

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services Committee

MEETING DATE: 10 June 2025

BY: Executive Director – Education & Children's Services

SUBJECT: School Uniform Guidance

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To allow the S2 and S3 stakeholder group to outline their school uniform proposals based on Scottish Government Guidance, and their consultation process.
- 1.2 To note the East Lothian School Uniform Guidance (Appendix 1) created by East Lothian pupils in consultation with a range of stakeholders and based on Scottish Government Guidance.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the East Lothian School Uniform Guidance (Appendix 1) created by East Lothian pupils in consultation with a range of stakeholders and based on Scottish Government Guidance.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Act was passed in 2024. This legally protects children's rights in Scotland and requires public authorities to comply with all articles.
- 3.2 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national approach to improving outcomes for children and young people by offering the right help at the right time so that they can reach their full potential whilst being treated with kindness, dignity and respect and having their rights upheld at all times.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government's *School Uniform and Clothing: Guidance for Schools and Education Authorities* (2024)
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-uniform-clothing-guidance-schools-education-authorities/>

states that there is no legal requirement for uniform to be worn by children and young people in schools in Scotland. Uniform guidance in schools should take a sensitive and pragmatic approach and be underpinned by an inclusivity that takes into account the individual needs, circumstances and identity of all children and young people.

- 3.4 A consultation group of S2 and S3 pupils from every secondary school in East Lothian used the Scottish Government Guidance noted above as a basis for discussion about uniform in East Lothian schools and how this guidance could be implemented.
- 3.5 The ideas were distilled into a set of principles. The principles were shared by the consultation group with a wider group of children from every primary school in East Lothian. The primary school children were instrumental in ordering the principles by importance. These are: affordable, comfortable, inclusive, equitable, practical and sustainable. Children and young people led every stage of the creation of this guidance.
- 3.6 This guidance sets out an inclusive approach to uniform that can be used and adapted to support the unique context of every school whilst ensuring a fair and equitable approach. It is not a prescriptive document but rather provides a framework to promote reflection and encourages schools to prioritise attendance and inclusion through their uniform guidance.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 3.7 It is proposed that schools refer to this guidance and adhere to the principles when they create new uniform guidance or update existing guidance and if they plan to make changes to existing uniform arrangements. The guidance will be shared with all schools in session 2025/26 to inform local practice.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications to this report.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial- none
- 6.2 Personnel - none

6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 School Uniform Guidance: Supporting Inclusive Learning Environments
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-uniform-clothing-guidance-schools-education-authorities/>

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Appendix 1

Included, Engaged & Involved

School Uniform Guidance

Supporting inclusive learning environments

June 2025

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1 Introduction

East Lothian Council is committed to being an inclusive local authority which ensures that all children and young people are supported to reach their full potential in learning environments which are nurturing and inclusive for all. A welcoming and positive ethos in school is central to every child and young person's learning experience. This sense of belonging is not created by a school uniform, but it can promote feelings of inclusivity and safety and can positively impact attendance.

There is evidence from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) that not having the correct uniform is a barrier to children and young people in poverty attending school.¹ Equity principles recognise the impact that poverty can have on the wellbeing, attainment and achievement of children and young people.² Schools should be rigorous in their approach to mitigating this, by using inclusive practice to broaden the parameters of success for children and young people.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools on creating fair and inclusive school uniform guidance within a context that ensures equity and the best possible outcomes for all children and young people.

2 Legislative and Policy Context

The legislative and policy landscape includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC)
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

How school uniform guidance is developed and applied is covered by several articles of the UNCRC including Article 28 (the right to education) and Article 12 (the views of the child).

- *The UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Act* (2024)
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-part-2-uncrc-incorporation-scotland-act-2024/pages/4/> This act incorporates the UNCRC into Scottish law. This legally protects children's rights in Scotland. Public authorities must ensure compliance with all articles of the UNCRC.

¹ CPAG submitted a paper <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/118122/html/> to the House of Common's Education Committee to support their report on 'Persistent Absence and Support for Disadvantaged Pupils' <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41590/documents/205047/default/>. They gave evidence that showed that school policies and practices around uniform and dress-up days can create barriers to attendance for children and young people living in poverty.

² East Lothian Council's 'Excellence & Equity: Raising Attainment for All' Strategy <https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/enabling-learning/raising-attainment> the purpose of this document is to outline our strategy to raise the attainment of all in achieving excellence and to ensure equity by closing the poverty related attainment gap.

