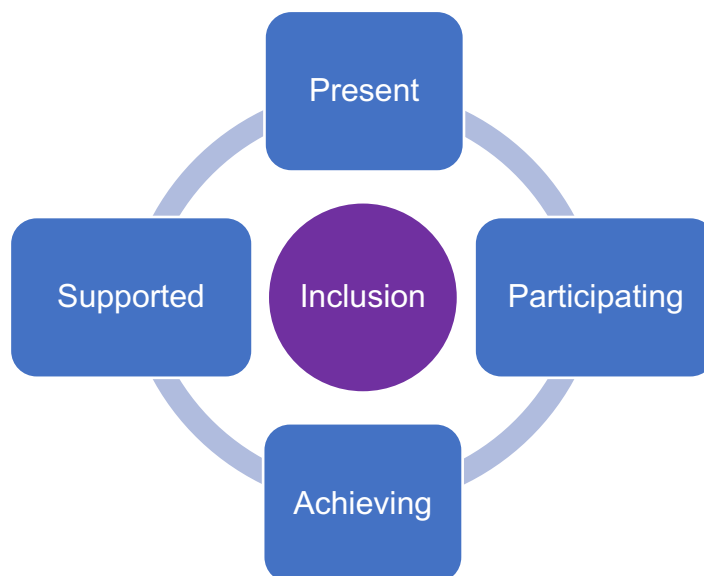
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Schools should eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation and engagement in school education for all pupils. To achieve this, schools are expected to design and implement inclusive and equitable uniform and clothing policies, underpinned by a rights-based approach. These policies should promote equality and protect pupils from discrimination, victimisation or harassment while advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between all pupils.

Schools should work with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff to design and implement uniform and clothing policies across the whole school which are flexible, practical and responsive to the needs, circumstances and identity of all pupils. This includes a flexible and simple approach to clothing and footwear for Physical Education (PE) which prioritises comfort and safety and does not create barriers to participation for pupils.

Inclusion

The comfort and wellbeing of pupils should be a priority in school uniform and clothing policies. This should be underpinned by an inclusive approach which embeds the four key features of inclusion – present, participating, supported and achieving.



There may be particular barriers to participation related to clothing and uniform for some pupils. This could include pupils from low-income households, those who have healthcare needs, those who have a disability, pupils who have periods of interrupted learning, young women and girls, or those belonging to a particular ethnic group or religion. It may also include children and young people with additional support needs.⁷ There may also be barriers faced by these or other pupils in relation to particular activities, such as PE. Schools should be aware that these barriers may arise in relation to a particular activity, such as swimming. Schools should respond to these issues sensitively and ensure their approach is flexible, inclusive and supports equality and pupil choice. Schools should consider all these aspects within the context of their wider education duties including their duties under the [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) (“the 2004 Act”). As part of this, schools should ensure ongoing engagement with pupils to ensure that any barriers faced by them in relation to clothing or uniform can be identified and addressed as part of an inclusive and equitable culture.

Pupils who are care experienced⁸ may be more at risk of facing barriers to participation in education. This could be for a range of reasons, including poverty, stigma or periods of interrupted learning. Some education authorities have taken steps to strengthen protections for care experienced pupils by regarding care experience in a similar way to a ‘protected characteristic’ as a way to protect pupils from discrimination and harassment they may face because of their care experience⁹. Schools should ensure that their clothing and uniform policies support care experienced pupils to participate fully at school and take action to address particular barriers that these pupils may face in accessing uniform or clothing. This should be

⁷ As defined by section 1 of the [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#).

⁸ Care experienced children are “looked after children” within the meaning of section 17(6) of the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#).

⁹ Care experience is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Looked after children are recognised as having an additional support need under [section \(1A\) of the Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) unless the education authority forms the view that the child or young person does not require additional support in order to benefit from school education.

considered within the context of responsibilities placed on local authorities as 'corporate parents'¹⁰ and actions to [Keep the Promise](#).

In respect of all pupils, schools should always be proactive in their approach and develop inclusive clothing and uniform policies that prioritise comfort and practicality and are flexible to meet the needs of all pupils. Schools should give careful consideration to items that some pupils may find restrictive, difficult to wear or to take on and off during the school day. This may include ties or clothing made of more rigid material, such as formal trousers or skirts. Schools should be flexible in their approach to the wearing of these items and consider appropriate alternatives that support pupils' comfort and wellbeing.

Schools should not include [branded items](#) of uniform as a compulsory part of their policy nor should they specify the style of items of uniform, clothing, or footwear, unless there is a practical reason to do so which would protect the health, safety or wellbeing of pupils and staff. Focus should instead be on the practicality and suitability of these items to allow pupils to actively and safely participate in a range of learning activities, including PE and sport.

Schools should support an inclusive approach that takes account of the particular needs, circumstances and identity of their pupils. This approach should recognise seasonal and weather changes and discourage the wearing of expensive designer items and football colours. It should also actively promote a culture of gender equality which avoids gendered assumptions about what type of clothing is preferred and supports pupils to choose the items they prefer to wear.

Schools should consider issues such as hair and the wearing of items such as jewellery, medical bracelets, religious items, nails and sensory aids and whether these would present a safety risk to pupils or staff. This is particularly important for PE and other practical subjects. Where appropriate, schools should carry out risk assessments to support identification and management of these risks. Importantly, when doing this, schools must recognise their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") and ensure that their approach does not discriminate against pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics and considers their Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all pupils.

Education Scotland has a range of resources for teachers and school staff on how they can support and promote an inclusive approach in their schools. This includes free, online [professional learning on inclusive education](#) and a [national framework for support staff](#). [Enquire](#) also has a range of resources for professionals to support an inclusive approach. These are available here: [Resources for professionals - Enquire](#)

A flexible and inclusive approach to uniform and clothing will also support pupils who are moving from other schools, either at the start of the school year or part-way through. Schools should bear in mind that there may be many reasons why a pupil

¹⁰ As defined by the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).

may move schools, including where the pupil is care experienced, from an Armed Forces family or belongs to the Gypsy/Traveller community. The inclusion of simple, generic, non-branded items of uniform and clothing will allow pupils to continue to wear items that they wore at their previous school, supporting them to feel included while minimising costs for parents and carers. Schools should ensure that pupils and their parents and carers are given appropriate support to access school uniform and clothing in these circumstances.

Equality and Diversity

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has produced [technical guidance for schools in Scotland](#) to support schools to carry out the legal duties placed upon them by the 2010 Act. This guidance includes advice relevant to clothing and uniform policies in the context of the 2010 Act. In relation to uniform generally, this guidance states:

EHRC – Technical guidance for schools in Scotland

“Setting different rules for different categories of pupil might result in discrimination.... Also, applying the policy rigidly without allowing flexibility for certain pupils might result in discrimination. Examples of policies that might be discriminatory are:

- a general rule of no headgear in school, which requires a Sikh pupil to remove his turban;
- not making reasonable adjustments to school uniform requirements for disabled pupils who require them, for example not allowing a disabled child who is allergic to the regulation nylon trousers to wear cotton ones; or
- requiring pupils to dress (or not to dress) in a way that conflicts with a genuine religious requirement of their religion or belief.

Being flexible about how such policies are applied is likely to avoid discrimination.

Assessing how the uniform policy affects pupils with different protected characteristics and consulting with parents about the policy will also help a school to avoid discrimination.”

It is important that schools take account of the [technical guidance](#) in their considerations to support a flexible and proportionate approach to clothing and uniform. Some further considerations, aligned to the protected characteristics are set out below. It should be noted that these considerations may intersect, and some pupils will be shaped by more than one of their protected characteristics, for example if they are both minority ethnic and disabled.

Race and ethnicity

It is important that schools recognise and understand in both their uniform or clothing policy and the application of this guidance, the different needs and circumstances of pupils from all ethnic groups who belong to their school community. Schools should take action to ensure that their uniform and clothing policy does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity and enables cultural expression. In doing this, schools

should ensure that their approach includes measures to prevent and tackle stigma, bullying, discrimination or prejudice against all pupils.

Teachers and school staff should be supported to access appropriate training and resources to support them to understand and respond to the needs of pupils from all ethnic groups with respect to uniform and clothing policy, and to consider how a whole-school approach to anti-racism will apply to uniform.

