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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation - Summary of response

Consultation on draft statutory guidance to school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies

10 June 2019

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Introduction

In Wales, there is no education legislation specifically covering the wearing of school uniform. Section 21 of the Education Act 2002 places the conduct of a maintained school under the direction of the school's governing body. The governing body is required to conduct the school with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement and this may include having a school uniform policy in place which can promote school discipline and ensure that pupils are dressed appropriately for learning activity.

The Welsh Government strongly encourages schools to have a school uniform policy in place as it has many benefits. When introducing a new school uniform policy or considering changes in school uniform requirements, the Welsh Government expects governing bodies to consider equality issues, the wide availability of uniform garments and cost implications to families and to consult widely with parents, pupils and other groups on a new/revised school uniform policy.

Where the governing body of a school has put in place a school uniform policy and/or a policy regarding pupils' appearance, it is for the head teacher to enforce these policies as part of their overall responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school.

The Welsh Government provides guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies. Whilst governing bodies are expected to consider the guidance when introducing or reviewing their school uniform policy, the Welsh Government have no powers to enforce it. Decisions relating to school uniform are appropriately for schools and their governing bodies to consider. If parents are unhappy with the availability of their child's school uniform or the cost of purchasing the uniform from a particular supplier, they may raise this concern with the school governing body.

The current Welsh Government guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies issued in 2011 is non-statutory. Kirsty Williams, the Minister for Education, decided to make the guidance statutory and to revise it to reflect current issues to better support governing bodies in making their decisions on school uniform policies in respect of access, affordability and flexibility.

The power for the Welsh Ministers to issue statutory guidance is contained in section 88 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and section 175 of the Education Act 2002. Whilst the Welsh Ministers may only issue statutory guidance to the governing body under section 88 of the 2006 Act, the governing body would need to set out the principles and those would have to

take account of any statutory guidance published by the Welsh Ministers under section 88 of the 2006 Act.

A consultation was launched on 29 November 2018 and closed on 21 February 2019 seeking views on the Welsh Government draft statutory guidance to school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies.

The consultation consisted of four specific questions concerning the draft guidance:

- Do you agree that school governing bodies should have regard to affordability when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?
- Do you agree that school governing bodies should have regard to access and availability of uniform items when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?
- Do you agree that schools' uniform policies should not dictate different items of clothing on the basis of sex or gender?
- Do you agree that school governing bodies should make clear their approach to flexible uniform items to account for extreme weather conditions when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?

Further questions invited respondents to say whether they felt that the guidance could have any positive or negative impact on the Welsh language and; respondents were also invited to offer any additional comments that weren't covered by the other specific questions.

Summary of consultation responses

The consultation received **925** completed responses, many of these were joint responses from groups such as school councils and third party organisations, so the overall engagement with the consultation is higher. Other respondents included teachers, school governors, parents, organisations and pupils. The majority of responses were supportive of the draft statutory guidance. Not all respondents commented on every question. A summary of the responses and a selection of comments, grouped by themes is provided below:

All quotations from consultation responses are in the original language unless specified otherwise.

Do you agree that school governing bodies should have regard to affordability when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Total	95%	2%	3%

The majority of those that responded agreed that school governing bodies should have regard to affordability when setting their school uniform and appearance policy. Many commented that school governors are best placed to understand the local demographics and judge what is an affordable cost. Some respondents felt that the guidance should be worded more strongly in this area and suggested that Welsh Government should have monitoring and compliance powers.

"I think they should be required to do more than "have regard" to this: it should be an absolute requirement"

"We also believe that the Welsh Government should consistently monitor whether schools are complying with its guidance."

"The guidance also rightly states that 'School governing bodies will have regard to the new Welsh Government statutory guidance when introducing or reviewing their school uniform policy, however, the Welsh Government will have no powers to enforce it'. Although this is correct, it may have the impact of giving a governing body license to disregard or underplay key aspects of the guidance."

"Where does accountability rest and is there a role for ESTYN as the schools inspectorate? Whilst there is reference to the WG lacking power to enforce the policy, the WG can make arrangements to ensure that compliance is monitored, whether this is undertaken internally or by an external body. We suggest accountability arrangements

are made known and put in place for monitoring compliance with this statutory guidance upon release.”

“It goes without saying that governors have regard to this, but 'value' rather than 'affordability' is the key point here.”

“However, that does not mean uniforms should be chosen solely on price. I believe a governing body is capable of striking a sensible balance.”

“This seems sensible. The governing body is best placed to know the demographics of the pupils”

“We suggest the guidance should be worded more strongly.”

