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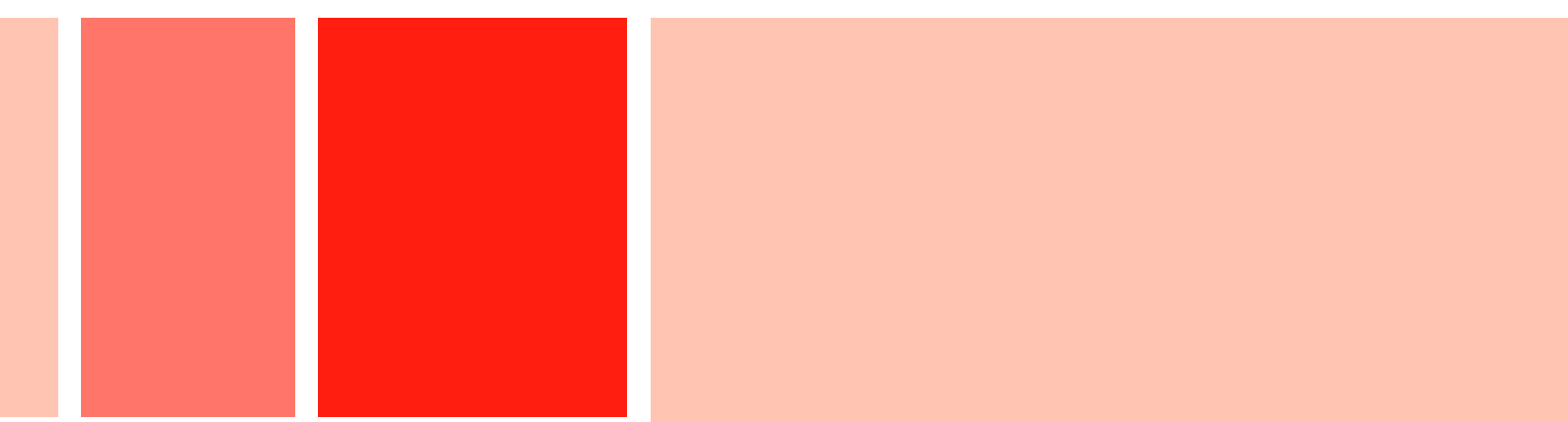
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School Uniform and Other Costs of Schooling: views and experiences in Wales



School Uniform and Other Costs of Schooling: views and experiences in Wales

Final Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government

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Glossary of acronyms

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureaux
DCELLS	Department for Children Education Lifelong Learning and Skills
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FE	Further Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
OFT	Office for Fair Trading
PE	Physical Education
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

Executive Summary

BMG Research was commissioned in the autumn of 2009 by the Department for Children Education, Lifelong Learning Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake research of views of parent/carers in Wales on school uniforms and the wider costs of schooling.

It is recognised that whilst a school uniform policy can be beneficial to schools, its pupils and their parents (if correctly implemented), there can be a risk of marginalisation or disadvantage to some groups because of, for example, the cost of the required items, perceptions and views on what is mandatory and what is voluntary and the availability of financial support for the cost of school uniform items. The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to understand these and other related issues in more detail to provide a sound evidence base on which to develop subsequent policy and practice around school uniform, to remove stigmatisation and to contribute to the wider target of the eradication of child poverty and disadvantage.

Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of the research was therefore to explore the views of parents/carers and young people in Wales on the validity, usefulness and benefits of having school uniforms and their experiences and views on the cost and availability of buying uniforms, and to explore how the wider costs of schooling impacts on children, families and schools. The research objectives thus relate to exploration and identification of the following:

- children and young people's views and experiences of school uniforms;
- how many schools have specific school uniform requirements/retailers or whether they are more widely available (and parental views);
- views of the cost of school uniforms, and the extent to which this can place some families at a disadvantage or feeling discriminated;
- the extent to which there is consultation with/consideration of parents' views in developing a school uniform policy;
- wider costs of schooling and how this impacts on different families or leads to the marginalisation or disengagement of some; and

- availability and role of financial support (grants, free school meals etc) – and parental awareness.

Research method

The study commenced with an inception phase, followed by:

- desk based research;
- stakeholder consultations;
- a telephone survey with parents and carers of school age children;
- postal survey of all schools; and
- qualitative case studies with schools and families.

Findings

School Uniform Costs

- School uniform requirements were evident in virtually all schools, with only one per cent of respondents reporting that there was no school uniform requirement at their child's school. School uniform requirements tended to be for jumpers, fleeces and/or cardigans, skirts or trousers, shoes, school bags, socks and coats.
- For the main items that were required, four fifths of tops needed to be badged or logoed and about half of shirts needed to be badged or logoed.
- Although blazers were only required by about a fifth of pupils (mostly in secondary schools), it was this item that was mostly likely to be only available from one specialist retailer.
- Ties and tops (fleeces, sweatshirts etc) were also only available from one specialist retailer in the majority of cases.
- Overall, 42 per cent reported experiencing some level of financial difficulty when buying their child's school uniform. Such difficulties were far more likely to be reported among families with a household income of less than £25,000. However, even among those with household incomes above £25,000, a fifth reported financial difficulties when buying their child's school uniform.
- The items that caused the most difficulty were jumpers/sweatshirts/tops. Costs of these (with logos) were said to be in the region of £12 to £15 per top.
- Sixteen percent of respondents reported that the financial difficulties had been such that they had had occasion where they had not bought a required

item because of the cost – this was more likely to be the case among households with a lower income. The most common consequence of such difficulties was having to make an adjustment elsewhere in the household budget.

- Although the majority of respondents reported that they were happy with the costs of school uniform, 26 per cent said that they were not – unsurprisingly this was more likely to be the case among low income households. Similar figures were evident for the costs of PE/sports kit.
- In terms of PE and sports kit requirements, 86 per cent of parents indicated that there were such requirements for their child – mostly shorts, shirt and trainers.
- In the majority of cases, PE/sports kit items were not required to be badged or logoed – the exception to this was t-shirts/tops where in around half of cases a logoed version was required.
- No specific sports equipment was required in 70 per cent of cases—where there was a requirement it was mostly related to shin pads, a gum shield or hockey stick.
- A minority of parents (10 per cent) said that they had not bought an item of PE/sports kit because of cost – again this was much more likely to be reported among the lower household income group.

School trips, activities and equipment

- A third of parents were asked to pay for 1 or 2 school trips for their child.
- Around three quarters of parents were happy with the amount of school trips they were asked to contribute towards, but around a quarter were not happy. Although those in the lower household income groups were slightly more likely to be unhappy about this, respondents in both groups expressed concern.
- One in 10 parents had not sent their child on a school day trip because of the cost, and one in 5 had not sent their child on a residential trip because of the cost. The likelihood of this increased among the lower income households (and particularly among those reliant on benefits as their main source of income), but remained an issue for both lower and higher income groups.

- Respondents whose main household income was from both employment and benefits were more likely than those whose main income was either just benefits or just employment not to send their child on a residential trip because of cost.
- Over half of the sample reported that they were *not* invited to discuss any difficulties in paying for school trips with the teacher, although 27 per cent said they were *always* invited to discuss such difficulties.
- That said, around two thirds of parents said that they were broadly happy with the costs associated with school trips for their child, with more parents from lower income household groups likely to express they were unhappy
- Around half of respondents felt pressurised into contributing to the cost of school trips.
- Contributions to a wide range of other school related costs were also apparent, including contributions to cookery lessons, design and technology equipment, art materials, charitable donations, contributions to school fetes/raffles and cake stalls or similar. Qualitative evidence indicates that the cost of some of these activities can be significant – for example cooking ingredients can be £3 or £4 a week.
- Over half of parents said that they purchased a school photo of their child during the last year; in the large majority of cases this cost was more than £10.
- Over two fifths of the sample also paid for additional activities for their child such as a school disco, school play costs or other hobbies at school.

Support with costs of schooling

- Overall 45 per cent of the sample found it difficult to meet all of the schooling costs discussed in the survey. Low income households and larger families were much more likely to report difficulties than others, although the presence of difficulties was evident in all groups.

- However, there appeared to be a lack of awareness about support that might be available to families, particularly for those on benefits who could access some support with the cost of residential trips or support by way of school uniform grants.
- The majority of parents also indicated that there were no opportunities to purchase second hand uniform items at their school (66 per cent) – although evidence from the schools themselves indicated that a higher proportion did indeed have such a facility.
- Qualitative evidence from schools suggests that efforts are made to ensure that children are not excluded or marginalised because of not being able to afford school uniform items or to go on school trips (for example, by discretely offering support). However, according to parents there was some reluctance to seek help, and a general lack of awareness of what help was available.

Overview

This research has provided an evidence base on school uniform policies and practices in Wales, as well as parents' and schools' views on the implementation of such policies and the extent to which they have an impact on families. This has been achieved through adopting a range of research approaches, including a survey of parents' views and experiences, a survey of schools practices and policies and qualitative case studies with families and schools, as well as a brief review of existing evidence. The scope of the research was also informed by early stakeholder consultations with representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Child Poverty Expert Group.

In the main, although families clearly feel the financial strain of providing school uniform and other school costs for their children, they are supportive of school uniforms. Evidence of financial difficulties in paying for school costs is, unsurprisingly, concentrated among lower income families - although this applies to both those families reliant on benefits as their main source of income as well as families in low paid work. These difficulties increase as the number of children increases. Costs increase as children move through secondary schools, with a

greater number of financial demands for school items (eg, sports kit, cooking ingredients) and school trips.

Thus, a persistent core of around 1 in 10 of families appear to experience significant difficulties in terms of affordability for school uniforms and school trips. From the case study work, it appears as though some schools have found ways of managing the difficulties that some families can face, through knowing their schools' families and by providing support in a discrete non-stigmatising manner (for example, waiving the cost for some items, or allowing the family to pay for trips in instalments).

Generally, however, it appears as though schools tend to play down support that they are able to offer, amid a fear of opening 'floodgates' of demand for financial help (perhaps in some cases from families who may not particularly need it). Furthermore, families may not always be aware of the support available and/or may be reluctant to seek help.

Recommendations

Overall, there was overwhelming support for school uniform *per se* from parents, pupils and the schools themselves. However, a number of recommendations have emerged from the evidence, relating to both policy and practice.

Recommendations for policy – issues to be considered by the Welsh Assembly Government

- Review the provision of board and lodging costs (for residential trips) for those eligible for free school meals and who should meet this cost to avoid placing considerable strain on the finances of schools (particularly those schools that have a high concentration of potential eligibility).
- Continue to provide guidance for schools on developing and implementing a school uniform policy (including examples of good practice), whilst ensuring that schools are still able to develop their policies according to their school's specific requirements. If possible, alignment with primary school requirements could be taken into account by secondary schools, to see whether any core items (such as

sports equipment or basic school uniform items) could continue to be used at secondary schools.

- Consider extending support for school uniform costs to those on low incomes (for example, in receipt of a high rate of tax credits) as currently they are ineligible for any financial support but can face significant difficulties in paying for required items.
- Ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government one off grant (£100 payable at Year 7) is not replacing any LEA provision.
- Ensure that LEA provision is consistently available across all LEAs
- Consider the feasibility of capping the annual or individual cost of residential trips – perhaps in consultation with schools and parents.
- Ensure that there is appropriate policy guidance for schools in offering financial assistance to families to help them meet the costs of school trips. Currently, it appears as though some parents are unaware of the availability of support and others feel reluctant to seek it out.
- Offer guidance for schools wishing to set up their own school uniform shop, which would enable them to deal directly with ‘mail order’ suppliers.
- Review outcomes from the One Wales Laptop pilot to assess whether this approach needs to be applied to secondary schools in addition to primary schools.

Recommendations for practice – issues to be considered by schools

- Consideration of access to school uniform suppliers – some families (particularly those without a car) could find it difficult to access suppliers. As noted above, one option may be for the school to host a school uniform shop, making access easier, keeping the cost down for parents and enabling any profits to be fed directly into school funds. It may also be possible for parents to access school uniform supplies online (assuming they have access to the internet).
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a direct relationship with a school uniform supplier who is able to supply the school directly (perhaps

through mail order) – in some cases suppliers may be happy to provide a small proportion of income from orders placed by parents to go directly into a school fund.

- The requirement for compulsory logoed items needs to be carefully considered by schools when they are developing their uniform policies; and schools should endeavour to have an appropriate balance of having its own distinct identity, whilst also ensuring that uniform items are widely available and affordable. Schools should therefore review the need for logoed items, or limiting them to just one or two (reasonably priced) items of clothing.
- Schools should explore the feasibility of being able to sew badges or logos on to school items to enable parents to have the flexibility and choice to buy items from a range of suppliers which can then have the school logo added.
- Encourage greater ‘ownership ‘ of school uniform policy among pupils and parents – where there is input from these groups into school uniform policy there is likely to be a greater acceptance and hence compliance.
- Ensure that pupils on lower incomes do not feel marginalised in any way (for example, by sitting in a different part of the dining hall to eat packed lunches or by it being easy to identify who does not go on a school trip or residential break).
- Consider the use of a school uniform loan or donation scheme for those in extreme hardship.
- Schools need to communicate with all parents in advising them about the different types of uniform support that are available (loan of spare items, availability of second hand uniform and so on) since some families do not wish to draw attention to their own financial circumstances.
- Promote and encourage school second hand uniform shops.
- Consider setting up a resource room at schools where pupils can loan items in a non-stigmatising way (for example, by utilising the room for other activities such as quiet study).

- Consider the introduction of a staged payment scheme for school residential trips, enabling payments by instalments (extending after the school trip if needed).
- Staggering the timings of school trips or running them on several occasions so it is not readily apparent who has been unable to go because of affordability.
- To give due consideration to families who may have limited access to the internet/broadband at home, and ensure that the children are not disadvantaged in any way because of this.
- Schools should undertake ongoing consultation with young people (possibly through school councils) to ensure that there is awareness and understanding of the impacts of costs of uniform and other associated costs.

Recommendations for practice – issues to be considered by schools and voluntary sector organisations

- Encourage partnership working between schools and organisations working with families on low incomes so that schools can refer parents to these organisations for help and advice with budgeting and claim support that they are eligible for such as free school meals.
- Promote head teachers' attendance at training and awareness raising sessions run by organisations with expertise in child poverty so that they can learn about the issues that low income families encounter and good practice in minimising the costs of schooling.

1 Introduction

1. BMG Research was commissioned in the autumn of 2009 by the Department for Children Education, Lifelong Learning Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake research of views of parent/carers in Wales on school uniforms and the wider costs of schooling. It is recognised that whilst a school uniform policy can be beneficial to schools, its pupils and their parents (if correctly implemented), there can be a risk of marginalisation or disadvantage to some groups because of, for example, the cost of the required items, perceptions and views on what is mandatory and what is voluntary and the availability of financial support for the cost of school uniform items. The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to understand these and other related issues in more detail to provide a sound evidence base on which to develop subsequent policy and practice around school uniform, to remove stigmatisation and to contribute to the wider target of the eradication of child poverty and disadvantage.

Background to the research

2. There is no education legislation specifically covering the wearing of school uniform or other aspects of appearance such as hair colour and style, and the wearing of jewellery and makeup. However, 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 can specify a uniform which pupils are required to wear and other rules relating to appearance. Secondary schools in Wales almost invariably specify a uniform for pupils to age 16 although many do not specify uniform for sixth formers. The position in primary schools is more mixed.
3. The Welsh Assembly Government strongly encourages governing bodies to have a school uniform policy which is drawn up after consultation with parents, pupils and relevant local or faith communities. The general consensus in government is that a school uniform policy which is properly developed and appropriately implemented can be very beneficial by:

- providing a sense of identity and cohesion within the school and instils pride in its achievements;
- supporting positive behaviour and school discipline;
- ensuring pupils dress appropriately for learning activity;
- removing peer pressure to dress in designer fashions;
- enabling pupils of all backgrounds to share in a common identity which embraces their particular requirements;
- helping to reduce inequalities between pupils and some triggers for bullying;
- helping to identify truants;
- assisting in the identification of strangers on school premises; and
- supporting and promoting the ethos of the school.

4. Guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government focuses on many issues relating to school uniform policies including equality issues, cost; considerations involved in introducing or changing school uniform policies; and consultation with parents and pupils over school uniform policies.

Cost of Uniforms

5. In relation to cost, the Welsh Assembly Government expects governing bodies to give high priority to cost considerations when introducing a school uniform policy and/or considering changes to uniform requirements and to ensure that uniform items are widely available for parents to buy. The Welsh Assembly Government guidance provides a number of suggestions of how to keep school uniform costs to a minimum, such as:

- only stipulate basic items and colours but not styles so that items can be bought from retail chains at reasonable prices and not just from one supplier;
- avoid high cost items such as blazers and caps;
- school logos – requiring logos on polo shirts, jumpers, blazers and PE kit, obtainable from specialist suppliers can be costly;

- avoid variation in colours and style for different year groups – this is expensive for parents and limits the scope for second-hand sale or handing on to siblings;
- have easily washable items: dry clean only items should be avoided;
- limit the frequency of uniform changes as this can be costly for parents and again limits the scope for re-sale or handing on to other pupils;
- consider the cost and availability of non-standard sizes;
- if there is a change to a school uniform policy, introduce a transitional period so that old uniform can be worn for at least a year before a total changeover to a new uniform and to consider if elements of the old uniform can be retained in the new policy; and
- take a flexible approach to basic uniform requirements during hot weather as opposed to having separate uniforms for winter and summer.

6. The guidance also sets out the current position in Wales regarding financial assistance for parents towards the cost of purchasing school uniform. This includes the Welsh Assembly Government School Uniform Grant Scheme which provides a grant (which is £100 in 2009/10) to pupils entering year 7 of maintained secondary school in Wales who are eligible for free school meals, and pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units in Wales who are aged 11 at the start of the school year and who are eligible for free school meals. In addition to this, many local authorities across Wales offer financial assistance towards the cost of school uniform; the amount varies from around £28 to £155.

Concerns Raised About School Uniforms

7. Concerns have been raised to the Welsh Assembly Government with regard to certain aspects of school uniforms, including:
- parents having no choice other than to buy school uniform items directly from the school, school Parent Teacher Association, or a small and restricted number of suppliers;

- schools insistence on pupils wearing logo-ed items of clothing which are more costly than non logo-ed items;
 - schools insistence on garments being unusual colours/patterns and therefore are not readily available in a wide choice of retailers;
 - different uniforms for boys and girls which can lead to differences in cost and/or quality of garments; and
 - schools providing a lengthy list of garments and equipment for sports and games, often with insistence that they are in specific colours or logo-ed.
8. Such situations reported can have an effect on some families, and thus a central aim of the research was to explore these and other issues in more depth to find out the scope of these concerns.
9. In addition to the costs involved with school uniforms a range of additional financial costs can place burdens on families. Such financial costs will sometimes place significant burdens on poorer families, and there is evidence to suggest that the range of events and items is increasing (the increase in prevalence of school end of year proms is such an example). This may have a significant impact on the pledge to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

Research aim and objectives

10. The overall aim of the research was to explore the views of parents/carers and young people in Wales on the validity, usefulness and benefits of having school uniforms and their experiences and views on the cost and availability of buying uniforms, and to explore how the wider costs of schooling impacts on children, families and schools. The research objectives therefore relate to exploration and identification of the following:
- children and young people's views and experiences of school uniforms;
 - how many schools have specific school uniform requirements/retailers or whether they are more widely available (and parental views);
 - views of the cost of school uniforms, and the extent to which this can place some families at a disadvantage or feeling discriminated;

- the extent to which there is consultation with/consideration of parents' views in developing a school uniform policy;
- wider costs of schooling and how this impacts on different families or leads to the marginalization or disengagement of some; and
- availability and role of financial support (grants, free school meals etc) – and parental awareness.

Research method

11. The study commenced with an inception phase, followed by:

- desk based research;
- stakeholder consultations;
- a telephone survey with parents and carers of school age children;
- postal survey of all schools; and
- qualitative case studies with schools and families.

12. Each is described in more detail below.

Desk based research and stakeholder consultations

13. A brief contextual review was undertaken of existing evidence with regard to the cost of schooling (including LEA provision), along with consultations with stakeholders including:

- representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government (Department for Social Justice and Local Government, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), and
- academics, lobby group representatives and network members in the field of child poverty.

Telephone survey with parents

14. In order to obtain quantitative data on parental attitudes towards, and experiences of, school uniform policy and practice, a telephone survey was conducted with parents of primary and secondary school age children. The

telephone survey was approximately 15 minutes long and covered the following key issues:

- whether their child's school has a school uniform policy, and how prescriptive it is (specialist retailers, specific requirements etc);
- parents' views on school uniform policy and the benefits of school uniform;
- views on the cost of school uniform;
- whether this cost is prohibitive in any way or causes any difficulties;
- whether parents have ever been consulted about their child's school uniform policy;
- wider costs of schooling and how this impacts on parents/families; and
- awareness and use of financial support for school uniform costs (and other support such as grants, free school meals etc).

15. The survey included an 'opt-in' question for further research on this subject, which then enabled the research team to purposively select a small sample of respondents for the case study qualitative work with parents/carers (see below). The telephone survey was conducted by interviewers at BMG's call centre, and took place in December 2009. A copy of the questionnaire is available in a separate technical report.

Postal census of schools

16. A postal self-completion questionnaire was distributed in December 2009 to all primary, secondary and special schools in Wales (a total of approximately 1,800 schools with over 30 pupils). The survey covered:

- how many schools have specific school uniform requirements – what elements are mandatory and what elements are optional;
- how many schools have specific school uniform outlets/retailers;
- whether/how parents and pupils are consulted on matters relating to school uniform policy;
- provision of support (financial or other) for the cost of school uniform (and wider schooling costs) – and any take-up issues;

- whether there have been any recent changes in school uniform policy – and if so what and why; and
- whether the school would be willing, in principle, to take part in further qualitative work (enabling us to select six schools in which to conduct qualitative work with young people and with the head teacher as appropriate – see below).

17. A copy of the postal questionnaire is available in a separate technical report.

Qualitative research with families and schools

18. Six qualitative ‘case studies’ with families of children with primary and/or secondary age school children were conducted. Respondents were selected from the earlier telephone survey of parents, based on responses to questions about the extent to which the cost of school uniform can/has caused difficulties or placed them at a potential disadvantage or at risk of stigma (and consent to be recontacted). Areas for exploration during the discussions (which were conducted face-to-face with parents and children where possible) included:

- parents’ views on school uniform policy and the benefits/disadvantages for their child(ren);
- children and young people’s perspectives on school uniforms;
- availability of school uniform and related equipment/items – cost, retail outlets, specialist stores etc – and parental views on this;
- whether there are any detrimental effects or stigma associated with the costs of schooling, and why;
- awareness/take-up of support for costs – and whether this is sufficient; and
- opportunities for consultation/dialogue with the schools about these issues.

19. From the schools survey, six schools were selected for follow-up qualitative work, which included discussions with the head teacher (or nominated deputy) about the school’s uniform policy as well as some small focus groups or paired interview discussions with pupils about their experiences. Copies of topic guides are provided in a separate technical report.

20. Qualitative finding from the families and schools case studies are included in Sections 3 and 4 of the report, with individual case study write-ups provided at Annex A.

2 Context

21. This section provides further background and context for the research, by providing a brief overview of existing research evidence around the costs of schooling, and the views of stakeholders.

Desk based review

22. Families are required to finance a range of requirements for their school age children and a number of studies have investigated the impact of these costs on budgeting, particularly on low income families. A brief review of some of the research undertaken across England and Wales in recent years around the costs of schooling, particularly its impacts on lower income families is outlined below.

The costs of schooling

23. The following items and events that have been identified as requiring parental support across a range of studies and documents:

- school uniforms and sports kits;
- school meals;
- transportation to and from school;
- classroom materials for activities such as cookery, IT, art and craft;
- music lessons;
- costs of curriculum related activities and school trips;
- costs of activities such as charity events and school photos;
- transition events and school proms; and
- access to ICT equipment and the internet at home.

24. Studies have sought to estimate the costs of schooling with a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) study finding that the average annual cost associated with sending a child to a state school in England in 2007 was £563.15 for primary pupils and £948.11 for secondary pupils (BMRB Research, 2009). This study examined a range of costs including school meals and school uniforms and found that 40 per cent of parents and carers surveyed found it difficult to meet these costs. Additionally, a study

undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB, 2007) which reviewed costs for school uniforms, school trips and additional costs found that 72 per cent of primary school respondents reported finding it 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to meet the costs, as did 79 per cent of secondary school respondents.

Costs of school uniform

25. The costs of school uniform have been a source of particular concern, with a number of bodies and charities undertaking research on this matter. The Office for Fair Trading (OFT) undertook a study across the UK in 2006 (OFT, 2006) following complaints from parents regarding lack of choice and high prices / poor quality when schools restrict the supply of uniform to particular retailers through exclusive contracts, as well as from other retailers claiming that these arrangements foreclose the market to them. Self-supply of uniforms by schools had also provoked similar complaints.
26. The OFT study surveyed a sample of schools across the UK as well as undertaking mystery shopping activities with suppliers. Evidence gathered from this research showed that some schools required parents to purchase school uniforms from particular suppliers or the school itself, with exclusive retailers' prices being 23 per cent more expensive than school uniform retailers generally and 150 per cent more expensive than supermarkets. The OFT therefore recommended that governing bodies should end exclusive school uniform contracts and make uniforms more widely available. The Welsh Assembly Government supported these findings and recommended that governing bodies should bear these in mind.
27. School uniform costs have been a particular area of concern for Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) throughout England and Wales, with the organisation undertaking numerous studies and campaigns about problems faced by parents on a low income financing school clothing for their children. The CAB expressed concern that school uniform costs normally occur as a lump sum; parents on low wages or benefits can experience difficulties to find this amount of money in one go, at the start of the autumn term or when their child joins a new school. Research undertaken by the CAB with parents about the costs of schooling in 2007 found that three quarters of parents of secondary

school children and two thirds of parents of primary school children found it difficult to meet the costs of school uniform. The study also reported that parents were broadly positive about the benefits of school uniforms, stating that they limited requirements and costs for a wide range of clothing for their children. However, parents also expressed concern that these benefits could be undermined by the specific nature of schools' uniform policies. These included restricting the supplier and customising the uniform with badges and logos.

Impact of the costs of schooling on low income families

28. Despite a reduction in the levels of child poverty in recent years, around one in four children (180,000 children) in Wales continue to live in poverty (WAG, 2009). Although education is free, there has been concern that the 'hidden' additional cost of education and schooling affects poor children and families by using a proportionately higher percentage of their incomes to supplement their attendance at school.
29. One of the Welsh Assembly Government's seven core aims for children and young people is to ensure that no child is disadvantaged by poverty. Being able to participate in all aspects of schooling is an important part of this, and access to education is one of the well-being indicators monitored by the Welsh Assembly's Wellbeing Monitor.
30. The End Child Poverty Cymru reported that schools provide an environment which should 'protect children from poverty by providing them with the opportunity to learn, make friends and participate in a range of events and activities, regardless of family background, income and other defining factors' (End Child Poverty Cymru, 2006). However, it also expressed concern that costs for school uniforms, trips, activities, transitional events, meals and classroom materials were increasing and possibly creating barriers to the full participation of children in schools, and even potentially stigmatise them.

Supporting families with schooling costs

31. In 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced an all Wales school uniform grant scheme to assist families on low incomes with the purchase of

school uniform for their children. The scheme is targeted at pupils entering secondary school as this is the time when parents face the biggest cost of school uniform in one go.

32. The grant is available to pupils in year 7 of maintained schools in Wales who are eligible for free school meals, and to pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units who are aged 11 at the start of the school year and who are eligible for free school meals.
33. The grant scheme provided eligible pupils with a grant of £85 in 2005/06; £95 in 2006/07; £97.50 in 2007/08; and £100 in 2008/09.
34. Apart from 2005-06 where uptake was lower than expected (this was partly due to the grant scheme bedding in), uptake of the grant has been high:
 - 2005-06 – 6,181 pupils claimed the grant (88 per cent) from an estimated number of 6,985;
 - 2006-07 – 6,275 pupils claimed the grant (96 per cent) from an estimated number of 6,500;
 - 2007-08 – 5,993 pupils claimed the grant (94 per cent) from an estimated number of 6,331;
 - 2008-09 – 6,374 pupils claimed the grant (99.6 per cent) from an estimated number of 6,399; and
 - 2009-10 – 6,621 pupils claimed the grant (103 per cent) from an estimated number of 6,413 (source – Welsh Assembly Government data).
35. The introduction of the Welsh Assembly Government School Uniform Grant has been highlighted as good practice by the Citizens Advice Bureau in providing families with financial assistance towards the costs of school uniforms. However, the Bevan Foundation stated that many families miss out on this support since the proportion of children living in poverty in Wales, (29 per cent) (DWP, 2006/07) exceeds the proportion eligible for free school meals (16 per cent) and consequently many low income families miss out on this support. Additionally, both the Bevan Foundation and the CAB reported that a number of LEAs had removed financial assistance for school uniforms

following the introduction of the grant (CAB, 2007). Evidence of provision as at October 2009 (provided by the Welsh Assembly Government) indicates that 9 local authorities do not provide a discretionary grant at all. Of the remaining 13 local authorities, the amount provided ranges from £28 to £155. Practice appears to vary considerably – for example, in some local authorities grants may be paid to pupils in one particular year group and in other local authorities, grants are available to pupils in a range of year groups from 7 to 11. Some authorities pay a cheque to recipients, others offer vouchers redeemable in local shops that supply school uniform. In one area schools use the fund to provide uniform packs. In the majority of cases, eligibility is based on the same criteria as free school meal eligibility (ie, in receipt of qualifying benefits such as Income Support or Income Based Jobseeker’s Allowance). In light of these developments, the CAB recommended that DCELLS should review and monitor the provision of grants on an annual basis by Welsh local authorities and to introduce safeguards to ensure that they are not using the introduction of the Welsh Assembly grant as an opportunity to reduce their own provision.

36. A good practice guide for schools (End Child Poverty Network Cymru and Children in Wales, 2006) detailing how the costs of schooling can be limited has been produced by End Child Poverty Network Cymru. It advised that schools should consider the financial impact of choosing a particular school uniform and to refer to the Welsh Assembly Government’s guidelines in ensuring that it has simple colour schemes and is universal across a school’s population rather than having variations for individual year groups. This guide also recommended that schools should find non-stigmatising ways to subsidise the cost of trips, activities and essential equipment and that all requests must make it clear that they would be voluntary. This recommendation was echoed by the CAB, which advised that DCELLS should produce a model charging policy for schools, outlining good practice in charging for trips and all costs associated with schooling, and that this should include standardised wording for letters home to parents regarding voluntary contributions.

37. Further recommendations for alleviating the impact of schools costs on families have also been identified, including increasing the levels of awareness amongst head teachers, classroom teachers and school governors of the effects of income poverty. Developing strategies to address the impact of poverty on children to overcome the disadvantages and stigma pupils from low income families face has also been identified as being pivotal to tackling the issues (The Bevan Foundation, 2009). The development of partnerships by schools with agencies who can provide free, confidential advice to help families with financial problems has also been recommended by Child Poverty Network Cymru and the CAB to provide practical support to families.
38. The Welsh Assembly Government has also sought to improve access to ICT for disadvantaged families through the introduction of the One Wales Laptop pilot which was launched in March 2010. This pilot comprises of a network of local projects across Wales providing laptops for up to 1,200 children aged ten to eleven, from selected schools in Communities First and Flying Start areas. Each project will have a strong focus on learning as well as supporting digital inclusion.

