SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
SCHOOL DRESS CODE POLICY

1. Purpose

The policy is intended to support schools across Scottish Borders to apply good practice in developing their own school dress code or uniform policy and in implementing such a policy.

2. Introduction

Scottish Borders Council encourages all its schools to have a dress code policy and will support them in establishing and enforcing this.

Scottish Borders Council believes that the establishment of a school dress code which encourages pupils and all those working in schools to dress in a way which is appropriate to attendance at school can have a positive effect on a school's reputation and its ethos.

To be effective, a school dress code must have the support of staff, pupils and parents. It must be practical, appropriate and flexible enough to meet the needs of individuals. There must be no discrimination against any pupil or member of staff because of their race, sex or religious beliefs. The principles of this school dress code reflect those principles which would be appropriate for any work-place and should apply to both pupils and to staff.

3. Benefits of wearing school uniform include:

- Giving pupils a pride in and sense of belonging to their school
- Increasing the school's profile in the local community
- Preventing competition between pupils over expensive fashion wear and helping to prevent bullying and victimisation of others on the grounds of what they wear
- Improving security in school and on school trips, because it is easier to identify who is a pupil in the school
- Differentiates between staff and pupils
- More convenient for parents

4. Consultation

Schools should ensure that they involve staff, pupils and parents fully in the development of any new school dress code or uniform policy. This should include, but go beyond, discussions with pupil and parent councils. Consultation could include:

- Surveys / questionnaires – online or at parents' evenings / assemblies / social education classes
- Notices in local supermarkets, community centres etc to stimulate discussion at home and in the community
- Involving pupils in the design of uniform / logos *(note: any redesigned logos should be checked with SBC Legal Services before being finalised)*
- Setting up a working group of staff, pupils and parents to consider the requirements of a uniform in the particular school context

5. Principles for school dress code / uniform policy

Acceptability – there are certain types of clothing which should never be worn to school. These are:

- Clothes which could damage the school building or furniture eg certain types of shoes
- Clothes which could lead to indiscipline such as clothing associated with particular sports teams or political groups (although sometimes team strips may be allowed in PE or for sports training sessions. This should be reflected in the school's dress code policy).
- Clothes which could cause offence to others eg t-shirts with offensive statements or pictures, or clothes which are too revealing
- Clothes which promote the use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs

It is recognised that Headteachers must have flexibility to interpret these categories in the light of local circumstances and changing fashions. The general guideline should be that clothing is unacceptable if it could disrupt the normal operation of the school, cause damage or injury, and ultimately it is the responsibility of the Headteacher of the school concerned to make that decision.

Safety – in addition, some types of clothing may be unsuitable for particular types of classes on safety grounds, such as:

- Clothes made from inflammable material, including shell/track suit style clothing
- Certain types jewellery in PE and some technical and science classes
- Scarves in PE, technical, science and home economics classes
- Some types of shoes in science or practical classes

There may be other items which should be included in this list by particular schools running particular classes and the list may change with fashion and should be amended as required and parents and pupils kept informed.

Practicality – the proposed school uniform should be practical, hard-wearing and suitable for all the activities which the pupil will need to take part in. It should be easy to wash. The school should consider whether their dress code policy needs to include guidance on:

- Sports/PE wear
- Footwear (eg wellington boots / Ugg-type boots / trainers / heels / plimsolls)
- Outerwear – including school bags

However, it is not considered practical for outerwear to be made part of the uniform as pupils are likely to be wearing the same coat and outdoor shoes for other activities as well as for school.

Cost – school uniform must be affordable and it is important that the items which make up the uniform be easily obtained locally, at a reasonable cost. If the uniform item is to include a school logo/badge it will restrict a parent's ability to buy a cheaper alternative item of the same colour/style and consultation should take place about whether that is considered to be fair and reasonable. It may be possible to provide sew on/iron on badges or to arrange for items bought elsewhere to be embroidered with the school logo for a fee.