“We are encouraged by the proposals set out in the document and consider that the WG have both identified the right issues which many parents and pupils have raised as concerns, and are clear about what outcomes are expected of school governing bodies in discharging their duties.”

“Affordability is very important. Uniform costs should be as reasonable as possible and should provide good value for money in this difficult economic climate.”

“The final decision on affordability has to rest with the governing body who are best placed to understand the context of their own school.”

“If uniform is expensive then it will either limit their activity (not getting involved with physical play for example) or if parents unable to replace due to high costs then young people are marked or stand out as different if presented in old, battered uniform.”

“The list of issues all governing bodies should consider when having regard to cost when setting their school uniform and appearance policy is wide ranging and sensible, and identifies the challenges many parents face.

We would hope that all governing bodies use this list as a ‘checklist’ and record their considerations in respect of each issue. All decisions made by governing bodies in respect of pursuing actions to address affordability should also be made available to parents and pupils to aid transparency and accountability.”

One of the key themes which emerged was the benefit of having a school uniform policy in promoting equality and a sense of community. The Welsh Government was asked to consider these aspects alongside the affordability of school uniforms. Many respondents commented that a school uniform and appearance policy put students on an equal footing, negating the need to buy the latest designer fashions. Many respondents also noted the importance of uniform in setting aspirations for students; promoting good behaviour and reducing bullying.

Several responses made reference to the cost of school uniform. There was a mix of comments with some respondents feeling it was too expensive, often these being where schools specified a large number of

branded items, others found uniform to be cheaper than buying non-uniform items.

“...Uniform is part of building the ethos of a school, including aspiration’

“School uniforms provide equality amongst pupils”

“The whole point of uniform is to promote equality and a sense of community, so this should be at the heart of every school's uniform policy.”

“Uniform is crucial to establishing and maintaining standards that allow equity and equality.”

“As a tool to prevent pupils engaging in judging others who cannot afford the latest designs and bringing an equality I embrace uniform.”

“Helping to make everyone equal, to reduce bullying and as a parent it reduces cost over the year compared to a child wearing normal clothes.”

“School uniform is good as it ensures all children dress equally so children from poorer families are not at a disadvantage.

The costs are not that high when you consider the clothes are worn for a whole year.”

“Uniform should be smart and give pupils some sense of pride in their school. Helps to set an ethos and standards. School uniforms are good value bearing in mind they are worn daily.”

“I feel that my child's school do consider affordability, there is more than one supplier and the quality of the uniform is excellent and reasonable. One set of uniform will last all year easily. My schoolwear shop also offers a savings & reserve scheme to spread the cost of the uniform. It is also a lot cheaper than having to struggle to buy branded clothes. Non uniform day is a nightmare! I think uniform stops bullying as everyone has the same items from the same suppliers”

“The secondary school that my daughter will attend in September demands that the children wear their own branded trousers and skirts which are far more expensive than the uniform available in shops. The catchment area includes an area of social deprivation so this has the potential to cause hardship to the families accessing the school”

Respondents were keen to highlight that affordability can be subjective and that both value for money and quality should be taken into account when considering uniform. Many felt that although high street items may appear cheaper, their durability and quality meant they needed to be replaced more frequently and this cost should be considered. Other respondents reported that some branded items were of a lower quality and that there wasn't an alternative to shop elsewhere for better value or sustainable items.

“First, there is no measure of affordability. Rather than linking it with actual incomes and costs, the measure is based on a school’s assessment of a notional deterrent effect. This is highly subjective. School governing bodies should know the number children eligible for free school meals that attend their school, but it is much more difficult for them to assess how much each family can afford to spend on a uniform. School governing bodies may therefore underestimate the stresses faced by low income families when trying to balance their budgets to buy school uniform. Such a subjective measure also means there is no consistency across Wales – with one school deeming a uniform to be affordable that would not be so regarded elsewhere.”

‘Affordability is a very important consideration when specifying uniform, however, this needs to be weighed against quality, value for money and the whole basket price for the uniform being selected. Low prices alone are rarely the best measure of good value.’

“The uniform should be based on best value. A more expensive (ethically sourced) garment that lasts longer is more cost effective in the long run and helps reduce garment wastage.”

“Quality of uniform should always be weighed up with cost. If trousers or shirts and jumpers don’t survive multiple washings then it is of no benefit in the long run to buy cheap.”

“Whilst a school uniform specialist is more expensive, it more likely to last the duration of a school year and beyond and therefore costing less in the long term.”