Stakeholder perceptions

39. Discussions were undertaken with six stakeholders to explore their experiences and perceptions about issues relating to school uniforms and the wider costs associated with schooling. Stakeholders were drawn from:
- the Welsh Assembly Government (Department for Children Education Lifelong Learning and Skills and the Department for Social Justice and Local Government), and
 - Child Poverty Expert Group members including representatives of Children in Wales and Barnardos.

Impact of school uniform policy

40. Having a school uniform in place was widely acknowledged as being a positive aspect of school life by stakeholders. School uniforms were identified as having a number of positive outcomes for schools and for children and young people. These include enabling a sense of identity and community in

schools and ensuring that pupils are not competing with each other to have the most up-to-date styles and designer brands, thus ensuring equality and limiting costs for parents. Nevertheless, stakeholders did express concerns about how schools are applying school uniform policies, which can result in significant financial burdens for some families, particularly those on low incomes.

Adherence to Welsh Assembly Government guidance

41. Stakeholders advised that there was minimal consistent evidence at a national or local level to assess the extent to which schools are following the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) guidance on school uniform policies. However, stakeholders did report that there has been much discussion about the costs of school uniform nationally, with concerns being raised about escalating costs of school uniforms and its availability being restricted to selected suppliers by some schools consequently limiting parental choice. These concerns have been raised by parents either directly to DCELLS, or through third sector organisations working with families experiencing financial difficulties and hardship.
42. There were also concerns that many schools are not following the guidelines when developing and implementing their school uniform policy. Secondary schools were felt to be more likely to deviate from the guidance rather than primary schools. This was due to a number of factors including the requirement for a wider range of clothing items, for example the need for blazers and sports kits, plus a greater likelihood by secondary schools to require logos on items of clothing. Additionally secondary schools were identified as being more likely to stipulate items of clothing requiring school specific distinct designs and trims such as coloured collars on pullovers or stripes on socks that are only available at specialist retailers or through the school. These specific requirements were identified as being particularly restrictive in limiting parents' ability to buy items from cheaper suppliers such as supermarkets.
43. School uniform policies requiring parents to buy substantial numbers of items of clothing with logos and/or school specific designs were identified as placing

significant financial burdens on many families, not just those receiving welfare benefits. It was reported that some schools did not appear to be considering the financial impacts of school uniform requirements on families, and that these schools were not referring to the guidelines when developing their policies. The fact that there is no scope for DCELLS to enforce the current policy guidance was stated by some as being a barrier in raising schools' awareness to the need to have affordable school uniform policies.

Furthermore, it was felt that Local Authorities could be taking a lead role in ensuring that schools were implementing fair and inclusive school uniform policies.

School awareness of families' financial circumstances

44. Involving parents and pupils in the development of school uniform policies was identified by most stakeholders as reflecting best practice in ensuring that schools developed a good understanding of families' circumstances to enable them to adopt a fair and appropriate school uniform policy. There was limited knowledge of the extent to which schools consulted with parents and pupils about school uniforms, and it was anticipated that the findings from this study would hopefully provide an insight into how and whether schools use consultation to inform the development of their policies.
45. Schools based in Communities First areas were generally perceived as having a greater awareness of the financial circumstances of families and impact of the costs of school uniforms. These schools were also thought to be more likely to apply flexible school uniform policies requiring a minimal number of items to need logos, or allowing logos to be optional, thus enabling parents to buy uniforms from a wide range of stockists. It was also perceived that primary schools in general were often more aware of family incomes and adapted their uniform policies accordingly.

Transition to secondary school

46. The transition from primary school to secondary school was identified by respondents as being a particularly problematic time for families, in terms of meeting the costs and requirements for school uniforms since a great many

additional items were required. Stakeholders questioned the need for many of the items stipulated in secondary school uniform lists provided to families, since some had reported that not all items were required or worn once the young person had started school (a view that was echoed by some in the qualitative case study work).

47. Respondents also noted that because secondary schools have wider catchment areas than primary schools (which is especially true for rural and Welsh language schools), this could mean that there can be extreme differentials in families' incomes within the one school. It was felt that this can result in a lack of awareness and understanding about families' financial circumstances by secondary schools leading to extensive and costly uniform requirements.
48. The availability of the Welsh Assembly Uniform Grant for young people from low income families starting secondary school was felt by stakeholders to be very helpful for eligible families, since uptake has been almost universal. However, it was widely felt that the assistance provided through the grant was limited since it does not cover all of the costs of the uniform and it is a one-off payment (payable at the Year 7 transition to secondary school). Additionally, it was also felt that some LAs had ceased providing support with the costs for school uniforms when the grant became available thus reducing their involvement in school uniform issues.

Recommended good practice

49. Stakeholders identified a range of good practice measures that schools should consider and apply when developing their school uniform policies including:
 - consulting with pupils and families;
 - limiting the requirement for items of clothing to have logos;
 - where logos are required, sew on badges should be available to be fixed onto items bought;
 - ensuring that items are available from a wide range of stockists; and

- avoiding the requirement for school specific designs and colours that are not widely available or only available at specialist retailers.

Wider costs of schooling

50. A vast range of additional costs associated with schooling that families need to meet was identified by stakeholders, such as school meals costs and paying for school nativity play costumes. Stakeholders strongly perceived that these wider costs have increased significantly over recent years with more demands being placed on families to make financial contributions to an ever growing list of school related activities plus additional equipment and learning resource materials.

School trips

51. School trips were identified by stakeholders as being a significant expense for many families to consider, especially for families with children in secondary schools since there are more residential and overseas visits that pupils are invited to participate in. Stakeholders questioned the extent to which schools evaluate the educational benefits of school trips, with some perceiving that these are not always assessed adequately. Assessing whether learning outcomes could be achieved through undertaking trips locally or less frequently was recommended by some stakeholders.
52. Concerns about schools' understanding and application of voluntary contributions for school trips were also raised by stakeholders, who discussed how this appeared to be a 'grey area' with schools not always being clear that contributions to school trips are voluntary. Approaches and mechanisms for subsidising school trips for pupils from low income families were also felt to lack clarity. Stakeholders identified that a few schools had a good awareness of charitable trusts and foundations that could offer funding support for some school trips, but that the level of support available through these channels was very limited and applying for support required a lot of administration time. Guidance on the funding of school trips and funding support from Local Authorities was also felt to be lacking, especially in terms of providing support for young people with special educational needs.

53. The impact on pupils not being able to participate in school trips due to financial constraints was felt to be extensive for a number of reasons. Stakeholders reported that these pupils would possibly feel stigmatised for not being able to participate, since they perceived that young people have an acute awareness about which families experiencing financial hardship. This, it was felt, could lead to some young people possibly being excluded from friendship groups that have formed during school trips (a concern that was echoed among parents interviewed for the case studies). It was also felt that many young people from low income families seek to alleviate stress on their families and may not always mention some trips (especially overseas and residential trips) to their parents to avoid placing any additional financial burdens or worries on their families. There is evidence to support this from the qualitative case studies (from both pupils and teachers). For example, one teacher advised that if they have not received a signed parental consent form for a trip, pupils are quietly asked if there is an issue about costs and will endeavour to support the learner's attendance from school funds.

Costs for additional equipment and learning materials

54. Stakeholders reported that there has been an increase in the additional equipment and study aid requirements for pupils, particularly those in secondary school. For example, they reported that some schools require pupils to purchase separate aprons for food technology and design technology when the same apron could suffice for both classes. Additionally the requirement for pupils to purchase protective goggles for some lessons was also questioned, since it was felt that in the past these had been purchased by the schools and shared amongst pupils.
55. The requirement for pupils to purchase revision guides was also raised by stakeholders, with many reporting that this was something that parents were very keen to do since it would support their children's academic achievement. However, these were seen as imposing an additional expense on low income families, amid a concern that not purchasing such items could adversely affect pupils' attainment, and entrench social exclusion. Additionally, stakeholders perceived that there has been an increased use of personal and private tutors

by families to support pupils to gain the best grades possible. This was identified as having a negative impact on low income families' ability to engage and participate in activities to raise pupils' achievement and future educational outcomes.

56. Access and availability of ICT equipment and the internet at home were also identified as recent additions to schooling costs that families are expected to meet as a matter of course. (Findings from the 2008 Living in Wales Study) identified that 67 per cent of households had at least one personal computer at home in 2008, however, only 38 per cent of households with an income of less than £10,399 reported having access to a computer. The study also found that 60 per cent of homes have access to the Internet (WAG, 2008).
57. Stakeholders advised that many families on low incomes do not have landline telephones since they prefer to be able to manage their telephone costs through having pay-as-you-go mobile telephones. Therefore, these families do not have access to the internet which can make it difficult for pupils from these families to complete their homework and self learning assignments. Evidence from the qualitative case studies indicated that some families do indeed cut back on areas such as broadband access in times of financial hardship, which can cause difficulties for children who require internet access for school work. The use of the local library was mentioned, although both availability and use were said to be restricted. Whilst schools offered the use of the internet at school during school hours, children could be reluctant to use this for fear of being labelled or teased.

Participation in extra curricular and after school activities

58. Stakeholders discussed how many schools provide a range of after school activities particularly as they move towards a more community focused model of operation. These activities include homework clubs, additional lessons in subjects and music lessons. It was felt that participation in these activities by pupils from low income families may be limited due to issues around transportation from these activities, particularly where families do not have access to a car or cannot afford additional transport costs. This was felt to be

particularly true for pupils in rural and Welsh Medium schools who often travel significant distances and are reliant on school bus services.

School and charity events

59. The emphasis on school events including; book fairs, proms and transition days was observed by stakeholders to have increased significantly in recent years. It was felt that some of these events could require substantial financial input from families, with limited demonstrable educational outcomes, and that this was particularly true of proms where the pressure to have expensive outfits was particularly high. For example, anecdotally, some stakeholders reported that families in areas of deprivation were taking out loans to finance prom attendance. The high cost of buying outfits for these types of events was also noted by parents in the qualitative case studies.
60. Additionally contributions and participation in activities to raise funds for charity, including school funds, were also identified as placing further financial demands on families. Frequent non-uniform days were identified as placing a dual burden on families, with young people experiencing peer pressure to wear fashionable and expensive clothing plus the requirement to make a monetary donation.

School meals

61. Whilst the cost of school meals was not within the scope of this study, it is of note that stakeholders discussed how this was a significant financial outgoing for many families that needs to be examined alongside the other costs. Some stakeholders raised concerns that not all families who are eligible for free school meals claimed them. Issues relating to the management and delivery of free school meals which were felt to stigmatise young people (by making it apparent who was in receipt of free school meals) were also raised by stakeholders, such as evidently having separate queues in dining halls for pupils eligible for free school meals to manage cashless payment systems. Stakeholders were therefore keen to advise that all issues and impacts around the costs of schooling need to be examined and addressed holistically in ensuring a joined-up approach.

Recommended good practice

62. Stakeholders recommended a range of factors that schools should consider in attempting to minimise the financial burdens on families and reduce the exclusion (and associated stigma) of young people from school related activities. These included:

- whole school planning of school trips to ensure there are not too many within the school year and that they have sound educational benefits;
- providing families with adequate notice about school trips and outings so these can be budgeted for in advance;
- ensuring free school meals are administered without stigmatising those receiving them; and
- limiting the number of charitable school events.

3 Parents' views on school uniform and other school costs

63. This section of the report presents the findings of a telephone survey of parents in Wales about school uniform and other school costs. Evidence is also included from six qualitative case studies with families who participated in the survey and subsequently agreed to take part in more in-depth discussions.

Research method

64. In order to obtain quantitative data on parental attitudes towards, and experiences of, school uniform policy and practice and the wider costs of schooling, a telephone survey was conducted with parents of primary and secondary school age children. It was agreed with the Welsh Assembly Government that as the proposed sample was relatively small (500) and a primary area of interest was on the experiences of parents on lower incomes, the sample should over-represent those from lower income households. As such, the sample was stratified by region, based on deprivation rankings for Wales, to ensure that there was a sufficient representation of areas with relatively low rankings. All local authorities were covered.

65. The telephone survey was conducted by telephone interviewers based at BMG's contact centre in Birmingham. Interviewees were offered an interview in Welsh (although no respondents took up this offer).

The survey sample

66. A sample of parents with school aged children was provided to BMG by a database provider. The sample covered a random selection of parents with a range of household incomes across all 22 local authorities in Wales. From this sample, parents were selected randomly for a telephone interview. Monitoring quotas were set to ensure that there was appropriate coverage of the key groups (including primary and secondary school age children) and across the different local authorities.

67. At the point of initial contact if any of the respondents stated that they had more than one child of school age, one child was randomly selected. In order to achieve this, the respondents were asked to identify the child with the most

recent birthday. All further questions asked in the survey then related to that child.

68. It was decided at the outset that the views of parents from both primary and secondary schools were important, although due to the anticipated increase in schooling costs at secondary level, a higher emphasis was placed on this type of school, and quotas were set to ensure that primary school children represented no more than two thirds of the overall sample.

Final response rate

69. The response rate for the *contacted* sample was 32 per cent (taking into account unobtainable numbers, telephone calls that went to answer machine, unanswered telephone calls and families falling outside of the population of interest - no children aged between 5 and 16, etc).

The case studies

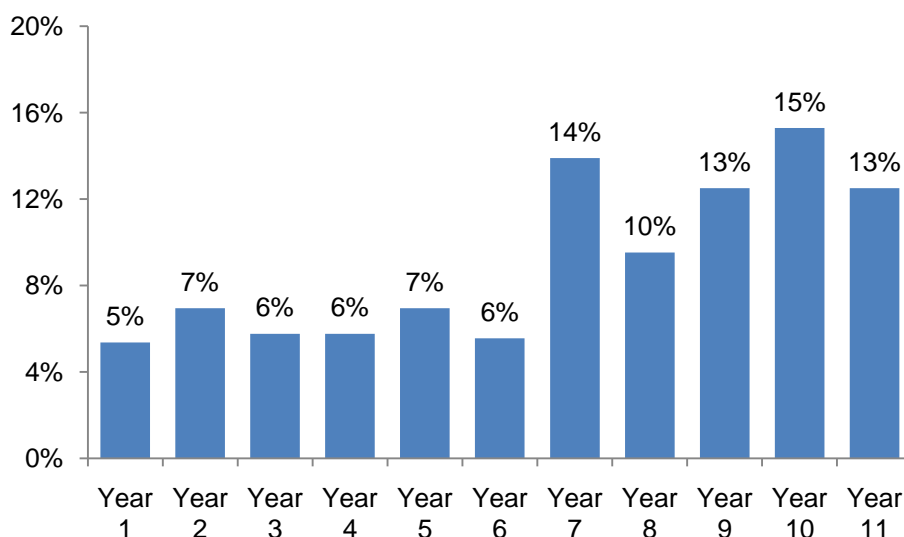
70. Six case study families were purposively selected, based on their survey responses, to take part in follow-up qualitative work. The families included:
- a two parent household (both parents out of work at the time of the interview), with six children (five of school age);
 - a two parent household (both parents in work) with twins (secondary school age);
 - a two parent household (one parent in part-time work) with two primary school age children and one secondary school age child;
 - a two parent household (both parents out of work) with two children in secondary school;
 - a two parent household (one parent in full time work) with one child in secondary school and one child at FE college; and
 - a one parent household (parent in part time work) with two children in secondary school.
71. Each family has been written up as a case study (see Annex A). However, data from the discussions (which included where possible discussions with

parents and children) has been included in this section, to provide further depth to the quantitative findings.

Respondent profile

72. In total, 506 parents across Wales were interviewed by telephone. This section of the report outlines the demographic characteristics of the sample. A total of 64 per cent parents answered questions about a secondary school age child, and 36 per cent answered questions about a primary school age child.
73. In terms of gender, an even split of male and female children was covered in the project. Fifty one percent of respondents answered the questionnaire based on a female child, and 49 per cent answered a question based on a male child.
74. All years between primary and secondary school were eligible for the survey (years 1 to 11). The percentage of respondents representing primary school children (years 1 to 6) varied between 5 per cent and 7 per cent, while those representing secondary schools (years 7 to 11) ranged from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.

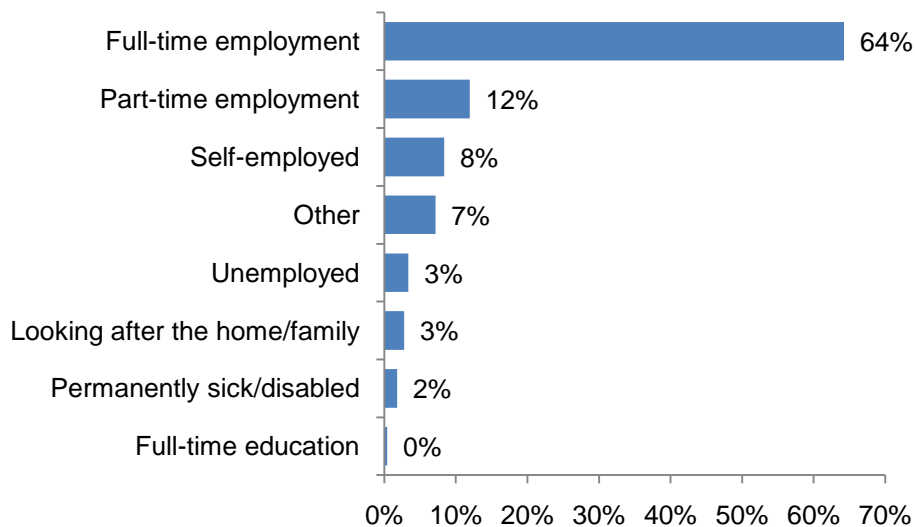
Figure 1 **Year of child**



Base: All respondents (506)

75. The respondents were asked to provide the economic status of the main household earner, and 64 per cent stated that the main household earner was employed full-time. Smaller proportions of 12 per cent and 8 per cent said that the main household earner was employed part-time and self-employed respectively, meaning a total of 84 per cent of respondent households were in employment at the time of the survey.

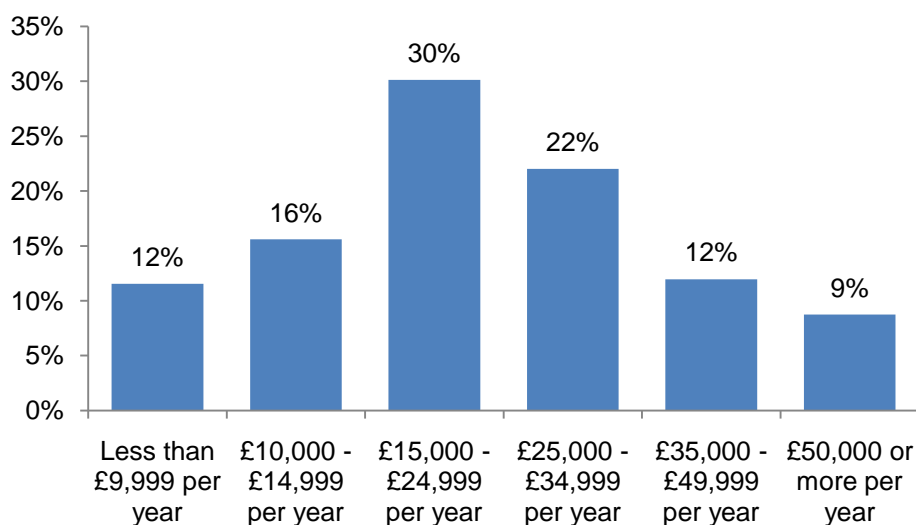
Figure 2 Economic status of main household earner



Base: All respondents (506)

76. The respondents were asked to provide details of their total annual household income (before tax), and 30 per cent of respondents stated that their household income was between £15,000 and £24,999, while 22 per cent said that their total household income was between £25,000 and £34,999. A smaller proportion (16 per cent) said that the total household income was between £10,000 and £14,999. The average household income data for Wales (based on CACI data for 2007) is just over £30,000, suggesting that this sample is slightly skewed towards low income households (which was the primary group of interest for this research).

Figure 3 Total household income (before tax)



Base: All respondents (506)

77. When asked about household income, 56 per cent stated that it was mostly made up of pay or income from employment and 34 per cent said that their household income comprised of a mixture of income from employment and tax credits or benefits. Household income consisted mainly of benefits and tax credits in 11 per cent of cases.
78. Out of the total sample, 10 per cent reported that they were entitled to free school meals. This compares to a national average of around 15 per cent. Although 10 per cent of the sample were *entitled* to free school meals, those actually *taking up* the entitlement may differ.

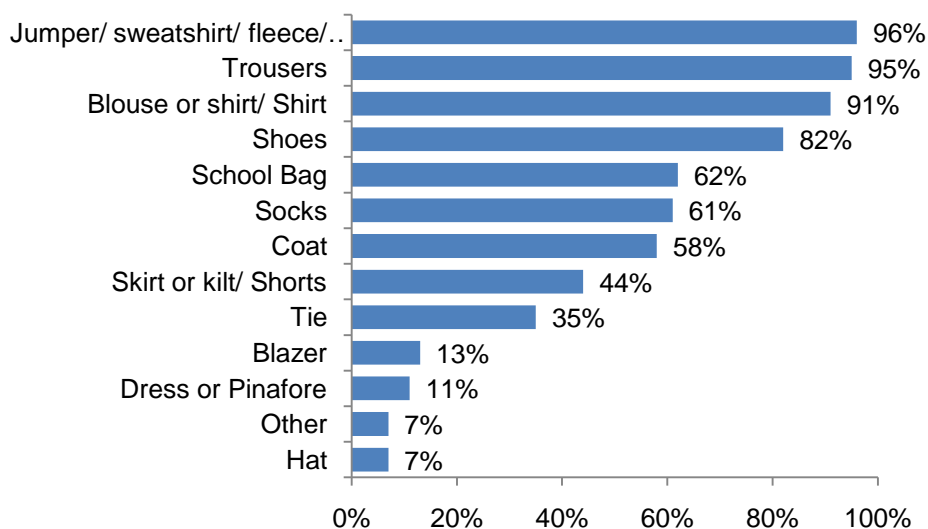
School uniform requirements

79. One of the first questions asked related to the requirement for a school uniform in the respondents' child's school. Only 1 per cent of respondents said that their child's school did not have a school uniform policy. In terms of school type, it was reported that school uniform is not a requirement in 2 per cent of primary schools and there was no school uniform policy in 1 per cent of secondary schools.
80. If a school uniform policy was present at the respondent's child's school, a question was asked regarding the items required. Almost all of the respondents said that their child needed to have a jumper/ sweatshirt/ fleece

(96 per cent), trousers (95 per cent) and a blouse/ shirt (91 per cent). Notable proportions also made reference to shoes (82 per cent), school bag (62 per cent), socks (61 per cent), coat (58 per cent) and skirt/ kilt or shorts (44 per cent).

81. A tie was required by 35 per cent, blazer (13 per cent), dress/ pinafore (11 per cent) or a hat (7 per cent).

Figure 4 Required school uniform items

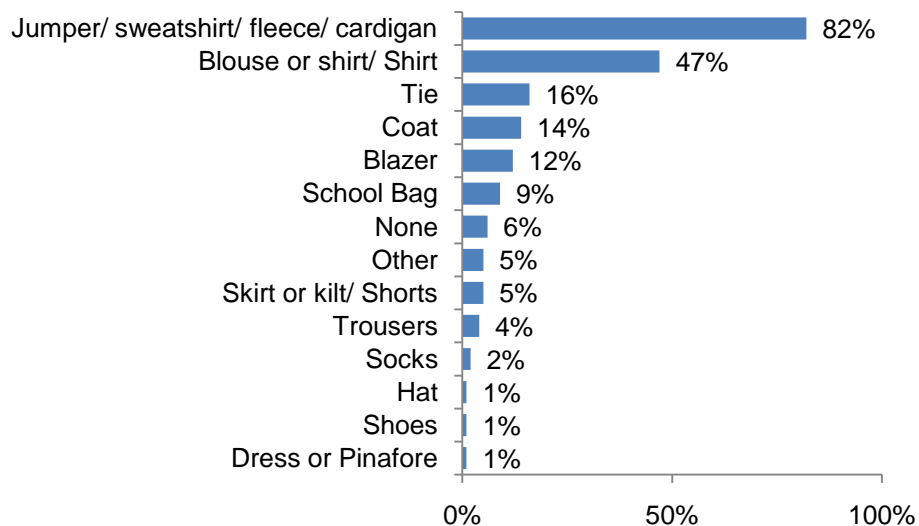


Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

82. One of the concerns of the Welsh Assembly Government has been about certain school items being required to have a school logo and as such only being available via a limited number of suppliers and often at a far higher cost than any non-logoed items. The respondents were asked if any of the required school uniform items they had mentioned needed to have a school logo/ badge or crest. Most of those that had mentioned that a jumper/ sweatshirt/ fleece was required said that this garment needed a logo/ badge/ crest. Similarly, 47 per cent of those that declared a blouse/ shirt as a required item stated that it needed a logo/ badge/ crest.
83. A minority of respondents reported that items such as socks (2 per cent), hat (1 per cent), shoes (1 per cent) and dress/ pinafore (1 per cent) needed to have a logo.

84. Only 6 per cent of respondents said that there were no items that required a school logo/ badge/ crest.

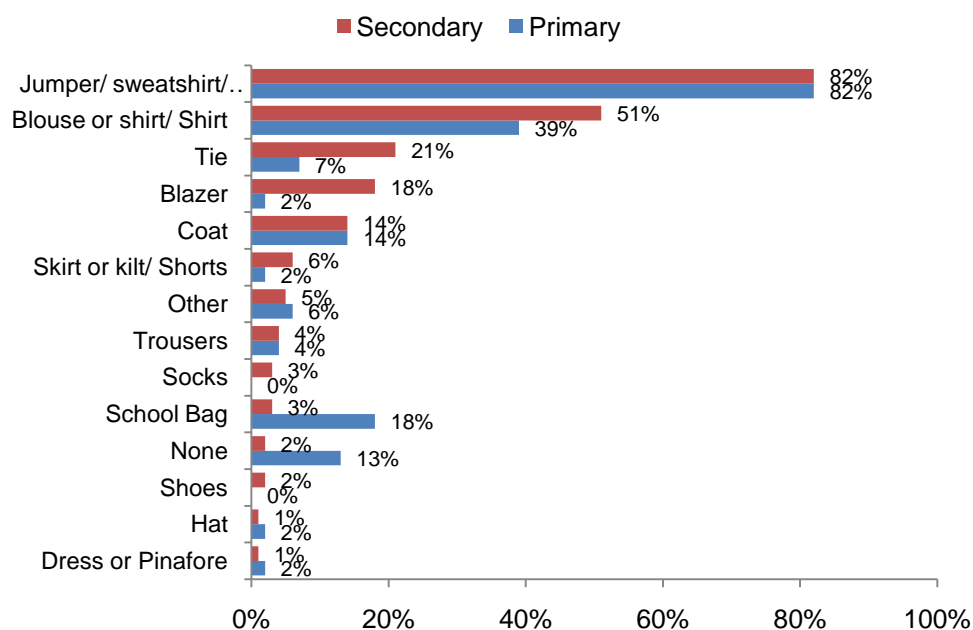
Figure 5 School uniform items requiring a logo/badge/crest



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

85. The requirement for badged items was slightly different for some items when comparing school type. For example, it can be seen that secondary school pupils were more likely than primary school pupils to have to wear a badged blouse/ shirt, tie and/or blazer. Those at primary school were more likely to need to have badged school bags.

Figure 6 Logo/ badge/ crest requirements by school type

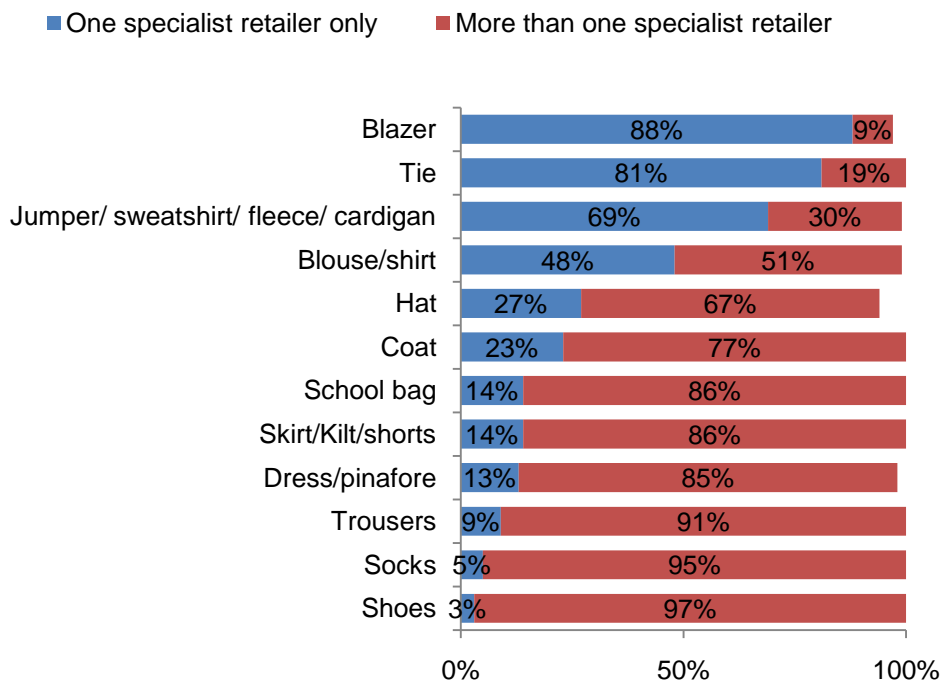


Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

School uniform suppliers/retailers

86. The respondents were asked to provide details regarding the availability of school uniform items, stating whether individual items could only be purchased from one specialist retailer, or whether they had options to buy the items from more than one specialist retailer. The items reported as most likely to be only available from one specialist retailer were blazers (88 per cent), ties (81 per cent) and jumpers/ sweatshirts/ fleeces/ cardigans (69 per cent).
87. The items that were least likely to have to be bought from one specialist retailer only were trousers (9 per cent), socks (5 per cent) and shoes (3 per cent).

Figure 7 Availability of badged school uniform items



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

88. In terms of non-badged school uniform items, 14 per cent of respondents said that non-badged school uniform items were available from one retailer only.

