

Midlothian School Uniform and Clothing Policy**Report by Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People & Partnerships****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations**

Council members are asked to note the national policy (September 2024) and approve the expectations for Midlothian schools from August 2025 onwards.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

On 25 June 2024 a motion was heard at Council regarding school uniform and the negative impact that expensive branded items can have on some Midlothian families. The motion was passed and the Executive Director of Children, Young People & Partnerships was asked to notify schools that unbranded uniform should be adopted. This report provides an update on progress made towards this ambition.

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3 Background

3.1 Definition

School uniform and clothing is any items of clothing and footwear worn during the school day. This may include traditional items of uniform; clothing for PE; clothing for outdoor learning and clothing worn to attend trips activities or occasions during or beyond the school day.

3.2 Legal 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 to support pupils to identify with their school and to feel accepted, respected and connected. School uniform can also help to promote attendance, reduce stigma and peer pressure and support safeguarding.

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the child is clear that each of our young people have the right to dignity, participation, social justice and the right to belong. School uniform contributes to fulfilment of these rights.

Responsibility for school uniform and clothing policy usually sits with individual schools.

3.3 National Guidance

In September 2024 Scottish Government published *School uniform and clothing in Scotland -Guidance for schools and education authorities*. As well as a summary document Scottish Government also released guidance for children and young people (*School uniform and clothing information for children and young people*) and for parents and carers (*School uniform and clothing in Scotland – a resource for parents and carers*).

The guidance sets out key principles that should underpin uniform and clothing policies and what schools are expected to consider in the development, implementation and review of these policies.

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 in 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

Branded items of Uniform

The national guidance is particularly explicit about branded items of uniform: *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 be on the practicality and suitability of items to allow pupils to actively and safely participate in a range of learning activities, including PE and sport.*

(School uniform guidance, page 13)

Branded items 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.

Where schools choose to include optional branded items, they should consider the use of iron-on or sew on as a lower cost alternative as a lower-cost alternative to purchasing branded items of clothing from specialist suppliers. Schools may wish to consider the viability of providing badges at a low cost or other options to limit costs for parents and carers.

(School Uniform guidance, page 23)

3.4 Midlothian position

Following the motion approved at Council in June 2025, the Parent & Learner Liaison Officer (PLLO) consulted with pupils, parents and school leaders on school uniform policy. This engagement confirmed that across Midlothian we have a range of approaches to school uniform and strong opinions about key elements that schools wish to retain such as P7 leavers hoodies.

This feedback combined with the publication of national guidance in September 2024 has helped create expectations for all Midlothian schools but allows for local decision making based on local context.

3.5 Midlothian expectations

- All schools should have a school uniform and clothing policy, developed with pupils, parents, and staff, which meets the needs of their pupils and wider school community.
- The school policy should reflect national policy in terms of affordability, equality, diversity & inclusion and sustainability.
- Schools should ensure their uniform policy is clear and accessible to pupils, parents and carers, and available on the school website and handbook.

- Schools are asked to support families with access to pre-loved uniform and should promote the school clothing grant.
- Schools should carefully consider their approach to special occasions, school trips and dress-down days and mitigate any barriers to participation.
- Schools should limit the frequency of changes to uniform policy and changes must be agreed through consultation and implemented over a period of time.

3.6 Support for families

The cost of school clothing can be challenging for families especially with replacements required throughout the year. There are 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 £120 for primary pupils and £150 for secondary school pupils. Parents and carers can apply for this if they feel they meet the criteria. Further details on the Midlothian Council website.

Most schools have arrangements in place for pre-loved clothing and uniform. Information about this is available from directly from the school.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Not applicable

4.2 Digital

Not applicable

4.3 Risk

Adopting a consistent approach across Midlothian schools will help to promote positive school attendance and sense of belonging. Aligning with non-statutory guidelines will reduce the risk of challenge from families.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Midlothian is committed to equalities and ensuring our obligations in terms of UNCRC. The revised school uniform guidelines will ensure that school policies are developed in conjunction with children, staff and families and that costs are kept to a minimum.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Midlothian School Uniform and Clothing Guidance for Schools

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Insert text here

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Insert text here

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Insert text here

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Insert text here

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Insert text here

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

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