It was suggested that policies should limit the amount of branded items. Respondents commented on items which they felt were unreasonable to specify such as branded socks, trousers or skirts and many felt that PE kit should not be branded. Parents raised concerns about having to buy branded specific sports kits which were rarely used.

Many respondents agreed that one branded item was sufficient to provide a sense of identity and preferred other items to be of a stipulated style and colour but allowed freedom to be purchased from a range of retailers. It was reported that the ability to hand down items and utilise second hand clothing was easier with generic items, this enabled uniforms to be more affordable. Respondents highlighted that school swop shops and second hand shops were good practice and that schools should make clear to families the financial support available to them for the purchase of uniform items such as the PDG Access grant.

“VERY expensive uniform (even branded socks!) Is not appropriate.”

“The number of school-branded items should be kept to a minimum. There's certainly no need for things like PE shorts and socks to be branded, for example”

“The secondary school that my daughter will attend in September demands that the children wear their own branded trousers and skirts which are far more expensive than the uniform available in shops. The catchment area includes an area of social deprivation so this has the potential to cause hardship to the families accessing the school.”

‘It is very important that uniform should be available in supermarkets to ease the financial burden on families that are struggling this includes shoes’

Many felt that schools should offer sew or iron on logos to limit costs. However, equally as many felt that sew on items did not help to ensure equality as the quality of clothing worn would vary.

“Not everyone can afford to buy from specialist clothing shops. You should be able to purchase from any supermarket or clothing store. Sell iron or sew on badges if you want parents to put logos on themselves”

“Why can't everyone wear plain clothes from whichever retailer they want with sew on badges? It keeps it affordable for everyone.”

“...Badges for the school should be allowed to be bought from the school and sewed on or ironed on. These also should be affordable”

“The cost of having a school logo added to a garment is minimal and the suggestion of sewing badges on is a backward step and would not really save money. It would however give parents more to do and the end result would be a less uniform appearance for the school.”

“Whilst in principle I agree to ideas such as making badges available for sewing onto items of clothing, I am concerned that this could stigmatise pupils, as it would be noticeable. It is better that the uniform is readily available from a number suppliers in order to ensure competitive pricing.”

“I also think that if you took away the ability for the school to have a standard sweatshirt or cardigan in primary school (with an embroidered badge) that you would be making things worse as stick on or sew on badges often cost more than the garments they would be put onto and would need to be reapplied every time a poor quality garment had to be replaced. I know lots of people who can't sew and would not be willing to do this. You may also unwittingly put some children at risk of bullying if they weren't wearing the right "brand" (fashion brand) of clothing.”

“I do not believe that logo 'badges' should be supplied as this defeats the purpose of a uniform looking the same.”

It was suggested that a cap be set for the cost of uniform and that it should be no higher than the sum available to families via the Pupil Development Grant.

“Only in so much as there should be a regionally or locally agreed average cost; and governors should be mindful of not exceeding it without putting in bursaries from PDG or elsewhere to meet the shortfall.”

“Affordability should be 1 of the major considerations when setting the policy and deciding on a suitable supply. There is no way that a school with a majority catchment in a deprived area (eg high % of free school meals, low employment etc) should consider a long list of compulsory items that in terms of retail value exceeds the Pupil Development Grant. For a secondary school it is currently more than possible to supply a badged school blazer, school tie, PE top & bottoms for under £70, leaving a significant part of the grant available for generic items such as trousers & shirts.”

“... for the Draft Guidance to be effective, ensure that school uniforms are affordable for all children in Wales, it should establish a cap on school uniform costs... such a cap should be set no higher than the sum to which a family is entitled from the Pupil Development Grant. This would ensure that low income families who qualified for financial support to cover the costs of their school uniform would not face the risk of having to spend further money on top of the grant on their children’s school uniform. It would also reduce the scope for wide variations in school uniform costs developing between schools, whilst limiting the risk of some school governing bodies misunderstanding the financial pressures faced by families in their communities.”

A few respondents commented that schools should not profit from the sale of school uniforms.

“Schools should not be allowed to profit by specifying clothes/supplier”

“ I do see that our local high school do tick the box of affordability by allowing polo shirt without logo to be worn, but what I think is outrageous is that the school makes a profit on their logo clothes by selling them to parents for more than the true cost price. Also our local high school do not allow the company supplying the clothes to sell them direct to the parents through the company’s website. Because they want to make the profit. I know this as I work in a primary school and have dealt with this company and know the true cost. Polo’s were over charged by £3. If you qualify for the council grant for your uniform this payment goes as profit to the school because the school are overcharging. It wrong!”