School uniform affordability

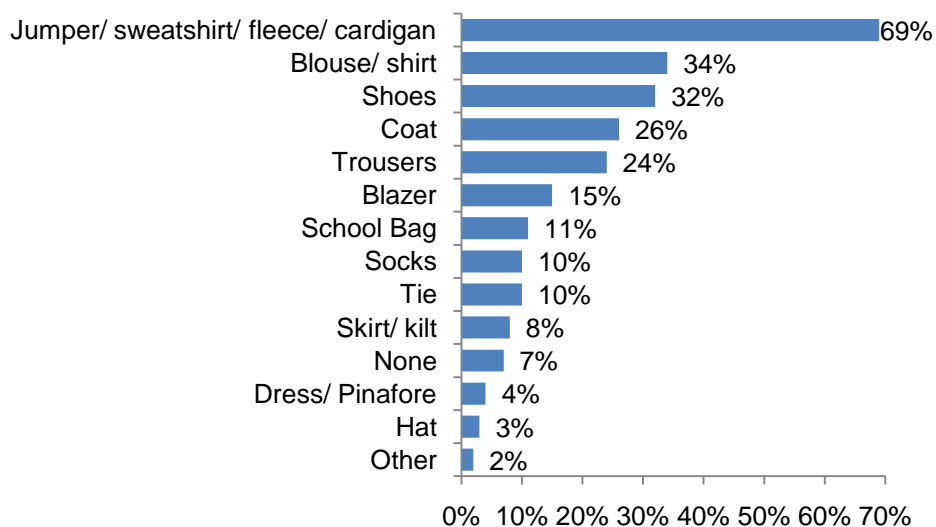
89. Overall, just over two fifths of respondents (42 per cent) reported experiencing some level of financial difficulty when buying school uniform.

90. The presence of financial difficulty when buying school uniform varied by household income. In households earning £25,000 or less, 58 per cent of respondents said that they had experienced financial difficulty. That said, 22 per cent of those households with an income above £25,000 also reported financial difficulties in buying school uniforms.

91. In terms of the items that had caused the most financial difficulties, 69 per cent felt that the jumper/ sweatshirt/ fleece/ cardigan caused financial difficulty. Smaller proportions of respondents felt that the blouse/ shirt (34 per cent), shoes (32 per cent) and/or coat (26 per cent) had caused some level of financial difficulty.

92. For a minority of respondents, less expensive items such as school tie and socks caused financial difficulty (10 per cent for both).

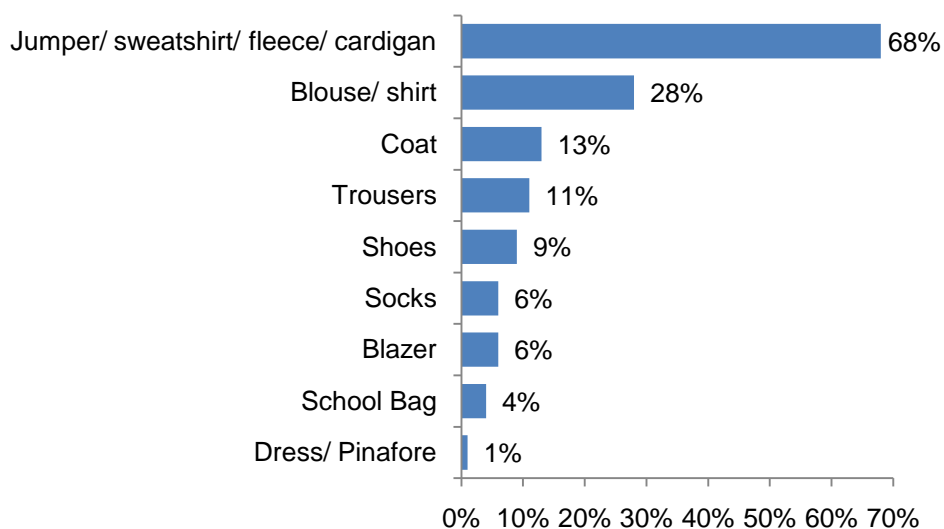
Figure 8 School uniform items that have caused financial difficulty



Base: If mentioned financial difficulty in relation to school uniform purchasing (212)

93. Bearing this in mind, the respondents were asked if they had ever been unable to buy any school uniform items due to financial difficulty and 16 per cent had been involved in a scenario where school uniform items had not been bought due to financial difficulty.
94. In terms of income group, 20 per cent of those earning a total household income of under £25,000 stated that they had not bought some school uniform items because of financial difficulty. Of those earning a total household income of greater than £25,000, 10 per cent said that they had not bought items due to financial difficulty.
95. Where respondents had stated that they had not bought items because of financial difficulty, they were asked to provide details of the individual items not bought. Most of the respondents in this subgroup (68 per cent) said that they had not bought their child a jumper/ sweatshirt/ cardigan because of affordability. Additionally, 28 per cent stated that they did not purchase a blouse/ shirt and 13 per cent said that they had been unable to buy a coat for their child.

Figure 9 Items not bought because of financial difficulty



Base: If mentioned financial difficulty in relation to school uniform purchasing (212)

96. Those that had been in the position of not being able to fund parts of their child's school uniform were asked about the consequences on their family. Half of these respondents said that they have had to make savings elsewhere in the family or household budget (53 per cent), 14 per cent said that they had not been able to buy everything needed and 8 per cent stated that they had to buy non-regulation school uniform items as an alternative.
97. From the qualitative case studies, it was clear that families routinely make sacrifices within other areas of their household budgeting to be able to provide essential items for school.

'If you've gotta do without something then you are willing to, to pay out for the kids to have things like shoes [for school]'

98. Other consequences of not being able to buy the required items included:

'He felt left out and wanted a logo on his jumper.'

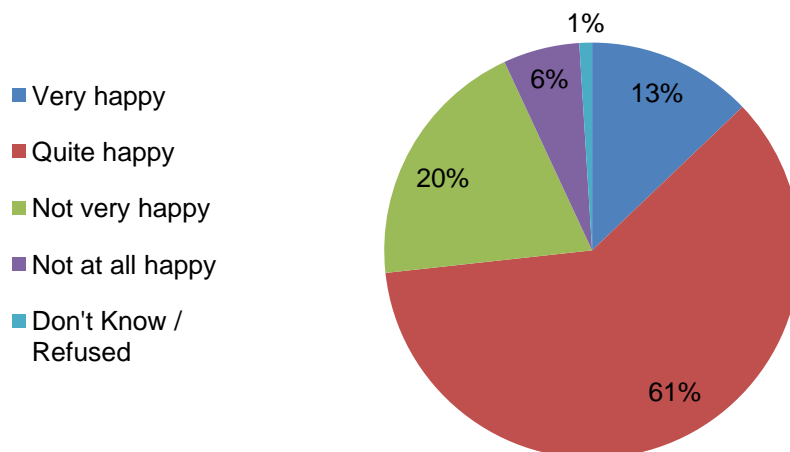
'Financial hardship, you can only get those things you can afford'

'[I was] given a free uniform by a friend'

'Not able to get everything so letters home saying my child needs to wear the correct uniform.'

99. Qualitative evidence from the case studies indicated that in times of hardship families would restrict the number of items they bought (for example, one top per child) or borrowed money from extended family members.
100. Case study families also discussed how they budgeted for school uniforms by purchasing items throughout the year to minimise the impact of having to buy all items of uniform required at the same time. This was especially true for families with more than two children.
101. Overall, 74 per cent of respondents were either very happy or quite happy when asked about the total cost of school uniform. However, 26 per cent of the sample reported being unhappy about school uniform costs - with 20 per cent saying that they were not very happy and a further 6 per cent stating that they were not happy at all.

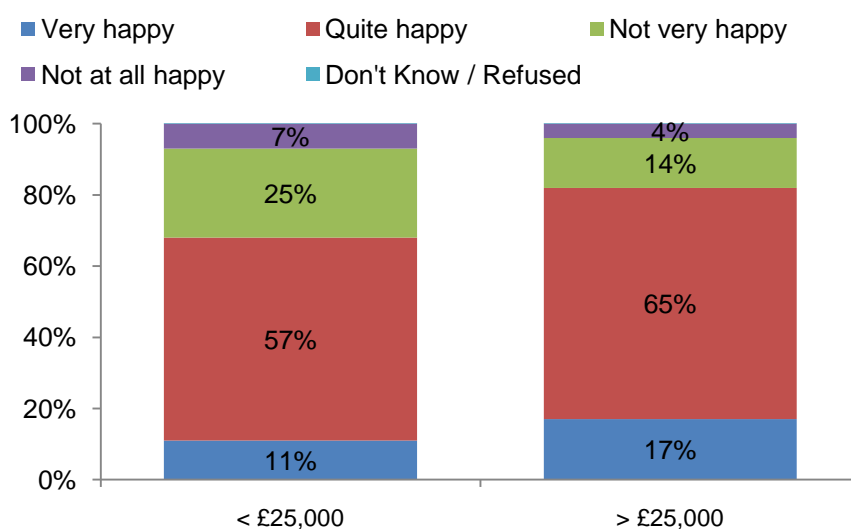
Figure 10 Views on the cost of school uniform



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

102. In terms of income group, those with a greater total household income were less unhappy about the cost of school uniform than their lower income counterparts. Of those earning less than £25,000 total household income, 32 per cent stated that they were either not very happy or not all happy with the cost of school uniform. Only 18 per cent of those in the higher income bracket shared this opinion.

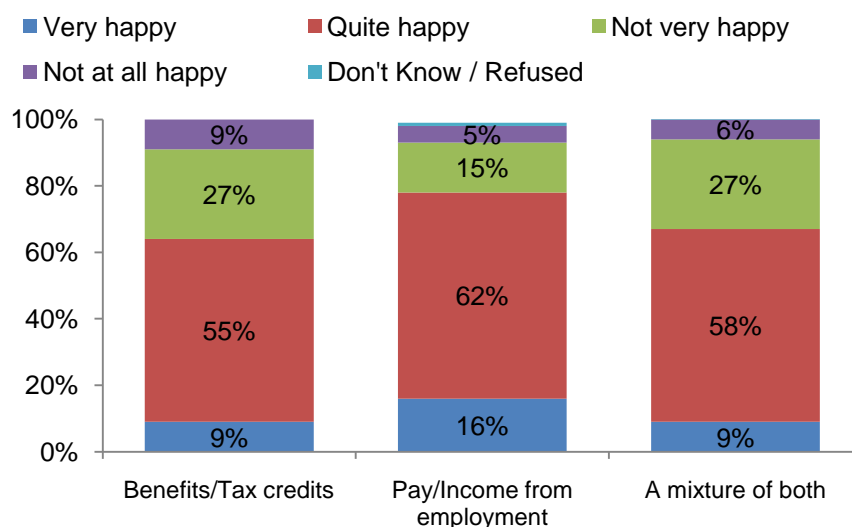
Figure 11 Views on cost of school uniform by income group



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

103. Those respondents whose household income was derived solely from employment were more likely than those in receipt of benefits/ tax credits to state that they were happy with the cost of school uniform and 78 per cent of stated that they were either very happy or quite happy with the cost of school uniform. Sixty seven per cent of respondents who receive income from a mixture of employment and benefits stated that they were very happy or quite happy with school uniform costs, and 64 per cent of those respondents claiming benefits or tax credits only said that they were either very happy or quite happy.

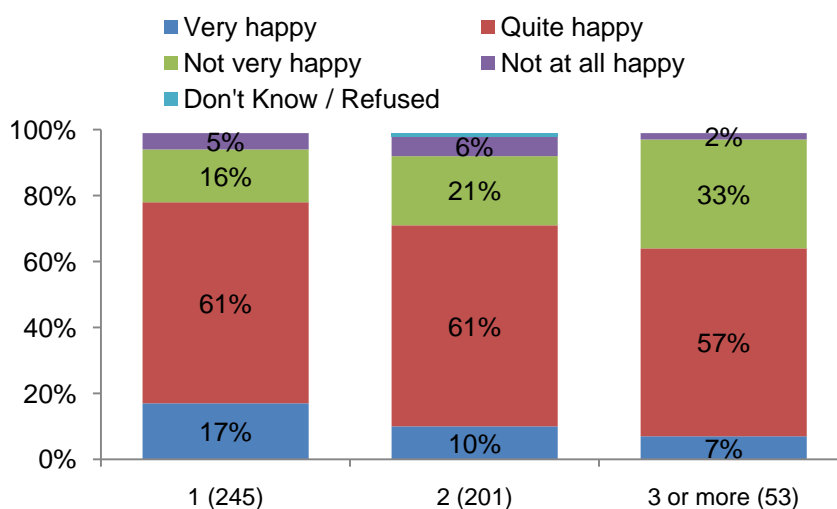
Figure 12 Views on the cost of school uniform by benefits received



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

104. Satisfaction with the cost of school uniform was lower among those respondents with more children living in the household. Four fifths of respondents (78 per cent) living with one child in their household were either very happy or quite happy with the cost of school uniform. Respondents living with two children in their household were less satisfied (71 per cent either very or quite happy) and those living with three children or more were the least happy with the costs of school uniform (64 per cent).

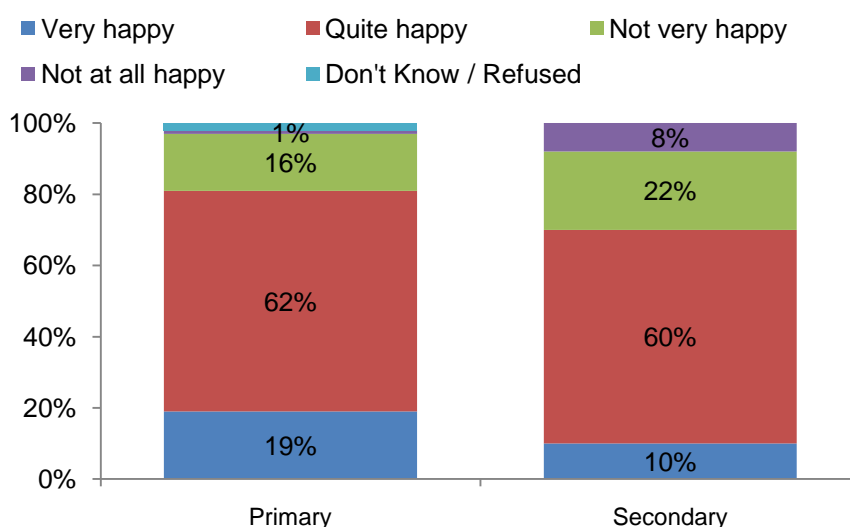
Figure 13 Views on the cost of school uniform by number of children in household



Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499) – individual sample sizes in brackets

105. Respondents with children in primary schools were generally happier with the costs of schooling when compared to those that had children in secondary schools. For primary school parent/carers 81 per cent reported that they were either very happy or quite happy with the cost of school uniform. Those with children in secondary schools were not as positive about the cost of school uniform; 70 per cent said that they were either very happy or quite happy.

Figure 14 Views on the cost of school uniform by school type

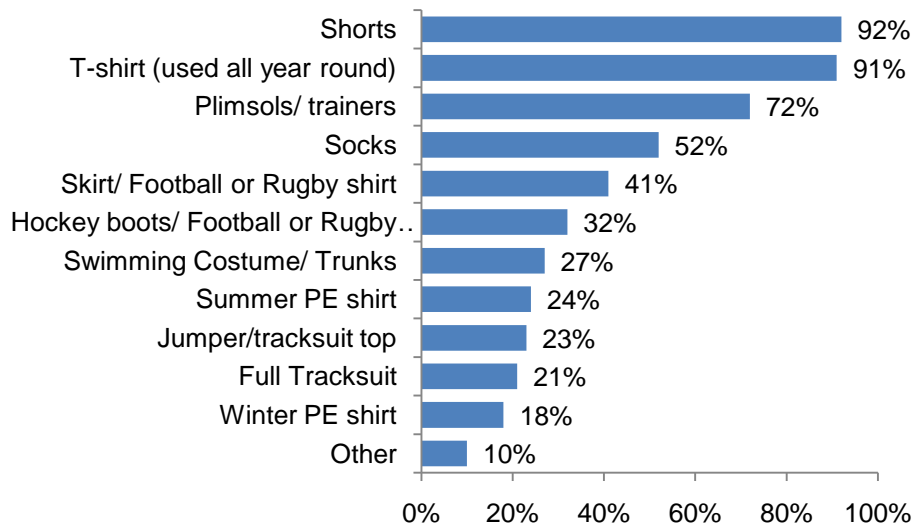


Base: if child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

PE and sports kit requirements

106. Most of the sample (86 per cent) said that a PE/ sports kit was required. In terms of school type, PE/ sports kit was more likely to be a requirement in secondary schools (96 per cent) compared to primary schools (70 per cent). Those that stated a PE/ sports kit was required were asked to provide details of the items that were required. Most of the respondents stated that shorts (92 per cent) and a t-shirt for all year around use (91 per cent) were required, followed by plimsolls/ trainers (72 per cent), socks (52 per cent), skirt (for girls)/ football/ rugby shirt (for boys) (41 per cent) and hockey/ football/ rugby boots (32 per cent).

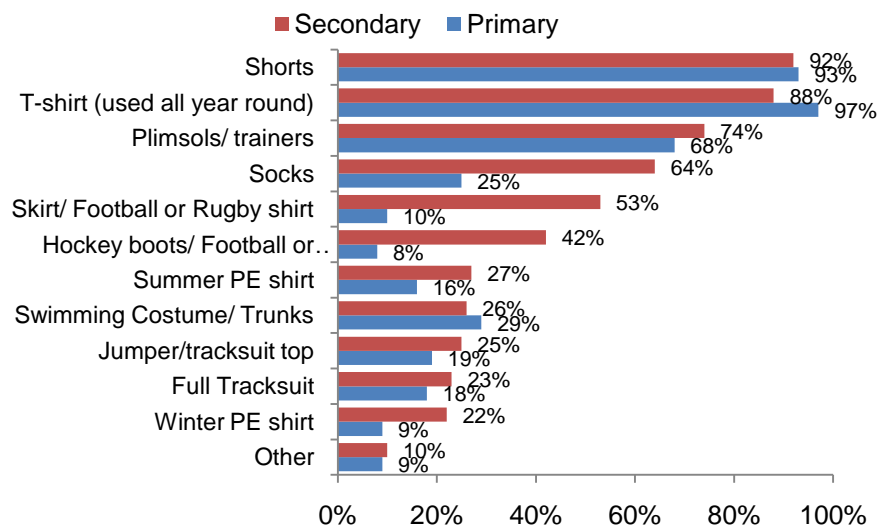
Figure 15 Items required for PE kit



Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

107. Unsurprisingly, the requirement for PE kit items was generally more prominent for those respondents with children at secondary school than at primary school. These items included; socks, skirt/ football/ rugby top and sports boots.

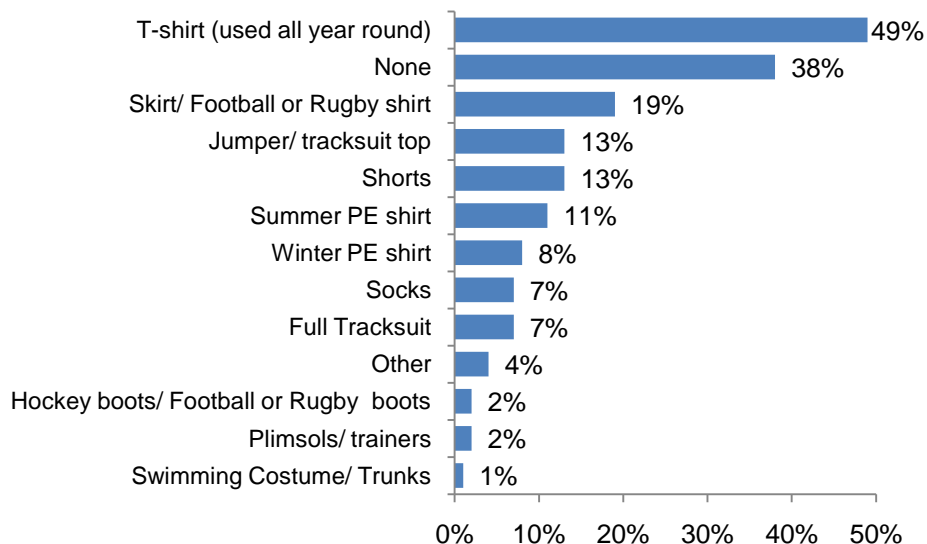
Figure 16 Items required for PE kit by school type



Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

108. A t-shirt (used all year round) was required to have a logo/ badge/ crest on it in 49 per cent of cases. Smaller proportions of respondents said that a skirt/ football/ rugby shirt (19 per cent), jumper/ tracksuit top (13 per cent) and/or shorts (13 per cent) needed to have a logo/ badge/ crest. No PE items required a logo/ badge/ crest in 38 per cent of cases.

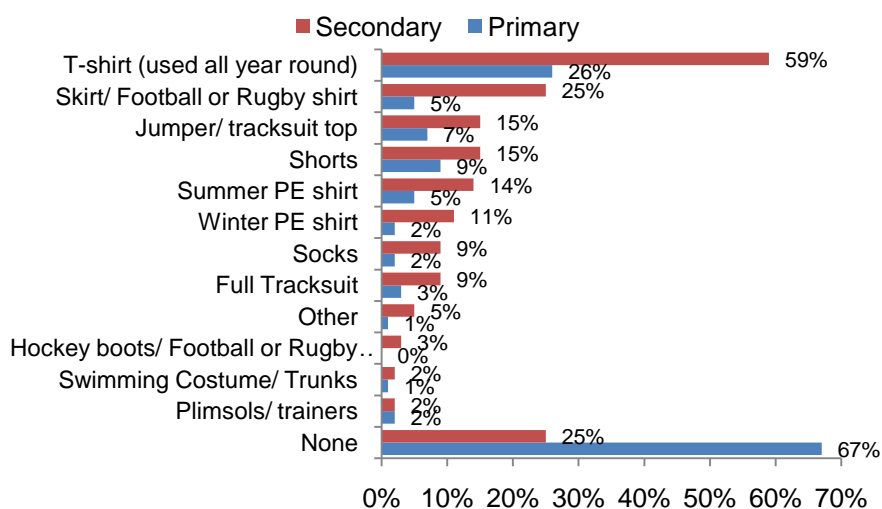
Figure 17 PE kit items that require logo/badge/crest



Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

109. The requirement for logos increases for those attending secondary schools and 67 per cent of respondents with a child at primary school said that none of the PE kit needed a logo, compared with 25 per cent at secondary level.

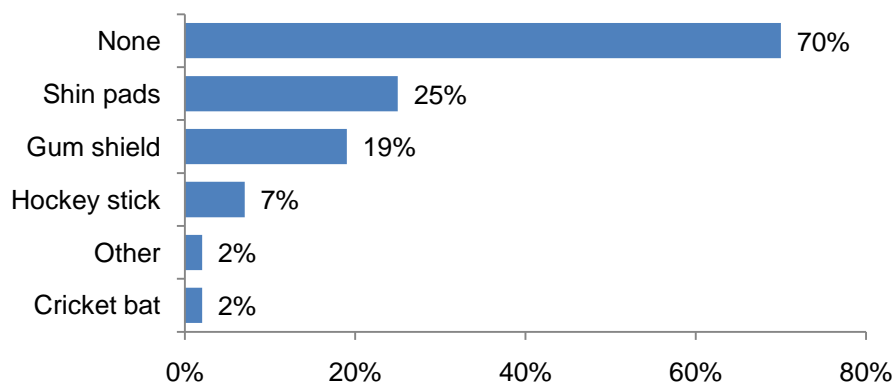
Figure 18 PE kit items requiring logo/ badge/ crest by school type



Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

110. In terms of sports equipment, 70 per cent of respondents said that there was no requirement for additional sports equipment. Shin pads were as a requirement for 25 per cent of cases, 19 per cent said a gum shield was needed and 7 per cent said that a hockey stick was required.

Figure 19 Requirement for sports equipment



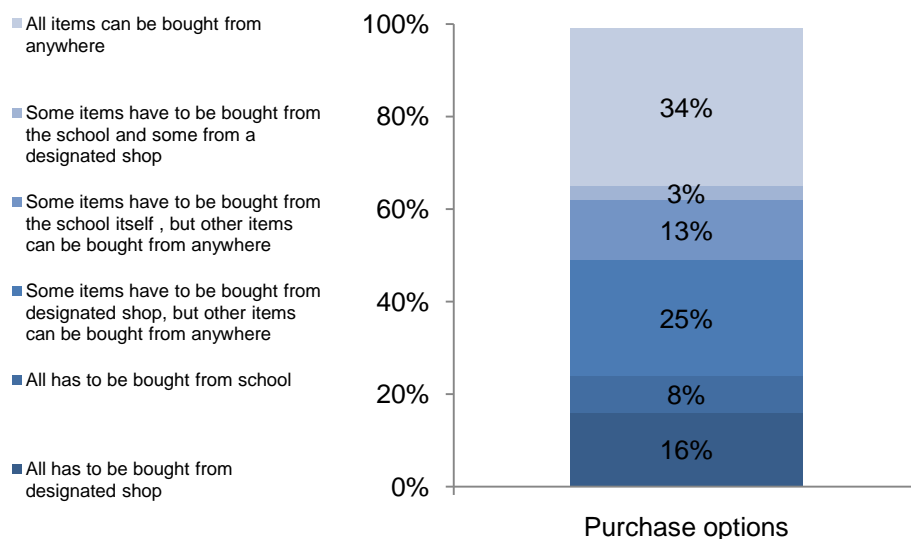
Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

PE and sports kit suppliers

111. Respondents were asked to provide details about the availability of their child's PE kit. Items required for PE lessons could be bought from anywhere by 34 per cent of respondents, whilst 25 per cent said that

some items have to be bought from a designated shop, but other items can be bought from anywhere and 16 per cent said that all items have to be bought from a designated shop.

Figure 20 Availability of PE kit

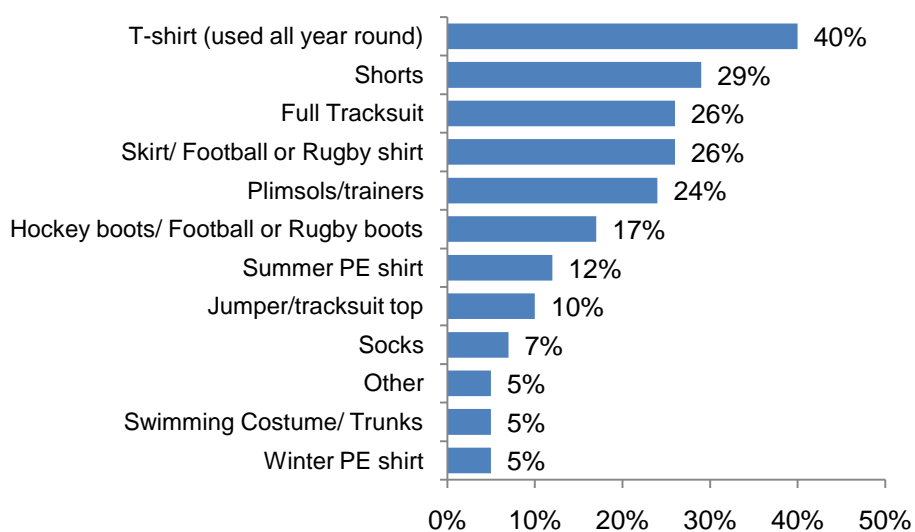


Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

PE and sports kit/equipment affordability

112. The respondents were asked if they have ever not bought items of PE kit or equipment because of the cost, with 10 per cent saying this had been the case.
113. Respondents that earned a total household income of less than £25,000 were most likely to state that they were not able to buy an item(s) of PE kit because of the expense. Only 3 per cent of those earning £25,000 or more said that they did not buy an item(s) of PE kit because of the expense compared to 15 per cent of the lower income group.
114. Bearing this in mind, the respondents were asked to identify any items that had caused financial difficulty. The top five items were: t-shirt (used all year round) (40 per cent), shorts (29 per cent), full tracksuit (26 per cent), skirt/ football or rugby shirt (26 per cent) and plimsolls/ trainers (24 per cent).

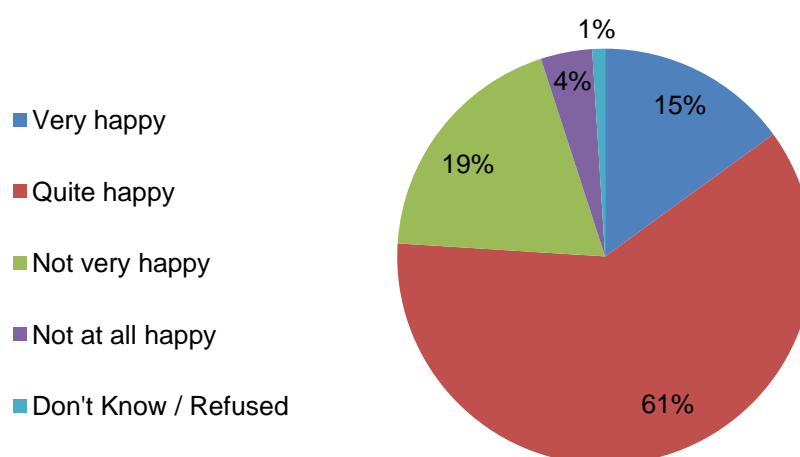
Figure 21 Items that caused financial difficulty



Base: Those that had expressed financial difficulty (42)

115. Overall, 76 per cent of respondents stated that they were very happy or quite happy with the cost of buying PE kit for their child at the time of the study whilst 23 per cent said that they were not very happy or not happy at all.

Figure 22 View on the cost of buying PE kit

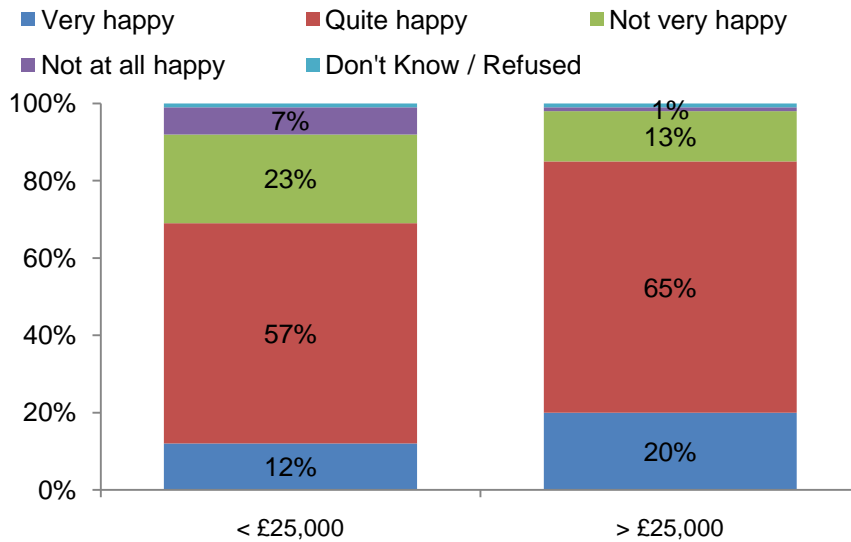


Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

116. Thirty per cent of households earning a total of £25,000 or less were either not very happy or not at all happy with the cost of their child's PE kit. This

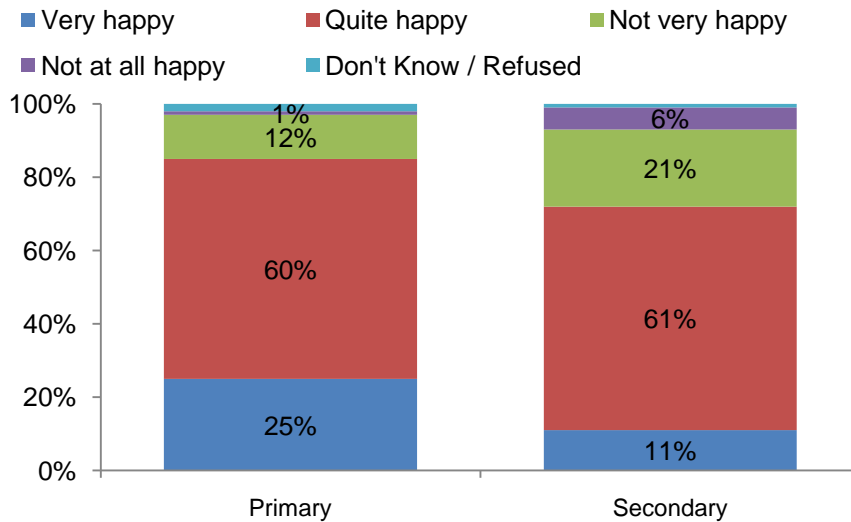
compares to 14 per cent of families with a household income of £25,000 or more.