Schools should ensure that they make parents aware of the support available to those in need through the clothing allowance provided by Scottish Borders Council.
Schools may also wish to discuss with parents' groups how second hand uniform could be made available to those who would like the opportunity to buy it.

Inclusion / Religious and cultural clothing – the dress code should be reasonable and should not, under any circumstances, lead to direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, gender or religious beliefs. The school should also consider how cultural dress can be accommodated and whether there are any health and safety issues which would need to be addressed should such a situation arise.

Flexibility - there are considerable advantages in a flexible dress code. While the traditional blazer, tie and school shirt may be included, consideration should also be given to a range of clothing in school colours and insignia including:

- sweatshirts / sweaters / cardigans
- polo shirts / T shirts / shirts
- trousers / shorts / skirts / dresses
- scarves / ties / hair accessories

Ensuring flexibility in the dress code can accommodate those pupils who wish to express their personality through their dress and also ensure that school uniform is adaptable enough to reflect fashion to some degree.

6. Implementing the school dress code

School uniform can be encouraged, but it cannot be imposed. If pupils and parents are involved in the development of the school dress code, there should be a positive buy-in to implementing it. However, over time this can fade and there will need to be ongoing efforts to ensure that parents and pupils are clear about what the school dress code is, and why it is important for them to comply with it.

Schools should give consideration to the ways in which positive encouragement can be given to pupils to adopt the school dress code. These could include:

- publishing the dress code in the school handbook and on the school's website
- reminding pupils of the school rules on dress through social education classes and assemblies, encouraging discussion if necessary
- asking parents to ensure their children observe the dress code through newsletters and at parents' evenings
- reminding parents of the dress code by showing them samples of clothing and providing the chance to buy school uniform from the school
- myth-busting – helping parents to deal with the arguments they face at home (eg "no one else at school wears a tie")
- consistent implementation of the agreed school dress code by school staff

Discipline for non-compliance with school dress code

A distinction should be made between clothes which do not conform with the school dress code and those which are unacceptable for wear in school under any circumstances (see Paragraph 5: Acceptability above). Clothes in the latter category should be dealt with through the school's normal disciplinary procedures.

Schools should be clear about the steps they will take to encourage compliance in the event of pupils not dressing in accordance with the agreed school code. These steps may include:

- contacting parents by telephone or letter to remind them of the dress code
- arranging an interview with parents to discuss the dress code
- asking parents to notify the school in advance if other clothing is to be worn

Schools should also find ways of assisting parents who may have difficulty in complying with the dress code. Great sensitivity is, of course, required in discussions with parents on possible assistance.

Any disciplinary sanctions to be taken against pupils who persistently refuse to comply with the dress code should be:

- written into the school's dress code policy following consultation with staff, pupils and parents
- applied fairly and consistently throughout the school
- should not involve the pupil missing out on their everyday education unless there is a safety issue should the child remain in class

Persistent non-compliance with a school dress code, if the clothing does not come within the categories set out above, could constitute a challenge to the authority of the Headteacher and could lead to disciplinary action. As the breach of dress code does not relate to those mentioned in paragraph 5, however, it would be expected that the school would first try to resolve the issues using the methods set out above.

7. Implementation of the policy

The policy will be implemented by all schools in the Borders with effect from 1st August 2011.

8. Policy Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy by schools will be monitored by the appropriate school manager.

The policy will be reviewed on a three yearly cycle by a Senior Education Officer nominated by the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning. If changes are required, a further consultation will take place involving:

- Staff
- Pupils
- Parents and Parent Councils

If appropriate, a report will be submitted to the Education Executive to request changes to the policy.

The first policy review will be in March 2014.

9. Implications

a. It is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this policy.

b. As it is more difficult for parents from rural communities to get to shops where school uniform is available, schools serving rural communities may need to consider how it can help parents to access the items they need.

Version Control

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