“Why must people buy from official school suppliers and what financial compensation do schools get for these cosy deals? An example is our children’s school uniform is only available from the school shop and so they make massive profit on these items because school policy is these items are the only ones pupils can wear. This in my view discriminates against families from poorer backgrounds and should be unacceptable, this is why we need legislation from the Welsh Government to stop these policies.”

Do you agree that school governing bodies should have regard to access and availability of uniform items when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Total	94%	2%	3%

The majority of those that registered a view agreed that school governing bodies should have regard to access and availability when setting their school uniform and appearance policy.

A common theme from the respondents was that parents should be offered a choice of suppliers, taking account of families' ability to access specific suppliers. Accessibility issues reported included suppliers with limited opening hours, lack of online suppliers and travel distances for those living in rural areas.

Many respondents felt that having a choice of suppliers kept the cost of uniform to a minimum through competition and allowed families to buy generic items from high street suppliers and supermarkets. It was suggested that schools should chose colours that are widely available. However, some felt that it was beneficial to have a specified uniform supplier as high street retailers only stocked uniform items at specific times of the year. Online purchasing was preferred by many, although there was sometimes the added cost for postage.

"I wholly agree with uniforms for children in school. However my frustration is with the limitations of where I can purchase uniform."

"Access to school uniform is essential, and ongoing access to account for growth, losses and general wear and tear through the year."

"Availability through the internet or direct from the school/local shops would make buying uniforms much easier for working parents"

"Local suppliers provide consistent service and have stock, supermarkets often lack stock or correct colour."

"Schools should have to ensure uniform items are available from a minimum of two different suppliers (with logos available separately if necessary)."

"Basics such as trousers and skirts should be easily accessible and the school should have a supplier for logo marked jumpers or specific skirts. A second hand scheme should also be available."

"Many parents work and are unable to access uniform supplier shops in working hours. Access to uniform at 24 hr supermarkets and online is easier for some."

"Need to make sure it is available to purchase either online or in store locally."

“Governing bodies should ensure that the uniform chosen is widely available in high street shops and other retail outlets and internet suppliers, rather than from an expensive sole supplier”

“Parents should be able to buy 365 days a year, ideally through more than one way (online, a physical shop and maybe through school as well)”

“Yes, access and availability is important throughout the entire year. Supermarkets/chain retailers stock products seasonally in-store. Whilst they might have a good range of styles, colours & sizes during the back to school period they are unlikely to stock & replenish everything during the vast majority of the year”

Availability of sizes was also reported to be an issue for some, with some designs and cuts being unsuitable or unavailable in certain sizes.

“Currently there are only two shops who stock our school branded uniform which pupils are expected to wear. This creates difficulties when availability is short. Often no garment available in the size required nor items at short notice and need to be ordered in.”

“Access and availability are important, but should be considered with all other factors. Just by providing several outlets for customers to purchase the uniform, then no-one supplier is taking responsibility or ownership of that supply. Therefore, they are likely to stock only the popular sizes and colours that they know will sell, and will give no regard for ensuring that the stock is maintained throughout the year. They will not consider it to be their responsibility and therefore shortages will ensue.”

“It is also apparent that the other retail stores only bother to hold stock of the popular sizes of general wear garments that they are likely to sell. Primary children requiring larger than age 11/12 garments, secondary girls requiring 40” plus sizes, secondary boys requiring 15.5” plus collar sizes, secondary pupils with waist 34” plus, short legs, extra-long legs will NOT be able to get uniform without the specialist shops as it will not be anyone’s specific concern. The specialist shop who has the relationship with their school and therefore is more accountable is concerned that they fit every child.”

Local suppliers were preferred by some, both from accessibility and economic reasons.

“Governing bodies should approve suppliers who invest in the local economy by having either a shop within 20 miles of the school for parents to visit or come to schools offering to sell directly to parents. A good website is essential for selling uniform to parents who prefer to buy this way. Welsh schools should be encouraged to support Welsh suppliers.”

“All of us have to start thinking of the global environmental impact of the clothes we buy, and the ethics involved in their manufacture. Very rigid school rules (eg only one brand of trousers) make this impossible. Out of school my daughters are not clothed in teflon coated polyester... Yet in school I often have no options at all, the school sweater has a crest, the skirts and trousers are specific brands and colours. I would love to see Wales leading in having a better environmental policy for uniform.”

“I am more concerned about the environmental impact of school uniform. Where there is little choice it usually means buying polyester with stain resistant coatings that are endocrine disruptors and environmentally hazardous. School uniform is a sea of coated polyester, it is very difficult to get anything that is environmentally sustainable yet still fitting the criteria of the school.”