The Scottish Government is clear that there is no place for racism in our schools. The [Anti Racism in Education Programme](#) is leading work to strengthen support for schools in tackling racist incidents and racism, while enhancing [professional learning and leadership](#), diversifying the education workforce and reforming the curriculum. This work is underpinned by the [Race equality framework for Scotland 2016 to 2030](#) which sets out the approach to promoting race equality and tackling racism and inequality.

Guidance and resources around race equality and anti-racist education can be found on [Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub](#) and [Glow Blog](#).

Sex

It is important for schools to recognise and understand that there may be issues related to clothing and uniform which have a greater impact on some pupils more than others, or in relation to particular activities. For example, young women and girls can often experience societal pressure to look or dress in a certain way. This can have an impact on their comfort and body image and may make them feel more self-conscious or anxious about attending school or participating in certain activities, such as PE. There may also be a perception that school uniform policies, and their implementation, can produce sexist double standards; for example, with girls and young women being held to stricter standards than boys and young men.¹¹ Research¹² also suggests that the cost of school uniform and clothing can be higher for girls and young women than it is for boys and young men.

Under the 2010 Act, schools must ensure that their uniform or clothing policies do not discriminate against pupils on the basis of their sex. Schools should design and implement gender neutral clothing and uniform policies that support participation and inclusion for all pupils. These policies should recognise and challenge the impact of harmful gender stereotypes, avoid gendered assumptions about the type of uniform that is preferred and promote flexibility and pupil choice.

Schools should avoid categorising items of clothing or uniform as suitable for a particular sex or gender and instead include a range of comfortable and practical, gender neutral options to support all pupils to participate fully in all subjects and activities. Schools should be mindful of language used when implementing uniform policy with individual students. For example, schools should avoid using language such as “modest” or “decent” as these terms are stigmatising and often only applied

¹¹ Gender Inequality and Societal Attitudes Report: [everyday-heroes-briefing3-Gender.pdf \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

¹² [School Uniform: Dressing Girls to Fail \(2021\) A Report by Let Clothes Be Clothes for the Department for Education](#)

to girls and young woman. Schools should ensure that when supporting and encouraging pupils to observe their uniform or clothing policy, their approach promotes gender equality, does not respond differently to pupils because of their sex or gender and supports pupils' freedom to express their gender identity.

Teachers and school staff should be supported to access appropriate training and resources to recognise and respond to gender-based issues and promote a culture of gender equality in their school. The [Gender Based Violence Working Group](#) has developed the [Preventing and responding to gender based violence: a whole school framework](#). This resource will support those working with and in schools to develop and strengthen universal and targeted approaches to gender-based violence within the context of the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Re-assignment

It is important that school uniform and clothing policies recognise and respond to the needs and identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex plus (LGBTQI+) pupils. Schools should develop and implement flexible and inclusive policies which take a proactive approach to address stereotypes and stigma which can often lead to prejudice or bullying experienced by pupils who are LGBTQI+. Under the 2010 Act, schools must ensure that their uniform and clothing policies do not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.

The Scottish Government supported development of [Guidance on supporting transgender young people in Scottish schools](#). The guidance is underpinned by the duties placed on education providers by the 2010 Act and provides advice on the practical application of those duties in a school setting. The guidance includes advice on school uniform. While this is in the context of supporting transgender pupils in schools, the principle can also apply to all pupils. The guidance says:

Supporting Transgender Pupils in Schools: Guidance for Scottish Schools

...forcing transgender young people to wear clothes which do not match their gender identity can be distressing for them, and may constitute discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

If your school has a uniform, the school uniform policy should include a range of options to accommodate the needs of girls and boys and these should also accommodate the needs of transgender young people through gender-neutral options; this can be helpful for many young people. This approach should allow all young people to wear the school uniform they feel most comfortable in.

Schools should not exclude transgender young people because of how they dress, unless it breaches health and safety regulations.

If your school doesn't have a school uniform, it should be clear that young people can wear what they want, including skirts, trousers, shorts, regardless of gender identity, as long as this complies with school guidelines.

This guidance also provides advice on clothing for transgender young people participating in PE and highlights some examples of good practice. This includes allowing transgender young people to wear sportswear which matches their expressed gender identity and considering alternative options for swimming. Again, while this advice is provided within the context of supporting transgender young people, taking a flexible and informed approach will support participation and engagement for all pupils.

In addition, teachers and school staff should be supported to access appropriate training and resources to support a whole school approach to implementation of 'LGBT Inclusive Education.' The Scottish Government has worked with partners to develop a national platform to support teachers and school staff across Scotland to tackle prejudice through education. These resources can be accessed here: [LGBT Inclusive Education | National Platform](#).

Disability

Children and young people who have a disability¹³ are to be supported to fully participate in school life. It is important for schools to recognise the individual needs of pupils within their school community and the impact that clothing and uniform policies may have on their participation and engagement. For example, some children and young people who have a disability may have to wear specific items of clothing or footwear to help them to fully participate at school. Others may be unable to wear particular items of clothing or footwear. This could include children and young people who experience discomfort when wearing clothing made of a certain material or that is of a particular style, or pupils whose participation is restricted by wearing certain items.

Under the 2010 Act, schools must ensure that they do not discriminate against children or young people because of their disability. The 2010 Act also sets out the requirements of education authorities, managers of grant-aided schools and proprietors of independent schools to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.¹⁴ As set out in the [EHRC's Technical Guidance](#), schools are required "to take positive steps to ensure that disabled pupils can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils."¹⁵ It is also important to note that this duty is anticipatory therefore schools "need to think in advance about what disabled pupils might require and what adjustments might need to be made for them."¹⁶

The requirement to provide reasonable adjustments must be considered within the context of protecting the health and safety of pupils and staff. The [EHRC's Technical Guidance](#) provides further advice to schools on how to ensure that suitable, sufficient and ongoing risk assessments are undertaken to identify and minimise risks for disabled children and young people.

¹³ As defined by Part 2, Chapter 1, section 6 of the [Equality Act 2010](#).

¹⁴ Schedule 13 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)

¹⁵ Paragraph 6.11 of the [EHRC's Technical guidance for schools in Scotland](#)

¹⁶ Paragraph 6.13 of the [EHRC's Technical guidance for schools in Scotland](#)

Some pupils may have an additional support need¹⁷ arising from a disability and may be receiving additional support in school in accordance with the 2004 Act. However, it is important to note that not all children and young people with a disability will have an additional support need and vice-versa. Regardless of whether a disabled pupil has an additional support need, schools are required to consider the requirement to provide reasonable adjustments under the 2010 Act. This may be in addition to any support that pupils are already receiving at school. Further information is provided in the [Supporting Learners' Code of Practice](#).

Religion or belief

School uniform and clothing policies should recognise all different religions and beliefs within the school community.

Under the 2010 Act, schools must ensure that their uniform or clothing policy does not discriminate against pupils on the basis of their religion or belief. As noted above, a policy that requires pupils to dress or not to dress in a way that conflicts with their religion or belief, could be discriminatory. It is important to recognise that pupils may wear certain clothing or other items, such as jewellery, as part of their religion or belief. Schools should ensure that they have a flexible policy that considers the circumstances of individual pupils to ensure that they are protected from discrimination. The EHRC's [technical guidance for schools in Scotland](#) may provide some helpful examples for schools in this respect:

EHRC – Technical guidance for schools in Scotland

Example: A school requires male pupils to wear a cap as part of the school uniform. Although this requirement is applied equally to all pupils, it has the effect of excluding Sikh boys, whose religion requires them to wear a turban. This would be indirect discrimination based on religion and belief because it is unlikely that the school would be able to justify this action.

Example: A school instigates a policy that no jewellery should be worn. A young woman of the Sikh religion is asked to remove her Kara bangle in line with this policy, although the young woman explains that she is required by her religion to wear the bangle. This could be indirect discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief.

Pregnancy and maternity

Every pregnant pupil and young parent should be supported to stay in school if they choose to do so. Under the 2010 Act, schools must not discriminate against a pupil because of pregnancy or maternity, or because of breastfeeding. Schools should have a flexible clothing and uniform policy that supports pupils as their pregnancy progresses and when they return to school following the birth of their child. Further information and support for schools is available at: [“Someone to talk to and Someone to listen” – Supporting young pregnant women and young parents in school](#). Information for young people is available at: [Pregnancy and parenthood while you are in school or education: leaflet](#)

¹⁷ As defined by section 1 of the [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)

Preventing hair discrimination

Pupils may have different hairstyles dependent on their cultural, family or social customs or because their hair type requires it, which could fall under the protected characteristic of race in terms of the 2010 Act. Other pupils may wear certain types of head coverings because of their cultural background, religion or disability which are all protected characteristics under the 2010 Act.

