

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE23 June 2022Report by Director of EducationSTANDARD CIRCULAR 6: DRESSING FOR EXCELLENCE  
A DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON SCHOOL UNIFORM**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update the Education Committee on the refreshed Dressing for Excellence Policy (Appendix 1) which outlines the approaches to be taken with regards to school uniform, in order to meet the duties and obligations outlined in the Equalities Act 2010, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the updated Dressing for Excellence Policy.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Education Committee will recall the Dressing for Excellence Policy which was presented to them in August 2011. It was created to ensure that the excellence achieved by our schools in many areas of their uniform is used as a valuable tool in creating a school climate which advances our vision of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, through Excellent Experiences.

4. The Dressing for Excellence Policy should support East Renfrewshire establishments in working to achieve excellence through equity for all learners and in doing so must consider how uniform policies might affect groups represented in the school, especially those who share protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

5. Reducing the Cost of Living is a key driver in local and national anti-poverty strategies, including East Renfrewshire's Local Child Poverty Action Plan. The Dressing for Excellence Policy has been updated with the intention of ensuring the cost of school uniforms are affordable for all families.

**REPORT**

6. Dressing for Excellence aims to lend support to schools and parents in setting consistent and high standards for dress codes and promoting a practical and inclusive approach to developing policy on uniform. It offers guidance to schools in ensuring uniform policies align with the Equalities Act 2010, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

7. Whilst there is no legislation that deals specifically with school uniform or other aspects of appearance, the policy provides guidance to schools on appropriate approaches to introducing, changing and maintaining uniforms. It is for establishments, in consultation with their stakeholders, to decide on the format of their chosen uniform and when doing so they must prevent any direct or indirect discrimination against pupils as a result of their gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion/belief.

8. Establishments have the support of the Education Department to determine a list of approved items which promote the establishment's ethos. However, the policy is clear that in determining approved items, schools should ensure that the uniform can be purchased from within the Clothing Grant available. Schools should consider how they can support parents and pupils to manage costs in ways that preserve dignity, for example through school uniform hiring and recycling schemes.

## **CONSULTATION**

9. This strategy is the result of a wide consultation including parents and carers via the Parent Council Chairs Forum and Equalities Forum, Head Teachers, Equalities Co-ordinators and children and young people. The Scottish Government has announced a national consultation on school uniform and following this will publish guidance. The results of the consultation undertaken within East Renfrewshire will be used to contribute to national consultation and the Dressing for Excellence Policy will be reviewed in light of any changed that might be required nationally.

## **FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

10. There are no financial implications for the Department or schools related to this paper.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

11. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the updated Dressing for Excellence Policy.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
23 June 2022

### Report Author

Marilyn Brennan, Quality Improvement Officer  
Marilyn.Brennan@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity)  
Tel: 0141 577 3253  
Siobhan.McColgan2@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

### Appendices

Appendix 1: East Renfrewshire Council Dressing for Excellence Policy

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Council Offices  
211 Main Street  
Barrhead  
East Renfrewshire  
G78 1XB

Dear Colleague,

**REVISED STANDARD CIRCULAR No 6**  
**SCHOOL UNIFORM: *DRESSING FOR EXCELLENCE***

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**1.**

**Rationale**

1.1

'Climate and ethos are key determinants in promoting social and emotional wellbeing and mental health for all in schools. This is described as 'core values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the school and classroom' and includes school 'connectedness' and a feeling of being accepted, respected and bonded to the school environment. [...] Research into authoritative school 'climate' indicates that it is one in which there is a balance between high expectations and structure on one hand and warmth and support on the other. This authoritative 'climate' has been cited as reducing student dropout rates, improving attainment and leading to less bullying and victimisation in schools.'

*Developing a positive whole-school ethos and culture, Scottish Government 2018*

## 1.2

School dress codes can play an important role in promoting equality, creating a positive ethos and nurturing a sense of belonging. In this respect uniform is another way in which East Renfrewshire establishments work to achieve excellence and equity for all learners. Uniform is a valuable tool in creating a school climate which advances our vision of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving, through Excellent Experiences.

## 1.3

Research undertaken by the Cost of the School Day Project, as well as consultation with children, young people and parents in East Renfrewshire, has found that families value school uniform as the most affordable option for school clothing, and that uniform is recognised by children, young people and parents as an effective way of minimising visible differences in pupils' financial circumstances. Where uniform policies are planned and implemented carefully and sensitively, such policies can reduce the risk of stigma arising from clothing and help create an environment which promotes equality.

## 1.4

It should be noted that this policy does not apply to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings, where children may wear whatever families find practical. Many settings choose to offer a form of uniform for reasons of practicality. While many parents appreciate this approach, it is entirely optional and careful consideration must be given to any ELC uniform offer in terms of cost to families.

## Definition

## 1.5

School uniform is a set of standardised clothes worn primarily in education establishments. In almost all schools in Scotland, a school uniform forms the basis of the school's dress code.