Figure 23 Views on cost of buying PE kit by income group



Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

Figure 24 Views on cost of buying PE kit by school type

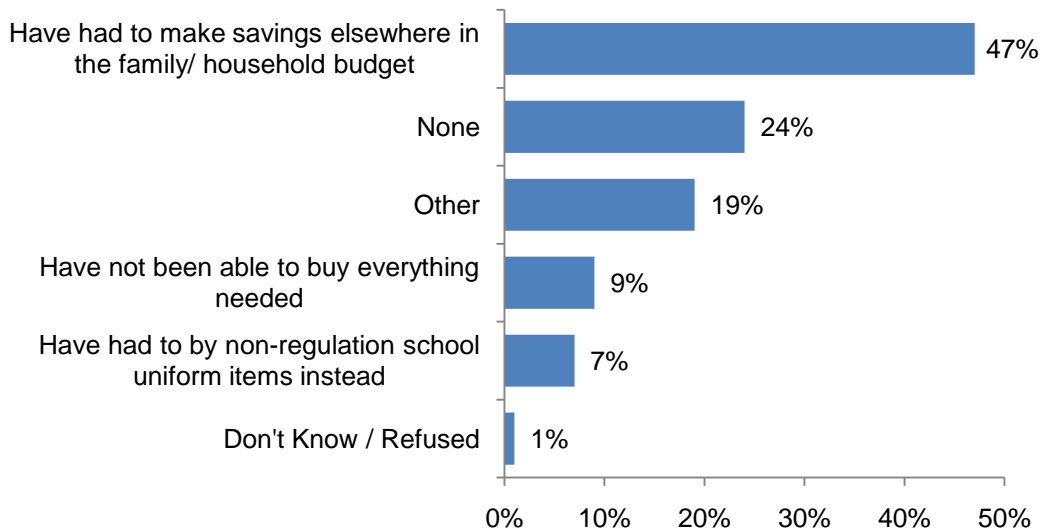


Base: If child's school had a PE kit requirement (437)

117. Those that had said they were not happy about the cost of purchasing their child's PE kit were asked whether the cost had had any consequences for them as a family, with 47 per cent saying that they have had to make

savings elsewhere in the family/household budget and 9 per cent said that they have not been able to buy everything that was needed. Twenty four per cent did not think there had been any consequences.

Figure 25 Cost of PE kit - consequences for the family (multiple response)



Base: Where not happy with the cost of PE kit (100)

118. Further insights are provided through some of the verbatim responses provided as 'other' by parents in the survey:

'I had a letter from the school to have a new pair of trainers exactly as required by the school, and since I could not afford it she missed PE for a couple of months'

'I could not afford the rugby kit in the first week of term, I ended up having a row with the teacher and having to buy the kit and make cuts elsewhere'

'He lost his rugby shirt a couple of weeks ago and I have not replaced it yet – no consequences as yet.'

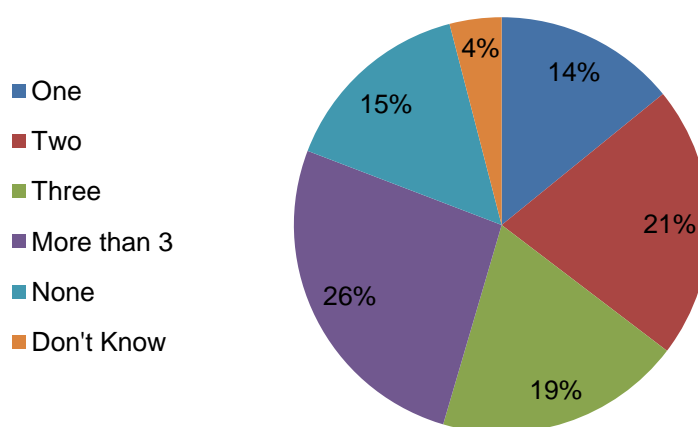
School trips, activities and equipment

119. This section reviews parents' experiences of paying for school trips (day trips and residential trips) as well as other school related activities and equipment which their child may require.

School day and residential trips

120. School trips may relate to a day trip, in school hours, or a residential trip (that is, involving one or more overnight stays, typically in school term time but may also cover out of school term time activities if non curriculum related). In terms of school trips (day or residential), 35 per cent of respondents were asked to pay for one or two trips during the last year, and 21 per cent were asked to pay for three and 26 per cent were asked to pay for more than three trips during the year. Fifteen per cent reported not being asked to pay for any. Fifteen per cent reported not being asked to pay for any.

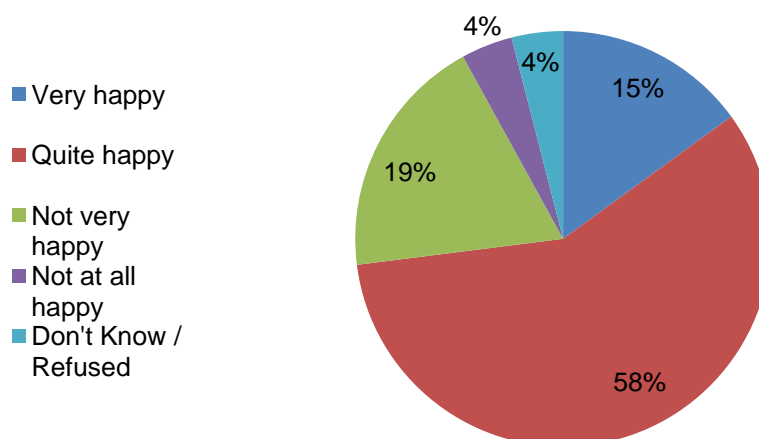
Figure 26 Number of day or residential trips asked to pay for in 2009



Base: All respondents (506)

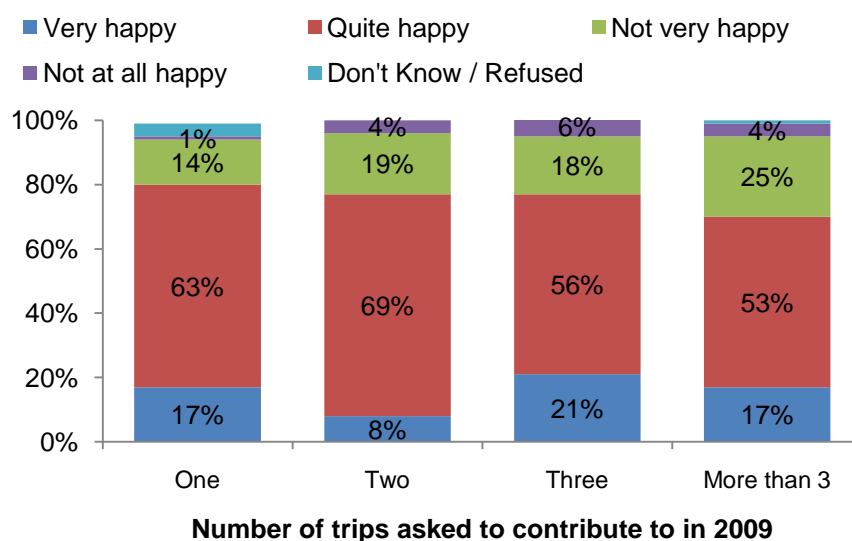
121. When asked whether they were happy with the number of school trips they were asked to contribute to, 73 per cent of respondents stated that they were either very happy or quite happy with the number requested, and 23 per cent indicating that they were either not very or not at all happy with the amount of trips they were asked to contribute to.

Figure 27 Satisfaction with number of school trips asked to contribute to in 2009



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

Figure 28 Satisfaction with number of school trips asked to contribute to in 2009



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

122. In terms of household income, 25% of households earning a total of £25,000 or less (stated that they were either not very happy or not at all happy with the number of school trips for their child. A slightly smaller proportion of those in the higher income category were either not very happy or not at all happy (20 per cent).

123. In comparison, 72 per cent of respondents whose household income came directly from paid employment stated that there were either very happy or

quite happy with the number of school trips they had been asked to contribute towards in 2009. Those whose income derived from a mixture of paid employment and benefits were less satisfied (59 per cent very happy or quite happy) while those respondents claiming benefits only were the least satisfied (49 per cent very happy or quite happy).

124. Findings from the family case studies illustrated that parents and young people felt that school trips can increase the financial pressures experienced by families. Parents discussed how they were keen for their children to participate in as many school trips as possible, but advised that this was not always possible due to the cost of trips. They also advised that schools would frequently give limited notification of day trips and this impacted on their budgeting.

125. Residential and overseas trips were identified as being particularly problematic for families to budget for, especially for larger families or where there were twins since this instantly doubled the price. Young people in one family described how they were no longer part of the school netball team due to being unable to attend an overseas netball trip and that this had made them (and other peers in the same situation) feel very left out.

‘Loads of people go to netball and they say [the netball coaches] ‘Who’s going on the netball tour?’ Then loads of people put their hands up, and four of us [those not going on the tour] get sat on the side for an hour, and then we go on for two minutes and that’s the end.’

126. From the qualitative evidence it is clear that parents were concerned that costs for school uniforms, trips, activities, transitional events, meals and classroom materials were increasing and possibly creating barriers to the full participation of children in schools, and even potentially a certain amount of pressure to send their children on school trips, to ensure that they were not excluded in any way.

‘It’s a lot of pressure, you know, you’ve got kids and they are like ‘oh I want to go on this thing’ and you feel a lot of guilt if you don’t let them go.’

127. This was particularly an issue among secondary school age children, where the frequency, duration and cost of school residential trips appeared to escalate. One family interviewed gave an example of a recent (curriculum) trip to the USA for those in the top set (which the child was in), which cost over £2000. The family had not been able to afford this (even with budgeting options) and the child had therefore felt excluded as most other children had attended (the school was in a relatively affluent area). This family felt that the school had given very little help or consideration in terms of affordability for those less well off families.

Contributions to other school activities

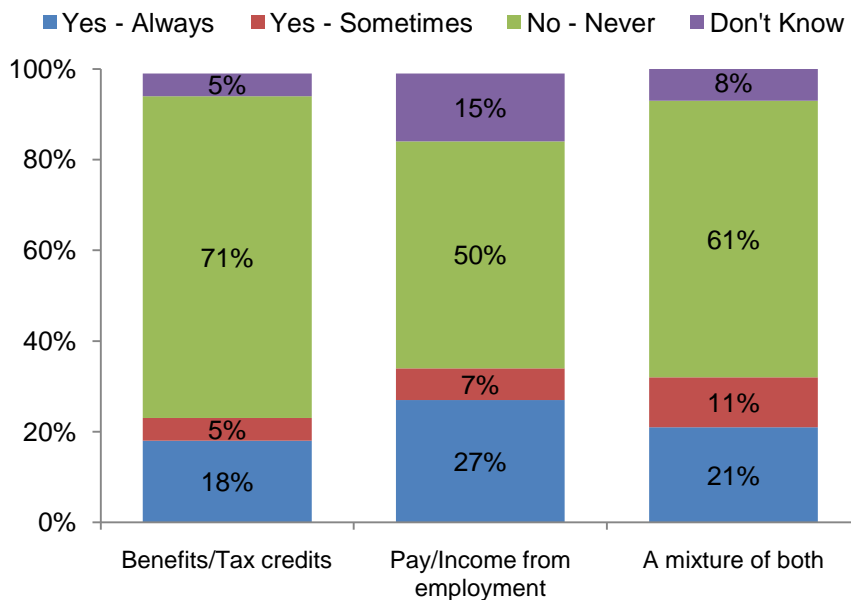
128. In terms of school activity within school hours, 59 per cent of respondents were asked to make a voluntary contribution at some stage during 2009.
129. For a minority of parents, the cost of school trips could mean that they were unable to afford to send their child, and 11 per cent of respondents stated that they had not sent their child on a school day trip because of the cost. Children in secondary schools were more likely to have not been sent on a day trip because of cost (15 per cent) compared to children in primary schools (5 per cent) – which may relate to both the greater number of trips offered at secondary schools as well as the likely higher cost per trip. Similarly, those families on benefits were more likely to have not sent their child on a day trip because of the cost (21 per cent) when compared to those families whose income derived from paid employment (6 per cent).
130. This was much more likely to be reported by low income households. Sixteen percent of those households earning £25,000 or less stated that they had not sent their child on a day school trip because of the cost, compared to just 4 per cent of those with a household income of over £25,000 per annum.
131. Respondents who lived with one child of school age were least likely not to have sent their child on a day trip because of the cost (9 per cent). A similar proportion of those living with two children (10 per cent) had not sent their child on a day trip because of the cost. This proportion doubles however,

- for respondents living with three children or more in the same household (23 per cent).
132. With regard to residential school trips (that is, a school trip involving at least one night away), and 21 per cent of respondents had not sent their child because of the cost.
 133. Again, the likelihood of this was greater among the lower income households – although both groups were likely to raise a concern. Respondents from the lower household income group (less than £25,000) were more likely to state that they had not sent their child on a residential trip because of the cost (28 per cent) compared to those in the higher income group (18 per cent).
 134. As with day trips, it was more common for children in secondary school to have not been sent on a residential trip in 2009 because of the cost (35 per cent) compared to primary school pupils (4 per cent). Again, this was in all likelihood related to both the number of residential trips offered and the higher cost per trip than at the primary level.
 135. Those with larger families were more likely to have not sent their child on a residential trip in 2009. For example, 17 per cent with one child in the household had not sent their child on a residential trip in 2009 because of the cost, whilst parents with three or more children living in their household were twice as likely to have not sent their child on a residential trip in 2009 because of the cost (33 per cent), and a similar proportion of those with two children (28 per cent) have not sent their child on a residential trip in 2009 for this reason.
 136. The survey explored the extent to which parents were invited to discuss any financial difficulties about paying for a school trip with a teacher and 24 per cent reported that they were always invited to discuss financial difficulties relating to school trips. Eight percent stated that they were sometimes invited to discuss these issues, while 56 per cent said that they were never offered this option.
 137. The likelihood of *never* being invited to discuss financial difficulties relating to school trips increased as the number of trips parents were asked to

contribute to increased; while 49 per cent of those asked to contribute to one trip report never being invited to discuss financial difficulties, this rises to 62 per cent of those asked to contribute to more than three trips.

138. Parents not claiming any benefits or tax credits were most likely to report that they were always invited to discuss financial difficulties with the school with regard to paying for school trips (27 per cent). On the contrary (and somewhat surprisingly), those parents whose income was composed purely of benefits or tax credits were most likely to state that they were *never* invited to discuss such financial difficulties (71 per cent).

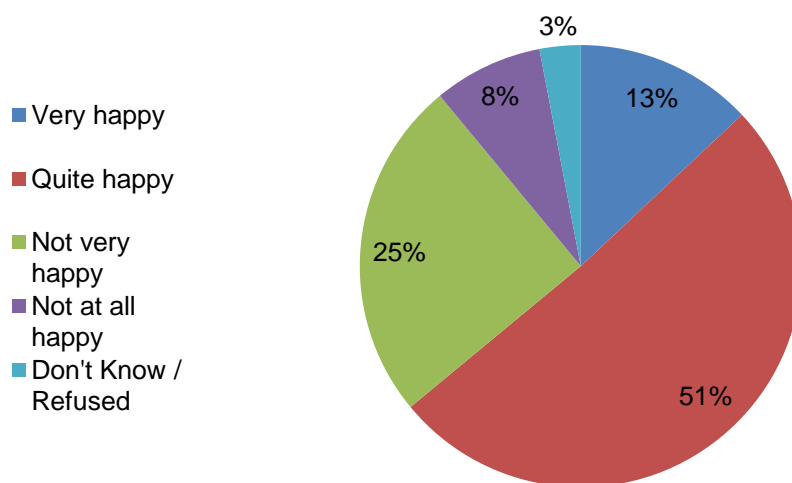
Figure 29 Whether invited to discuss financial difficulties with school, with regard to paying for trips, by household income composition



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

139. Regarding the cost of school trips, 64 per cent of respondents were either very happy or quite happy with the cost of school trips, although 33 per cent said that they were either not very happy or not happy at all with the costs associated with school trips.

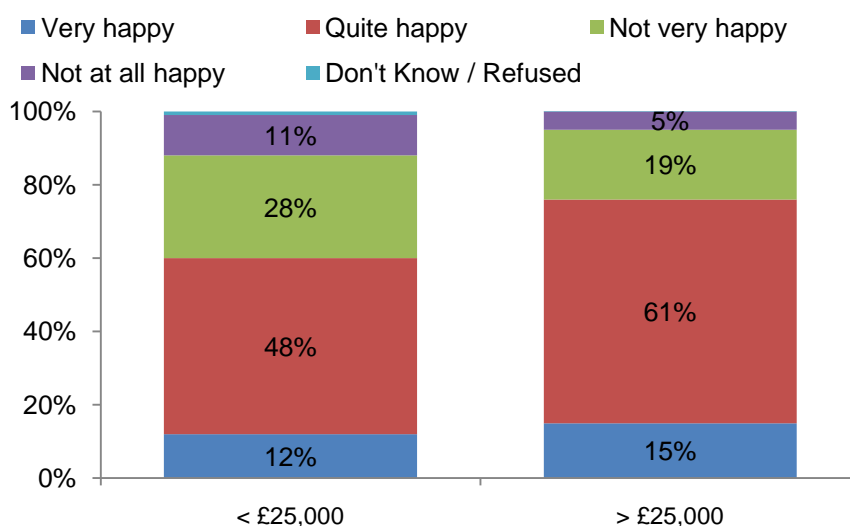
Figure 30 Satisfaction with cost of school trips



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

140. The satisfaction with the cost of school trips by income group. Those earning a total household income of £25,000 or less were more likely to state that they were either not very happy or not at all happy (39 per cent) when compared to those in the £25,000+ income bracket (24 per cent).

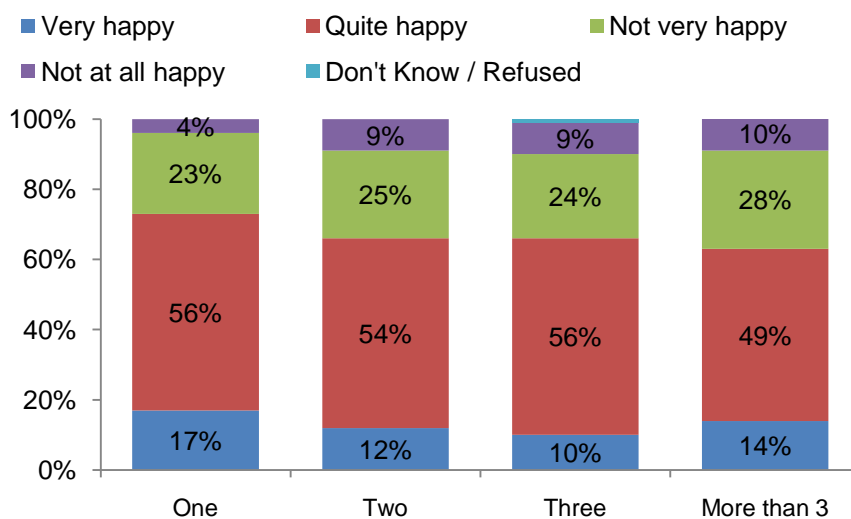
Figure 31 Satisfaction with the cost of school trips by income group



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

141. Unsurprisingly, satisfaction with the cost of school trips declined as the number of trips the parents have been asked to pay for increased with 27 per cent of parents that have been asked to pay for one trip in 2009 stating that they were either not very happy or not at all happy with the cost of school trips. Those parents who have been asked to pay for three or more school trips in 2009 were the least satisfied - 38 per cent said that they were either not very happy or not at all happy with school trip costs.

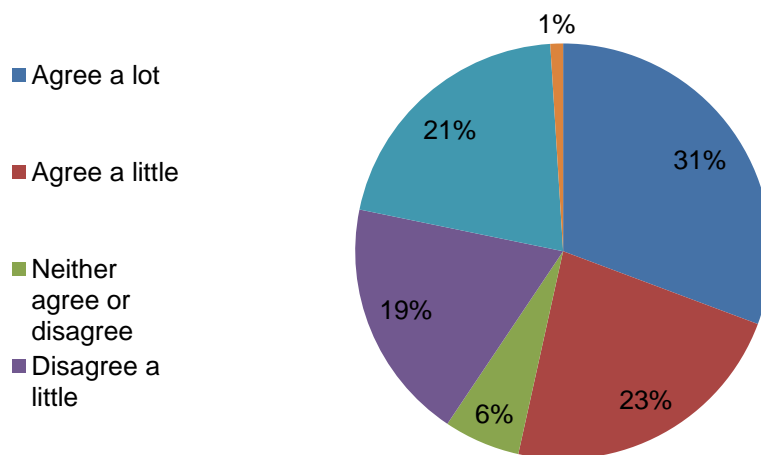
Figure 32 Satisfaction with the cost of school trips by amount of trips asked to pay for in 2009



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

142. The majority of parents reported feeling a certain amount of 'pressure' with regard to school trips. Over half (54 per cent) of respondents either agreed a lot or a little that they sometimes felt pressurised into paying for trips.

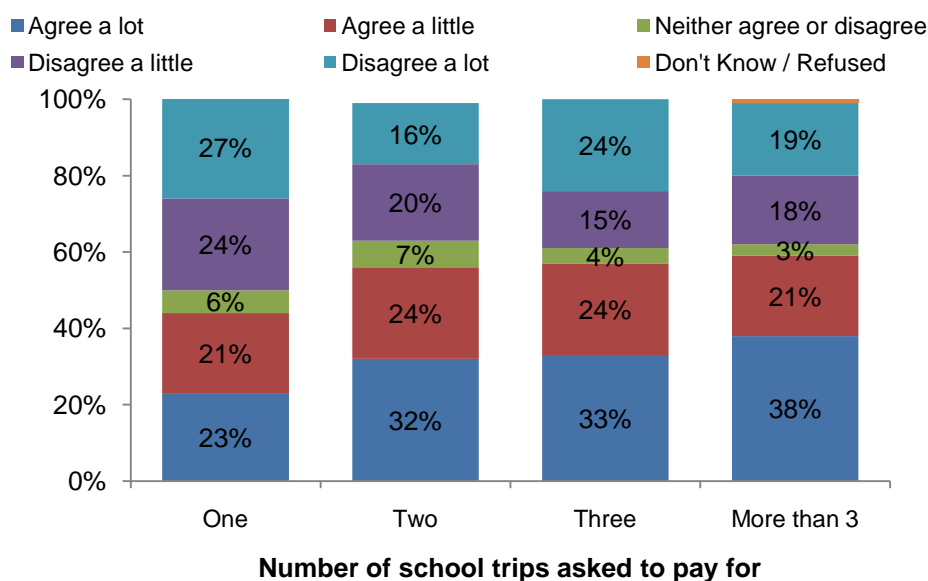
Figure 33 Extent to which parents/carers feel pressured into paying for trips



Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

143. Forty four percent of parents that have been asked to pay for one trip (either agreed a lot or agreed a little that they feel pressured into paying for school trips. Parents that had been asked to pay for three or more trips were most likely to state that they feel pressured into paying for trips (59 per cent).

Figure 34 Extent which parents/carers feel pressured into paying for trips, by number of trips asked to contribute to in 2009

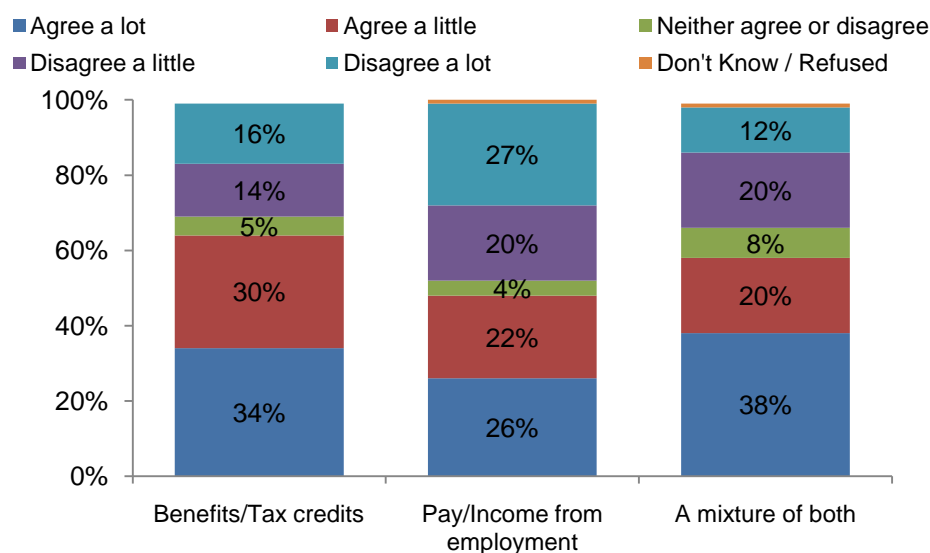


Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

144. Around half of parents whose income derives solely from paid employment (48 per cent) stated that they felt pressured into paying for school trips in

2009 (26 per cent agreed a lot, 22 per cent agreed a little). This percentage increases to 64 per cent for parents whose income is composed only of benefits or tax credits (34 per cent agreed a lot, 30 per cent agreed a little).

Figure 35 Extent which parents/carers feel pressured into paying for trips, by household income composition

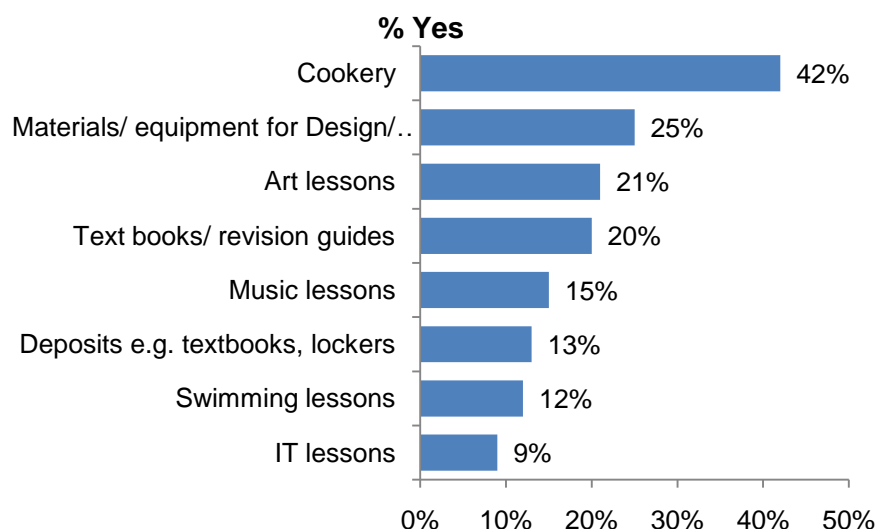


Base: Respondents that had been asked to pay for at least one school trip (428)

Other school related costs

145. There is a range of other school related expenditure that parents may have to consider for their child, including paying for materials or equipment needed for certain lessons, contributing to charitable events or charity collections and buying school photographs. Parents in the survey were asked about some of these items and the associated costs.
146. When asked about other contributions that respondents had made for materials for their child's lessons, the most common area was contributions to items for cookery classes (42 per cent stating they were asked to make such a contribution during the last year), followed by design and technology materials (25 per cent) and materials for art (21 per cent).

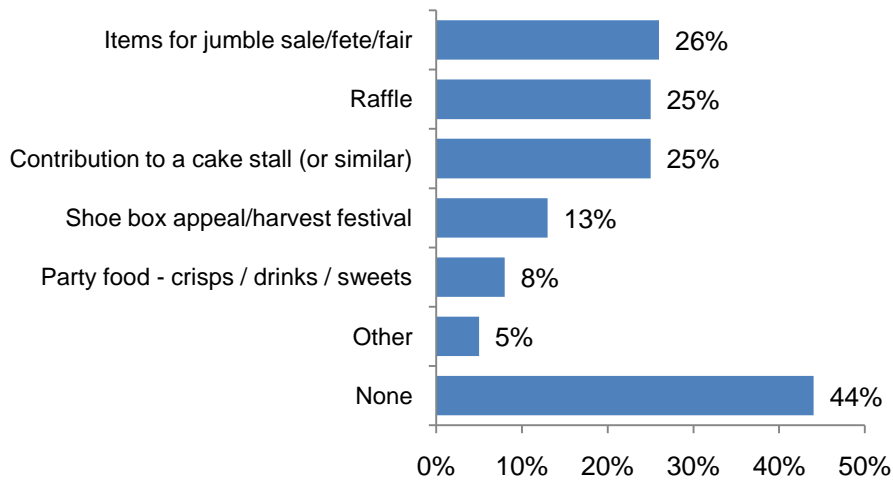
Figure 36 Other contributions made for lessons



Base: All respondents (506)

147. The respondents were also asked if they were asked to make donations to charitable causes in 2009, such as 'home clothes' or non-uniform days or charity activities such as Comic Relief or Children in Need and 82 per cent stated that they had indeed been asked this.
148. Respondents were also asked how much (approximately) they had last contributed on behalf of their child. The contribution had been less than £1 for 52 per cent of respondents and 35 per cent had given between £2 and £5. Donations of more than £5 had been provided by 12 per cent of respondents.
149. Requests for contributions to other activities or events were also fairly commonplace, and 25 per cent of respondents indicated that they were asked to contribute to other activities such as donations for sales, raffles and cake stalls. However, 44 per cent said that they had not had such requests in the last year.