Not all schools will have a policy for hair, hairstyles or head coverings, but where they do, this policy should be flexible, inclusive and support the needs, circumstances and identities of all pupils. It should be gender neutral, support pupils to feel comfortable with their natural hair and respect their right to express themselves through their choice of hairstyle. Where a policy is in place, it must take account of the requirements of the 2010 Act and not discriminate against pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics. In relation to hair, hairstyles and headgear, the EHRC's [technical guidance for schools in Scotland](#) states:

EHRC – Technical guidance for schools in Scotland

“A school policy that bans certain hairstyles adopted by specific racial or religious groups, without the possibility of any exceptions on racial or religious grounds, is likely to constitute unlawful indirect race or religion or belief discrimination.

If your school's policy bans headgear, make sure it has exceptions on the grounds of:

- race (for example, for Black pupils or pupils with a mixed ethnic background who wear African heritage head wraps)
- religion or belief (for example, for Muslim pupils who cover their hair)
- disability (for example, pupils undergoing cancer treatment who wear wigs, scarves or hats).

Without such exceptions your policy is likely to be unlawful on the grounds of indirect discrimination based on race, religion or belief or disability.”

It is important that teachers and school staff are supported to recognise and understand the links between different hair types and styles, race and cultural identity and the potential for hair discrimination in uniform policies. It is good practice for schools to provide training for staff on the need to foster good relations and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment related to hair as part of public and grant-aided schools' obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Schools could also support this by organising activities to promote equality and diversity, for example, activities that include Black role models and that celebrate Afro-textured hair.¹⁸

Further resources to support schools to design and implement policies which prevent hair discrimination and foster an inclusive environment are available here: [Preventing hair discrimination in schools | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#). This

¹⁸ [Preventing hair discrimination in schools | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

includes a [decision-making tool](#) for schools to use when creating or reviewing uniform policies.

Affordability

Alongside equality, inclusion and diversity, the affordability of school uniform and clothing is vital in supporting the removal of unnecessary barriers to pupils' participation and engagement in school education and addressing stigma and disadvantage.

We know that many families are currently facing real hardship as a result of the cost-of-living crisis¹⁹. We also know that these circumstances affect some households more than others with evidence identifying six priority family types as being at highest risk of child poverty: lone parent families, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled adult or child, families with a younger mother (under 25), families with a child under one, and larger families (three or more children)²⁰. It is estimated that 24% of children (250,000 children each year) were living in relative poverty after housing costs in 2019-22.²¹ This guidance should be considered as part of a range of measures aimed at supporting families during these challenging times, addressing child poverty, and supporting delivery of the ambitious targets²² set by the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#).

For many families, the cost of school uniform, clothing and footwear can present a significant barrier to pupils' participation and attendance at school. This can have a considerable impact on pupils' wellbeing and may have a negative effect on their experience and achievements.

It is important for schools to consider how they can best achieve the benefits of a shared uniform or clothing, without creating unnecessary financial or other barriers for families. Therefore, schools are expected to do all that they can to minimise the cost for parents and carers of school uniform and clothing. Schools should ensure that they have a flexible policy that recognises and meets the needs of individual pupils, promotes affordability and sustainability and eliminates unnecessary clothing costs or burdens for parents and carers. Schools should also be mindful of these factors when planning special occasions and school trips. Further consideration of this is included in [this section](#) of the guidance.

Schools should be mindful that the cost of uniform and clothing is more acute for some families²³ and consider measures to mitigate this. Schools should actively promote the availability of the [school clothing grant](#) and where appropriate, offer support to families to access it. Schools are expected to ensure there are appropriate arrangements in place for parents and carers to access uniform and

¹⁹ [The Cost of Living Crisis in Scotland: analytical report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

²⁰ [Tackling child poverty priority families overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

²¹ [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-22 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

²² [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

²³ The Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland identifies six priority household groups: larger families (with 3 or more children); lone parents; minority ethnic households; households with a disabled adult or child; households with a child under one year old; and mothers under 25 years old.

clothing items through pre-loved initiatives and through other types of provision where this is necessary.

To support all families with the cost of clothing and uniform, schools should consider their policies within the context of national minimum amounts available for school clothing grants. Schools should design uniform and clothing policies on the basis that families can buy all items needed for the school year, plus a reasonable number of spares or replacements, within this budget.

Some further detail is provided below on the measures that schools should consider as part of their commitment to limit the cost to parents and carers of providing school uniform, clothing and footwear for their children.

- Schools should have simple policies which only specify basic, generic items and colours, for example, dark trousers, dark footwear, to allow parents and carers to purchase items from a range of retailers at a reasonable price.
- Specific consideration should be taken by schools in rural areas to enable parents and carers to source items locally or online at a reasonable cost.
- Schools should consider the availability of non-standard sizes of uniform, clothing and footwear included within their policies to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their age or build, are able to access comfortable and practical clothing and footwear at a reasonable cost.
- Schools should take action to limit the number of items required during the school day or week.
- Schools should promote, and support access to pre-loved uniform and clothing.
- Schools should not include [branded items](#) that are only available from a specialist supplier as a compulsory part of their uniform or clothing policy. Further information is provided in the section below.
- Where schools include generic items such as jumpers or cardigans in their school colours, these items should be easily available from a range of retailers.
- Schools should avoid specifying the style of items of uniform, clothing or footwear, including outdoor items, unless there is a practical reason to do so which focuses on the practicality and suitability of these items to allow pupils to safely participate in a particular learning activity. This should take account of seasonal and weather changes and discourage the wearing of expensive, designer items.
- Schools should avoid variation in colours and items, such as ties, across different year or pupil groups to allow these items to be passed on to siblings and avoid the need to buy new items for a particular year group.

- Schools should consider the cost of washing and drying items of uniform and avoid items, such as some types of blazers or ties which require specialist cleaning or are difficult to dry.
- Schools should encourage pupils to wear protective items, such as aprons or wellies, when they are participating in activities that may cause their clothes or footwear to become dirty. Schools should consider having a supply of spares to give to pupils who need them.
- Secondary schools should explore with their associated primary schools, the feasibility of aligning aspects of their school uniform and clothing policy. They may consider similar core uniform items, for example, shirts, polo shirts, trousers, and skirts, to allow these to continue to be used by pupils in secondary schools to reduce costs for parents and carers.
- Schools should limit the frequency of changes to their uniform policy and where changes are made, consider whether items from the previous policy can be incorporated into the new policy, provided that they are in line with the principles set out in this guidance. Where changes are made, a transition period should be included. Further information on this is included in the [consultation section](#).

Some examples of approaches to designing affordable uniform and clothing policies are provided below. Further examples are available at the [Cost of the School Day Ideas Bank](#).

Case study – [Affordable uniform policy](#)

Buckie Community High School consulted pupils and families about school uniform, and how policy might change to make it more affordable for all.

Pupils at Buckie believed that uniform was important to reduce bullying but also felt that it could be simpler and more easily afforded. Pupils also discussed the challenges of the school blazer being mandatory for Prefects and suggested that this could be off-putting for some pupils who may be discouraged from applying for a Prefect position if there was an additional cost attached. The school has now taken steps to ensure that their uniform policy is simple and actively promotes plain black non-logoed items as acceptable uniform. The school now also clearly states on their uniform flyer that support is available with accessing a blazer for any pupil who may wish to become a Prefect.

Case Study - [Simple, affordable and inclusive uniform policy](#)

Keith Grammar School found that the best uniform policy is one developed in collaboration with the whole school. To reduce costs, the school changed their policy to specify black jumpers for all years rather than having a colour change for senior phase. They also decided to remove the need for logos on school jumpers to reduce cost pressures even further.

Keith Grammar took other steps to reduce costs to families, including supplying ties to students, using Pupil Equity Funding to provide jumpers and shirts for anyone who needs those items, and referring families to Moray School Bank.

Branded items of uniform

Branded items²⁴ of uniform and PE kit are usually only available to purchase through a specialist supplier and are often more expensive than purchasing generic uniform items. These items may be more difficult to access locally which can create challenges for parents and carers or lead to additional costs.