## 1.6

East Renfrewshire's Education Department expects and encourages schools to have a clearly defined and active policy on uniform, as it can:

- instil pride in the establishment and contribute to its values
- promote a positive and professional work ethic, which can lead to raised attainment
- help children and young people to see schools as places of learning
- support positive behaviour
- encourage learners to identify with, and support, the establishment's ethos
- promote equality
- protect children and young people from social pressures to dress in a fashionable or expensive way
- help to reduce the overall cost of living for families
- minimise visible differences in socio-economic status
- nurture cohesion and promote good relations between different groups of pupils
- foster a spirit of partnership among pupils and staff, between home and school, and between the school and the wider community
- contribute to security and personal safety.

## 2. Aims of the Policy

### 2.1

*Dressing for Excellence* aims to lend support to establishments and parents in setting consistent and high standards for dress codes and promoting a practical and inclusive approach to developing policy on uniform.

### 2.2

Given that there is substantial parental and public approval of uniform, schools in East Renfrewshire are encouraged and supported to insist on the wearing of uniform. In doing so, they must prevent any direct or indirect discrimination against pupils as a result of their gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion/belief, in line with the Equality Act 2010, and respecting all children's rights as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 2.3

It is incumbent on schools to ensure that uniform policies do not create additional barriers to equal participation in education for children and families on low incomes. Establishments will be encouraged and supported to adopt low-cost uniforms and to employ a range of strategies to support families who experience financial barriers to purchasing uniforms.

### 2.4

There is no legislation that deals specifically with school uniform or other aspects of appearance. This paper provides guidance to schools on appropriate approaches to introducing, changing and maintaining uniforms. It is for establishments, in consultation with their stakeholders, to decide on the format of their chosen uniform. The Education Department fully supports schools in taking a firm stance on this matter and encourages schools and parents to support the wearing of a defined uniform, with a list of approved items which promote the establishment's ethos.

### 2.5

Against this background it should be noted that it is not the policy of the Education Department to insist on pupils wearing uniform or having specialist items of clothing as a prerequisite to their attending and engaging in all of the activities of the curriculum.

## Guidance for Schools

### 3.1

Schools should ensure that their uniform policy is fair and reasonable. All establishments must take account of their obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

### 3.2

Establishments have the support of the Education Department to determine a list of approved items.

### 3.3

School uniforms may include:

Shirts

Polo shirts (in primary schools and schools/services for children with additional support needs)

Ties

Trousers

Shorts

Skirts

Jumpers, cardigans, and sweatshirts

Blazers

Black shoes

### 3.5

Schools may advise parents and pupils of their expectations with regard to outer garments during inclement weather and how these might be stored in schools. Some schools may wish to include outer garments in a list of optional items.

### 3.6

Schools may also wish to give guidance on items of clothing which would not reflect the school's ethos and values. There are forms of dress which are unacceptable in school such as items of clothing which:

- fail to identify children / young people as members of their school community
- are not in keeping with the school ethos
- potentially encourage faction (such as football colours)
- could cause offence (such as anti-religious symbolism or political slogans)
- could be a health and safety hazard during learning (such as insufficiently warm or practical clothing, dangling earrings)
- could cause damage to flooring
- carry advertising, particularly for alcohol or tobacco
- could be used to inflict harm on other pupils or be used by others to do so.

Where removal or changing of items of clothing is required for any reason, schools should give consideration to the space and privacy available to pupils and be mindful of children's rights as defined in UNCRC.

### 3.7

#### **Equality**

In formulating a policy on school uniform, schools should:

#### 3.7.1

- Consult widely on the proposed uniform policy, and on any changes to an established policy. Head teachers should refer to Standard Circular 77 for guidance on carrying out a consultation. Children and young people should be directly consulted and involved in developing uniform policy in line with Article 12 of UNCRC, with due attention to their right to express views on matters which affect them and to be taken seriously.

As schools plan to change or renew their policy, there are benefits in working with associated cluster/community schools to take a co-ordinated approach; this can help to maintain support for school uniform in the community as a whole and ease transition between stages.

Consultations should include representatives of the wider community, such as community leaders representing minority ethnic groups, religious groups, groups representing people with additional support needs and disabilities, and groups representing LGBT+ people.

#### 3.7.2

- Take account of UNCRC, particularly in respect of Article 14, the right to freedom of thought, belief and religion, and Article 30, children from minority or indigenous groups. All religious and cultural requirements can be met within a school uniform policy and schools should create

policies which promote respect and equality for all cultures and beliefs. Lists of approved items should be inclusive of the requirements of diverse cultures and religions, and should include all items commonly worn by children and young people of religions represented in the school community.

### 3.7.3

- Take account of the needs of pupils of all genders. School uniform requirements should be gender neutral and should not prescribe items for particular genders. Schools should be careful to avoid creating policies which result in indirect discrimination against genders, for example if girls experience in practice a greater number of, or more detailed, requirements than boys.

### 3.7.4

- Be mindful of their duties under current legislation; in particular the Equality Act 2010 which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, and UNCRC, which requires public bodies to observe all rights of people under 18 as listed in the convention.

Schools should consider their uniform/dress code policy in the context of the above legislation, including the requirement to assess the impact of school policies on pupils from different equality groups and on children's rights. The involvement of pupil and parent equalities groups and forums in consultation processes outlined in 3.7.1 may be a useful strategy in preventing discrimination.