- The Scottish Government's *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)* <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/> This National Practice Model sets out a shared framework and approach to the identification, assessment and analysis of a child or young person's wellbeing needs.
- *The Equality Act* (2010) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
All uniform guidance should comply with this act which covers nine protected characteristics and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation whilst promoting equality of opportunity for all.
- The Scottish Government's *School Uniform and Clothing: Guidance for Schools and Education Authorities* (2024) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-uniform-clothing-guidance-schools-education-authorities/pages/11/> This guidance states that there is no legal requirement for uniform to be worn by children and young people in schools in Scotland. Uniform guidance in schools should take a sensitive and pragmatic approach and be underpinned by an inclusivity that takes into account the individual needs, circumstances and identity of all children and young people.
- The Scottish Government's *Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: Preventing and Managing School Exclusions* (2017) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-uniform-clothing-guidance-schools-education-authorities/pages/11/> This document supports the promotion of positive relationships and mutual respect between staff and children and young people in school.
- The Scottish Government's *Supporting transgender young people in schools: guidance for Scottish schools* (2021) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-transgender-young-people-schools-guidance-scottish-schools/> This document promotes inclusive practice in schools directing them to accommodate transgender young people through their uniform guidance by including a range of clothing options, allowing young people to wear whatever they choose from the options provided and never excluding transgender young people because of how they dress, unless it breaches health and safety regulations.

Throughout this policy the term parent(s) will be used to apply to anyone with parental responsibility, those providing a foster or residential placement, or the local authority where full parental responsibility rests with them as corporate parents. In the case of care experienced children and young people and those in kinship care, this is also taken to mean 'carer'.

Relevant national and local legislation, policy and guidance can be found in Appendix 1.

4 Principles for School Uniform Guidance

During the consultation process, young people from every secondary school in East Lothian decided upon the following six principles which should all be considered when creating any guidance on uniform in schools. The principles were shared with children from every East Lothian primary school who listed them in order of priority as follows:

1. Affordable
2. Comfortable
3. Inclusive
4. Equitable
5. Practical
6. Sustainable

5 Planning school uniform guidance

Guidance should remain consistent and only change following robust consultation. In accordance with the UNCRC, Head Teachers should always seek to consult with children and young people when creating or updating any guidance. This guidance should seek to meet the needs of all individuals, in-keeping with the principles of GIRFEC, by allowing accommodations to be made where necessary to promote wellbeing and attendance.

The following table should be used when creating new guidance or reviewing existing guidance. It is based on the six principles along with some other pertinent considerations for schools.

Consideration	Evidence	Next Steps
<p>Affordable</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data, including SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), FSM (Free School Meals) and CE (Care Experienced), to understand which children and young people and their parents might face challenges in affording school uniform? • Parents being able to purchase all items for the school year, plus a reasonable number of spares or replacements? • Promote the uptake of the School Clothing Grant? • Parents being able to obtain uniform items easily and affordably e.g. by choosing generic colours or clothing 		

<p>commonly sold in supermarkets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That you are not promoting any branded items nor items with school logos? 		
<p>Comfortable</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The comfort and wellbeing of all children and young people? • The different activities children and young people will carry out over the course of a school day e.g. P.E., break times outside, art and other practical activities and desk-based work? 		
<p>Inclusive</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving children and young people a choice about what they wear by giving a variety of uniform options? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing children and young people with ASN (additional support needs) to keep items of clothing on in class (e.g. hats or hoods) or whose sensory needs might preclude them from wearing certain items of uniform? How has this been communicated to all staff so that they are not routinely and unfairly challenged on this? • Adaptations to school uniform for children and young people with disabilities e.g. clothing that can easily be put on and removed, comfort for wheelchair users or specialised footwear? • Children and young people living across multiple households who might not always have the same access to appropriate school wear? Might a child need access to a school uniform bank for part of the week? 		
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<p>Equitable</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender neutral options? • Uniform that is equally comfortable and practical for all genders? • Different religious and cultural practices? 		
<p>Practical</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform that is suitable for all weathers and activities? • Minimising the need for multiple items of clothing needed for a school day e.g. different types of sports shoes, specialist PE wear or art smocks? • Giving children and young people a choice about whether they keep on items of uniform or remove them 		

<p>in class unless what they are wearing is unsuitable for school or poses a health and safety risk? How has this been communicated to all staff so that children and young people are not routinely and unfairly challenged on this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How some items of uniform might make certain groups or individuals feel if forced to wear them e.g. traditional white school shirts are often made from transparent fabric? 		
<p>Sustainable</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting pre-loved uniform as the preferred option? • Schemes to encourage parents to donate and receive items of pre-loved uniform? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implications of house colours, or any other variations in school uniform, on the ease with which these items can be passed on or re-used? 		
<p>Leavers' hoodies/ year-specific items of uniform such as S6 blazers</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability and affordability when making decisions about leavers' hoodies or other items of school uniform only suitable for a limited period of time? • Safeguarding when designing items of uniform with identifiable markers e.g. names, school and year group? 		
<p>Dress-up Days</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost implications of dress-up days and ways to 		

