A Good Practice Guide –
School Uniform Policy

Commissioned by Welsh Government, produced by Children in Wales

Promoting Fair Uniform Policy / Accessibility / Sustainability

Why this guide?

With the rising cost of living placing added pressure on families, schools play a vital role in ensuring uniform policies are affordable, fair, inclusive, and sustainable. This guide shares best practice examples informed by Welsh Government statutory guidance, along with insights from schools and families who took part in the research.

Examples of Best Practice

Ysgol Evan James

Ysgol Evan James follows Welsh uniform guidance well by keeping uniform affordable and accessible. Logos are optional, black shoes of any type are allowed, and a second-hand rail is available. Clothing on the rail come from donations, are free to take and are always available. Items that make up the school uniform are widely available in most high street shops, allowing parents to choose more affordable choices. Practical changes, like using the same polo for P.E. and uniform, ensure the policy is inclusive and community focused by inviting parents to consult on the update via a survey.

"I have donated things and know people who have taken things too."

"I like to be the same as everybody else."

"You can just go into any shop that sells clothes."

Gwersyllt Community Primary School

The school operates a free, always-accessible uniform "shop" from an unlocked metal shed in the yard, stocked through community donations from families and local retailers. Donations are organised in lockers by size, which are used to restock the "shop". This informal system allows pupils, parents, teachers, and the wider community to easily access all aspects of school uniform, including winter coats. Many value the shop for supporting those who need uniform without cost or explanation. The "shop" is widely used, and people find out about it in various ways—through teachers, parents, social media, or personal need. Teachers play an active role, regularly checking if students require uniform and guiding them to the shed when needed. It's a normal, supportive part of school life, where noticing a need prompts action.

"You can explain your lack of uniform to a teacher if it is a one off, but if they notice it is more than once, they will offer to take you to collect new uniform."

"Also, a community cupboard with food and toiletries on the yard."

"I can just go there if I need something or get dirty playing."

"It's really good for people who need it."

"Shop is good because people who need or cannot afford it, can get it easily for free."

Ysgol Brynteg

'Vinteg', launched two years ago by Year 10 students through the Prince's Trust initiative, promotes sustainability while teaching valuable life skills. It allows pupils to order uniform items—like ties, shirts, and jumpers—via a QR code found on the school's website under the cost-of-living section, with delivery or pick-up from pupil reception. The initiative also includes a free pop-up Prom Shop, with items donated by Tesco and parents, and a donation link on the website. Pupils manage the ironing, washing, and packaging of items, supported by an on-site washing machine and planned donation-funded shelving. Lost property is repurposed after a term, and community-based parents' evenings increase accessibility.

"Tesco donate new clothes to us."

"People order online and then we pack and label their order and leave it at reception."

"We organise it every Wednesday."

"Lost and found items get used if they're not claimed after a term."

"It counts towards something, so now we have more people involved."

Considerations to set up a successful second-hand uniform scheme:

- How can we ensure the scheme is aimed at both parents and pupils?
- What is the purpose of the scheme?
- When and how will donations be collected?
- How will donations be organised and cleaned?
- Where will we keep donations?
- How will we let pupils and parents know about the scheme?
- How can we ensure we make school uniform more accessible and affordable?

- How will people 'order' and 'collect' their uniform?
- Who will be responsible for overseeing the scheme?
- How can we include pupils in the initiative?
- How do we reduce stigma surrounding using second-hand uniform?
- How can we increase donations?
- How can we ensure uniform policies are environmentally friendly?

Feelings About Non-School Uniform Days

While we know the financial stress highly branded school uniform policies can bring, Welsh Government have also been made aware that there are increasing financial pressures on families on non-school uniform, and themed dress up days. We asked pupils for their experiences on non-school uniform and dress up days.

| Freedom of Expression and Charity Support | Stress, Confusion, and Bullying | Balancing Freedom and Structure |

"It's something I look forward to, to show my style and feel more like me."

"It has a purpose, to raise money for charity or a good cause."

"Some people bully others for not being able to afford certain clothes, which is stressful."

"I'd rather do something different than non-school uniform."

"There aren't enough rules on what you can and can't wear, so people could be inappropriate or wear things people can't afford."

Alternative days suggested by pupils: odd socks, outdoor learning, games, crazy hair, pyjama

Pupil Voices

Article 12: 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.

What we heard from pupils whose school followed considerate uniform and appearance policies:

"You can just go to any shop that sells clothes."

"If it's cold outside you can get a jumper from the rail if you don't have yours from home."

"You can go and get replacements from the 'shop'."

> "We don't need logos, just the right colour."
> "I feel part of a community."

> "It's a good thing that we don't have to have logos; they are expensive and there is a lack of shops that do it."

Involving pupils

Uniform Decisions

- Ask pupils how they feel about school uniform
- Is there any need for a change?
- What changes do they recommend?
- How can we make sure it's cost effective?
- Are there any issues?

"School council often give opinions and viewpoint of students which allows student to be more involved in decisions."

Second-hand Uniform Scheme

- What would you change about the current scheme?
- Awareness Campaigns: How could we make pupils and parents more aware?
- Do you think pupils could be more involved? How?

"Important to raise awareness of the second-hand schemes so that everyone has the chance to benefit from them."

Policy

- Consult with pupils on proposed changes
- Engage with representatives from school council
- Do they believe the changes fair and equitable?

"As a school council, we would like to be more involved in the school uniform."
"We try to make it fair for families."

Ways to keep parents and carers informed:

School events (concerts, sports days etc) and awareness campaigns

Catalogue, school website, or app

Posters around school

School Fetes

Open days and parents' evenings

Online parent access platforms (e.g. Dojo, Seesaw)

Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

School Newsletter

What to consider when assessing school uniform and appearance policy:

- Consider costs, is this most cost-effective policy?
- What more can we do to reduce costs?
- Can uniform be bought from multiple suppliers to provide choice and increase affordability?
- Are all required items necessary?
- How can we ensure that pupils have a say?

- Are items affordable and available from a range of suppliers?
- How have we considered the equality act?
- Is the policy gender neutral?
- Do we have a second-hand uniform scheme?
- How can we promote second hand uniform?