“Environmental impact of school uniform policies hasn’t been mentioned but is an important factor. Every year children grow out of perfectly wearable uniform although some families are able to pass this uniform to younger siblings many families do not have a good system of reuse available to them. Boxes of lost property jumpers at school should also be minimised with jumpers being rehomed at the start of the next academic year. I personally would love to buy second hand uniform for my children but this wasn’t available to me. It would be a missed opportunity to not consider the environmental impact of uniform policies and the potential to create a more sustainable Wales.”

It was generally agreed that access and availability should be a key consideration when schools considered setting or amending school uniform policies and that governing bodies are best place to understand their geographic and economic areas and consider this when setting school uniform and appearance policies.

In the easy read version of the consultation question 3 was phrased slightly differently asking “Do you agree that school uniform should be the same for all pupils?” As well as the views above, this also elicited responses concerning different uniform items for different ages. For example, sixth form pupils having alternative or no uniform and various year groups being distinguished by different uniform items such as different coloured ties.

“Sixth formers are young adults and should not be required to wear a uniform.”

“My daughter’s school has a variety of different ties for different year groups, for which I can see no justification. It may perhaps be acceptable to have an optional alternative uniform for the sixth form (e.g. a different tie, or allowing jackets or blazers instead of jumpers). But there should never be a need to change uniform just because of moving into a new school year.”

“Daughter wore own clothes in sixth form cost me much more than the standard uniform and all are on an equal footing.”

Do you agree that schools’ uniform policies should not dictate different items of clothing on the basis of sex or gender?

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
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Total	71%	16%	13%
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The majority of those that registered a view agreed that schools' uniform policies should not dictate different items of clothing on the basis of sex or gender. Although some preferred a gender neutral uniform, many expressed a preference for separate male and female items but allowing pupils the choice of which they wore. However, some respondents raised concerns that this may lead to clothing such as skirts being removed from uniform policies but that it was important to maintain choice for people to express gender.

Many of the respondents who disagreed or neither agreed or disagreed also commented that policies should have uniform items for different sexes and gender but that students should be free to wear items from either list.

A minority of responses expressed opinion that items of clothing should be different for boys and girls.

Respondents also noted that when stipulating uniform items governing bodies needed to be mindful of dress requirements for different faiths and cultures. Those who are required to wear items for religious reasons must be accommodated and schools must ensure that uniforms did not discriminate on any basis.

"I think skirts should still be available to those who want to wear them and not have a trouser only rule"

"I don't see why my daughter can't wear sports shorts for physical exercise. A gender neutral uniform would be better."

"It is absolutely essential in current times to have equality and non-gender specific uniforms in order to protect the mental health and identity of our children"

"They should not be able to dictate on basis of gender full stop! It should be up to the pupil if they want to wear a skirt or trousers, blouse or shirt etc."

"My child is going through identifying her sexuality and has openly said she is bisexual but hates wearing fitted jumpers that are compulsory for girls when boys have comfortable relaxing jumpers she feels that she should be allowed to wear this uniform too"

"This should include the choice for all children as to whether they wear trousers or skirts, regardless of their gender assignment or sexuality"

“The question of gender of a school uniform should be addressed by allowing those pupils with gender fluidity to wear either gender of uniform as required, without discrimination. The practicality of having a uniform policy that prescribes only gender neutral garments would be difficult to fulfil. However having a policy that allows children to wear any garments that form a part of the uniform policy should be allowed and encouraged.”

“This is a positive step, it already happens in some schools but not all.”

“School uniform policies should not dictate items of clothing on the basis of sex or gender and instead provide a list of acceptable uniform items which pupils can select from.”

“I would not agree that a policy which discriminates on the ground of sex (or any other ground) becomes acceptable if the purported justification for the discrimination is religious. Surely the point about religion should be that uniform policies should be sensitive to the forms of dress adopted by pupils of different religions, which may entail some flexibility and perhaps allowing a wider range of items to be worn than would otherwise be the case.”

“We certainly ought to respect the right of religious believers to live out their faith in school, including their right to wear overtly gender specific clothing. To do otherwise would be religious discrimination and display deep intolerance of families with different beliefs on the subject of gender specific clothing.”

It was raised that uniform policies must ensure that there is no difference in costs for uniforms for either sex/gender. Some respondents reported that some items were more expensive for a particular gender, for example, where boys were wearing generic trousers and girls wearing branded skirts.

“Let them choose to wear trousers or skirts, whichever makes them feel right in themselves. One local school has a tartan skirt for girls these typically cost £25 each, the boys wear grey trousers costing roughly £10 this is hardly fair.”