<p>mitigate or avoid any cost to parents e.g. alternative reading activities on World Book Day, Halloween costume/ Christmas jumper swaps, or wearing pyjamas or odd socks instead of costumes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether a 'wear your own clothes' day or dress-down day could increase the likelihood of the stigmatisation or non-attendance of any groups or individuals? 		
<p>School Trips</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort and practicality when considering clothing for school trips? • Whether any additional actions are necessary to support the safeguarding and easy identification of children and young people when out of school? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost implications for parents when asking for specialist clothing to be provided by them e.g. waterproof clothing or walking boots? Is there provision for parents to borrow these items from school or elsewhere? 		
<p>Inappropriate school wear</p> <p>Children and young people who are unable to observe school uniform should never be excluded from school. This includes formal exclusions recorded through SEEMiS, exclusion from class or sending children or young people home to change.</p> <p>What steps have you taken to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The actions to be taken if a child or young person is deemed to be wearing clothing that is inappropriate for school? These actions should be supportive and never punitive. Conversations should be discreet and sensitive with 		

<p>the focus on supporting positive relationships and behaviour and promoting attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What clothing could constitute offensive, impractical or inappropriate attire for school? • Clothing worn in school which could pose a health and safety risk? These risks may be subject-specific or relevant across the whole school. • The promotion of gender equality including the avoidance of potentially stigmatising terms such as 'modest' or 'decent'? 		
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6 Appendix 1

- East Lothian Council's *Inclusion, Equality and Accessibility for All* policy (2022)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *A Positive Approach to Promoting School Attendance* policy (2022)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *Preventing and Managing School Exclusions* policy (2023)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *Respect for All A Positive Approach to Preventing Bullying* policy (2022)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *Managing Distressed and Challenging Behaviour* policy (2018)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *Identifying, Assessing and providing for Additional Support Needs of Children and Young People* policy (2018)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *Child Protection and Safeguarding* policy (2023)
<https://sites.google.com/edubuzz.org/eastlothianeduhub/caring-relationships/policy-process-and-guidance>
- East Lothian Council's *East Lothian Partnership Poverty Plan* (2021-2023)
https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/34964/east_lothian_partnership_poverty_plan_2024-28.pdf This plan is linked with the vision of the Local Authority to create: "An even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy, that enables our people and communities to flourish."
- *School Clothing: Framework for Action* (2023)
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rh7UZHjyNrp9acbslQ00OctGln0JWUI6/edit?pli=1&t=0>

This document was created by representatives from the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen for a Fairer World, Child Poverty Action Group and Education Scotland. It contains a framework for considering school clothing under 3 headings: affordable, comfortable and sustainable.

- CPAG's *Cost of the School Day Toolkit- Scotland* (updated 2023) <https://cpag.org.uk/what-we-do/project-work/cost-school-day/resources/toolkits/toolkit-scotland>
This resource is designed to help schools investigate cost barriers and poverty-related challenges with the participation of the whole school community.
- *School Uniform CoSD* (2023) A short film created by CPAG in partnership with young people about school uniform and ways of reducing costs for parents.
[Approaches to affordable uniform policies and pre-loved clothing - uniform video](#)
- *Which one? A comparative study of traditional and sports uniforms on academic achievement, cognitive performance, playtime, bullying and discrimination in adolescents: The Cogni-Action Project* (2022) [Comfort/ activity/ play - gender issues](#)
A peer reviewed study published in Frontiers on the impact of traditional uniforms versus more relaxed clothing on experience and outcomes for young people.
- *The Children and Young People's Commissioner Statutory School Uniform Consultation* (2022) <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/resources/stat-school-uniform/>
The Children and Young People's Commissioner and their Young Advisers Group's response to the consultation on uniform in schools carried out by the Scottish Government.
- *EIS Briefing on the Equity of School Activities*
<https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/Equality/Child%20Poverty/EIS%20Briefing%20on%20the%20Equity%20Impact%20of%20School%20Activities.pdf>
Factors for schools to consider in order to reduce costs for parents when organising school trips, charity and fundraising events, non-uniform days, dress-up days, schools parties, school proms and leavers' hoodies.
- *Engagement with children on school uniform- The Children's Parliament* (2023)
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/consultation-analysis/2023/06/analysis-report-responses-consultation-school-uniform-scotland/documents/consultation-national-school-uniform-guidance/consultation-national-school-uniform-guidance/govscot%3Adocument/consultation-national-school-uniform-guidance.pdf>
Consultation commissioned by the Scottish Government by the Children's Parliament with primary aged children on school uniform.