

Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Title	School Uniform Policy
Issued	December 2023
Last Updated	
Author	Team Manager System Redesign and Commissioning

1. **Overview**

The Minister for Children and Education is aware of public concern that the cost of school uniforms can be high for families. This issue has been raised directly with her by parents/carers and by The Jersey Consumer Council, The Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority (JCRA) and the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

In April 2023 the JCRA concluded its study of the market for school uniforms in Jersey and made three recommendations which it believes will have an impact on the cost of uniform, for the benefit of consumers. This includes recommendations for the Government to further consider policy developments. To respond to this recommendation the Minister has published this School Uniform Policy that includes measures designed to reduce the number of branded and compulsory school wear items and ensures schools take full account of prospective consumer costs when developing uniform policy.

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to Government of Jersey schools.

3. **Responsibilities and distribution**

The information in this policy is for the use of CYPES staff. It will be used primarily by Primary and Secondary School staff to apply when considering their school uniform policy. It will also be published on the department's website and available to members of the public.

4. **Policy/Standards**

4.1 Key points:

4.1.1 Schools need to ensure that their uniform is affordable. In considering cost, schools will need to think about the total cost of school uniforms, taking into account all items of uniform or clothing parents will need to provide while their child is at the school.

4.1.2 Schools should keep the use of branded and compulsory items to a minimum and will be limited up to **five bespoke items** for all uniform including PE Kit¹. Items which are continually provided to students free of charge are not included in this number. The definition of bespoke items is those which have a particular logo, design or trim which mean they must be specifically stocked by a supplier and are not available from a generic retailer.

4.1.3 Schools should be mindful of the design in which they choose and how this impacts parents who are absorbing the cost for items that are more expensive due to intricate and specialist designs. Thought should be given to where simpler branding and design could reduce cost.

4.1.4 A school's uniform policy should be published on the school's website, be available for all parents, including parents of prospective pupils, and be easily understood.

4.1.5 Schools should ensure that their uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money (including the quality and durability of the garment).

4.1.6 Single supplier contracts should be avoided unless regular tendering is undertaken where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where the best value for money is secured. The requirement for schools to tender is determined by the size of the school. Further information on the requirement to tender is incorporated into the "Supporting Information for schools on competitive tendering" guidance note produced by the JCRA (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) in December 2023².

4.1.7 Schools should ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire. This includes when the second-hand uniform is available to purchase to ensure accessibility. Information on second-hand uniforms should be clear for parents of current and prospective pupils and published on the school's website.

4.1.8 Schools should engage with parents and pupils when they are developing their school uniform policy.

4.1.9 Schools should consider that their uniform policy is gender neutral and does not infringe upon the rights of students with protected characteristics.

4.1.10 Schools should ensure that their uniform policy considers students with neurodevelopmental conditions and / or sensory needs.

4.1.11 When engaging with parents there should be adequate representation of all students to ensure the school uniform incorporates their needs.

5. Requirements and implementation for schools

Following the publication of this guidance, all schools should review their current uniform policy to determine if any changes are required.

Where changes of either uniform items or uniform suppliers are agreed, schools should work with their suppliers to ensure that there is a sensible transition period in place, considering the fact that suppliers plan in advance and that most sales occur in the weeks preceding the autumn term. Help is available from CYPES to re-negotiate contracts with suppliers and work through the procurement and tendering process.

¹ Government of Jersey Fee Paying Schools are permitted to vary this policy in relation to the number of bespoke items following consultation with parents and agreement from their Board of Governors and CYPES.

² <https://www.jcra.je/media/598876/school-uniform-market-study-supporting-information-for-schools-on-competitive-tendering.pdf>

Schools should begin to plan so that they are compliant with this guidance by September 2026. The process will start from December 2023 with full compliance by September 2026. It is however recognised that some schools might be tied into existing contracts with suppliers and may not be able to comply with some elements of the guidance until their contract is due for renewal, which may be later.

This means the following actions need to happen before parents seek to purchase or acquire uniform items in summer 2026:

5.1 Changes to the uniform policy which do not fit with these exceptions, such as removing an unnecessary bespoke item.

5.2 Publishing the uniform policy on the school's website and ensuring it is easily understood.

5.3 Making sure that second-hand uniforms are available to acquire (either from the school directly or from an established scheme).

5.4 Where a school needs to run a competitive process to set up a new contract to secure a supplier for elements of their uniform, they will need to ensure that they have a clear plan to meet this requirement as soon as possible.

5.5 Where possible schools should aim to implement some of this policy at the earliest convenience to benefit parents such as guidance around second-hand uniform and clear publishing of uniform policy.

5.6 Any removal or changes of uniform items will need to be discussed with the supplier to ensure that this is done in a phased approach and to comply with any contracts or service level agreements in place.

