

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education Committee	Subject: SCHOOL DRESS CODE
From: Director of Education	
Date: August 1997	
Ref: MO'N/CP	

Purpose

To seek education committee approval for a policy on a school dress code.

Recommendations

The education committee is asked to

- (i) approve a policy framework for a school dress code
- (ii) instruct the director of education to issue the policy for immediate implementation

Michael O'Neill

Members wishing further information regarding the attached report should contact:
Michael O'Neill, Director of Education on 01236 812336

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**SCHOOL DRESS CODE POLICY FRAMEWORK****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION****1. Introduction**

School security and pupil safety are issues which have recently attracted a high level of parental and public interest. This paper proposes that a policy framework on school dress code is approved as part of the council's commitment to improve security in schools in North Lanarkshire.

2. The Current Position

2.1 The previous education authority Strathclyde Regional Council issued a broad statement on school dress which appeared in all school handbooks. This statement was of a general nature and offered limited support to schools to encourage pupils to wear a school uniform. Consequently it proved very difficult for schools to implement effectively.

2.2 Over the last year, perhaps as a result of the Dunblane Primary School tragedy and the considerable media interest, school boards and parents organisations have become more aware of safety and security in schools.

2.3 At the meeting of the North Lanarkshire Parents' Consultative Group in November 1997 the parent representatives presented a paper which strongly argued the case that North Lanarkshire Council should give serious consideration to establishing a policy on school dress code.

2.4 The director of education agreed to consult widely on this issue and to report his recommendations to the education committee in due course.

3. Consultation

3.1 The director issued the paper produced by the Parents' Consultative Group to seek the views of the wider community.

3.2 Views expressed during this consultation with headteachers of primary and secondary schools, Parent Teacher Associations, School Boards, area forums and teachers' unions were unanimously in favour of the development of a framework policy on a school dress code.

3.3. The overwhelming view was that a clear lead should be taken by the council to actively encourage a code of acceptable school dress.

4. Recommendations

The education committee is asked to

- (i) approve the policy framework on a school dress code which is attached as Appendix 1 and the school handbook insert outlined in Appendix 2.
- (ii) instruct the director of education to issue the policy for immediate implementation

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NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**SCHOOL DRESS CODE**1. Introduction

1.1 All North Lanarkshire schools should have a policy on dress code which encourages pupils to dress in a way which is appropriate to attendance at school.

1.2 The advantages of pupils conforming to such a code of appropriate school dress include:

- the creation of a positive image in the local community
- the promotion of a positive school ethos and a sense of identification with and loyalty to the school
- improved security by being able to identify young people within the school and on school excursions
- a reduction in bullying and victimisation which can arise from peer pressure to adhere to certain fashion items
- the encouragement of a purposeful attitude to work and positive behaviour
- raising young people's awareness of the requirement to dress appropriately for the circumstance e.g. certain work requirements, interviews etc.
- assist parents in terms of economic and practical issues
- assist the identification of truants in the community

2. Content of a School Dress Code

2.1 It is not the authority's intention to lay down a standard dress code but rather to outline a framework within which schools are able to implement a negotiated dress code appropriate to the establishment.

2.2 In this context it is important that schools have a dress code which meets with the general support of parents, the school board, staff and pupils. After full consultation headteachers should prepare a statement of the dress code for issue to parents and for inclusion in the school handbook. The school board, pupil council and staff consultative structure should all be involved in this process. Consideration may be given to seeking written agreement of parents to the code.

2.3 While the traditional blazer, school shirt and tie may be included, consideration should be given to a range of clothing in school colours and insignia including such items as:

- sweatshirts
- polo shirts
- T shirts
- scarves

- 2.4 Wherever possible school dress should be inexpensive, practical, hard wearing and appropriate for the work to be done in school.
- 2.5 The dress code must not lead to direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender or disability.
- 2.6 Schools should give careful consideration to:
- positive ways in which pupils can be encouraged to adopt the dress code
 - sensitive ways of assisting parents who may have difficulties to support the code
- 2.7 Schools should have a clear strategy for implementing the agreed school dress code. Steps such as:
- reminding pupils of the school rules on dress
 - contacting parents by letter or phone to remind them of the school dress code
 - arranging an interview with parents to discuss the dress code
- 2.8 Schools should make a clear statement about the types of clothing which are unacceptable in school under any circumstances. This should include items which:
- could potentially encourage factions (e.g. football colours)
 - could cause offence (e.g. anti-religious symbolism or political slogans)
 - could cause health and safety difficulties such as loose fitting clothing, dangling earrings
 - are of flammable materials which may be a danger in certain classes (e.g. shell suits)
 - could cause damage to flooring
 - carry advertising in particular for alcohol or tobacco and
 - could be used to inflict damage on other pupils or to be used by others to do so
- The general guideline should be that clothing is unacceptable if it could disrupt the normal operation of the school, cause damage or injury.
- 2.9 Headteachers must submit details of the proposed dress code for the school and details of the consultation process to their area education officer prior to implementation.
- 2.10 Whilst in general terms it would not normally be the policy of the authority to exclude a pupil from school solely on the basis of his/her dress persistent refusal to respond to a reasonable dress code might be deemed to be a serious challenge to the headteacher's authority and be detrimental to the well being of the whole school community. In such circumstances a headteacher could justify the use of the school discipline procedure.

3. Implementation

- 3.1 Headteachers should discuss the contents of a school dress code with staff, pupils, parents and school board.

- 3.2 Following consultation a statement on the school dress code should be formulated and steps taken to inform parents of the code.
- 3.3 A clear statement of the school's dress code must appear in the school handbook supported by a brief statement of North Lanarkshire School Dress Code Policy (see appendix 2).
- 3.4 The headteacher should review the policy on dress code in the light of changing circumstances.
- 3.5 The education authority will support headteachers in the implementation of a dress code within the terms set out in the council policy and the requirements of the legislation.
- 3.6 Parents in receipt of council grants for footwear and clothing will be encouraged to purchase items which are in accordance with the school dress code.
- 3.7 Headteachers will be given the opportunity to share good practice in relation to the implementation of this policy.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**SCHOOL HANDBOOK INSERT**

All North Lanarkshire schools must have a dress code which encourages pupils to dress in a way which is appropriate to attendance at school. This dress code must not lead to direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender or disability. Prior to drawing up the dress code the parents, pupils and staff were fully consulted. It is the expectation of the education authority that parents will be keen to support the dress code and written agreement may be sought.

Clothing which is unacceptable in school under any circumstances. This would include items which:

- could potentially encourage factions (e.g. football colours)
- could cause offence (e.g. anti-religious symbolism or political slogans)
- could cause health and safety difficulties such as loose fitting clothing, dangling earrings
- are of flammable materials which may be a danger in certain classes (e.g. shell suits)
- could cause damage to flooring
- carry advertising in particular for alcohol or tobacco and
- could be used to inflict damage on other pupils or to be used by others to do so

Parents in receipt of a grant for footwear and clothing from the council will be encouraged to purchase items which are in accordance with the school dress code. Approval of any requests for such grants in other circumstances are at the discretion of the director of education. Information and application forms may be obtained from any school or area office.

Whilst in general terms it would not normally be the policy of the authority to exclude a pupil from school solely on the basis of his/her dress persistent refusal to respond to a reasonable dress code might be deemed to be a serious challenge to the headteacher's authority and be detrimental to the well being of the whole school community. In such circumstances a headteacher could justify the use of the school discipline procedure.