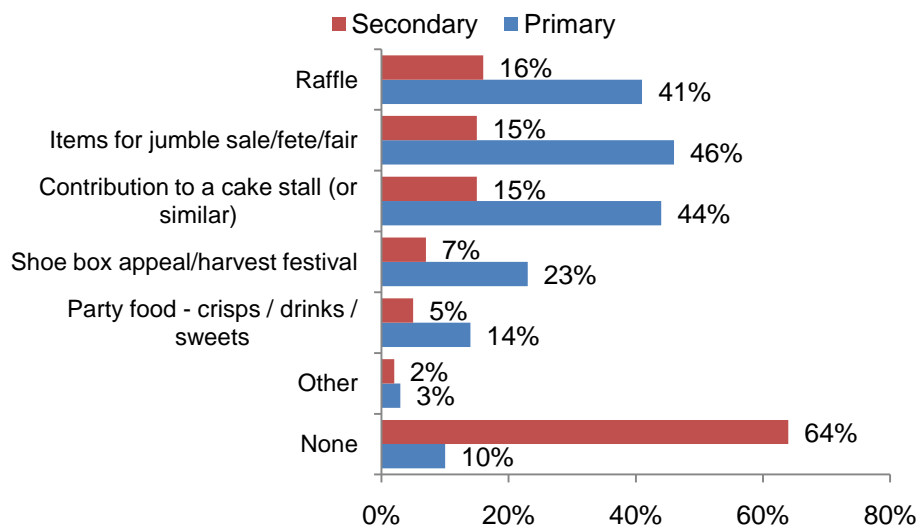
Figure 37 Other contributions to school activities (multiple response)



Base: All respondents (506)

150. Contributions to such activities were more common in primary schools.

Figure 38 Other contributions to school activities, by school type (multiple response)

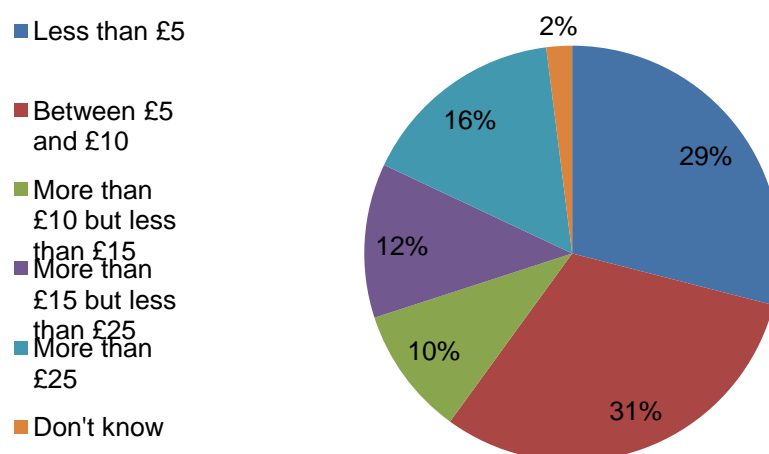


Base: All respondents (506)

151. In most cases, the cost of these additional contributions was relatively small. Forty seven percent of respondents that had made such contributions said they cost less than one pound over the course of the previous year. Thirty eight percent said the approximate cost was between

- £1 and £5, although a minority (7 per cent) stated that the contribution(s) came to over £5.
152. Over half (54 per cent) of respondents stated that they bought school photograph(s) of their child in 2009.
153. In terms of the cost of the school photograph(s), the majority of the respondents said that the purchase cost them more than £10 (86 per cent) and 11 per cent) stated that the photograph(s) cost between £5 and £10.
154. Some respondents also paid for non-lesson activities, for example school discos, school plays or hobbies with 44 per cent saying that they had paid for activities like these in the last year.
155. In terms of cost, 29 per cent of this subgroup of respondents said that the non-lesson activities cost up to £5 in total over the last year and 31 per cent indicated that the cost was between £5 and £10. Sixteen percent of this group said that non-lesson activities had cost them £25 or more over the last year.

Figure 39 **Approximate cost of non-lesson activities over the last year**



Base: If asked to make contributions to 'non-lesson' activities (224)

156. Case study families discussed the need to buy GCSE course guides and other school text books to support their children's learning. These were seen as an additional but necessary expense to help their children gain the best grades available to them.

157. The costs associated to ICT equipment and access to the internet were discussed by case study families. The young people in these families expressed concern that teachers often set homework and assignments that require access to the internet outside school time.

158. Case study families on low incomes advised that they could not afford internet access and that this was impacting on the children's ability to complete homework. Other families discussed how even though they did have access to internet, they thought that teachers should have a better awareness of pupils' access to ICT.

'Teachers do always expect you to have access to the internet.'

'I can't imagine how they would manage without computers. They are on them constantly doing their homework'.

159. The costs of printing out homework and coursework assignments were also discussed by families with some advising that these can become quite expensive since ink cartridges can cost around £30. Young people discussed once again that teachers were not always aware of the impact of these costs on families and that they felt under pressure to ensure that they printed out their homework.

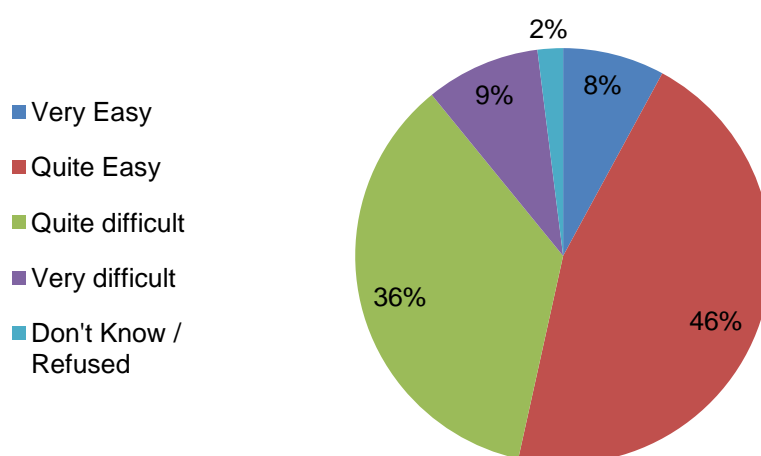
160. Participation in extra curricular and after school activities was explored with case study families, with young people reporting varying levels of involvement with these activities. Music lessons at secondary school were described by some families as being an activity requiring significant financial inputs should children wish to opt in to these activities, particularly at secondary school. Families advised that they needed to buy the musical instruments to participate in the lessons as well as paying for the lessons. On top of these costs, payment was also required for music books and examinations. These costs were felt to be prohibitive for many families, especially if more than one child wanted to take part in music related activities. Some families advised within primary schools and the local community for young people wishing to take up music lessons with the provision of free instruments and lessons.

161. Participation in sporting events was also mentioned by families as requiring their input and financial support. As described earlier, children in one family felt excluded from their netball team since their family could not afford to send them on an overseas netball trip.
162. Attendance at school proms was also identified as being an area of expense for families with families having to find money for special clothes and accessories as well as hair and make-up. However, young people said that these were very important aspects of school life and they looked forward to participating in these events, therefore parents sought to ensure that they could financially support their children to attend these events.

Ease of meeting schooling costs

163. The respondents were asked to state how easy they felt it was for them as a family to meet all of the costs that were discussed during the survey interview. Over half of respondents said that it was easy (although only 8 per cent stated that it was *very* easy) to meet of the costs covered in the survey. However, over a 36 per cent felt it was *quite* difficult and 9 per cent said that they found it *very* difficult to meet the costs discussed.

Figure 40 Ease of meeting all of the costs discussed in the survey

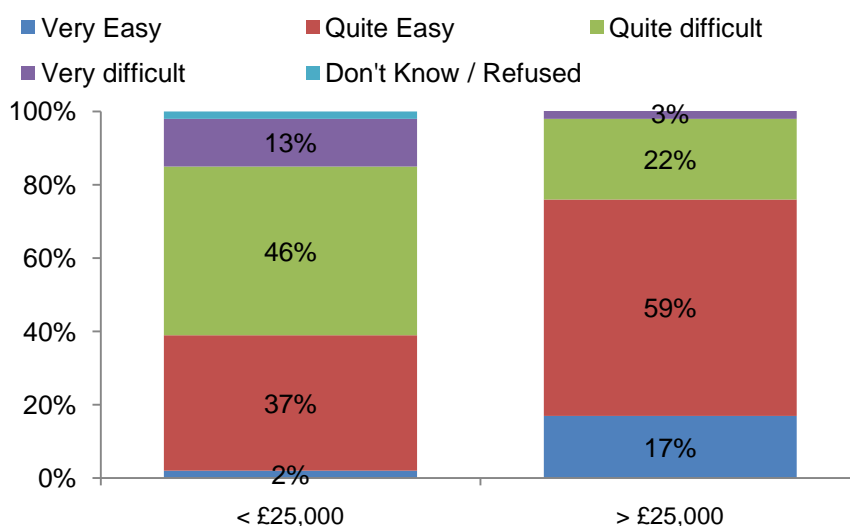


Base: All respondents (506)

164. As might be expected, there are significant differences in income groups and 58 per cent of respondents in a household with gross total household

income of £25,000 or less stated that they found meeting all of the costs discussed in the survey either quite difficult or very difficult. This compares with 25 per cent from the higher income group (greater than £25,000) reporting that they found the costs either quite difficult or very difficult.

Figure 41 Ease of meeting all of the costs discussed in the survey by income group



Base: All respondents (506)

165. Similarly, those on benefits were more likely to report difficulties in meeting the kinds of schooling costs discussed in the survey and 21 per cent of those whose incomes were composed solely of benefits/ tax credits said that they found meeting the costs discussed in the survey very difficult and 9 per cent of those who had household incomes made up of a combination of paid employment and benefits stated that it was very difficult to cover the costs. This compares with 6 per cent of those whose household incomes were made up of paid employment who said that they found it very difficult to cover the costs discussed in the survey.

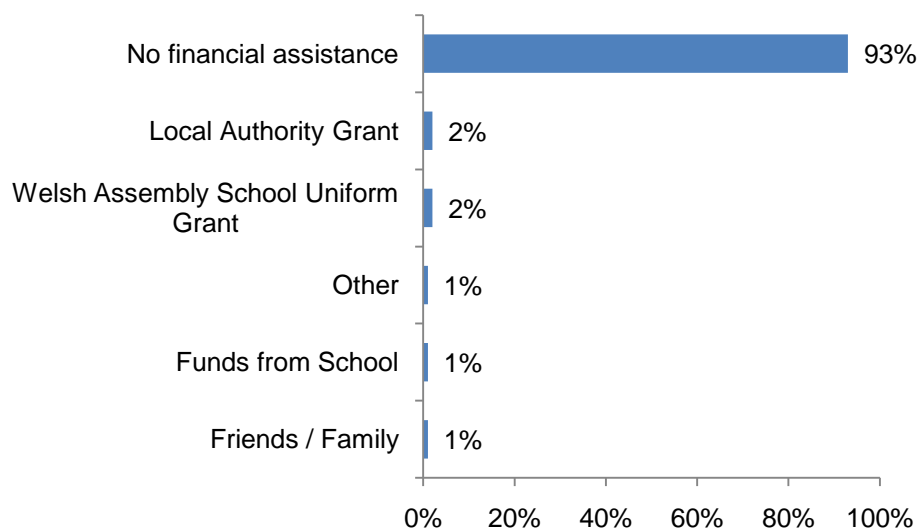
Accessing support for school uniform and other school costs

166. There is an expectation from the Welsh Assembly Government that consideration is given by schools and governing bodies to the cost of school uniform and other items or areas of expenditure for parents, and guidance provides a number of suggestions as to how costs can be kept to a reasonable level. For some parents, support is available via the Welsh

Assembly Government School Uniform Grant Scheme which provides a grant (which is £105 in 2010/11) to eligible pupils entering year 7 of maintained secondary school in Wales¹. In addition to this, many (though not all) local authorities across Wales offer financial assistance towards the cost of school uniform although the entitlement amount varies from one authority to another (see Section 2.1.4). Some assistance from schools for school trip costs is also available for those who are economically inactive and reliant on out of work benefits.

167. Almost all respondents (93 per cent) reported that they had not received any financial support in buying school uniform for their child.

Figure 42 Whether respondents had received any financial help or assistance with buying school uniform (multiple response)



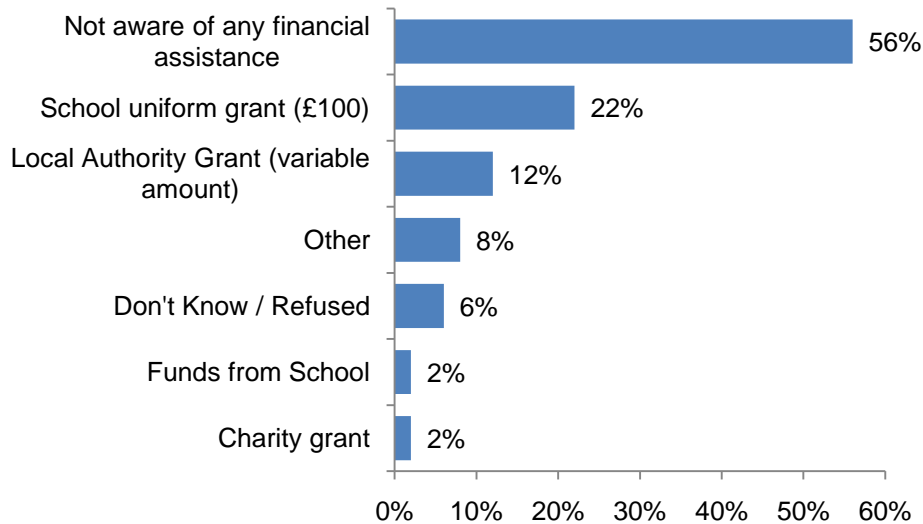
Base: All respondents (506)

168. In terms of awareness of financial help, 56 per cent of respondents stated that they were not aware of any financial assistance before it was mentioned in the survey (although a large proportion of these would not have been eligible for the school uniform grants). Smaller proportions of 22

¹ The scheme provides a grant to pupils entering Year 7 of maintained secondary schools in Wales who are eligible for free school meals, and pupils in special schools, special needs resource bases and pupil referral units in Wales who are aged 11 at the start of the school year and who are eligible for free school meals.

per cent and 12 per cent were aware of the school uniform grant and the Local Authority grant respectively.

Figure 43 Awareness of financial help (before mentioned in the survey)



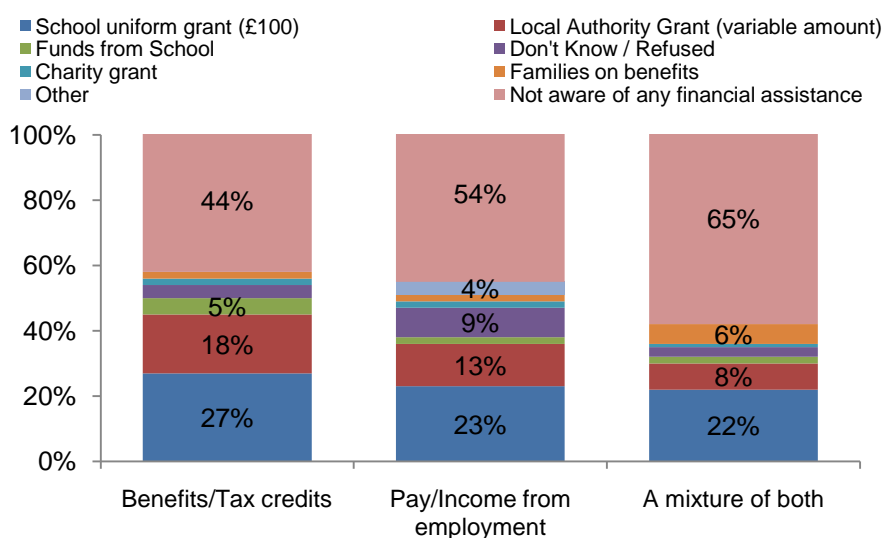
Base: All respondents (506)

169. There is no significant difference in the awareness of financial assistance for school uniform cost issues when comparing lower income and higher income households.
170. Interestingly, it is those parents whose incomes are based on a mixture of paid employment and benefits that were most likely to be unaware of *any* financial assistance for school uniform costs (65 per cent). Around half of those parents whose incomes are based on paid employment only (54 per cent) were not aware of any financial assistance, and 44 per cent of parents claiming benefits and/or tax credits only were not aware of any financial support for school uniform costs. From the case study work, one family had been unaware of financial support (despite being on benefits) until another parent advised them. In another case, a family had received a grant of £70 but this had been insufficient to cover the costs, once school shoes had been purchased.

‘For £70 you are lucky to get one jumper. One t-shirt and maybe a pair of shorts and that’s it’

171. In another case, the family reported that they did not receive the £100 grant until after their child had started school and the items had already been purchased (in fact the family in question did not realise they would get a grant).
172. The school uniform grant (£100) was the most commonly recognised, with around a quarter of parents in each income subgroup mentioning it.

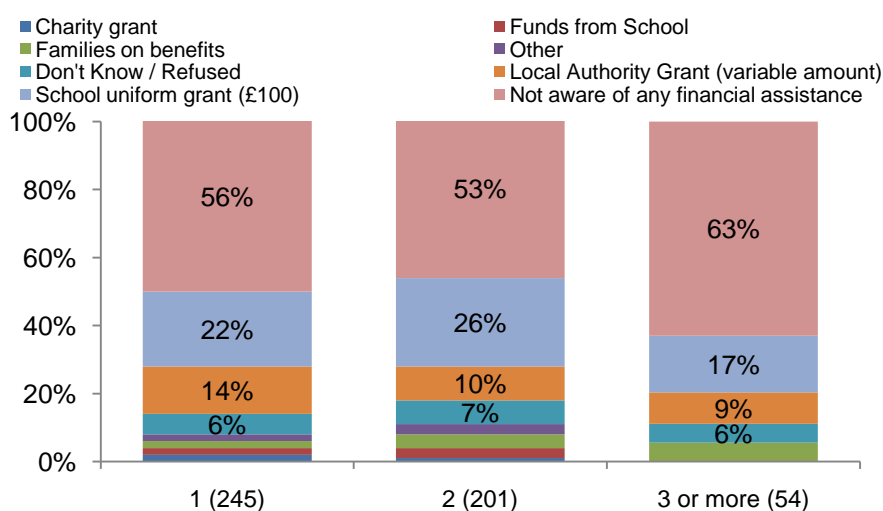
Figure 44 Awareness of financial assistance, by household income composition



Base: All respondents (506)

173. Parents living with three children or more in their household were most likely to state that they were not aware of any financial assistance in terms of school uniform cost (63 per cent). Fifty six per cent off of those living with one child and 53 per cent with two children said that they were not aware of any support.

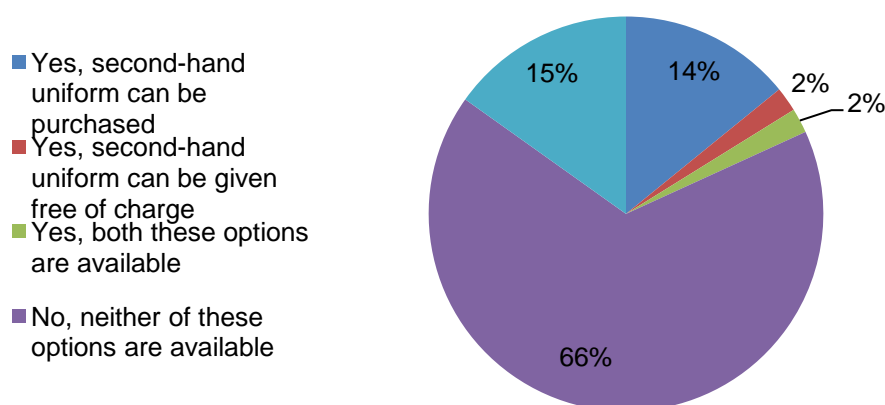
Figure 45 Awareness of financial assistance, by number of children in household



Base: All respondents (506) – individual sample sizes in brackets

174. The respondents were asked if opportunities to purchase second hand uniform were available at their child’s school. Fourteen percent of the sample said that there were options to purchase second-hand uniform. However, 66 per cent of respondents said that there were no opportunities to acquire second-hand uniform, and 15 per cent did not know if this facility existed.

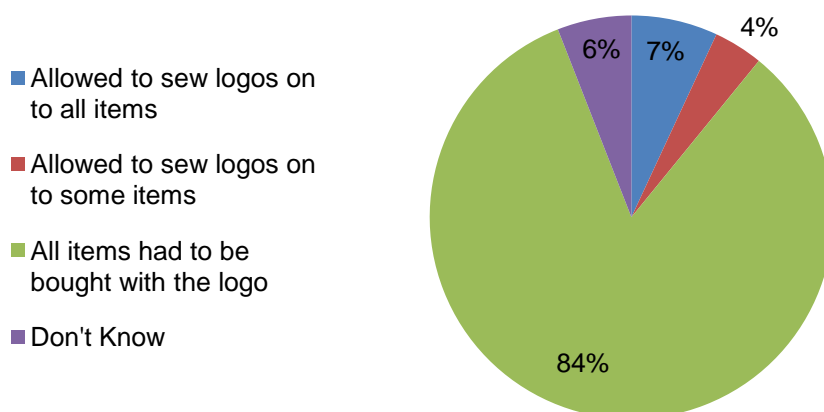
Figure 46 Opportunities to buy second hand uniform



Base: All respondents (506)

175. One option that could be made available to parents is to purchase the school emblem or badge separately and sew it on to items of school uniform. However, in the large majority of cases (84 per cent), respondents said that they had to purchase items with logos already on them. Only 7 per cent said that they were allowed to sew logos on to items themselves.

Figure 47 Whether allowed to sew on logos/ badges/ crests



Base: Where logos required (473)

Consultations about school uniform policy

176. Sixty three per cent of parents said that they had never had any consultation with the school about school uniform policy whilst 35 per cent said that they had. This may in part reflect whether or not there had been any recent changes in school uniform policy at the child’s school.

Good practice: School 4 case study (primary school)
<p>This school is currently changing its school uniform and advised that implementing a new school uniform will bring about a significant challenge, and that it will be essential to get the right balance of having a uniform that meets pupils’ recommendations which also provides value for money.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">‘It is an absolute minefield, we have so much to consider. The children want all sorts of colours and badges. We have to explore the options with them.’</p> <p>Both pupils and the school discussed how hooded jacket tops may be included in the uniform since they provide warmth and are practical. Pupils described how they like wearing ‘hoodies’ as they look right and keep them</p>

warm, with many wearing them to school already.

The school described how it intends for the new uniform to require minimum enforcement. It was felt that there were many other aspects of schooling and education that deserve time and attention over and above monitoring whether pupils are wearing the right coloured tops or shoes.

Pupils also discussed how they were generally happy wearing what they liked to school, but welcomed the chance to have a school uniform. They described how they would like the uniform to be fairly flexible and did not wish for their teachers to be too strict in telling them what to wear as they did not want it to feel like secondary school.

Pupils described how they were enjoying participating in discussions about their new school uniform. They provided a range of ideas about what they felt would be important features of a new school uniform and said that they like the idea of having bright colours for their school uniform and also thought that having their names on their tops would be helpful in getting to know who each other was. However they also considered how getting their names onto their tops may make them more expensive to buy. Overall, they discussed how warmth and comfort were felt to be the most important qualities of a new uniform so they would be able to run around the playground whilst also being at ease in the classroom.

177. Those that reported that they had been consulted about school uniform policy said that this had been via meetings/open events (27 per cent), informal feedback (25 per cent) and questionnaires (14 per cent). In the qualitative strand, several schools had changed their school uniform shortly after a new head-teacher was appointed. In one case, the consultations had included discussions with pupils and staff, and questionnaires to parents, pupils, staff and school uniform providers, with the final decision resting with the governing body. In another example from family interviewed, proposals to introduce a blazer had been rejected by pupils so had not gone ahead. From the schools consultations, it was clear that where pupils did not feel that they 'owned' the school uniform policy, or had not had an input into it, there was likely to be less compliance than when they felt that they had been able to make a contribution to its design, choice of colour scheme etc.

Good practice case study: School 1 (secondary school)

This school changed its school uniform five years ago with the school being very keen to consult with pupils, parents, governors and staff during the changeover period. A range of considerations were outlined for all groups; the cost, health and safety, creating a school ethos, equality for pupils from different backgrounds and paying attention to the Welsh Assembly Guidelines.

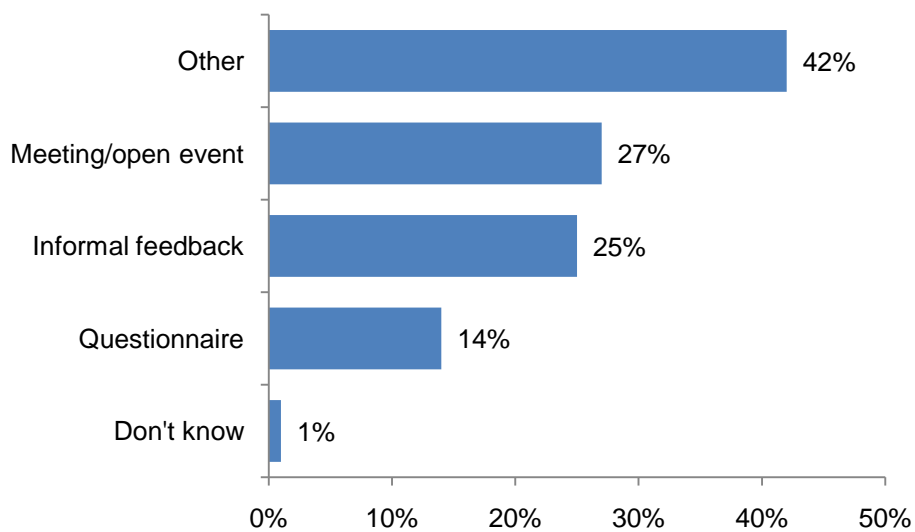
Paying attention to cultural issues and inclusion was also a prime concern of the school when it was developing its new school uniform policy, to ensure that it encompassed the needs of all pupils in order to maximise their participation in school life.

‘You just try and be as inclusive as possible and if [the pupils] see that you are trying they co-operate; they don’t want to be different...So they are very willing to co-operate’

During the consultation process, pupils were asked what type of uniform they wanted. Unsurprisingly, they requested fashionable and branded items, which the school used as a debating point, requesting them to consider issues around cost, and fairness and inclusivity, with pupils deciding on a uniform that was felt to be fair.

The school advised that the uniform adopted was ‘more or less’ what the pupils had suggested. There was some debate about whether to retain the school tie, with many of the parents saying that they wanted to keep collars and ties, but staff did not want them anymore and the pupils wanted something more comfortable.

Figure 48 Type of consultation



Base: If been involved in consultation (175)

Raising concerns about school uniform requirements

178. Respondent were asked whether they had raised concerns about the child's uniform requirements with 10 per cent saying that they had done this, representing 49 parents.
179. Those that had raised a concern were asked to specify what the concern was in relation to and 24 per cent said that they had an issue with cost while 16 per cent revealed that it was about availability. The remaining concerns were related to 'something else', with a wide range of issues given, including specific school uniform requirements (and the extent to which there was flexibility) and footwear:

'It can be difficult going to and from, the specialist retailer if on the bus, especially when they do not have everything available and some things need to be re-purchased.'

'[The parent] Bought some black Timberland boots which had a tiny logo on which resulted in the school sending a letter home saying he [the son] couldn't wear them. After some discussion they decided to allow it as they were so expensive.'

'Unreasonable shirts, the school shirts required small logos on them, which are not very noticeable, however they cost a lot more than regular white shirts which need to be bought.'

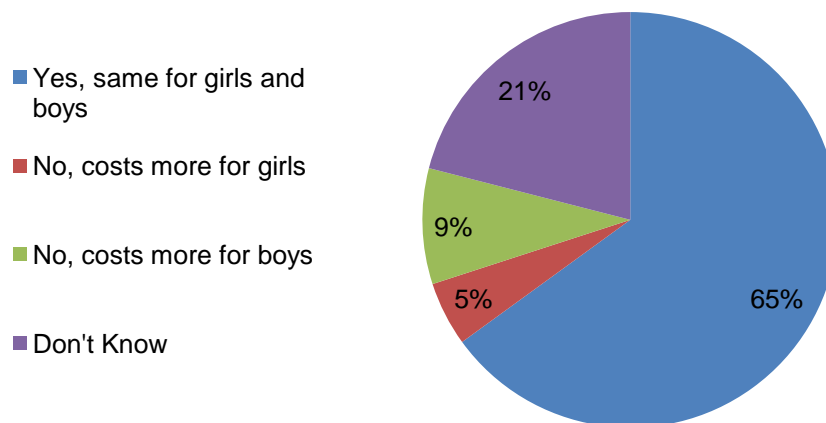
'At school there is nowhere for my child to store his coat, he has to carry it around with him. In the summer when it's hot they are not allowed to remove their jumpers.'

General views/attitudes to school uniform and other school costs

180. This section reviews respondents' overall attitudes and perceptions about school uniform and other school costs.
181. School uniform and sports kit requirements can be different for boys and girls, with the potential for variability in costs. The respondents were asked whether they thought the cost of school uniform and/or PE kit differed

between males and females and 65 per cent of respondents felt that the cost of school uniform/ PE was the same for girls and boys. However, 9 per cent stated that they perceived the cost to be greater for boys, with 5 per cent indicating that the costs were greater for girls.

Figure 49 Cost of school uniform/ PE kit – variability by gender



Base: If child's school has a school uniform policy (499)

182. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement in relation to a number of statements about school uniform. These were:

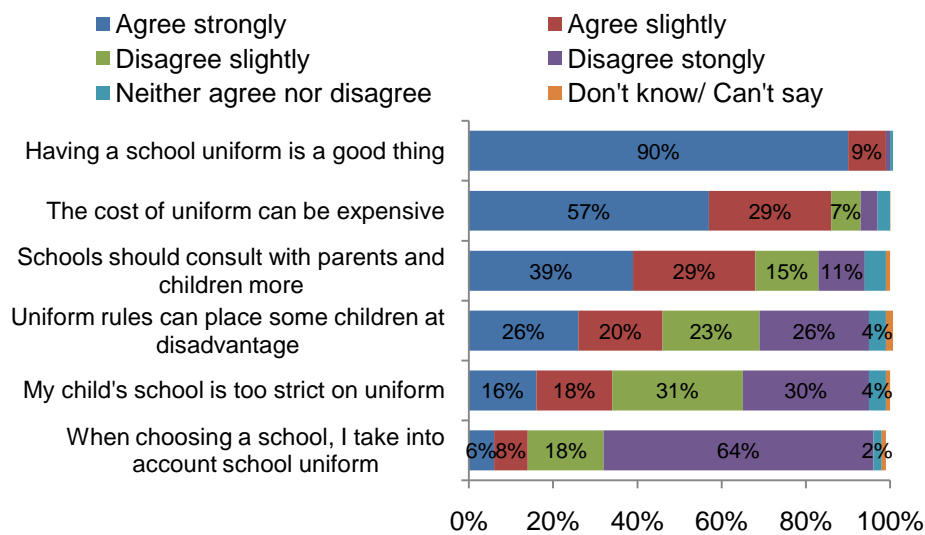
- having a school uniform policy is a good thing;
- the cost of buying school uniform can be expensive;
- my child's school is too strict on rules about school uniform;
- schools should consult with parents and children more about school uniform rules;
- school uniform rules at my child's school can place some children at a disadvantage; and
- when choosing a school for my child, I/we take into account the cost of their school uniform.

183. There was overwhelming support among parents for school uniform in principle. Almost all (99 per cent) of respondents agreed strongly or slightly that having a school uniform is a good thing, with only 34 per cent feeling

that their child's school is too strict on school uniform rules. However, the large majority (86 per cent) also agreed that the cost of school uniform can be expensive and 68 per cent of parents felt that schools should consult more with parents and children about school uniform rules. Additionally, 46% of parents agreed that the school uniform rules at their child's school could place some children at a disadvantage.

184. The cost of school uniform, however, did not appear to be a significant factor when making a decision about which school their child should go to, with only 14 per cent stating that they took this cost into consideration.