For these reasons, branded items of uniform, including blazers, should not be compulsory nor promoted or encouraged by schools. Instead, branded items should only be included as an optional alternative to generic items of uniform. Schools should carefully consider the inclusion of optional branded items. These considerations should focus primarily on affordability and sustainability, and also take account of equity, inclusion, pupil comfort and practicality.

Importantly, even when branded items are marked as optional in a uniform policy there is the risk that parents will feel under pressure to afford the 'better' more expensive items for their children. Therefore, schools should not promote branded items, including blazers, and be clear in their policies and communications with pupils, parents and carers that these items are not compulsory and that generic items are all that is needed or expected. Communications around this should be part of a supportive and poverty aware culture and aligned to wider efforts to reduce the cost of the school day.

Where schools choose to include optional branded items, they should consider the use of iron-on or sew-on badges as a lower-cost alternative to purchasing branded items of clothing from a specialist supplier. Schools may wish to consider the viability of providing badges at a low cost or other options to limit costs for parents or carers. Where branded items are included as an option, schools should widely promote the availability of support for parents and carers to access these items, for example, through pre-loved uniform initiatives or through other types of provision where necessary.

²⁴ The term 'branded' is used to describe an item of clothing with distinctive features, characteristics or colours which make it unique to a particular school. This may include a logo or badge, braiding on a school blazer, or any particular style of type or colour of clothing that is not available from a range of retailers.

Blazers

As noted above, schools should not include items such as blazers or other branded outerwear, as a compulsory part of their uniform policy. Schools should give very careful consideration to the inclusion of blazers as an optional item in their uniform policy. Alongside affordability, these considerations should focus on equity, inclusion, pupil comfort and practicality, including seasonal and weather suitability.

Importantly, where schools choose to include blazers as an optional item, they are expected to explore lower-cost alternatives to purchasing blazers from specialist suppliers, such as the use of a generic blazer with a sew-on, iron-on or pin badge. As above, where blazers are included as an optional item, schools should be clear that these are not needed or expected. Where they are included as an option, schools should widely promote the availability of support for parents and carers to access blazers through pre-loved uniform initiatives or other types of provision where appropriate.

Non-uniform items

Branded options for non-uniform items such as bags, lunch boxes or water bottles, should not be compulsory and generic items that are available from a range of retailers should be promoted. Schools should discourage the use of expensive designer items and football colours. Schools should support pupils, parents and carers to consider the environmental impact of these items and promote the use of affordable and sustainable products.

Distinguishing between different pupil groups

Some schools include items in their uniform policy to distinguish between different responsibilities, pupils or groups, for example, to identify pupils in the senior phase, including those in leadership roles, or to recognise different houses within their school. However, this can create additional costs for parents and carers and can limit opportunities to re-use and recycle these items. In the case of leadership roles, a requirement to purchase additional items could also discourage pupils from applying for these roles.

Schools are expected to minimise costs for parents and carers by limiting the number of items required and not creating additional or different requirements for different pupil groups. For example, where schools choose to include a blazer as an optional item, braiding should not be used to distinguish between different year groups or responsibilities in the senior phase. In addition, schools should not use different coloured clothing such as jumpers or polo shirts, to distinguish between different pupil groups.

Where schools have a practical reason to differentiate between pupils or pupil groups, they should consider other low-cost alternatives, such as badges and lanyards, or bibs for PE. Alternatively, schools may want to consider whether other items, such as ties, where these can be sourced at a low cost, could be used as a way to distinguish between pupils or pupil groups. However, schools should carefully consider the impact on pupils' comfort, alongside the cost and environmental effect

of implementing this. This should include thinking about whether this would limit opportunities for items to be reused by siblings or other pupils.

Contracts for branded items

Where a school's uniform policy includes optional branded items, the school or education authority should ensure a written contract is in place with their supplier for these items.

Schools and education authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have obtained the best value for money from suppliers. Any savings negotiated with suppliers should be passed on to parents and carers. Schools and education authorities should not enter into cashback arrangements. Schools and education authorities should ensure that suppliers continue to provide good value for money throughout the duration of the contract.

Single supplier contracts should be avoided unless regular tendering competitions are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where the best value is secured. This contract should be retendered at least every 5 years. Reviewing a policy does not necessarily have to result in changes being made.

As a general rule, the value of the contract will determine the type of procurement procedure a school needs to undertake. The higher the value of the contract the more rigorous the tender process will need to be. For example, this might range from seeking 3 quotes for low-value contracts to a full tendering exercise for high-value ones.

Compliance with competition law

The [Competition and Markets Authority](#) ("CMA") enforces competition law. It has previously written to schools and school uniform suppliers on the importance of ensuring that schools make sure that parents and carers can benefit from choice which drives down prices.²⁵

Schools should be aware that:

- where schools appoint uniform suppliers or retailers, they, and their uniform suppliers or retailers, their arrangements or conduct may be scrutinised under competition law.
- long term exclusive arrangements between schools and uniform suppliers or retailers may be problematic, especially where these arrangements provide uniform suppliers or retailers with a local monopoly and they abuse that position by, for instance, charging excessive prices.
- these types of arrangement or conduct may break competition law and could be investigated formally by the CMA, particularly where the conduct of suppliers or retailers is suspect. Businesses that are found to have broken competition law can be fined up to 10% of their annual turnover and ordered to change their behaviour.

²⁵ [Competition and Markets Authority - action to reduce the cost of uniforms](#)

- where a school sells to pupils and their families, the school should not seek to charge excessive prices and should use its own role as purchaser to drive a better bargain for pupils and their families.

Physical education (“PE”), Physical Activity and Sport

Clothing and footwear for PE should be fit for purpose and take account of the learning environment and weather conditions. Thought should be given to the activity taking place and whether pupils need specific clothing, footwear or equipment to participate safely and comfortably. Where additional items are needed, information should be provided to pupils, parents and carers at the earliest point and where appropriate, support identified to access any additional items through pre-loved uniform initiatives or other types of provision.

There should be no expectation for pupils to wear a uniform to participate in PE and branded items of clothing should not be encouraged or promoted by schools. The wearing of expensive, designer clothes and footwear and the wearing of football colours should be discouraged. Pupils should be supported and encouraged to take responsibility for their PE clothing and footwear to minimise items becoming lost or damaged.

Case study: [Uniform provision](#)

Mill of Mains Primary offers free pieces of uniform for families when needed.

"We have a new gym hall and so asking for parents to buy gym shoes in the middle of the year is a challenge for some and some children didn't yet have those. So we have trainers and gym shoes to offer children and these have come from donations and we are able to match up kids with these shoes. There is no fuss and it means that all kids can take part in gym lessons."

Case study: [Using PEF for PE kits](#)

Logans Primary School has been using Pupil Equity Funding and school funds to make sure that all children have the right clothing to take part in P.E.

"The school has provided a polo shirt for all pupils to wear on the days when they take part in P.E. This means that there is no need to bring clothes in to the school, everyone has the same shirt and no-one needs to buy a specific shirt for P.E. We have used both PEF and school funds to support this. It also means that no child is taking part in P.E. wearing inappropriate clothes."

As part of action to minimise the number of items required over the course of the school day or week, schools should consider the appropriateness of pupils wearing PE clothes on the days when they have PE. Taking this approach may reduce costs for parents and carers and could support pupils who may find it more challenging to change into their PE kit in school, including younger pupils or those with additional support needs. It may also minimise the risk of items of clothing or footwear becoming damaged or lost. However, it is very important that schools carefully consider, in consultation with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school

staff, any negative effects this may have on the comfort and hygiene of pupils. Things to think about could include the potential for pupils' clothing becoming wet or dirty following activities which have taken place outside or in adverse weather or how pupils, particularly those in the later stages of primary school and in secondary school, may be negatively impacted if they are unable to change clothes after a period of exercise.

Pupils who are representing their school competing in organised activities, may be required to have particular clothing, footwear or equipment to take part. The organisers of these activities should consider whether these requirements create barriers for pupils who want to participate and take steps to address them. This could include consideration of the cost of the items required and whether support is available from the school or wider community through donations, pre-loved uniform initiatives or sponsorship. Sportscotland have developed the '*Kit for All*' initiative to support those involved in organising sporting activities to work with schools and the community to identify local needs and provide access to recycled and pre-loved sports kit for pupils. Further information about this, including current local initiatives is available here: [Kit for All](#).