Some felt that students should not be required to wear certain items such as skirts and ties for various reasons, it should be optional. It was also mentioned that stipulating different PE kits for girls may make them feel vulnerable and limited their ability to participate in activities. Consideration was also given to different styles and cuts of clothing as these can make students feel uncomfortable.

“Girls should never be forced to wear skirts for any activity”

“Girls should not be defeminised, they should feel able to wear skirts.”

“In a few of the high schools I am aware that in the summer months, the boys have been allowed to wear shorts but the girls have had to wear skirts. Girls are then having to decide how to protect their modesty by either wearing tights (which is impractical

and unhealthy in the extreme hot weather) or wearing shorts underneath the skirt (which is an added expense to parents and also not a healthy option)."

"Stop girls wearing ties. Nowhere else in life would a woman wear a tie. It's ludicrous. Some research says that women feel they have to dress like a man to succeed. This starts in school - let's stop it."

"Girls and boys should be able to wear whatever they are comfortable wearing regardless of sex...Gender is a social construct so is irrelevant"

"My son is a larger build and would be more comfortable if he were allowed to wear jogging bottoms instead of trouser."

"There is no place for gender discrimination in our schools."

"I think that skirt, smart shorts or trousers should be offered, irrespective of gender. I do not think that just offering trousers for all is acceptable, as some young women will have grown up wearing skirts and feel more comfortable in a skirt."

"I agree that policies shouldn't dictate that boys wear trousers and girls wear skirts but I disagree with making everyone wear a gender neutral uniform which is what is currently happening at my daughter's school, from September she will no longer be allowed to wear a skirt. Where is her option to make a choice?"

"This should include the choice for all children as to whether they wear trousers or skirts, regardless of their gender assignment or sexuality."

It was widely noted that gender discrimination must not be allowed and that children should be allowed to express themselves freely as they developed their own identities.

"Schools and governing bodies need to have regard to equality legislation"

"We fully agree that schools' uniform policies should not dictate different items of clothing on the basis of sex or gender. Governing bodies must fully comply with existing equalities legislation and not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender. This is applicable both in regard to school uniforms and matters considered to fall within the category of 'appearance'. Many schools have made positive and sensible adjustments to their policy to have full regard for such matters, yet this is not consistent across Wales"

Do you agree that school governing bodies should make clear their approach to flexible uniform items to account for extreme weather conditions when setting their school uniform and appearance policy?

	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Total	89%	6%	5%

The majority of those that registered a view agreed that school governing bodies should make clear their approach to flexible uniform items to account for extreme weather conditions when setting their school uniform and appearance policy. Many felt that simple adaptations such as allowing PE kit to be worn or removal of blazers and jumpers in hot weather was a suitable compromise. Respondents felt that it should be clear in the policy what would be acceptable and how changes would be communicated to avoid any confusion. A strong theme from respondents' comments was that the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils was paramount.

"Uniform should never be enforced at expense of pupil wellbeing, health, education"

"Pe kit okay when hot, non-uniform puts too much pressure to wear expensive clothes"

"Children should be able to remove jumper when hot without permission"

"Adults have choice to dress for weather, why don't children?"

"Children should be able to wear cooler clothes in summer or warmer clothes in extreme cold weather. However, I would favour adapting the uniform e.g. shorts and shirt in summer rather than having a separate winter and summer uniform."

"It is a basic human right to be comfortable in heat and cold. If it is hot, the child should be allowed to wear cool clothes. If it is cold, the child should be allowed to wear warm clothes. Adults have this choice....why haven't the children???"

"My son's school changed the uniform policy during last summer's heat and stipulated that pupils could wear school PE kit. Very sensible."

"All learners raised the same point, if temperatures are high or low depending on the time of year, wearing school uniform can become uncomfortable which impacts on their ability for them to focus on their studies and they become easily distracted because of it."

"Based on regulation for adults in the work place , Welsh Government should legislate / regulate so that once temperatures hit 21c short sleeves , tailored knee length bottoms should be allowed to ensure the children in comprehensive schools are not discriminated against and that the top priority is for them to be as comfortable as possible to ensure the best learning environment possible"

"Important to consider both hot, cold and wet weather. The wellbeing of children should be at the heart of any uniform policy decisions."

"This flexibility should ensure that pupils are not sent home or punished for adapting uniforms in the face of extreme weather."