Figure 50 Attitudes toward school uniform policy



Base: All respondents (506)

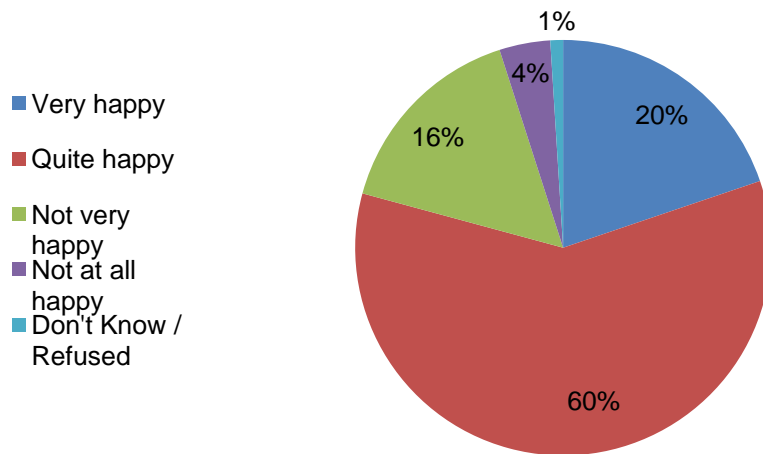
185. Families who participated in the qualitative work generally were in favour of school uniforms. Likewise, although some of the children ideally preferred to wear their own clothes they recognised the value of having a school uniform in terms of school identity and making it 'fair' on all pupils (avoiding pressure to wear designer clothes).

186. Despite the overwhelming majority of parents indicating that the cost of buying school uniform can be expensive, 60 per cent of parents stated that, taking everything into account, they were generally happy with the costs of sending their child to school. Nevertheless, 20 per cent of parents indicated

that they were not very or not at all happy with the schooling costs (16 per cent not very happy and 4 per cent not happy at all).

187. In terms of income group, 75 per cent of those respondents living in households earning a total of £25,000 a year or less said that they were either very happy or quite happy with the total costs associated with schooling. A higher proportion of the higher income group (£25,000 and over) said that they were either very happy or quite happy with the total cost of schooling (87 per cent).

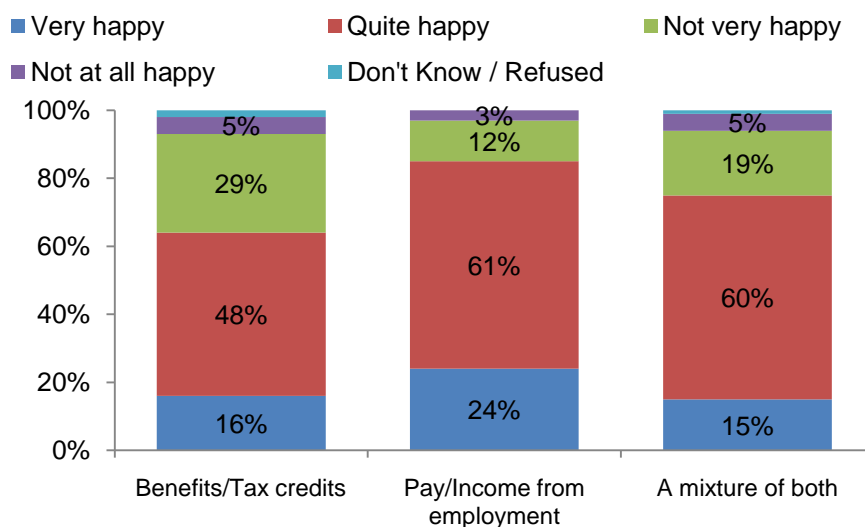
Figure 51 Satisfaction with total costs associated with schooling



Base: All respondents (506)

188. Parents whose income was based entirely of paid employment were most satisfied with the total costs of schooling (24 per cent were very happy and 61 per cent were quite happy). Parents claiming benefits and/or tax credits as their only income were the least satisfied, although 16 per cent very happy, and 48 per cent quite happy.

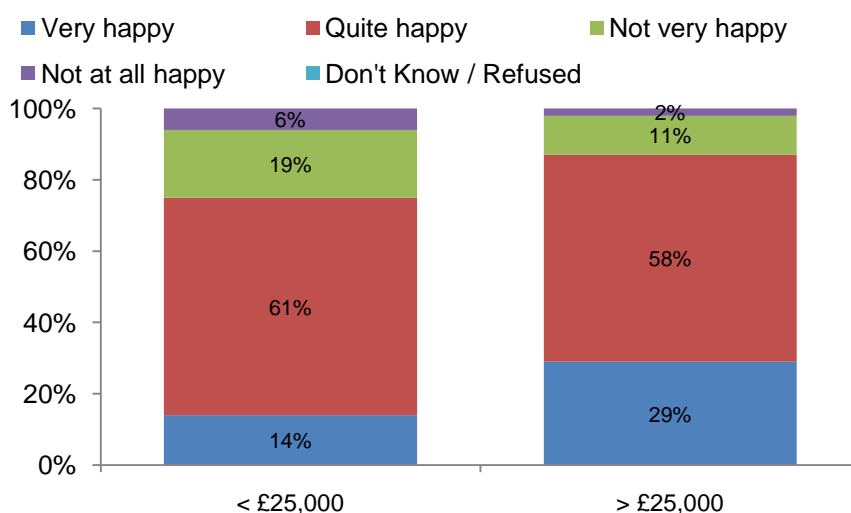
Figure 52 Satisfaction with total costs associated with schooling by household income composition



Base: All respondents (506)

189. The satisfaction with the total cost of schooling by income group was explored and 25 per cent of those in the lower income group (£25,000 or less) stated that they were either not very happy or not at all happy with the total cost of schooling, compared to 13 per cent of those in the higher income group.

Figure 53 Satisfaction with total cost of schooling by income group

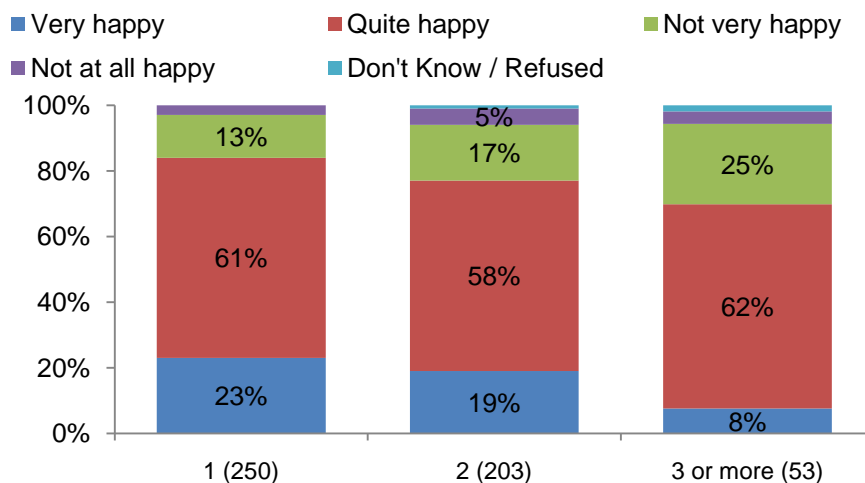


Base: All respondents (506)

190. The majority of parents living with one child in their household stated that they were either very happy (23 per cent) or quite happy (61 per cent) with

the total cost of schooling. Those living with three children or more were the least satisfied (8 per cent very happy and 62 per cent quite happy).

Figure 54 Satisfaction with total cost of schooling, by number of children in household



Base: All respondents (506)

191. Evidence from the qualitative work emphasised the strain that some families felt they were under when providing for their school age children.

‘What I find these days with schools is that everything comes at a cost, everything is at a cost. If it’s for the uniforms, how they get to school, school trips... it’s always money all the time. Not a week goes by when they come home and one of them has got to have money for something. It doesn’t seem to stop.’

4 Schools' views

192. At the time of the research, there was limited information available nationally with regard to school policies and practices around school uniforms and other schools related costs. What evidence did exist indicated considerable variation between different schools. Therefore, a postal self-completion questionnaire was devised for distribution to all schools to gather information on:

- how many schools have specific school uniform requirements – what elements are mandatory and what elements are optional;
- how many schools have specific school uniform outlets/retailers;
- whether/how parents and pupils are consulted on matters relating to school uniform policy;
- provision of support (financial or other) for the cost of school uniform (and wider schooling costs) – and any take-up issues; and
- whether there have been any recent changes in school uniform policy – and if so what and why.

193. Schools were also asked whether in principle they would be willing to take part in further qualitative work. Six schools were subsequently selected as case studies, and BMG researchers visited these schools to talk to head teachers and pupils. The case study schools included three primary and three secondary schools from across Wales (covering urban and rural areas as well as a Welsh medium school). Findings from these visits are incorporated into the report as good practice examples, with full case study write-ups provided in the Annex A.

School responses

194. This section of the report outlines the profile of responding schools. In total, 1,749 questionnaires were distributed, in December 2009. This represented all schools in Wales at that time (1,471 primary schools, 224 secondary schools and 44 special schools). Following one reminder, a total of 484 completed questionnaires were returned, representing an overall response rate of 28 per cent. Most of the respondents (86 per cent) of the 484

schools that responded were primary schools, 12 per cent secondary schools² and 2 per cent special schools³. These proportions match very closely to the proportions within the overall population. The database used for the survey (of all schools in Wales, provided by DCELLS) contained 1,736 schools of which 85 per cent were primary schools, 13 per cent secondary schools and 2 per cent special schools.

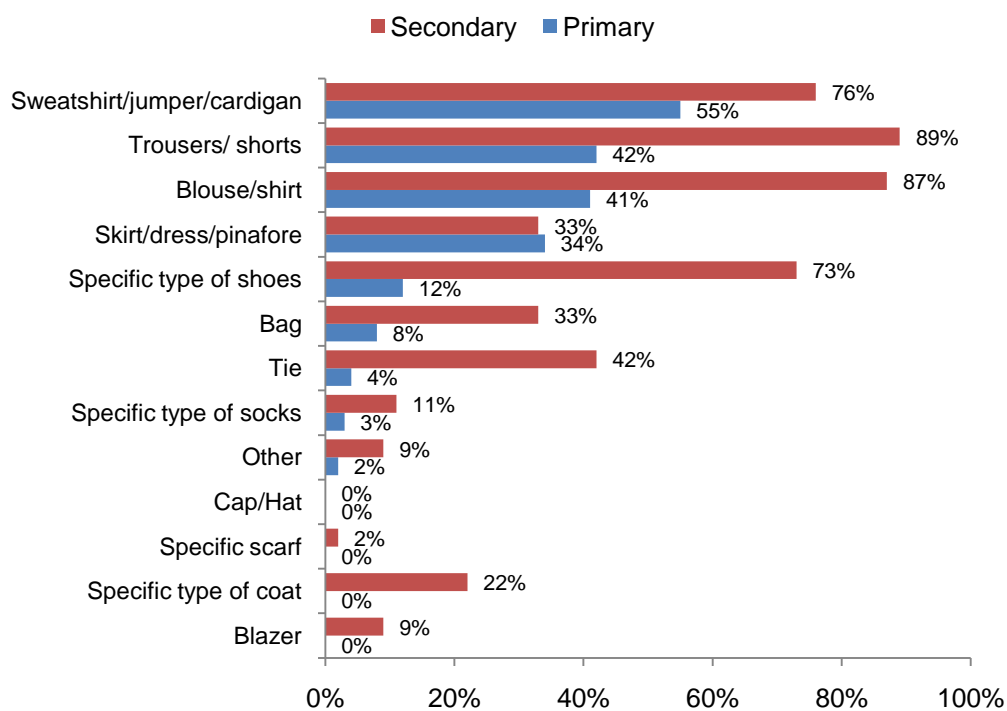
School uniform requirements

195. All of the schools were asked whether their school had a school uniform policy. Only 8 schools of the 484 that responded stated that they did not have a school uniform policy (2 per cent).
196. A PE/sports kit was required by 77 per cent of schools – again those that did not require a PE/sports kit were primary schools.
197. Unsurprisingly, uniform item requirement was much higher at secondary school level than at primary level. In secondary schools, the top five items that are required were trousers/ shorts (89 per cent), blouse/ shirt (87 per cent), sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (76 per cent), shoes (73 per cent) and tie (42 per cent). Further to this, 22 per cent of respondents stated that a specific type of coat was required at secondary schools.
198. In primary schools, the top five required items were sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (55 per cent), trousers/ shorts (42 per cent), blouse/ shirt (41 per cent), skirt/ dress/ pinafore (34 per cent) and shoes (12 per cent).

² Representing 56 secondary schools. As this is a relatively small sample base, caution should be exercised in interpretation of findings.

³ 10 special schools replied – whilst representative of the wider population, this base cell size is too small to provide statistically meaningful data so has been excluded from any sub-group analysis. .

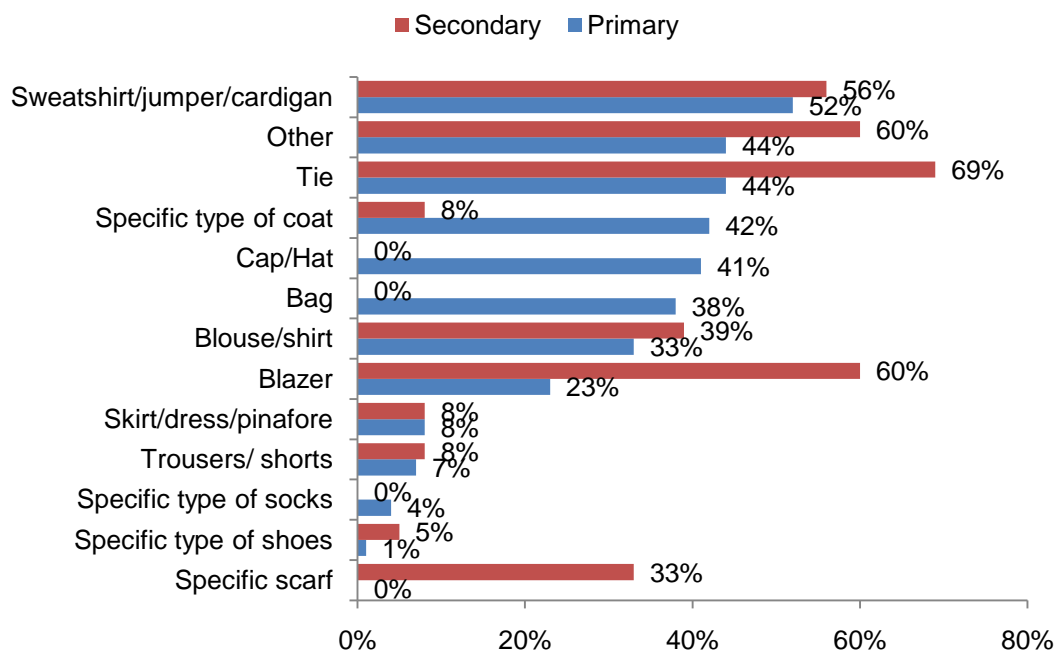
Figure 55 Required school uniform items



Base: Where school uniform is required (466)

199. Schools were asked if any of the required school uniform items had to be bought from a specific supplier. The top five items for respondents in secondary schools were tie (69 per cent), blazer (60 per cent), sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (56 per cent), blouse/ shirt (39 per cent) and scarf (33 per cent).
200. For primary schools the top five items were sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (52 per cent), tie (44 per cent), coat (42 per cent), cap/ hat (41 per cent) and bag (38 per cent).
201. Additional items of uniform under 'other' mainly included fleeces, polo tops and hooded tops.

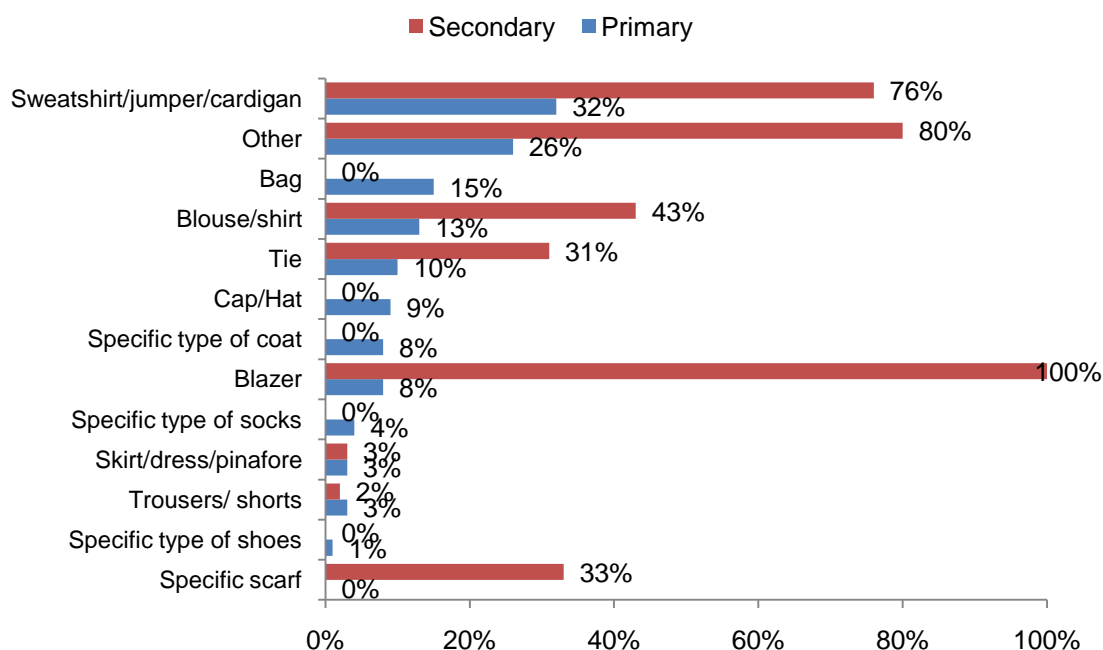
Figure 56 Whether items have to be bought from specialist supplier



Base: Where school uniform is required (466)

202. The requirement for school logos or badges on items of school uniform was also explored. In secondary schools logos were stated as compulsory for blazers (100 per cent), sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (76 per cent), blouse/ shirt (43 per cent), scarf (33 per cent) and tie (31 per cent). Requirements for logoed items in primary schools were evident to a lesser extent among primary schools. The top five items of uniform requiring compulsory logos in primary schools were sweatshirt/ jumper/ cardigan (32 per cent), bag (15 per cent), blouse/ shirt (13 per cent), tie (10 per cent) and cap/ hat (9 per cent).

Figure 57 Items requiring school logos



Base: Where school uniform is required (466)

203. Just under half of schools stated that parents could sew the school logo onto uniform items if they wished. In terms of school type, 22 per cent of secondary schools said that this was an option for parents and 49 per cent of primary schools said that parents could do this. This figure is much higher than that reported by parents, with just 7 per cent indicated that their school permitted them to sew on a logo or badge onto school uniform.
204. Schools were asked about the action (if any) taken if a pupil repeatedly come into school without school uniform. The most common actions in secondary schools were verbal warnings (75 per cent), loaning of uniform (64 per cent), sending home warning letters (56 per cent), sending pupils home (25 per cent), detention (24 per cent) and pupil being withdrawn from class (22 per cent).
205. Among case studies, how secondary schools dealt with non-compliance varied. In one example, children described how they were sent to another room for their lessons for that day if they had not complied with the uniform requirements; in another example the school operated a loan room, where

pupils were able to borrow items of clothing if they needed to (the room was also used for other activities to avoid any stigma in accessing the room).

Good practice case study: School 1 (secondary school)

Interestingly, the school has established a 'Hafan' (literally a haven) within the school, which provides a range of support and resources to pupils including providing spare school uniform for those in need or who have forgotten a particular item. The Hafan has a stock of school shoes which pupils are also able access. The school advised that pupils who have arrived at school not wearing the correct uniform are immediately sent to the Hafan to collect any items of uniform that they require.

If pupils have turned up in trainers with a note from home, advising that their shoes are being repaired the school reported that it accepts this. However, if there was no note or it was a reoccurring transgression she or he would be sent to Hafan collect shoes since the school has purchased a supply of shoes. For reoccurring offenders, the school has confiscated branded shirts for up to a week to assist in enforcing the school uniform requirements.

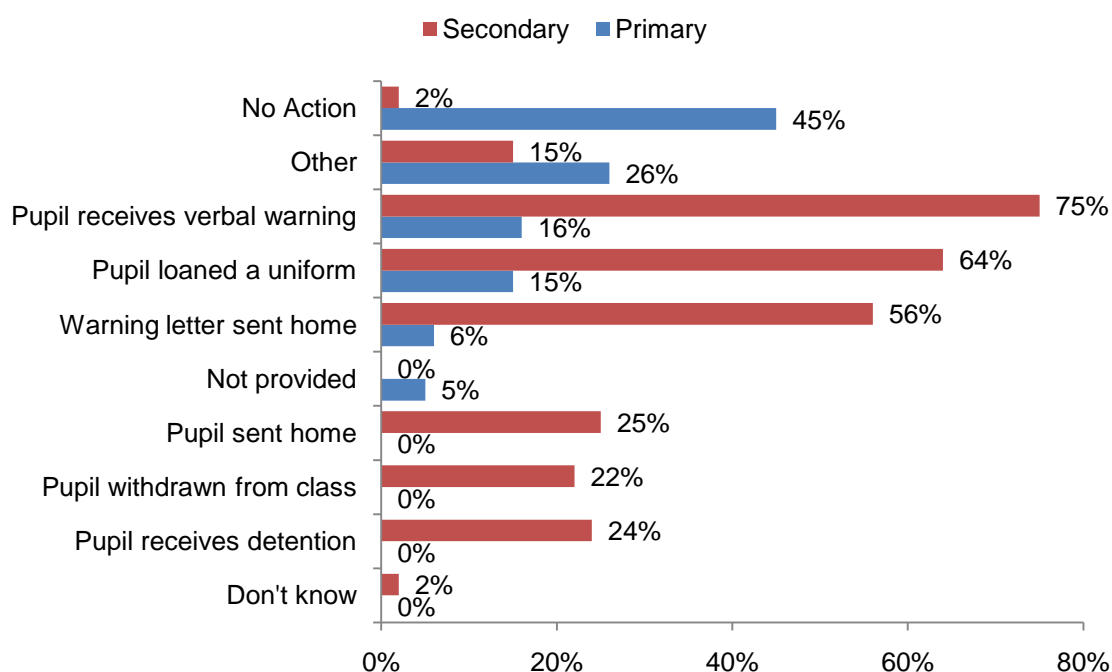
'As soon as they are in the door they get sent to Hafan. If they are recurring offenders then we might keep the shirt for a week. We'd phone the parents, and in most cases they say 'well I sent them off this morning in school uniform.'

206. In primary schools, the likelihood of using action against pupils that repeatedly came to school without the correct uniform was generally lower. No action was taken in 45 per cent of cases. For those schools where action was taken 16 per cent involved verbal warnings, 15 per cent involved the loaning of uniform and 6 per cent consisted of letters home.

Good practice case study: School 3 (secondary school)

This school implemented a new school uniform when the school was created following a merger. Pupils advised that they like their school uniform particularly the colour and feel that it makes them distinctive in a positive way in the local area. Pupils are continually involved in consultations with staff at the school to ensure that they are all complying with the school uniform requirements, but also to discuss issues that are concerning them about the uniform. The school council gathers pupils' views and feeds these back to staff. For example, the length of school skirts has been discussed along with pupils' ideas for a summer school uniform to ensure that they do not get too hot. Pupils also advised how some had suggested that school blazers would be a good idea, but discussions with the head teacher revealed that these would be too costly to buy.

Figure 58 Action if pupils repeatedly come to school without uniform



Base: Where school uniform is required (466)

Assistance via schools for obtaining school uniforms

207. In terms of assistance available to parents/ carers that cannot afford uniform, 60 per cent of respondents in secondary schools said that they provided second hand uniform free of charge (although when asked a similar question in the parents' survey 66 per cent indicated that there was no opportunity to do this at their child's school). Support via a local authority grant was mentioned by 60 per cent of schools, and 53 per cent mentioned the Welsh Assembly grant (£100). Provision of support from School/PTA funds was reported by 20 per cent of schools. In secondary schools, 76 per cent of respondents stated that the availability of the local authority grant is publicised to parents/ carers. A slightly smaller proportion (66 per cent) said that the Welsh Assembly grant is publicised and 50 per cent said that the availability of second hand uniform at reduced prices is publicised to parents/carers.

Good practice case study: School 2 (secondary school)

The school advised that it provides additional support to families who need help with buying the full uniform in a number of ways including; providing items of second hand school uniform and in some instances new items where families are experiencing extreme financial hardship. Publicity about this support has been limited through formal channels (such as school newsletters and handbooks) with the school preferring to apply a discrete approach supporting families on an individual basis, since this is felt to avoid stigmatising any young people who are receiving support.

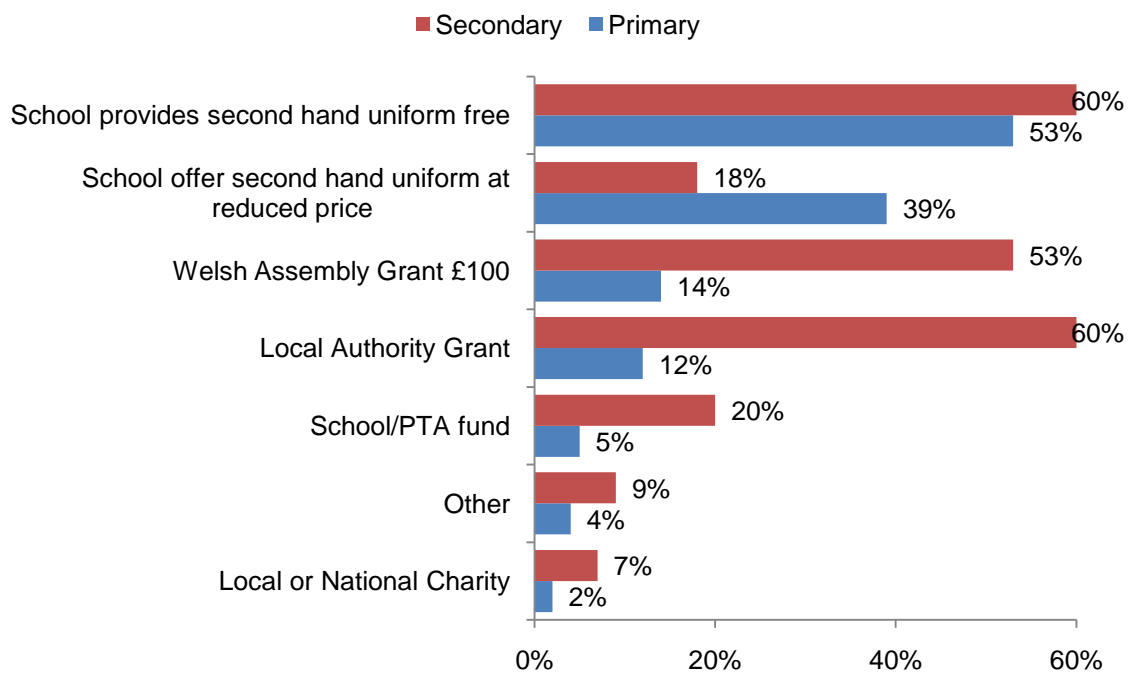
‘We are sympathetic to the needs and situations of individual families.’

Used items of uniform are cleaned and stored and given to pupils who need additional items of clothing. The school contacts parents prior to providing spare uniform asking them if they would be happy if the school provided some items of spare uniform.

‘We recycle items of uniform quietly so that young people can have more than one sweatshirt or polo shirt.’

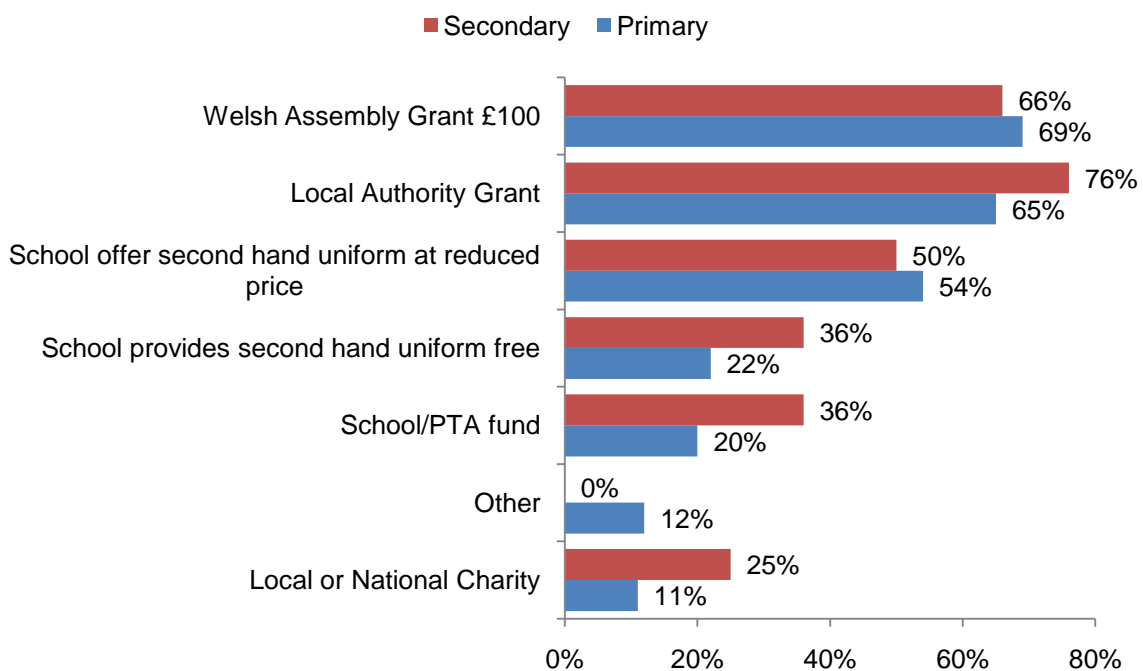
208. In primary schools, 53 per cent of respondents said that second hand uniform was available, 39 per cent mentioned the availability of second hand uniform at reduced price and 14 per cent said that the Welsh Assembly grant (£100) was available. Among primary schools, 69 per cent said that the availability of the Welsh Assembly Grant was publicised and 65 per cent said that the local authority grant was publicised. The availability of school uniform at reduced prices was publicised in 54 per cent of schools, with smaller proportions publicising the availability of free second hand uniform free (22 per cent) and school/PTA funds (20 per cent).