6. Actions schools should take

6.1 Assess the overall cost implications

6.1.2 Schools should assess the overall cost implications of their school uniform policy for parents and be aware of how costs could mount up where multiple items of the same garment may be needed. For instance, when a child may grow out of an item quickly or where spare items are likely to be needed.

6.1.3 Work with suppliers when branding school uniform to keep costs low. Considering that the type of branding and variation requested on the item of uniform can increase cost.

6.1.4 Consider bespoke items and if these items can be made non-bespoke to give parents more choice.

6.1.5 Assess the impact variations in their uniform can have.

6.1.6 Schools should assess the impact which variations in their uniform (such as house colours or specific items of clothing for different year groups) can have on total costs and the ability of parents to pass items down between siblings.

6.1.7 Avoid frequent changes.

6.1.8 Schools should avoid frequent changes to uniform specifications. They should show how any change in uniform specifications secures the best value for money or why the change is required.

6.1.9 Schools should take action to minimise any financial impact of any change on parents (such as allowing pupils to continue to wear the old uniform for a reasonable period).

6.1.10 Consider how costs affect diverse groups of pupils.

6.1.11 Schools should consider how the cost of their uniform might affect each group represented at the school, especially children who belong to groups with a particular protected characteristic.

6.1.12 Engage with parents and pupils.

6.1.13 Schools should engage with parents and pupils on cost issues when they are developing their uniform policy. They should be able to show how these views have been considered in their policy.

6.1.14 Avoid needing additional uniform for extra-curricular activities.

6.1.15 Schools should avoid requiring parents to purchase additional uniform for the purpose of any extra-curricular activity. This may involve but is not limited to, extra-curricular activities such as sport, music, art, or drama.

6.1.16 Similarly, schools should avoid requiring additional items to be used for interschool competitions. This does not preclude schools from having a standard PE kit for PE lessons.

6.1.17 Schools should engage with existing uniform suppliers or prospective uniform suppliers on how to ensure that they get the best value for money on their proposed uniform. For instance, a supplier may be able to provide standard style items cheaper than more intricate and unique designs.

7. Bespoke items

Generic items which are widely available (including from low-cost retailers) give parents choice and allows them to control the cost of school uniforms. As such, schools should keep bespoke items to a minimum and limit their use to low cost or long-lasting items. The number of bespoke items in total including PE kit will be limited to five.

Further to this, bespoke items should also be carefully selected, if a school specifies a certain brand or type of uniform item that is not generically available this can impact on costs. Schools should carefully consider whether requiring a bespoke item is the most cost-effective way of achieving the desired result for their uniform. For instance, whilst it may be appropriate to require a certain colour for socks, requiring them to have the school logo or a certain pattern would be unnecessary.

The term 'bespoke' is used to describe an item of clothing with distinctive characteristics which make it unique to the school. As a general rule, if an item cannot be purchased at a range of retailers it is likely to be a bespoke item. Such items are often designed specifically for the school and are unique in colour, design, or fabric. For instance, a blazer with the school logo, a sweatshirt with a specific-coloured trim, or trousers with a unique style which are therefore only available from a specific supplier, would all be classed as bespoke items. In comparison, a black skirt or a grey cardigan that can be bought from a variety of retailers would not be considered a bespoke item.

Where a school decides that a bespoke item is required, they should consider how they can maintain the benefits of a bespoke item whilst keeping costs low. This may involve using sew or iron on labels or limiting the bespoke items to longer-lasting items such as ties rather than items that the parent may need to purchase more frequently or in larger quantities such as shirts. Schools should also consider whether changes to the specification of a bespoke item might reduce costs for parents.

To ensure that school uniform acts as a social leveler, optional bespoke items should also be kept to a minimum. To avoid parents having to purchase multiple expensive items such as coats, bags, and trainers, which they may already have purchased for use on non-school days,

schools should avoid being overly specific about such items in their uniform policy. For instance, it may be appropriate to require a coat to be simple, sensible and without any branding but requiring a coat to have the school logo or certain school colours would be unnecessary. Similarly, schools should be mindful of the cost implication for parents when they make requirements on what is deemed appropriate footwear, including footwear required for sport, as many students will also wear their footwear for non-school purposes.

Schools must not exceed a total of five bespoke items within the uniform policy.

8. PE Kit considerations

8.1 When developing their school's PE kit, schools should apply the same consideration to cost as they would for the everyday items in their uniform.

8.2 Schools should avoid being overly specific in their kit requirements for different sports and keep the number of items, particularly the number of bespoke items, to a minimum. For instance, it may be appropriate to have both shorts and tracksuit bottoms but specifying different shorts for football and hockey would be unnecessary.

8.3 No pupil should feel unable to participate fully in PE or represent their class or school because the PE kit is too expensive.

9. Arrangements for the supply of uniforms

9.1 Cost and value for money for parents should be the most important consideration for schools when considering how school uniforms should be sourced. Parents should be able to purchase generic items of uniform from a range of retailers giving them choice and value for money.