Sustainability

In addition to promoting an affordable and inclusive approach, it is vital that schools consider the environmental impact of their uniform and clothing policies and take action to achieve a sustainable approach. Schools are uniquely placed to influence the behaviour of their school community and are expected to commit to measures in their policies and communication that support a reduction in waste and promote the benefits of pre-loved clothing.

Schools should consider their approach to clothing and uniform within the context of Scotland's wider policy aims of Net Zero and action to address the climate emergency. This includes the rapid transformation required across all sectors of Scotland's economy and society to meet our national target of achieving net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Further information is available at [Net Zero Nation](#).

Schools should also consider their clothing and uniform policy within the context of [Learning for Sustainability \("LfS"\)](#). This approach sets out Scotland's ambition that every 3-18 place of education will become a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030. Driven by a cross-curricular, whole-setting approach, LfS aims to bring together global citizenship, sustainable development, and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding, and transformative learning experiences. Alongside environmental benefits, this approach can also support pupils to understand wider social impacts of sustainable approaches, such as ethical procurement and human rights within supply chains. Further information, including a range of resources for teachers and school staff is available from Education Scotland: [A summary of learning for sustainability resources | Resources | Education Scotland](#).

Many of the measures set out in the affordability section of this guidance are also relevant to achieving a sustainable approach to uniform and clothing. Measures such

as limiting the number of items of uniform or clothing required during the school day or week; promoting generic clothing; discouraging the use of branded items; recognising the cost of washing and drying uniform; and actions to protect clothing to extend its lifespan, are all examples of things that schools should consider as part of a sustainable approach to their uniform and clothing policy. Some examples of measures that schools are expected to consider to achieve a sustainable approach to uniform and clothing are listed below.

- Schools should promote pre-loved uniform and clothing as the first option and ensure there are appropriate arrangements in place for families to access this. This will reduce demand for new clothing to be purchased and minimise waste.
- Schools should limit the number of items of uniform, clothing or footwear required during the school day or week and ensure a proportionate approach to the number of items required which minimises unnecessary demands on pupils. This should include a flexible, non-prescriptive footwear policy which discourages expensive or designer brands and focuses on comfort and practicality.
- Schools should promote the use of generic clothing and colours and should not include [branded items](#) that are only available from a specialist supplier as a compulsory part of their uniform or clothing policy. This will maximise opportunities for the re-use of clothing by other pupils in schools or the local community and mean that clothing can continue to be used where pupils move schools.
- Schools should not include items such as blazers or other branded outerwear, as a compulsory part of their uniform policy, to increase opportunities for these items to be reused.
- Schools should include comfortable, adaptable and gender neutral items within their policies so that items can be worn by all pupils and reused easily. This should include a flexible policy for clothing and footwear for PE to maximise opportunities for these items to be re-used where appropriate.
- Schools should avoid variation in colours and items, such as ties, across different year or pupil groups. This will increase opportunities for these items to be passed on to siblings or other pupils and minimise the number of items that need to be bought new.
- Schools should consider standardised neutral school colours, for example, grey, black or navy, to increase opportunities for these items to be reused.
- To protect and extend the life of items, schools should consider the colour of items included within their policy and avoid using colours that are more likely to become stained or washed out.

It is recognised that a balance is required between implementing a sustainable approach while minimising costs for parents and carers. Lower cost items may be

less durable and therefore may last for a shorter time than items that cost more to purchase. This is one of the reasons why it is important that schools limit the number of clothing, uniform and footwear items that are required over the course of the school day or week and take actions to protect clothing and footwear.

Protecting clothing and footwear to keep it in good condition and extend its lifespan will also make it more likely that these items can be re-used by siblings or donated to pre-loved uniform initiatives. Schools should work with parents and carers to promote the long-term benefits of protecting and caring for clothing and footwear. Schools should also consider the materials used in their uniforms and promote and raise awareness of the benefits of clothing made from sustainable materials such as organic cotton and recyclable fabrics.²⁶

Schools should involve pupils in these considerations and consider appropriate learning opportunities to support discussion and activities about the environmental, social and economic benefits of a sustainable approach whilst highlighting the need for appropriate support to access and care for items.

Reusing clothing and pre-loved clothing schemes

Reusing school uniforms is a key part of both a sustainable and affordable approach. It is essential that schools have arrangements in place for parents and carers to access uniform items easily and discreetly through pre-loved uniform initiatives. It is recognised that some parents and carers may feel there is an expectation for them to buy new items of clothing or uniform, rather than accessing these items through pre-loved initiatives. Schools are expected to create a culture that highlights and promotes the environmental benefits of these approaches, alongside their advantages in terms of affordability for all families.

Many schools work closely with their Parent Councils to support the organisation and delivery of pre-loved uniform initiatives. This can include both permanent school uniform stalls and planned sales or swaps at school events. Schools should work with their parents and carers, any Parent Council where applicable and the wider community to consider and agree the approach that would work best for their school community. Schools should also consider involving pupils in these initiatives to help support their understanding of sustainable approaches and minimise any stigma that might be associated with them. This could be delivered through initiatives such as 'Eco-Schools,' giving it a strong sustainability branding to offset any stigma surrounding affordability.

Some schools or their Parent Councils also work closely with organisations in the local community to deliver a community-based approach. Schools should explore further opportunities to work with community-based organisations who can often offer advice and signposting to families on other sources of support as well as providing access to pre-loved uniform.

²⁶ This could include recycled wool, cotton and synthetic fabrics such as recycled polyester.

Schools are expected to widely promote pre-loved uniform initiatives to all their parents and carers. Schools may want to consider using social media, the school's website, or other regular communications, such as a weekly newsletter, to share information on how to access pre-loved items of uniform and clothing. Schools should consider exploring opportunities with parents and carers and the local community for spare clothing or uniform to be donated to be used again by another pupil. As part of this, schools should consider opportunities to donate excess pre-loved, generic items to community-based organisations. This could support the re-use of clothing locally and prevent items being thrown away. Schools should also consider asking for donations of items that are no longer in good condition but can be repurposed and used for example, as protective clothing or during outdoor learning. Schools are best placed to understand the circumstances of families within the school community and how best to approach this.

There are many good examples of different approaches to reusing uniform and clothing across schools in Scotland. Some examples are included below and further examples can be found at the [Cost of the School Day Ideas Bank](#) and [Connect's Success Stories](#).

Case study: [Parent-led uniform stall](#)

Giffnock Primary School Parent Equalities Group has been running a monthly Pop-Up Uniform Stall...The group thought carefully about how to make the stall attractive to parents and also remove any stigma that might exist around pre-loved uniform. In the future, the group hopes to tie the pop-up shop in with other school and community events...They would also like to highlight the pop-up shops to parents at key points in the school calendar.

Case Study: [Eco Uniform Exchange](#)

"We wanted to offer free school uniform to all Head of Muir Primary and ELCC families through easy access to our Eco Uniform Exchange... The Eco Uniform Exchange solely relies on parent and local community donations to make it work...We recognised that some people may not be able to come into the school, so I created an online Microsoft form that allows for a request for uniform. We want to make sure that everyone can have the same access."

Case Study: [ApparelXchange](#)

ApparelXchange is a pre-loved uniform organisation that collects unwanted uniform and lost property, runs swap and sales events in schools, provides discrete clothing packages for families who need extra support and retails low-cost uniform within their shop and online. It also provides workshops and educational events for parents, teachers and pupils to provide knowledge around clothing supply chain and the social, economic and environmental benefits of reusing, with the intention of motivating behaviour and empowering people to be more sustainable.

Other considerations

In addition to the [key considerations](#) set out in previous sections, schools should also take account of the following issues in the development and implementation of their school uniform and clothing policies.

Weather and seasonal suitability

To support pupils to be comfortable and ready to learn and play, schools should have a flexible uniform, clothing and footwear policy that takes account of seasonal or weather changes.

Schools should consider including items in their policy which will help pupils stay warm in colder months and cool in warmer months. This could include items such as shorts, leggings, hoodies, or jumpers. Schools should take a flexible approach which promotes gender equality and avoids gendered assumptions about what type of clothing or uniform is preferred. Pupils should be encouraged to make their own choices for example whether they would prefer to wear skirts or trousers.

In colder and wetter months, schools should be mindful of financial or other barriers that families may experience in accessing appropriate items of clothing and footwear and possible challenges of washing and drying uniform and clothing. Schools should consider a more relaxed approach that is flexible and supportive to ensure that pupils are warm, dry, and comfortable during these periods and can participate fully at school.