### 3.7.5

- Consider the timeframe for introducing their uniform policy or amending an existing one and phase its introduction as appropriate.

## 3.8

### **Cost of school uniform**

#### 3.8.1

Reducing the Cost of Living is a key driver in local and national anti-poverty strategies, including East Renfrewshire's Local Child Poverty Action Plan. Schools should consider the cost of school uniform in the context of reducing the overall cost of the school day for all families and engage with stakeholders to find creative ways to reduce the cost of uniform for all wherever possible. The Education Department will support schools to engage with stakeholders and partners in this endeavour.

#### 3.8.3

Schools should be mindful of the cost of approved items and ensure that the uniform can be purchased in full within the amount of the Clothing Grant. Schools should consider how they can support parents and pupils to manage costs in ways that preserve dignity, for example through school uniform hiring and recycling schemes. By ensuring that the uniform chosen is affordable, schools can enable all parents and pupils to fully support the school's policy.

Where possible, schools should consider including items which are widely available and affordable from high street shops rather than from a sole supplier. In determining suppliers to schools, the administration of placing orders and distribution of purchases to families should be considered. Suppliers who provide online ordering services may be easier for all families to access.

## 3.9

**Physical Education (PE) and Outdoor Learning**

## 3.9.1

School uniform policies should include guidance on PE kits and clothing for Outdoor Learning. Schools should be mindful of the needs of different pupils and of the equality, discrimination and rights issues outlined above. PE uniform should be practical, comfortable, appropriate to the levels of activity involved and able to be worn by all pupils without special adjustments. The cost of clothing for PE and Outdoor Learning should be considered and costs to families reduced as far as possible.

Where pupils are due to spend a large part of the day outdoors or engaged in physical activities such as PE, it may be more practical for pupils to come to school in their PE uniform. If such an approach is planned, schools should:

- undertake thorough consultation with learners and parents before making changes to their policy;
- be mindful of the fundamental principles and aims of the Dressing for Excellence policy as set out in 1 and 2 above, which also apply to PE / Outdoor Learning uniforms;
- give careful consideration to any impact the approach may have on the overall cost of uniform items throughout the year;
- ensure there is sufficient clarity for pupils and parents about all aspects of the dress code to allow consistent implementation throughout the day/week.

**Implementing School Policy**

## 4.1

Head teachers should ensure that the Parent Council is fully involved in determining the uniform and that it supports school management to communicate and publicise the school's uniform policy clearly. For example, schools should consider holding meetings with parents and pupils, publicising the policy on the school website and in social media, and providing leaflets/digital guides for parents and pupils, sections in the school handbook and guidance at induction events where pupils and parents are present.

## 4.2

The support and commitment of all school staff is vital for successful implementation of a uniform policy and the head teacher should discuss explicitly the school's expectations of staff members in terms of their promotion of the policy, modelling GTCS standards of social justice and equity, and the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees. Staff should be aware of the steps they should take to encourage pupils to show their support for the school's values and ethos.

## 4.3

By involving pupils, parents and staff in the formulation of the school policy, head teachers can expect widespread support. However, head teachers may occasionally meet some resistance and will need to consider carefully the risk of a challenge to the policy and how they might discuss pupil and parental opposition to the school's policy with those who choose not to support it. Winning support for the policy should always be the preferred approach in any discussions with pupils and parents, explaining the benefits for individuals as well as the school and its ethos, and setting out the school's expectations in terms of support from parents and pupils.

4.4.

In justifying the benefits of promoting the wearing of uniform, schools must consider carefully how the policy may be undermined by events such as non-uniform days. This is not to say that schools should not organise such events, but that they should be used sparingly and judiciously. Their impact on learning and teaching should be considered along with any potential negative impact on the cost of attendance and participation.

4.5

Schools should insist on pupils wearing school uniform or adhering to the agreed dress code while representing the school or East Renfrewshire Council at events held outwith the school, for example at awards ceremonies, inter-school competitions, music festivals, etc. A basic rule of thumb is that if the school or Council is to be mentioned, uniform should be worn.

4.6

Under no circumstances should children or young people be denied access to education or a full curriculum or assessment opportunities because they do not comply with the school's dress code.

### **Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy**

5.1

It will be the responsibility of head teachers in partnership with parents and pupils to monitor and evaluate on a day-to-day basis the implementation of their policy on school uniform, and to ensure that issues and problems which are unable to be resolved at school level are brought to the attention of the Education Department directorate.

5.2

School policies and the level of support for them should be kept under constant review by head teachers. Any evaluation of implementation of, or changes to, uniform policy should be reported in the school's Standards and Quality Report.

5.3

The Education Department directorate will monitor and review the effectiveness of implementation of this circular through discussions with head teachers at regular meetings, with pupils through the Director's Forum, with parents through the Parent Council Chairs Forum and Equalities Forum, and by monitoring complaints received by the department.

5.4

An evaluation of the revised policy will take place 2 years after its introduction during session 2021-22, and its impact will be reported on in the department's Standards and Quality Report.

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