9.2 Where a school's uniform policy includes a bespoke item, the school should ensure a written contract is in place with their supplier for these items.

9.3 Schools should be able to demonstrate that they have obtained the best value for money from suppliers. Any savings negotiated with suppliers should be passed on to parents. Schools should not enter cashback arrangements.

9.4 Schools should ensure that suppliers continue to provide substantial value for money throughout the duration of the contract.

9.5 Single supplier contracts should be avoided unless regular tendering exercises are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and where the best value is secured. This contract should be retendered at least every 5 years. Reviewing a policy does not necessarily have to result in changes being made.

9.6 Further information on the requirement to tender is incorporated into the "Supporting Information for schools on competitive tendering" guidance note produced by the JCRA (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) in December 2023³.

9.7 CYPES is available for help throughout the tendering and procurement process.

10. Other considerations when tendering for a uniform contract

³ <https://www.jcra.je/media/598876/school-uniform-market-study-supporting-information-for-schools-on-competitive-tendering.pdf>

10.1 Views of parents and carers and pupils

10.1.1 Schools should engage with parents and carers and pupils on cost issues and ensure their views have been taken into consideration.

10.1.2 Parents and carers with children who have specific requirements such as those with special educational needs should be represented in any parental/carers engagement.

10.2 Timing

Schools should be mindful of suppliers' ordering timelines. Suppliers tend to order branded uniform stock by December to ensure that it is delivered by the following June or July in time for the back-to-school period.

10.3 Uniform specification

Schools should request visualisations showing what the uniforms will look like as well as fabric samples, to support their decision making when awarding contracts. The uniforms should be machine washable. Fabric should also be breathable and comfortable to cater for sensory needs.

10.4 Delivery

Different suppliers will be able to offer different delivery methods, some of the most common include direct to school, online and retail shops. Schools should consider which methods their parents would prefer.

10.5 Other issues to consider

Although cost and value for money for parents and carers should be the most important consideration for governing boards, that does not prevent them from considering other issues which are important to the school community, such as sustainability and ethical supply chains.

11. Provision of second-hand uniforms

11.1 Second-hand uniforms can benefit all parents and carers, particularly those on low incomes. In addition, by extending the life of garments, it is more sustainable.

11.2 Schools should ensure that arrangements are in place so that second-hand school uniforms are available for parents and carers to acquire (for example through periodic second-hand uniform sales or swap shops). It is for the school to decide how this will be best achieved. A school may wish to organise the provision or sale of second-hand uniforms themselves or via their Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Consideration should be given to the availability of parents and carers, for example those who work may not be able to visit a second-hand shop during school hours.

11.3 While schools can decide the method they are going to use to make the provision of second-hand uniforms available to parents and carers, all schools should ensure that information on second-hand uniforms is clear for parents and carers of current and prospective pupils and published on the school's website. This should clearly state where second-hand uniforms are available to be purchased.

12. Providing information to parents and carers

A school's uniform policy should be:

12.1 published on the school's website.

12.2 available for all parents and carers, including parents and carers of prospective pupils.

12.3 easily understood.

12.4 given consideration if an item needs to meet specific requirements, for instance, smart black shoes, then this should be clearly stated.

12.5 clearly state whether each item is optional or required. If the item is only used in certain circumstances or at particular times of the year, then this should be made clear.

12.6 make clear whether a generic item will be accepted or if a bespoke item is required.

12.7 include sufficient information so that a parent or carer is clear whether an item can only be purchased from a specific retailer or if it can be purchased more widely, including from second-hand retailers.

13. Actions to help develop your School Uniform Policy

To help schools meet these requirements, we strongly recommend that they:

13.1 engage with parents and carers and pupils when designing their uniform policy or when making any significant changes - these views should be considered in determining the final policy.

13.2 consider how the introduction of the proposed uniform policy might affect groups represented in the school, especially those who share protected characteristics (sex, religion, belief, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), disability, gender reassignment and pregnancy).

13.3 consider the options for a gender-neutral uniform and how comfortable the proposed uniform will be for pupils.

13.4 consider options for those with special educational needs (SEN) and developmental needs and those who may have sensory needs with regards to items of clothing.

13.5 take a sensible approach to allow for exceptions to be made during extreme weather.

13.6 ensure that their uniform is suitable and safe for pupils who walk or cycle to school, for instance, by allowing pupils to wear a coat which they could be visible in when it is dark going home.

13.7 choose a PE kit which is practical, comfortable, appropriate to the activity involved and affordable.

13.8 ensure the final policy is published on the school's website so it is easy for parents and carers (including parents and carers of prospective pupils) to access and understand.

13.9 carefully consider the risk of a challenge to the policy and consider the appropriate insurance cover.

CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Date Issued	Issued by	Reason for Change
0.1	19.12.2023	Team Manager System Redesign and Commissioning	First Issue

Presented To	Approval date:
Senior Leadership Team	19.12.2023
Ministerial Team	19.12.2023