Schools should ensure that their policy supports pupils to be suitably dressed and protected from the elements throughout the year when travelling to and from school and learning or playing outside. Schools should have a flexible policy in relation to outdoor clothing and footwear which promotes comfort, safety, practicality and active travel. Again, schools should be mindful of potential challenges faced by families in accessing suitable outdoor clothing and footwear and provide appropriate support to families, including signposting to pre-loved uniform initiatives or other types of provision where appropriate.

Schools should avoid specifying particular styles or colours of coats or jackets and discourage the use of expensive designer items and football colours. Schools should take steps to ensure that pupils know how to be safe when travelling to and from school and recognise the dangers of wearing outdoor clothing that makes it more difficult for them to be seen. This is particularly important in autumn and winter months when it may be dark when pupils are travelling to and from school. Where schools have a policy that includes an optional school blazer, flexibility is expected at times of the year when the weather is either very cold or very hot.

Outdoor learning

Schools should consider opportunities for outdoor learning within the context of Learning for Sustainability and its associated action plan. A summary of resources for outdoor learning is available here: [A summary of outdoor learning resources | Resources | Education Scotland](#).

Schools should ensure that pupils have appropriate clothing and footwear to enable them to be warm, dry and comfortable when participating in outdoor learning activities. Pupils, parents and carers should be given as much notice as possible when outdoor learning is planned. Schools should consider whether support is available from within the school or local community to support pupils to access clothing to participate and engage with outdoor learning. Some examples of how schools might do this are available within [Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland](#).

Special Occasions and school trips

Special occasions

There are many times during a pupil's school life, where they will come together to celebrate achievements or mark important occasions. This may include events that take place during a school day, such as celebrating religious festivals, for example, Christmas, Eid-ul-Fitr or Diwali or participating in charitable events, such as Children in Need or World Book Day. This may also include occasions that take place outwith normal school hours, in the evenings or at weekends, and may include events to mark leaving secondary school or moving on from primary school.

These occasions are an important part of a pupil's school journey, and many children and young people look forward to particular events throughout the school year. However, schools should recognise that there may be barriers to participation in these occasions. This could include the need to buy extra or additional clothing to participate which may create additional financial pressures for parents and carers. Pupils may also experience social or other pressures in relation to these special occasions which could cause pupils to feel excluded or embarrassed and could in some instances lead to bullying. As set out in the [key considerations](#) section, schools should do all that they can to ensure that these occasions are inclusive, non-discriminatory, sustainable and affordable for all pupils.

For all special occasions or events, schools should work with teachers and school staff to consider the number of events that take place during the school year and whether these can be limited or spaced out to avoid multiple occasions occurring close together. Schools should consider alternative ways to mark these days and occasions that do not put financial pressure on families and risk non-participation for some pupils. Pupils, parents and carers should be given as much notice as possible. Where appropriate, schools should work with any Parent Council and the local community to consider opportunities for a whole school-community approach to mark special occasions.

Further information for schools highlighting these issues and suggesting ways that they can be navigated sensitively in the maximum interests of equity and inclusion is available in the [EIS Briefing on the Equity Impact of School Activities](#). Information about the cost of having fun at school and ideas and good practice to make these more inclusive is also available in the Child Poverty Action Group's report which is available here – [The Cost of Having Fun at School | CPAG](#).

Non-uniform and dress-down days

Schools should be aware that pupils may feel anxious or embarrassed about non-uniform or dress-down days. They may be worried about standing out, their appearance or the additional stress these events might cause their parents or carers. These events can also have an impact on pupil attendance.²⁷ Pupils' concerns about events could be founded on fears around bullying or racism or other forms of discrimination. Therefore, alongside an inclusive and supportive approach to these occasions, it is essential that schools have robust policies and procedures in place to respond effectively to these issues.

Schools should carefully consider their approach to these events. This includes consideration of how to minimise or avoid costs for parents and carers, reduce pressures on pupils and promote sustainability. Schools should consider limiting the number of events and explore opportunities to celebrate them in a different way. This could include encouraging the wearing of items that pupils already have at home or that can be created or reused in school. This could also include arranging appropriate learning activities related to a particular theme, such as creating artwork, designing publicity materials, or decorating an item of clothing. Schools should consider asking parents and carers who are able, to donate clothing or items that they no longer need to be used or repurposed for these events. Where schools ask for a donation for these events, this should be minimal and always optional.

Schools should consider how to ensure equal participation for all pupils. This includes those who may need additional support to participate. Where appropriate, schools should ensure that this support is provided in line with their duties under the 2004 Act, the 2010 Act and in the context of the [key principles of inclusion](#).

Some examples of different approaches to these special events are included below.

Case Study: [World Book Week tents](#)

In 2020 Dundee City Council asked all schools to come up with ways of celebrating World Book Day in the most inclusive way possible, with little or zero cost to families. Downfield Primary School put on a week of events centred around two 'reading tents' to make sure everyone had the chance to enjoy books with their friends. The school also ran a book swap, and invited guest readers to the tent.

Case study: [Stress-free Halloween celebrations at school](#)

Miller Primary School's approach to Halloween is designed to take the pressure off parents and make sure the children have a great time.

"Our Halloween parties are always set during the school day. The reasons behind that is we want to take the pressure off them having them after school. We want to make sure that the parents don't feel that they have to go over the top with costumes, that they have to pay a lot of money for costumes. When it's run during the day we can make sure that every child has a costume, that they can participate.

²⁷ Page 31, Attendance: Understanding the Issues November 2023, [Improving attendance in Scotland | Attendance | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

We can provide the games and the food, and we just feel it's a much calmer experience."

Occasions outside of normal school hours

For occasions that take place outwith normal school hours, schools should listen to pupils and include them, their parents and carers, and teachers and school staff in the planning of special occasions. Pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff should be given as much notice as possible and provided opportunities to share any concerns they may have about the affordability or inclusiveness of an event. Particular consideration should be given to events or occasions where there is an additional cost to attend, such as end of year proms. These costs should be minimised, and information should be made available to pupils, parents and carers at the earliest possible opportunity with options provided to spread the cost over a period of time.

Schools should consider if there are any local initiatives which may help pupils to access clothing and footwear for these occasions or, in consultation with pupils, they could explore opportunities to hold events at a lower cost.

Case study: [Pre-loved prom initiative](#)

Auchenharvie Academy has developed a new initiative to remove costs associated with attending their prom for their senior pupils. The school has collected a large number of donated new and pre-loved prom dresses, suits, shoes, accessories and organised special events to showcase these to their senior pupils. The events will provide the opportunity for pupils to try on outfits and choose their prom outfit with friends and family.

The initiative has received incredible support from the local community and local businesses. Pupils are keen to ensure that dresses can be reused to support the next year of senior pupils to attend their prom and continue the initiative at Auchenharvie Academy.

School trips

School trips are important in supporting pupils to engage with the curriculum. Many trips that take place during the school day will not require additional items of clothing or footwear. When planning school trips, schools should consider whether any additional clothing or footwear is necessary to ensure that pupils are comfortable and suitably dressed to participate. It is important for schools to consider the impact of any additional requirements on pupils, parents and carers and consider action to minimise additional costs. Where additional items are required, information about this should be provided to pupils, parents, and carers at the earliest opportunity and where appropriate, support identified to access any additional items through pre-loved uniform initiatives or other types of provision. Schools should consider whether any additional actions are necessary to support the safeguarding and easy identification of pupils when they are attending school trips. Suggestions to promote an affordable and inclusive approach to these trips is also available in [EIS Briefing on the Equity Impact of School Activities](#).

In the case of residential experiences, schools should carefully consider the cost of clothing required within the context of the overall cost of the trip and consider actions to minimise costs to ensure that all pupils can fully participate. Information about any specific requirements for clothing and footwear should be provided to pupils, parents and carers at the earliest point and where appropriate, support identified to access these items through pre-loved initiatives or other types of provision. Further information and practical advice about residential trips is available in Education Scotland's [Practical Guidance on Outdoor Learning](#).

Information, consultation, and complaints

Information

Schools should provide clear, accessible information to pupils, parents and carers about their school uniform and clothing policy.