"school uniform should be designed so that pupils should be as comfortable as possible in order to promote good learning"

"..the school governing body should make the approach clear in the uniform and appearance policy, rather than just publicising the approach on an 'as and when' basis"

when extreme weather hits. This would allow those buying clothes to take the extreme weather policy into account when making purchasing decisions”

“We believe that this is an opportunity for the WG to go further and set a maximum temperature of 26c for a classroom. We believe this would protect the wellbeing of both education professionals and the children and young people in our schools. If WG is serious about ensuring that wellbeing is a key goal of ‘Our National Mission’ then they should not miss this opportunity.”

“This seems very reasonable and with climate change will become even more essential. Flexibility in policies for extreme weather conditions is certainly the best way forward.”

“Agree, the policy should clearly spell out what the appropriate uniform rules are for various weather conditions, what items of clothing will be acceptable, and how it will be communicated.”

“Clarity for all; staff, pupils and parents is vital, in order to avoid confusion.”

“Many schools have made positive and sensible adjustments to their policy to have fully regard for such matters, yet this is not consistent across Wales. This is both applicable in the summer as well as the winter months, with due regard to ensuring that their approach does not discriminate on any grounds. Many low income families struggle to provide more than one coat for their children given the high cost of such items. School governing bodies should be mindful of this when setting their policies.”

Effects of school uniform and appearance policies on the Welsh language.

Of the few respondents that commented, the majority felt that the guidance would not have any positive or negative impact on the Welsh language. Some commented that any school logo should be bilingual, and that the wearing of uniform would instil in students a sense of pride, about their heritage and nationality. It was raised that any supplier stipulated by a school policy must be able to communicate in Welsh to enable parents to use their chosen language, and must comply with any relevant Welsh Language standards.

Additional Comments

Comments included concerns about children being sanctioned for not wearing correct uniform, which may be outside of their control, and stigmatised lower income families. Some felt there should be clear guidance on sanctions and when these would be issued, with discretion

applied where an item was soiled or spoiled and could not be worn until replaced.

"I also believe that the isolation of pupils who do not conform to uniform codes in the tiniest detail is an over-the-top reaction to an artificial problem, and that any statutory guidance provided to schools should also incorporate the appropriate use of isolation, exclusion and other forms of punishment in these situations."

"This debate has taken too long to be addressed. Children are being targeted in schools, given detention, sent home all through the decision of their parents to provide uniforms that they can afford or access. Being sent home for having the wrong colour black trousers or a particular pair of shoes or hair too short too long."

"Also if the parents cannot afford the correct uniform children are being punished."

"Children should never face punishment for wearing 'non logoed' Items if their parents are unable to access or afford these items. It is cruel and unnecessary. Governing bodies should have the power to bring school staff to account should this happen."

"Guidelines should include advise on 'punishment' for not wearing uniform. Why exclude someone from school for not having a logo on their shirt?"

"As a principle, school uniform should relieve pupil and family stress - not cause it. And should reduce inequality in school, not increase it. Uniform should never be put up as a barrier to attendance or education."

"I also strongly oppose the punishment of students over minor uniform issues, particularly when such issues may well be the result of poverty or parenting difficulties."

There were multiple comments about PE Kit not needing to have logos, and concerns about items required not being used more than a few occasions.

"I have had to spend nearly £200 per child on kit/socks/boots/accessories etc and my sons are not sporty at all. Fair enough if your child is into sports and can use some of the sports equipment outside of school, but mine do not! What's wrong with plain coloured items for standard PE lessons?"

"PE kits seriously footwear and different items of clothing are not necessary if they play for the school team the school should provide the top to identify them but other than that it's not necessary for the expense for one hour long lesson every week."

"PE kits are very expensive at our school and perhaps just a compulsory t shirt could be expected and then parents could but plain black shorts or suchlike. I've no desire to pay £20 for a pair of PE shorts that neither enhance performance or often end up lost."

"There's certainly no need for things like pe shorts and socks to be branded"

"There is no need for pe kit to need logos - something like plain black shorts or jogging bottoms and a plain colour T shirt would be fine, especially as most children at

secondary only have 2 pe lessons a week. Requiring specific pe kit with logos makes it disproportionately expensive.”

“My son's pe uniform consisted of different items for different sports. Is this really necessary as compulsory uniform? No and it isn't enforced but it's on the year 7 lists and adds pressure.”

“And pe kit should just be plain basic shorts/joggers and t shirt they are ridiculously expensive.”

A number of respondents made comments about hair styles, jewellery and make up being included in school uniform guidance. Some felt it was helpful to include whilst others felt that young people should be able to decide about their own personal appearance.

“School uniform codes should never give guidance on the colours and style of hair.”

“Being told to remove make up can affect confidence as children may use it to hide spots etc. Whilst I appreciate heavy make up is not justified a little everyday should be worn.”