Figure 59 Assistance available when parent/carers cannot afford uniform



Base: Where school uniform is required (466)

Figure 60 Whether support with costs of school uniform is publicised

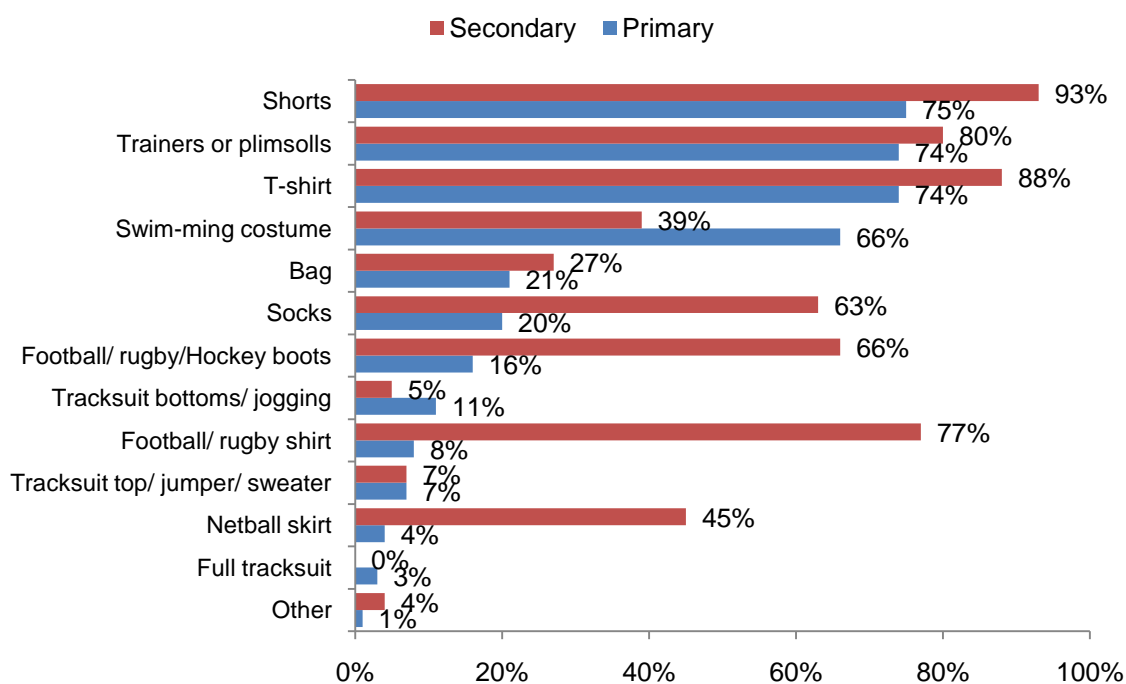


Base: Where assistance is available (variable base size)

PE and sports kit requirements

209. At secondary school level, the top five compulsory requirements were for shorts (93 per cent), t-shirt (88 per cent), trainers or plimsolls (80 per cent), football/ rugby shirt (77 per cent) and football/ rugby/ hockey boots (66 per cent).
210. At primary school level the top five compulsory requirements were for shorts (75 per cent), trainers/ plimsolls (74 per cent), t-shirt (74 per cent), swimming costume (66 per cent) and bag (21 per cent).
211. Unsurprisingly, secondary school pupils were more likely than primary school students to require socks, football/rugby shirt, football/ rugby/ hockey boots and/or a netball skirt.

Figure 61 Compulsory PE/sports kit items

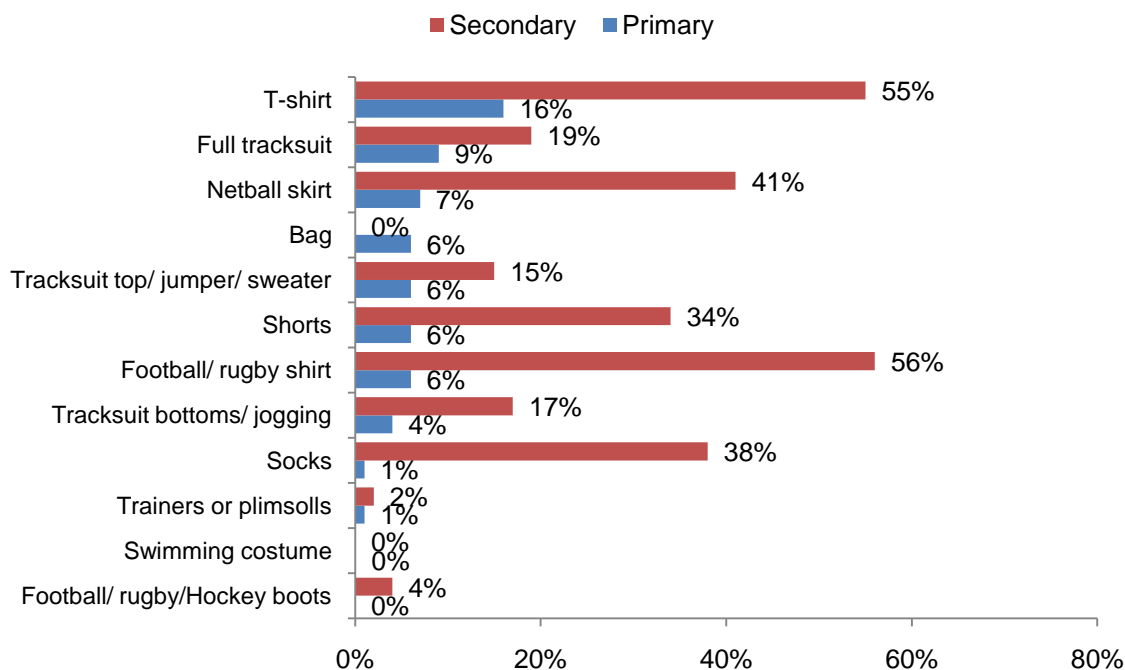


Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

212. The respondents were asked if any of the PE/ sports kit items already mentioned had to be purchased from a specialist supplier. Those respondents representing secondary schools were generally more likely to have stated that items need to come from a specific supplier. In particular specialist suppliers were required for football/ rugby shirt (56 per cent), t-shirt (55 per cent), netball skirt (41 per cent), socks (38 per cent) and shorts (34 per cent).

213. The top three primary school items that had to be purchased were t-shirt (16 per cent), full tracksuit (9 per cent) and bag (6 per cent).

Figure 62 Whether PE/sports items have to be purchased from specific supplier



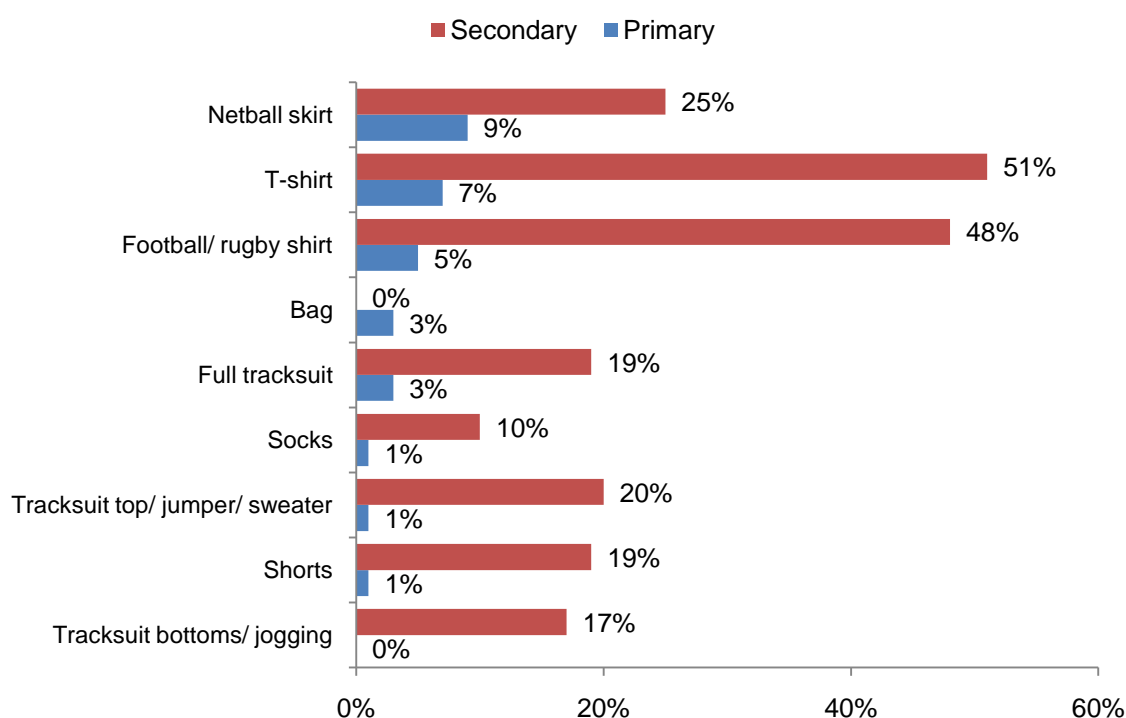
Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

214. The respondents were asked to provide details regarding logo requirements for PE/ sports kit. Again, the requirement for a logo was more prevalent among secondary schools. The top five items for secondary schools were t-shirt (51 per cent), football/ rugby shirt (48 per cent), netball skirt (25 per cent), tracksuit top/ jumper/ sweater (20 per cent) and full tracksuit and shorts (both 19 per cent).
215. The large majority of primary schools did not have a requirement for logoed PE or sports items, the top three items were for netball skirt (9 per cent), t-shirt 7 per cent and football/rugby shirt (5 per cent).

Good practice case study: School 2 (secondary school)

This secondary school has sought to keep PE kit requirements to a minimum to ensure affordability. Pupils are not required to have separate tops and shirts for different sporting activities; that is the same top can be worn for rugby and gym activities. Additionally logos are not required for the PE kit and items can be purchased anywhere so long as they are in the appropriate colours.

Figure 63 PE/sports items that require a logo



Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

216. In terms of sewing on logos on to PE/ sports kit, 60 per cent of respondents from primary schools said that parents/ carers can sew logos on to their kit. A smaller proportion of 32 per cent stated that this was permitted in secondary schools. It is of note that in the parents' survey, overall just 7 per cent of all parents said that they were permitted to sew logos on to items.
217. In terms of action taken by schools if a pupil repeatedly fails to have an item of PE or sports kit, secondary school respondents were generally more likely to take action when compared to primary schools. The top three actions for secondary schools were the loaning of PE/ sports kit (79 per cent), issuing of verbal warnings (75 per cent) and warning letters sent home (63 per cent).
218. The top three actions for primary schools were the loaning of PE/ sports kit (55 per cent), issuing of verbal warnings (37 per cent) and warning letters sent home (28 per cent).

219. Secondary school respondents were far more likely to report the action of detention when compared to primary school respondents (46 per cent secondary, 3 per cent primary).

220. Additional ‘other’ actions that could be taken by schools included the following:

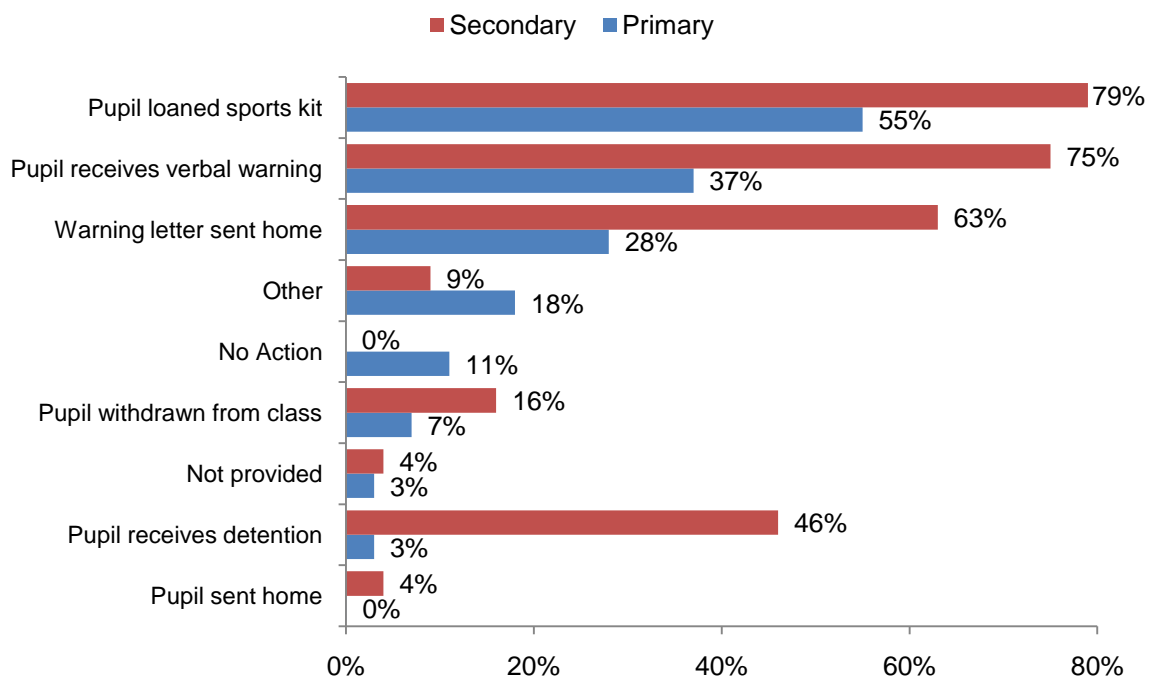
‘Verbal request to wear uniform but no action.’

‘Parents are approached, not a warning!’

‘Spoken to, but not forced if persistent.’

‘Pupils are encouraged to wear uniform and rewarded for doing so.’

Figure 64 Action taken if pupils repeatedly do not have PE/ Sports kit



Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

221. Sports kit was provided free of charge in 45 per cent of primary schools. It was also mentioned that second hand kit could be purchased (19 per cent)

and that the Welsh Assembly grant could be accessed (6 per cent) at primary school level⁴.

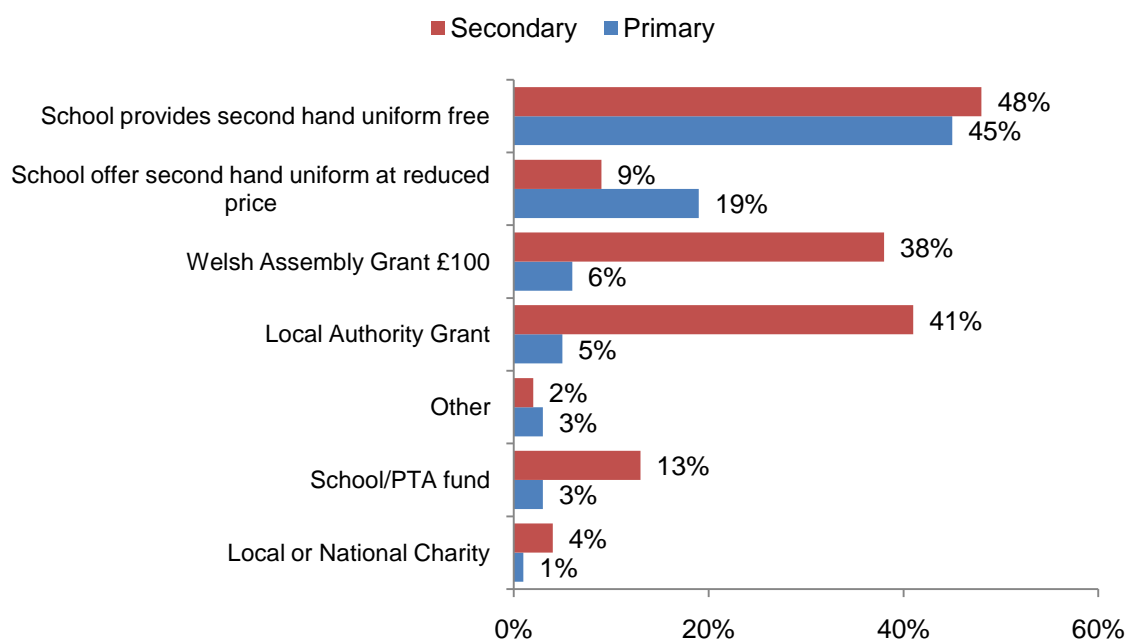
Good practice case study: School 6 (primary school)

This school found that many pupils did not have a PE kit and were reluctant to wear spare pieces of second hand kit. Getting parents to provide PE kits was found to be problematic in many of these cases. This non participation was having a negative impact on teaching and learning in the school, with pupils sitting out of PE lessons due to their lack of kit, and sometimes being disruptive and not co-operating with teachers. The school therefore decided to purchase a set of new PE kits for each year group, which pupils without kits could borrow. The school launders these kits and these are kept in each class. Participation in PE has increased significantly since the introduction of the kits and has eliminated behavioural problems. The school advised that although there was an investment cost to the school, it had been worth it for the benefits that have been brought to pupils through its provision.

222. Secondary schools were more likely to have options of the local authority grant (41 per cent) and the Welsh Assembly grant (38 per cent). Secondary schools were slightly more likely to offer second hand uniform free of charge (48 per cent).

⁴The Welsh Assembly uniform grant is only available to young people in secondary school, it therefore appears that some respondents may have mistakenly attributed support from Local Authorities or other sources to be from the Welsh Assembly Government.

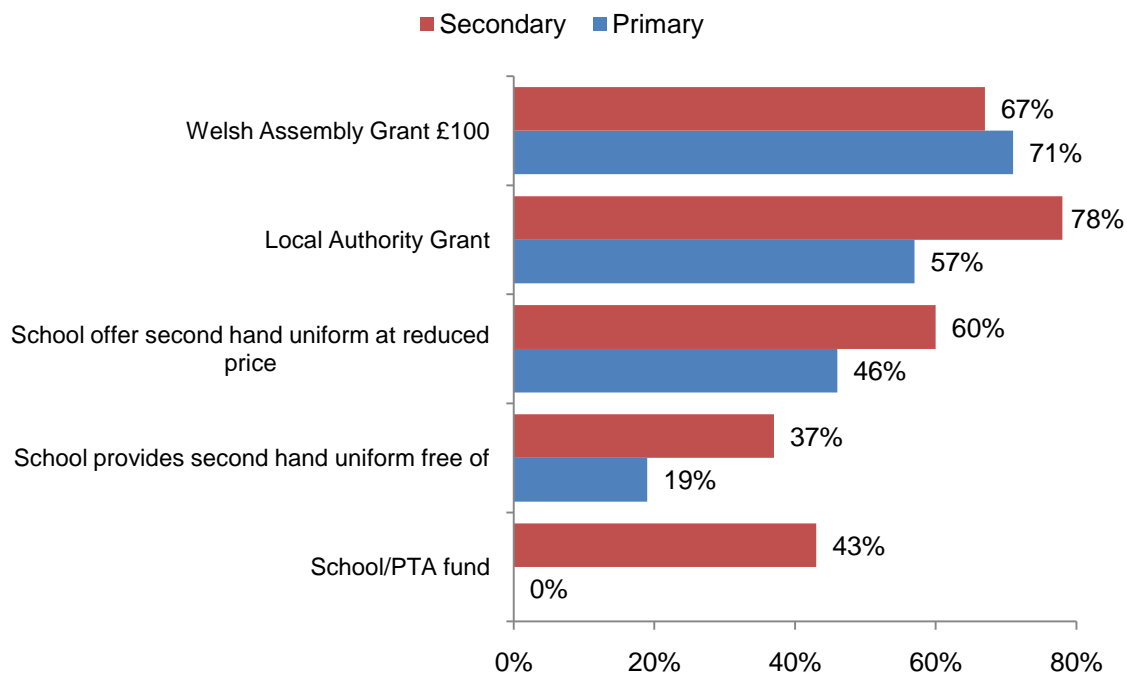
Figure 65 Assistance available if pupils cannot afford items of PE/sports kit



Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

223. The schools were asked to state whether such support mechanisms were publicised to parents. For secondary schools, the top three support mechanisms mentioned were publicising the local authority grant (publicised in 78 per cent of schools), the Welsh Assembly grant (publicised in 67 per cent of schools) and the publicising the availability of second hand uniform at reduced prices (60 per cent).
224. In terms of primary schools, the top three support mechanisms publicised by schools were the Welsh Assembly grant (71 per cent), local authority grant (57 per cent) and the school offering second hand uniform at reduced prices (46 per cent).

Figure 66 Whether support for the cost of PE/sports kit is publicised



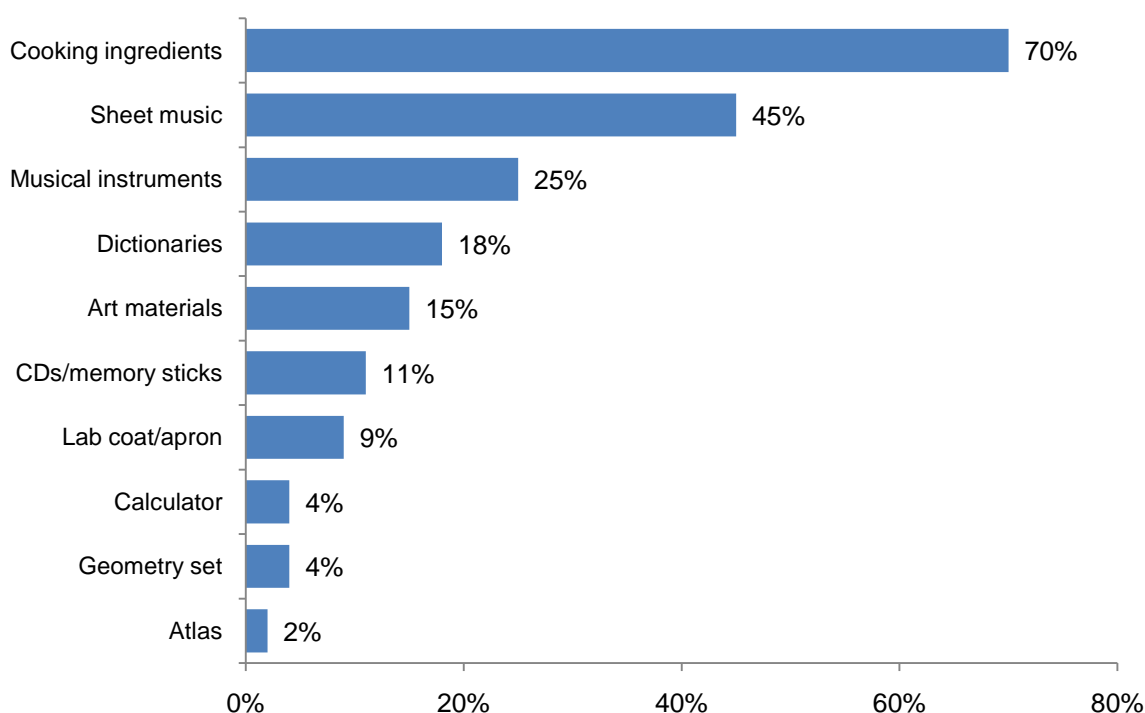
Base: Where PE/ sports kit is required (365)

School requirements for materials and equipment

225. The other items that were required at secondary school are shown below⁵. The top five types of materials and equipment were for cooking ingredients (70 per cent), sheet music (45 per cent), musical instruments (25 per cent), dictionaries (18 per cent) and art materials (15 per cent). Evidence from the case study families indicated that the cost of providing ingredients for cooking in particular could be quite high – particularly if there was more than one secondary school age child in a family.

⁵ the number of requirements for primary schools were very small so have not been included in the analysis

Figure 67 Other items required at secondary school



Base: All secondary school respondents (56)

226. Stationery items were much more likely to be mostly supplied by primary schools than secondary schools (94 per cent provided, compared to 38 per cent of secondary schools). In secondary schools stationery items were equally likely to be supplied mostly by the pupil (40 per cent) as by the school.

Good practice case study: School 4 (primary school)

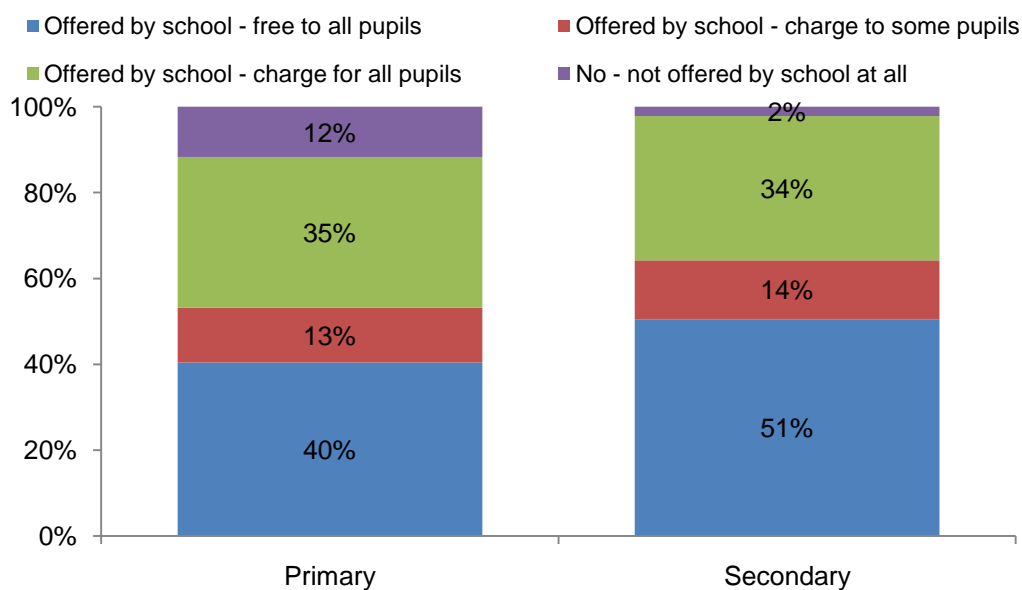
This school reported that it provides all stationery items required by pupils since this ensures that they are all able to participate fully in lessons and saves time in sorting out who needs to be provided with items. It was felt that the pupils have respect for their sets of stationery and that most pupils look after these items well.

‘Everyone has a set of pens and pencils in a pot. No one can say “I haven’t got this or that.” All equipment to learn is there.’

227. Schools were asked if pupils were ever excluded from lessons if they failed to provide the correct equipment or materials for a particular lesson. In both primary and secondary schools, this was only reported in a very small minority of cases (1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively).

228. In terms of extracurricular music lessons, 40 per cent of primary school respondents said that these were available free of charge. A higher proportion of 51 per cent stated this facility was in place at secondary schools. For the majority of the remainder, extracurricular music lessons were available at a charge.

Figure 68 Whether offered extracurricular music lessons



Base: All respondents (484)

School trips

229. Schools were asked to provide details of up to six school day or residential trips in the questionnaire.

230. Around nine in ten (88 per cent) of the trip details provided by primary schools were curricular, while a smaller proportion of trip details provided by secondary schools were curricular (57 per cent).

231. In terms of compulsory charges, 44 per cent of the trips described by primary schools charged parents a compulsory fee. A much higher proportion of 72 per cent of trip details provided by secondary schools had a compulsory charge.

232. Voluntary contributions were requested in 80 per cent of cases in primary schools, compared with 70 per cent of cases for secondary school trips.

233. The respondents were asked about the consequences of pupils not being able to afford to contribute to a curriculum related school trip. In most cases, schools stated that the school funds covered the cost (83 per cent in both primary and secondary schools). Trips had to be cancelled in 11 per cent of secondary schools and 12 per cent in primary schools if parents could not afford them

234. Other actions mentioned by schools included the following:

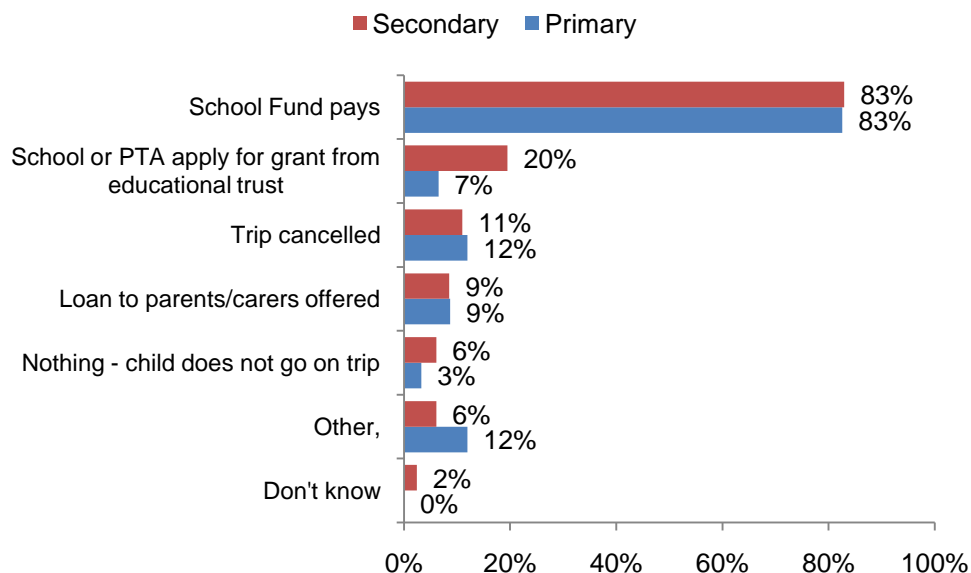
‘If majority do not pay, trip is cancelled if 1 or 2 struggle - school pays.’

‘Parents always pay because they are given time to save the money.’

‘Parents are given the chance to pay a small amount on a weekly basis to meet the cost.’

‘Payments by instalments offered.’

Figure 69 Consequences of pupils not being able to afford a curricular school trip (multiple response)



Base: All respondents (484)

235. Schools were asked if parents were provided with the option of meeting school staff regarding affordability issues in terms of school trips. In most

cases (83 per cent in secondary schools and 73 per cent in primary schools) information was included in a letter advising the parents/ carers of the trip. In around two fifths of cases (42 per cent in secondary schools and 45 per cent in primary schools) information was mentioned informally, for example at parents' evenings. Interestingly, respondents from the parents' survey indicated that in the main they were *not* offered an option to discuss with the school any financial difficulties in paying for a school trip. This suggests that while opportunities to raise concerns or access support may be available via the school, awareness of this is low.

Good Practice: School 5 (primary school)

This school described how it seeks to ensure that all pupils in Year 6 are able to participate on a residential trip at the end of the school year by making parents aware of the trip very early in the school year so that they can plan and budget for it well in advance. The school also promotes an open door policy whereby parents can discuss any financial difficulties that they are having with the head teacher so that appropriate payment schedules can be agreed. This has resulted in the school being able to extend the payment schedule after the trip has taken place in a small number of cases.

236. A possible explanation for the limited amount of information available is that providing financial support for these kinds of activities can place a significant demand on already constrained school funds. This was further borne out in discussions with schools where respondents advised that they generally dealt with family concerns about cost on a case-by-case basis rather than publicise support available since they were concerned about being inundated with requests for support which they would not be able to meet.

Good practice case study: School 3 (secondary school)

This school has clear mechanisms in place so that families that are in receipt of income support are informed about how they can receive support with school trips. The school ensures that it is clearly stated that contributions are voluntary in correspondence to families. The school however did advise that this is a problematic area as some trips can become unviable if a lot of parents request support and it is difficult to gain the right balance.

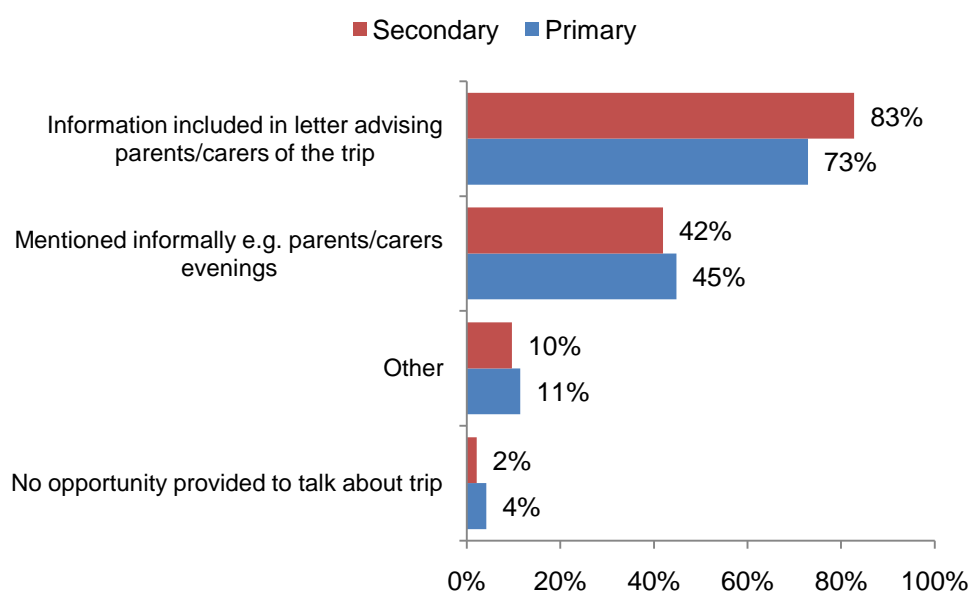
237. Other actions and interventions undertaken by schools included the following quotes:

‘A phone call if we believe parents are finding payments difficult.’