It is good practice for information about a school's clothing and uniform policy to be included in their school handbook. The school handbook must be reviewed annually and updated where necessary. It must be made available to all parents or carers of existing and prospective pupils on request and be available on request to a parent or carer in an alternative form including in a language other than English if it is reasonable to do so. Further information about school handbooks can be found here – [School Handbook Guidance: Information for local authorities and schools](#).

School uniform and clothing policies could also feature on a school's website or noticeboard and be shared with pupils, parents and carers via social media, electronic contact or letters home. To ensure that all pupils, parents and carers are made aware of the school's policies on school uniform and clothing, schools should be mindful of different family circumstances within their school community and take necessary steps to provide accessible information, for example in another language or format. Information about a school's policy should also include a point of contact at school whom parents and carers can speak to if they have any concerns or problems with uniform or clothing.

Policies should be made available to parents and carers in parent friendly and accessible language and should avoid education-related jargon. Where this must be used, a glossary or something similar should be included to explain these terms. Schools could consider working with any Parent Council where applicable or other parent groups to develop their written policy to ensure that it is accessible and easy to read.

Positive communication with families

When sharing information or reminders with pupils, parents and carers about their approach to school uniform and clothing, schools should ensure accessibility and clear messaging. Communications from schools should reflect wider efforts to promote equity and inclusion and reduce the cost of the school day as part of a supportive and poverty aware culture. This may include signposting to pre-loved uniform initiatives or other sources of support, such as information about the school

clothing grant or other financial support. Further information is provided in the section on [signposting families to sources of support](#).

When communicating with pupils, parents and carers, it is important that schools are mindful of the language that they use. Schools should ensure that messaging promotes an inclusive and supportive culture. To achieve this, schools should avoid prescriptive or demanding language and instead use nurturing and inclusive language. For example, instead of sharing messaging stating, “full PE uniform must be worn,” try “appropriate clothing for PE is required,” with examples given of what is expected. Schools should also be considerate of the frequency and times of the year when issuing reminder messages to families about school uniform. For example, messages during the festive period or pre-summer holidays could add to already existing financial or other pressures on families.

Schools should share information about sustainable and cost-effective options for school uniforms, such as pre-loved uniform initiatives. They should also regularly share information about the [school clothing grant](#) and other available financial support. When communicating with parents and carers, schools should always do so in a way to reduce stigma around pre-loved or cost-effective options, while focusing their messages on more sustainable choices to encourage a positive culture change. It is best practice for schools to issue universal communications about available support which uses inclusive language and is directed to the whole school community, rather than messaging which highlights specific groups. For example, schools should avoid using terms such as ‘vulnerable families’ or ‘families in need.’ This is particularly important as schools may not always know who is in need of support so should avoid assumptions. Communication around support available should be repeated regularly, on a variety of platforms and at key points in the year such as induction visits for new pupils, the start of term, pre-summer holidays and in sufficient time to meet school clothing grant application deadlines.

Consultation

To support an affordable, equitable and sustainable approach, schools should limit the frequency of changes to their uniform and clothing policy. Where schools are considering making changes to their policy, this should always be done in consultation with pupils, parents and carers, teachers and school staff and other relevant parties. Schools should consider a range of ways to seek views on potential changes. Types of engagement could include, surveys, engagement with any Parent Council where applicable, engagement with the Student Council or activities with pupils in class. Schools should ensure that they consider and mitigate any barriers to participation and take active steps to ensure that there are arrangements in place to support engagement with harder to reach pupils, parents and carers, for example, care experienced children and young people, young carers and Gypsy/Traveller families.

Parent Councils are a good starting point for consultation, but it is important for schools to consult with a range of groups to ensure a variety and diverse range of views are gathered. For example, schools should consult with groups like additional support for learning (“ASL”) parent support groups, equalities groups, English as an

additional language (“EAL”) groups and similar parent or carer groups. Parent groups can also work in partnership with schools to carry out consultations through focus groups, surveys and using their own channels of communication.

To be truly meaningful, consultation should always involve two-way communication and provide opportunities for views to have an actual impact on the development of the policy. There are a range of resources available to support meaningful consultation and engagement. This includes Education Scotland's [guidance on supporting communication with parents and carers](#) and the Scottish Government's [guidance to support the involvement of children and young people in decision making](#).

Where schools are considering changes to their uniform or clothing policy, they should consider the impact of these changes in terms of affordability, sustainability, equality and inclusion. Schools should carefully consider the balance between the intended positive impact on pupils, parents, and carers and any negative consequences which could arise, to determine if change is necessary. Where there is a potential negative impact, schools should take appropriate action to mitigate this.

All schools must consider the requirements of the 2010 Act. Education authorities and the managers of grant-aided schools must also consider the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty of the 2010 Act and must assess the equality impact of proposed and revised policies and practices.²⁸

Where, following consultation, schools do make changes to their uniform or clothing policy, they should include a transition period of a minimum of one full school year. Schools should consider whether items from the previous policy can be incorporated into their new policy. This will limit costs for families and support the use of pre-loved or second-hand items of clothing. Where items from the previous policy are incorporated into the new policy, this should be in line with the key principles set out in this guidance.

Complaints

Good communication with pupils, parents and carers is key to effective implementation of school policies, including those related to clothing and uniform, and can support the prompt resolution of complaints or concerns. Schools should engage regularly with pupils, parents and carers about their uniform and clothing policy and provide information about how concerns can be raised.

Where concerns or complaints do arise, these should be dealt with in line with local complaints procedures, which are focused on addressing issues at the most local level where possible. Where appropriate, schools should continue to engage positively with pupils, parents and carers to try to resolve concerns or complaints with minimal disruption to learning.

²⁸ [The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#)

Where there is a concern that a school has failed to discharge a statutory legal duty related to education²⁹, any interested party can make a complaint to Scottish Ministers. Further information is available in the Scottish Government's [guidance on section 70 complaints](#).

Where it is alleged that a pupil has been discriminated against on the basis of a protected characteristic, the 2010 Act provides a mechanism for a claim to be raised. How these claims are considered will depend on which protected characteristic the claim is being made in relation to.

- Information about claims related to all protected characteristics is available here: [Equality Advisory and Support Service \(equalityadvisoryservice.com\)](#) and [Problems at school – Citizens Advice](#)
- Information about claims relating to disability discrimination of pupils in school education is available here: [Making a Claim | First-tier Tribunal for Scotland \(Health and Education Chamber\)](#)

Supporting and encouraging pupils to actively and safely participate in school life

There is no legal requirement for uniform to be worn by pupils at schools in Scotland. Schools should have a uniform or clothing policy in place where it meets the needs of their pupils. Schools are responsible for the delivery and implementation of their policy.

Schools should take a sensitive and pragmatic approach to implementing their uniform and clothing policy. This should be underpinned by an inclusive approach which takes account of the individual needs, circumstances and identity of pupils.

Care should be taken to avoid making assumptions about a pupil who is not wearing school uniform. There are a wide range of reasons that could impact on a pupil's ability to observe a school's uniform or clothing policy. These could include family circumstances, including financial circumstances or living between more than one household; an additional support need, including pupils who may find wearing particular clothing uncomfortable, where the pupil is care experienced, a young carer or from an Armed Forces family; or where children and young people have a disability or medical condition.

Schools should consider whether there are underlying factors which are impacting a pupil or their attendance at school and where appropriate, take supportive, rather than punitive action to address these, in line with their broader legal duties.

Pupils should be supported and encouraged to observe a school's uniform or clothing policy, but they should not face negative consequences if they are unable to do so. The response to non-wearing of uniform should be rooted in understanding, support and empowerment. It should be aligned to schools' broader policies to

²⁹ Further information is set out within Annex A - Legislative and policy context

support relationships and behaviour, promote attendance and reduce absence. Teachers and school staff should be supported to implement a whole school approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour, aligned to the guiding principles of [Included, Engaged and Involved \(part 2\)](#).

Schools should not prevent any pupil from participating in an activity or subject due to their clothing or footwear, unless their participation would present a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of pupils and staff. It is recognised that there may be activities that require particular clothing, footwear or other items to either be worn or not worn to ensure the health and safety of all pupils or staff. Where this is the case, schools should work with pupils, parents and carers, and teachers and school staff to ensure that this is effectively communicated, and appropriate support is provided to pupils to support their participation. This could include consideration of whether the clothing required can be provided by the school. In doing this, schools must ensure that they comply with their legal obligations under the 2010 Act and their broader education duties.