“Also to be considered is hair colour, hair cuts/styles, and make up. How does someone dying their hair effect learning? How does say stripe shaved marks in hair effect learning? And how can make up (used by some for comfort and confidence) effect learning?”

“Expand rules on jewellery and hair to reflect the modern age”

“Makeup and cosmetics needs to be included as part of the appearance policy. Any hair, jewellery, makeup and cosmetics policies must treat sexes and genders equally.”

“School uniform codes should never give guidance on the colours and style of hair”

“What a child wears and how they style their hair has no effect on their education and so freedom of expression is an important part of growing up”

“Kids should be able to have freedom of expression ie hairstyle of their choice shoes that they like none of this stuff impacts on education plus it shows respect for different people works both ways we have finally been allowed to dye our hair whatever we choose in the work place and tattoos and piercings are no longer frowned on”

“Makeup and cosmetics needs to included as part of the appearance policy. Any hair, jewellery, makeup and cosmetics policies must treat sexes and genders equally.”

Consideration was also given to young people with disabilities, or specific needs and difficulties. Comments included the need to consider alternative uniform items for these pupils and having regard to sensitivities when deciding materials and textures, and restrictive items.

“The sensory needs of autistic and other disabled children. Many children have sensory issues around traditional shirt collars and cuffs, embroidered logos, traditional trousers. It would be great to see a sensory difficulty uniform or sen adapted uniform for these children.”

“Schools should consider impact of uniform policies in accommodating pupils with autism or other sensory issues.”

“There should be far greater flexibility in uniform for children with autism and sensory difficulties. The ability to wear (for example) similar clothing but in softer materials, rather than rigid adherence to the policy. Reasonable adjustments would be a huge help.”

“I think the most important things are that children are comfortable so that they are able to learn effectively, and that school uniform policies do not act as a barrier to learning for children who aren't able to afford them, have issues around disabilities or health problems that make it difficult for them if the uniform policy is too restrictive, or who are unable to wear certain items clothing due to cultural or religious reasons. The whole point of uniform is to promote equality and a sense of community, so this should be at the heart of every school's uniform policy.”

“Schools should also take account of additional needs when considering uniform policies e.g. sensory issues.”

Many stated the importance of uniform was to provide equality and improve behaviours amongst other benefits. However, some respondents questioned the need for uniform, citing a lack of evidence of any educational benefit, and comparing to other countries where uniform is not worn in schools.

“Uniform encourages smartness which is often neglected these days.”

“I still find it difficult to understand the rationale for uniform in education. It often appears to conflict with the voice of a child and that forceful agenda in Wales by then dictating to children what they have to wear.”

“Why not lose uniform entirely? Works in college and most of Europe”.

“School uniform policies are outdated and unrelated to learning outcomes in research.”

“As a Welsh teacher, school uniform policies are one of the major things I have to deal with on a daily basis. I personally feel that school uniforms are completely unnecessary as they have no impact on attainment whatsoever.”

“Uniform is crucial to establishing and maintaining standards that allow equity and equality.”

“Uniform policy should have learners dressed for success, and differentiate from what they would wear in leisure time!”

"It must be done in a way that has appositive impact on families and young people and not be used as an excuse for schools as a behaviour control tool. Schools weaponise uniform and turn staff into uniform police officers (it is a waste of time and effort and unnecessary) when they should be preparing our young people for a dynamic and challenging changing world where uniform does not play any part."

"Uniform is an important leveller "

"I have been to a number of schools in Europe where uniform is not worn, with no detriment to educational standards."

"Whilst we have the need for uniforms with regard to identity for the school, compliance and standards as well as the obvious negative effect on children who come from less affluent homes if there were no uniforms - I believe that this needs to be balanced with fairness and creative expression for the child, and the importance of their own identity on their mental health."

Next steps

The Welsh Government welcomes the responses to the consultation.

Consulting on the guidance has provided an insight on the issues of concern and an opportunity to consider them in advance of the publication of the guidance. All comments received will be carefully considered when finalising the guidance.

The Welsh Government believes that the guidance will provide clear and useful support for governing bodies in making their decisions on school uniform policies in respect of access, affordability and flexibility and; will help to ensure consistency in the approach to school uniform and appearance policies

The new, statutory guidance for school governing bodies on school uniform and appearance policies will be published on the Welsh Government website and will come into force in September 2019.

A school's uniform and appearance policy will remain the responsibility of the governing body. School governing bodies will have regard to the new Welsh Government statutory guidance when introducing or reviewing their school uniform policy, however, the Welsh Government will have no powers to enforce it.