Pupils who are unable to observe a school's uniform or clothing policy should **never** be excluded from school for this reason. This includes formal exclusions recorded through SEEMIS and internal exclusions, including isolation, or sending pupils home for a period of the school day.

Signposting families to sources of support

There is a range of support available to parents and carers to help them with the cost of school uniform and clothing.

The [school clothing grant](#) is available to parents and carers who are in receipt of certain benefits. In 2024/25, the grant pays a minimum amount of £120 for primary school pupils and £150 for secondary school pupils. The eligibility criteria to receive school clothing grant is set by individual education authorities. Schools should widely promote the availability of school clothing grant and publicise the eligibility criteria in their individual education authority area. Where changes are made to the eligibility criteria, schools should communicate this to all parents and carers as soon as possible. Where appropriate, schools should offer support to parents and carers to apply for school clothing grants.

Schools should also consider whether there are other sources of financial support available to parents and carers. This might include the Scottish Child Payment or financial support provided by the education authority. Schools should work with partners to make sure that they are able to provide clear, accessible and up-to-date information to parents and carers about benefits, money advice and income maximisation services in their local communities. An overview of financial support available can be found here: [Financial help in the school years | CPAG](#).

Schools should also share with parents and carers information about other resources or support services that offer advice and information. This could include local or community services and initiatives. It could also include [Parent Club](#), a website that

offers resources for parents and carers in Scotland on a range of different topics. Parent Club maintains a [Family Support Directory](#) that provides signposting to organisations, benefits and information. Information for families about local sources of support and resources can be found here: [ALISS - A Local Information System for Scotland | ALISS](#).

Annex A – Legislative and policy context

This section sets out information on the legislative and policy context in which this guidance and local decisions about school uniform and clothing should be considered.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) is an international human rights treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children.³⁰ It contains 54 Articles which set out the rights that all children are entitled to and how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.³¹ The Convention should be considered as a whole, however, the most relevant Articles for schools to take account of when considering uniform and clothing policies are summarised below.

Article 2 – Non-discrimination

The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

Article 13 - Freedom of expression

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 28 - Right to education

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Education

This guidance should be considered within the context of [overarching education policies](#) to support the learning and teaching of pupils. Information on relevant legislation is provided below.

³⁰ The Scottish Government intends to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. Further information about this is available at [Children's rights - Human rights - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

³¹ [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

Education (Scotland) Act 1980

[The Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) (“the 1980 Act”) sets out the general duties and powers of education authorities in relation to providing school education for children and young people living in their area.

Education authorities have a duty to provide school clothing to certain pupils under certain circumstances.³² Section 54(1) of the 1980 Act provides that where it is brought to the notice of an education authority that a pupil attending a public school does not have adequate or suitable clothing to take full advantage of the education provided, the education authority must make such provision to ensure the pupil is “sufficiently and suitably clad” during the period the pupil is attending school (including days when the school does not meet).³³ The education authority can seek to recover costs related to this provision from the pupil’s parent if it does not place the parent in financial hardship.³⁴

Education authorities may provide clothing to pupils who are boarders, or pupils who are attending nursery schools or classes under their management³⁵; special clothing (for example, laboratory wear) or PE clothing to pupils in attendance at public schools or other educational establishments under their management³⁶; and make arrangements for clothing for pupils who are attending independent schools where appropriate³⁷.

A complaint can be made under section 70 of the 1980 Act where any interested party believes that a responsible body has failed to discharge a statutory educational duty. If, after investigation, the Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the responsible body has failed to discharge the duty, they may make an order under section 70 of the 1980 Act declaring the responsible body to be in default and requiring them to discharge the said duty. Further information is available at [guidance on making a section 70 complaint](#).

Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000

The [Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000](#) sets out children and young peoples’ right to school education³⁸ and the related duties placed on Scottish Ministers and education authorities. The Act requires education authorities to have due regard to the views of children and young people in decisions that significantly affect them³⁹ and consider the views of other persons such as parents and carers or other appropriate individuals and organisations.

³² Section 54(1) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³³ In the context of section 54, a pupil attending a public school includes children aged 5, but not yet in school, and children and young people with additional support needs as set out in section 54(4) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³⁴ Section 54(2) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³⁵ Section 54(3) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³⁶ Section 11(2) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³⁷ Section 55(b) of [the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#).

³⁸ Section 1 of the [Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000](#).

³⁹ Section 2(2) of the [Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000](#).

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

The [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006](#) aims to help schools, education authorities and others to engage with parents meaningfully in the education of their children and in the wider school community. It requires Scottish Ministers and education authorities to promote the involvement of parents in their children's school education at public schools.⁴⁰ The Act aims to support parents to be involved with their child's education and learning; be welcomed as active participants in the life of the school; and encouraged to express their views on school education generally and work in partnership with the school. It also places a duty on education authorities to promote the establishment of, and support the operation of Parent Councils.⁴¹

Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

The [Education \(School and Placing Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) requires education authorities to provide certain information to parents and carers of children who are attending or considering attending a school. This includes the provision of supplementary information on the general policy or practice in relation to pupils wearing school uniform⁴². Schools must ensure that where this information is provided, it is kept up-to-date and provided to parents and carers in a language other than English where requested.

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

The [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#) sets out the legal duties of education authorities and the rights of parents, children and young people to additional support for learning. The Act aims to ensure that all children and young people are provided with the necessary support to help them work towards achieving their fullest potential. Section (1A) of the 2004 Act recognises children and young people who are looked after⁴³ (care experienced) as having an additional support need, unless the education authority forms the view that they do not require additional support in order to benefit from school education⁴⁴. The [Supporting Learners' Code of Practice](#) provides guidance for education authorities on carrying out their duties under the 2004 Act. Guidance on the [presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting](#) is also relevant in supporting an inclusive approach which identifies and addresses barriers to learning for all children and young people.

Equality Act 2010

[The Equality Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act") provides the legal framework for protection from discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the grounds of protected

⁴⁰ Section 1 of the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006](#).

⁴¹ Section 5(3) of the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006](#).

⁴² Paragraph 13(u) of schedule 1 of the [Education \(School and Placing Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#).

⁴³ Within the meaning of section 17(6) of the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#).

⁴⁴ Section (1A) of the [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#).

characteristics.⁴⁵ The Act's requirements of schools in relation to provision of education and access to benefits, facilities or services is set out in Chapter 1 of Part 6 of the Act. Under the Act, it is unlawful for a school to discriminate against an applicant or pupil in relation to:

- admissions
- the provision of education
- access to any benefit, facility or service
- exclusions
- any other detriment

It is also unlawful for a school to harass or victimise an applicant or pupil.

[Section 149](#) of the 2010 Act sets out the legal duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to do the following in the exercise of their functions⁴⁶.

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

All education authority and grant-aided schools in Scotland must assess the equality impact of proposed and revised policies and practices. The EHRC has published [Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: Scotland](#) to support public bodies to carry out their functions in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty of the 2010 Act.

Keeping the Promise to Care Experienced Children and Young People

Care experienced children and young people are sometimes referred to as 'looked after.' The [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) sets out many of the duties, powers and responsibilities that local authorities hold in respect of their looked after children. The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) sets out the duties and responsibilities of corporate parents to work together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people. Further information on the role of corporate parents is provided within the [statutory guidance on Part 9 \(Corporate Parenting\) of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).

Following the [Independent Care Review](#), a commitment has been made to [Keep the Promise](#) for care experienced children, young people and their families. It contributes to our ambition for every child in Scotland to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

⁴⁵ The protected characteristics under the schools' provisions are: disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

⁴⁶ As defined by section 150 of the [Equality Act 2010](#).

United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The [United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNCRPD) promotes, protects and ensures the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and promotes respect for their inherent dignity. School should consider [Article 7](#) in the design and implementation of their uniform and clothing policies.

Article 7 – Children with Disabilities

1. States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.
2. In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
3. States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realise that right.

Policies to address poverty

This guidance should be considered within the context of overarching policies to tackle poverty and address disadvantage. For pupils, this includes addressing the [poverty related attainment gap](#) and universal and targeted measures to address the cost of the school day, such as [free school meals](#) and the [school clothing grant](#).

Policies to support the environment

This guidance should be considered within the context of policies to support sustainability and action to tackle the climate emergency. This includes:

- [Wellbeing economy](#)
- [Net zero nation](#)
- [Action on climate change](#)
- [Circular Economy](#)



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