‘School prospectus.’

‘Trip notice given well in advance with the offer of paying weekly.’

Figure 70 Provision of information to parents regarding affordability issues



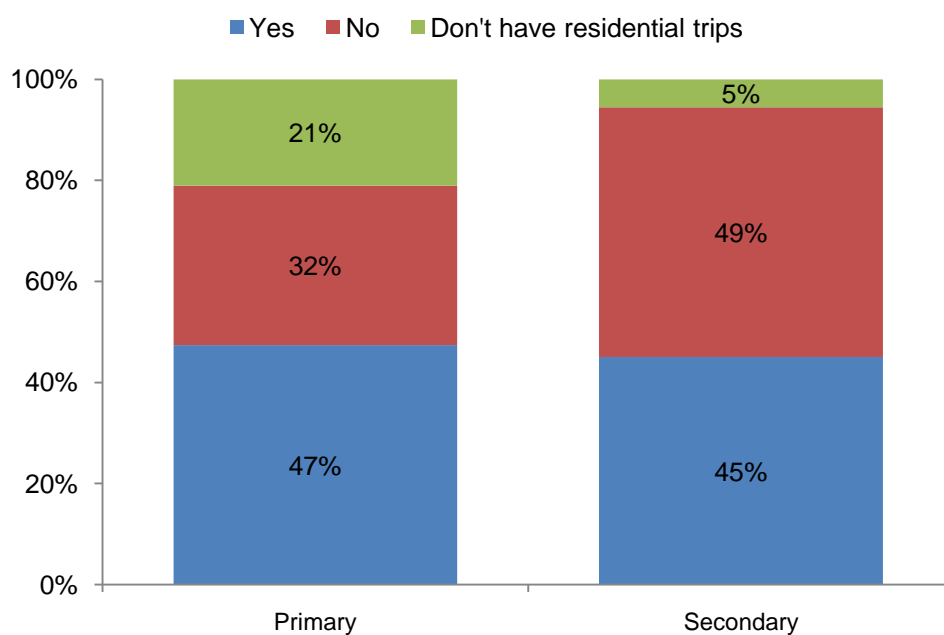
Base: All respondents (484)

238. Some pupils are entitled to the remission of charges made for the cost of board and lodging during residential school trips. Where the trip takes place wholly or mainly during school hours, pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain out of work benefits (including income support and income based Jobseeker’s Allowance – i.e. eligible for Free School Meals) are entitled to the remission of these charges. However, the cost of remission generally falls to the school.

239. Schools were asked if they publicise that parents/ carers who are eligible for free school meals are entitled to free board and lodgings on residential trips. Overall, around two fifths of schools publicised this (47 per cent of primary schools and 45 per cent of secondary schools). A higher proportion of

secondary school respondents (49 per cent) said that this facility was not publicised to parents/ carers when compared to the primary school group (32 per cent). (Twenty per cent of respondents from primary schools said that there were no residential trips.) According to evidence from the case study work, schools could be reluctant to publicise this because of concerns about high demand for remission which could place a considerable strain on limited school funds – particularly in schools where free school meal entitlement was high. Among families in the case studies, awareness of such support was not widespread – for example, one family had only found out that they could have got help (after not sending two of their children on a residential trip because of cost) from a parent in the playground.

Figure 71 Whether schools publicise residential trip free board and lodgings for families that are eligible for free school meals

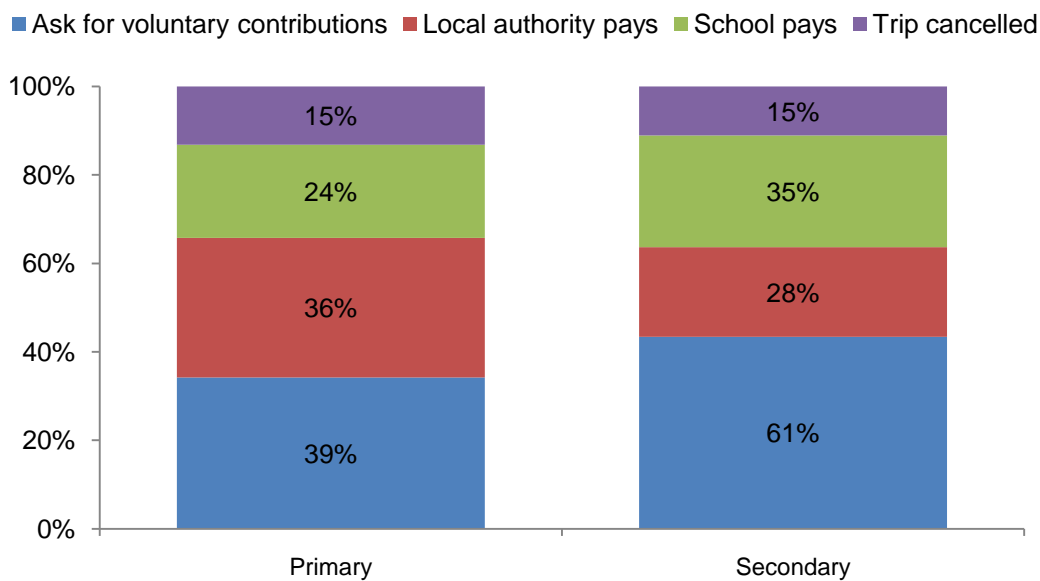


Base: All respondents (484)

240. In terms of covering the costs of those eligible for free board and lodgings 39 per cent of those at primary schools said that the costs are covered by requests for voluntary contributions, 36 per cent said that the local authority pays, 24 per cent said that the school pays and 15 per cent said that they have had to cancel trips. It is of note that that 34 per cent of primary schools did not provide an answer to this question.

241. The secondary school respondents said that in 61 per cent of cases the school asks for a voluntary contribution, 28 per cent said the local authority pays, 35 per cent said the school covers the cost and in 15 per cent of cases trips have had to be cancelled. Responses were not provided by 29 per cent of secondary schools to this question.

Figure 72 How schools cover costs of those eligible for free board and lodgings



Base: All respondents (484)

Other school costs and financial assistance

242. In terms of costs for swimming lessons 8 per cent of primary school respondents said that there was a compulsory charge to parents/ carers (likely to be related to the cost of transport to the swimming pool), 22 per cent stated that there was a voluntary contribution to parents/ carers and 60 per cent said that lessons are provided free of charge. In 11 per cent of cases no swimming lessons were provided by the school.

243. From a secondary school point of view, 2 per cent said that there was a compulsory charge, 4 per cent said that they asked for a voluntary contribution, 56 per cent stated that swimming lessons were provided free of charge and 39 per cent said that swimming lessons were not provided at all.

Good Practice: School 6 (Primary school)

This school has a high proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and has found that parents have very little income to support enrichment activities. The school has therefore sought to implement a range of activities, such as singing lessons and dance workshops that are available to all pupils in each year group. The school consults with pupils and parents about the types of activities that they would like to participate in and then sources providers who can deliver these activities to a whole class group. These involve careful curriculum and budget planning by the teaching staff, but have ensured inclusivity of pupils. Pupils recalled many of these activities during discussions stating how much they had enjoyed them.

The Views of Special Schools

244. This section provides a short overview of the responses from special schools.
245. The schools questionnaire was sent out to 44 special schools and responses were received from 10 – thus it should be noted that this small sample does not provide any statistical representativeness or robustness, but it does provide an indication of the provision in such schools.
246. Six of these schools said that pupils had a school uniform policy. In half of these cases it was optional, although three schools said that it was a requirement to wear the school jumper/top and this was generally from a specific supplier. However, there appeared to be some discretion with regard to actual logoed items, with most saying that it was optional. Three of the schools said that it was permissible to sew logos on to items. In the main, no action would be taken by the school if a pupil repeatedly came to school without any required item, although on occasion a letter might be sent home to a pupil's parents or carers. Almost all schools required items of sports/PE kit, mostly t-shirts and trainers – if pupils came to school without the required items the schools were generally able to loan items to the pupil. In general, other than school uniform/PE kit, no other items were required by pupils attending special schools.

247. In terms of affordability, three of the six schools said that some financial assistance was available although the remaining three respondents did not know – where schools were aware of assistance, this was publicised to parents. Two of the schools were able to offer second hand items if needed.
248. Seven of the ten schools offered free extra-curricular music lessons to pupils (although based on a small sample this is a much higher proportion than across primary and secondary schools as a whole).
249. In terms of paying for school trips, in almost all cases schools offered parents the opportunity to discuss any financial issues with parents, via the covering letter.
250. The respondents were asked if their school asks parents/carers to contribute to any type of school fund. In primary schools 15 per cent said yes they did ask parents to contribute to such a fund, compared to 11 per cent of secondary schools.
251. The schools were given the opportunity to provide further comments relating to the topics of discussion covered in the survey, indicating a range of attitudes and views. Verbatim comments collected include:

‘This is very emotive issue for our parents and children. Money is not available for the costs associated with buying a uniform.’

‘School uniform is affordable and should be compulsory. Parents should be expected to contribute to educational visits. When children are given free pens/pencils etc. they are very wasteful with them.’

‘Why is it that parents can afford to smoke and drink but they cannot afford to pay for any school activities?’

‘Certain parents will never pay for trips if they know there is a way of not doing so. As a school, we would never not take a child who had not paid but because our payment policy is well established this never happens.’

‘We have to maintain high standards and educational visits are encouraged, but we do not have adequate funding to subsidise visits out of school budget or school funds.’

'Cost of uniform is kept to minimum required for good lasting quality - uniform is valued by school. The school is conscious of being in the area of social deprivation and keeps costs and fundraising to a minimum.'

5 Overview and Recommendations

Overview

252. This research has provided an evidence base on school uniform policies and practices in Wales, as well as parents' and schools' views on the implementation of such policies and the extent to which they have an impact on families. This has been achieved through adopting a range of research approaches, including a survey of parents' views and experiences, a survey of schools' practices and policies and qualitative case studies with families and schools, as well as a brief review of existing evidence. The scope of the research was also informed by early stakeholder consultations with representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Child Poverty Expert Group.

School Uniform and PE/sports kit requirements

253. School uniform requirements were evident in virtually every school. Requirements tended to be for jumpers, fleeces/tops, skirt/trousers, shoes and to a lesser extent school bags and coats. For sports and PE kits, the large majority of parents said that this was also required by their child's school (and in almost all secondary schools). The main requirements were shorts, t-shirts, trainers and socks.
254. Having a school uniform in place was overwhelmingly reported as being a positive aspect of school life by all of the respondent groups consulted with for this study. School uniforms were viewed as a way to ensure that all pupils can be seen and treated as equals by staff and peers, whilst also providing pupils and schools with a cohesive identity and enhancing the sense of community.
255. However concerns were expressed among child poverty policy experts, parents and young people about schools requiring pupils to have uniforms that were expensive to purchase due to the requirement to have logoed items and distinctive colours and designs that could only be purchased from a single or restricted range of retailers.

256. Findings from the surveys of schools and parents indicate that many schools do require logoed items of uniform, with most schools having logoed jumpers, sweatshirts, fleeces and/or cardigans. Many schools stated that that they are flexible in allowing parents to sew logos and badges onto uniform items of the correct colour, but many parents advised that they have had to purchase items with the logo already sewn on, thus limiting their choice of retailers. This issue was borne out further in the case study aspect of the study, with primary schools adopting a more flexible approach to the need for logoed items compared with secondary schools.

Uniform affordability issues

257. Affordability of school uniforms was an issue raised across all respondent groups for this study. Schools generally reported that they were very mindful of ensuring that their school uniforms were affordable when they were developing their requirements. However, there appears to be a difference in perceptions of affordability between schools and families in some cases, with 40 per cent of families saying that they had experienced some level of financial difficulty in meeting the costs of school uniform requirements. Families experiencing financial difficulties reported that as a result certain items of uniform would not be bought (mainly the correct top). Additionally, families sought to purchase similar items to those required but at a lesser cost, for example non-logoed items.
258. Discussions with policy experts and families suggested that some schools were not always aware of the financial pressures that families experience, and this was particularly true of low income families who were in work. Such families can to some extent be less visible since they are not eligible for free school meals and thus the Welsh Assembly Government's school uniform grant. On the other hand, schools felt that they were generally able to identify where families were experiencing problems with affording school uniforms and sought to address these issues discreetly, for example, by providing pupils with spare items of clothing in some instances. Young people discussed how they were aware of this provision and had accessed it, but parents were less aware of this support. Schools in the qualitative work discussed how young

people can find it difficult to tell their parents that they need certain items of uniform or PE kit since they know their parents will not be able to afford the required items. Therefore, some schools have sought to limit the problems that arise from this through having a good supply of spare items of clothing or even full sets of PE kits so that borrowing or using these items is viewed as the norm rather than stigmatising individuals.

School trips

259. School trips were identified as being an important aspect of school life by schools and young people in enriching learning and providing opportunities to visit new places. Schools advised that they do prioritise affordability issues when planning trips, and sought to implement payment schedules that minimised the financial burden of residential trips. Although the majority of parents were happy with the amount of school trips they were asked to contribute to, around a quarter were not happy (and indeed around half of parents said that they did feel some pressure to send their child as they did not want them to be left out or feel excluded in any way).
260. There was a general lack of awareness among parents with regard to any financial support for paying for day or residential trips – despite the majority of schools indicating that parents were advised about this. In some cases, it is possible that schools are reluctant to promote the availability of financial support because of concerns about high levels of demand (and associated impact on school budgets).
261. Through the qualitative schools work it was evident that some schools are particularly adept at identifying children whose families may be experiencing hardship so cannot afford to go on school trips, and are able to offer support in a discrete way. However, evidence from the families themselves suggests that many may not access support when needed for reasons of both stigma and lack of information.

Additional costs

262. Families, young people and schools identified a range of additional costs that need to be met as part of children's schooling such as text books, materials and ingredients for food technology lessons, accessing ICT, and music lessons. Once again, families on lower incomes reported that these costs were often difficult to meet with some young people being unable to fully participate in certain activities.
263. Access to ICT at home was an issue for some families on lower incomes, with internet costs being particularly problematic. Young people discussed that they felt that teachers often assumed that everyone had easy access to the internet and frequently set homework and assignments requiring internet based research. Although schools advised that young people could access the internet at lunch times and after school, young people expressed a reluctance to do this since they felt this could make them stand out.
264. Ensuring that extra curricular and cultural activities are available to all pupils is also a challenge for schools with music lessons and participation in sports teams often entailing additional costs. Case study findings suggest that certain primary schools are seeking ways to provide all pupils with opportunities to participate by careful planning and use of funding. This appears to become more problematic in secondary schools with families being required to provide a greater financial input into extra activities. Young people and families discussed how it was difficult to raise issues and concerns about being able to participate in these activities since they did not wish to draw attention to themselves. Providing inclusive enrichment opportunities appears to be a challenge for schools, due to pressures on funding and additional support resources.

General

265. A persistent core of around 10 per cent of families appears to experience significant difficulties in terms of affordability for school uniforms and school trips. From the case study work, it appears as though some schools have found ways of managing these difficulties, through knowing their schools'

families and by providing support in a discrete non-stigmatising manner for example, waiving the cost for some items, or allowing the family to pay for trips in instalments. It is possible that some schools take a relatively low key approach to promoting the financial support they are able to offer, amid concerns being overwhelmed by demand for financial help (perhaps in some cases from families who may not particularly need it) and the associated pressure on school funds.

266. Evidence of financial difficulties in paying for school costs is, unsurprisingly, concentrated among lower income families - although this applies to both those families reliant on benefits as their main source of income as well as families in low paid work. These difficulties increase as the number of children increases. Particular financial difficulties were observed at the transition from primary to secondary school, with the requirement for a different full new uniform and sports kit. Uptake of the Welsh Assembly Government school uniform grant is almost universal for eligible families, which indicates that it is being publicised effectively. However, there is a significant minority of families on low incomes who do not qualify for this support but would clearly benefit from it.
267. Costs increase as children move through secondary schools, with a greater number of financial demands for school items (eg, sports kit, cooking ingredients) and school trips.
268. There is a sense of reluctance by families and young people to make teachers and schools aware of financial difficulties that they may be experience when confronted with costs for uniforms and activities. Young people are concerned about not standing out or appearing to be different to their peers so may be hesitant in seeking support or raising the issue at home. Additionally, schools are often relying on their knowledge of families along with skilful guesswork in identifying where there are problems, but this becomes more problematic in larger schools (particularly secondary schools). Additionally, proxy measures for low income families such as free school meals do not always identify families requiring support due to families not claiming this support or not being eligible due to parents being in low paid work.

Recommendations

269. Overall, there was overwhelming support for school uniform per se from parents, pupils and the schools themselves. However, a number of recommendations have emerged from the evidence, relating to both policy and practice.

Recommendations for policy – issues to be considered by the Welsh Assembly Government

- Review the provision of board and lodging costs (for residential trips) for those eligible for free school meals and who should meet this cost to avoid placing considerable strain on the finances of schools (particularly those schools that have a high concentration of potential eligibility).
- Continue to provide guidance for schools on developing and implementing a school uniform policy (including examples of good practice), whilst ensuring that schools are still able to develop their policies according to their school's specific requirements. If possible, alignment with primary school requirements could be taken into account by secondary schools, to see whether any core items (such as sports equipment or basic school uniform items) could continue to be used at secondary schools.
- Consider extending support for school uniform costs to those on low incomes (for example, in receipt of a high rate of tax credits) as currently they are ineligible for any financial support but can face significant difficulties in paying for required items.
- Ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government one off grant (£100 payable at Year 7) is not replacing any LEA provision.
- Ensure that LEA provision is consistently available across all LEAs.
- Consider the feasibility of capping the annual or individual cost of residential trips – perhaps in consultation with schools and parents.
- Ensure that there is appropriate policy guidance for schools in offering financial assistance to families to help them meet the costs of school

trips. Currently, it appears as though some parents are unaware of the availability of support and others feel reluctant to seek it out.

- Offer guidance for schools wishing to set up their own school uniform shop, which would enable them to deal directly with 'mail order' suppliers.
- Review outcomes from the One Wales Laptop pilot to assess whether this approach needs to be applied to secondary schools in addition to primary schools.

Recommendations for practice – issues to be considered by schools

- Consideration of access to school uniform suppliers – some families (particularly those without a car) could find it difficult to access suppliers. As noted above, one option may be for the school to host a school uniform shop, making access easier, keeping the cost down for parents and enabling any profits to be fed directly into school funds. It may also be possible for parents to access school uniform supplies online (assuming they have access to the internet).
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a direct relationship with a school uniform supplier who is able to supply the school directly (perhaps through mail order) – in some cases suppliers may be happy to provide a small proportion of income from orders placed by parents to go directly into a school fund.
- The requirement for compulsory logoed items needs to be carefully considered by schools when they are developing their uniform policies; and schools should endeavour to have an appropriate balance of having its own distinct identity, whilst also ensuring that uniform items are widely available and affordable. Schools should therefore review the need for logoed items, or limiting them to just one or two (reasonably priced) items of clothing.
- Schools should explore the feasibility of being able to sew badges or logos on to school items to enable parents to have the flexibility and choice to buy items from a range of suppliers which can then have the school logo added.

- Encourage greater ‘ownership ‘ of school uniform policy among pupils and parents – where there is input from these groups into school uniform policy there is likely to be a greater acceptance and hence compliance.
- Ensure that pupils on lower incomes do not feel marginalised in any way (for example, by sitting in a different part of the dining hall to eat packed lunches or by it being easy to identify who does not go on a school trip or residential break).
- Consider the use of a school uniform loan or donation scheme for those in extreme hardship.
- Schools need to communicate with all parents in advising them about the different types of uniform support that are available (loan of spare items, availability of second hand uniform and so on) since some families do not wish to draw attention to their own financial circumstances.
- Promote and encourage school second hand uniform shops.
- Consider setting up a resource room at schools where pupils can loan items in a non-stigmatising way (for example, by utilising the room for other activities such as quiet study).
- Consider the introduction of a staged payment scheme for school residential trips, enabling payments by instalments (extending after the school trip if needed).
- Staggering the timings of school trips or running them on several occasions so it is not readily apparent who has been unable to go because of affordability.
- To give due consideration to families who may have limited access to the internet/broadband at home, and ensure that the children are not disadvantaged in any way because of this.
- Schools should undertake ongoing consultation with young people (possibly through school councils) to ensure that there is awareness and understanding of the impacts of costs of uniform and other associated costs.

Recommendations for practice – issues to be considered by schools and voluntary sector organisations

- Encourage partnership working between schools and organisations working with families on low incomes so that schools can refer parents to these organisations for help and advice with budgeting and claim support that they are eligible for such as free school meals.
- Promote head teachers' attendance at training and awareness raising sessions run by organisations with expertise in child poverty so that they can learn about the issues that low income families encounter and good practice in minimising the costs of schooling.

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Annex A: Case study write-ups (families and schools)

Family 1

Family Profile

- Two adults (mother and father)
- Three children, one in secondary school (aged 11), two in primary school (10 and 6)
- One parent working, one self employed as a builder (has not really worked for a year due to lack of building work)
- No benefits claimed apart from tax credits

School uniform requirements

- Secondary
 - School jumper with logo (pupils need permission to remove jumper if they want to)
 - School coat with a logo. This is not compulsory, but pupils cannot wear any bright colours.
 - Proper sports trainers with adequate support (school recommends the exact brand, but this is only a suggestion and not compulsory)
 - School shoes
 - Some items are only available at one store (rugby shirt, girls PE top, skorts (shirts and skirt in one))
 - The only items that require a logo as compulsory are the blazer and the PE top. It is recommended that all the other items have a logo, but not essential.
 - Sports kit differs by gender – football boots/ rugby boots etc
- Primary
 - Skirts and trousers can be bought anywhere as long as they are the correct colour
 - Polo tops can be bought anywhere as can the jumper
 - Pupils can wear what they like for PE lessons
 - School jumper is logoed, but not compulsory

Purchasing school uniform

As a general note, this family would rather spend money on buying better quality uniform from outlets such as Next and Clarks shoes so the uniform lasts longer. It was felt that cheaper options from large supermarket chains result in false economy.

- Secondary
 - There is one shop where the logoed items are available from. There are other shops that can print the logo on a blank jumper, but it looks slightly different so the respondents do what they can to get the official one. Other than that, all uniform items can be bought from anywhere as long as it's the right colour.
- Primary
 - Items can be bought from anywhere although it is quite hard to find a match for the shade of green that is required for the school jumper/ cardigans as it is quite a specific shade of dark green. For this reason, the parent decided to opt for the logoed jumper rather than go through the difficulty of finding the correct shade of green.

School uniform is expensive. Yearly cost of at least £450 for the three children. The family find it difficult to meet these costs, but do their best to put the children first.

'If you've gotta do without something then you are willing to pay out for the kids to have things like shoes [for school] which are a priority.'

The parents said that they would rather do their best at the beginning of the year to pay for quality school uniform items so it lasts for the whole year. The respondents are careful budgeters and work out at the beginning of each year how much money they will have to spend on things.

The family mentioned that they do go without things in order to cover the uniform costs. This was said to be clothes for the parents, going out etc. They do try and save as well with the school uniform expenditure in mind so when new term does come around it is easier to meet the costs.

As the father has not worked for around a year, they anticipate that covering school uniform costs is going to be very hard this year.

The primary school used to have yellow polo tops, but then changed to white. This happened just before the start of a school year in order to give parents time over the summer to buy the new colour. The school sent letters home a few months in advance of the summer holidays and stated that the parents could change the colour of the polo top then if they so wished. The respondents were pleased with the amount of time they were given to buy the new colour.

Support for purchasing school uniform

Awareness/receipt of grants

The respondents had not heard of any support. It was felt that they have not been made aware of any support as none of their children have free school meals and both parents have an income (albeit a small one for the builder due to lack of work). They have never been offered support or even gone to seek it, but they have never really felt the need to. If they did need support they would be unsure about how to get it. Also there is a fear that if they were to receive support, the authorities would find a way to have it back through some kind of tax penalty.

‘I know people on the dole. They give it them in one hand [money] and take it out of the other.’

There is nothing mentioned regarding support on the information letter outlining school uniform. Free school meal entitlement is mentioned in the school newsletters, but nothing about uniform grants or support.

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

The parents liked the idea of school uniform as it would be very difficult to dress their children if they could wear what they wanted because of peer pressure. There was a general view that rules for uniform get stricter as children hit secondary school.

Apart from the jumpers (earlier comment relating to shade of green) the school uniform policy is fairly easy to adhere to.

Uniform policy needs to take into account cost and availability of items.

Overall views of school uniform – children

The children would rather wear their own clothes to school.

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

It was felt that primary schools were fairly laid back about the uniform and therefore nothing really happens if pupils are not in uniform. However, it was mentioned that it is very rare that pupils are out of uniform in the primary school. The secondary schools are more strict, although the respondents were not able to detail the disciplinary process resulting from non uniform.

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

Primary trip costs are manageable as these are kept quite local, meaning cost is relatively low. There are residential trips at the primary school, but even these are local and affordable (£100 for a three night stay). Furthermore, the school is quite flexible in situations of hardship and can subsidise low income families and offer the option of paying in instalments. Plenty of notice is given in advance of trips via letters and meetings in the case of residential trips.

There are more trips at the secondary school and these tend to be more expensive and farther afield. One was to Paris for three nights for £200 which was a coach journey. The respondents said that they do what it takes to make sure their children go on the trips as they do not want them to miss out on their education. Letters are sent home plenty of time in advance and meeting are held for parents to discuss trips. Crucially, however, the meetings are only available to parents who have given permission to the child to go on trips. Thus, it is possible that poorer parents would not give permission to the children to go on the trip because of financial constraint, and as a result they would not get to go to the meeting to discuss their hardship. Again, there is no mention of financial support available on the first letter.

'If they put on the letters about, um, advice towards help with the cost, then obviously the poorer children wouldn't miss out – but they don't put anything on the letters.'

Where applicable, voluntary contributions are made aware to the parents.

Specialist equipment

At the secondary school there is a requirement for full stationery equipment; pens, pencils, ruler, rubber, art equipment, scissors, glue sticks, calculator, colouring pencils, sketch pencils, drawing pencils etc. At primary school no stationery equipment is needed.

Schools social events

School discos, school proms and Christmas parties are fairly frequent at both schools, all consisting of small costs apart from the prom where a dress and shoes were required.

Guitar lessons at the primary school are £1.50 per lesson (at lunchtime). On top of this a guitar had to be purchased. Music lessons are optional however. Pupils can only attend lessons if they have their own instrument as there are no spares owned by the school. Two of the children play in a Celtic band out of school hours and this is free. Moreover the instruments are provided by the band should people not have them.

School fundraising/charity events

There are fundraising events such as pyjama day, mufti day, red nose day, harvest festival (a tin of food required) and so on which are usually £1 each time.

Impact of non-participation (trips, social events etc)

Children feel left out if they do not go on trips and the respondents do all they can to make sure their children can go on the trips. They still have to go to school if they are not going on trips and instead sit in a class room doing class work.

Recommendations

School uniform should be free of charge. If you start a new job you get your uniform provided free, and the respondents are not sure why this is different for school children.

Family 2

Family Profile

- Two adults (mother and father) with two children, both girls aged 15 and 13 in years 9 and 11
- Both adults currently without work and claiming benefits (income support)

School uniform requirements

- Jumper
- T-shirt/ blouse
- Tie
- Black shoes
- Black socks
- Everything has to have a logo except for trousers, socks and shoes
- Full PE kit with the top requiring a logo
 - PE shorts can be worn all year around, but PE trousers are available from the school if the pupils would rather wear them instead
- Boys need even more PE equipment – rugby socks, boots and so on. It is a lot more expensive for boys compared to girls

Purchasing school uniform

The cost of the PE top was said to be unreasonable. A plain blue top from Asda (or similar) would cost next to nothing, while the school logoed one costs £13-£14.

School uniform is available from a shop in town or purchase it from the school. The items are cheaper from the shop in town, but the logo is a slightly different colouring. If pupils wear the cheaper one they get '*picked on*' at school by their peers. The parents feel pressured into buying the uniform from the school for this reason. The price difference is around £4-£5. It is felt, however, that the items from the school are better quality.

It was mentioned that it is not really necessary to have logos on all items, in particular on a polo shirt which is worn under a jumper.

The cost of the PE top increases at certain sizes. This means larger children pay more than their smaller peers. At size 36 and larger the price increases by £2/£3.

One of the respondent's daughters is a size 34 leg, and as a result the parent could not find any trousers locally that would fit her. The parents had to travel to Cardiff (circa 30 minute journey) to source some trousers. Buying them off the Internet was an option, but the P&P costs dissuaded them, and it was more cost effective to travel to Cardiff.

Availability, cost, choice, strategies (eg, buying large sizes, hand-me-downs, limiting numbers bought)

There are times of the year where schools bulk order uniform, usually before the beginning of a school year. If parents choose to order uniform at this stage, they have to pay in full up front. This poses issues because often payment is required before the school uniform grant has come through due to the length of time it takes to process the claim. The school does not accept your order if you have not got the means to pay.

This family has to borrow money from family members to cover the cost of school uniform. The parents stated that they have to have the uniform so are prepared to borrow money to prevent their children from going without it. It was felt that uniform should be free for all families as education is compulsory.

It was also mentioned that it would be ideal to have two of every item (two jumpers, two shirts etc) as only being able to afford one of each places a considerable strain on the clothes washing procedures within the household.

T-shirts at Asda cost £2. At school they are £13 with a logo on them.

Support for purchasing school uniform

Awareness/receipt of grants

Forms were presented to parents regarding free school meal and school uniform support before their children started secondary school. When the daughters started year 7 the Welsh Assembly school uniform grant (£100) was given to them. However, this arrived a few months after starting school and the parents did not know they were going to get it.

The family has received the school uniform grant which amounted to £70 per child. It was felt that this is nowhere near enough to cover all of the uniform

costs. It costs £40 for a decent pair of shoes. The grant was applied for through the education office.

‘For £70 you are lucky to get one jumper, one t-shirt and maybe a pair of shorts and that’s it.’

The respondents stated that shoes are probably the biggest outlay, and buying cheap ones does not solve the problem as they have tried buying cheap ones in the past and they have not lasted.

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

It is felt that school uniform is a good idea because if the children had to wear their own clothes there would be a lot of competition.

One of the daughter’s heels broke on her shoe recently. The mother had to drive a few miles to get the shoe repaired on the day it happened so the shoe was available to wear the following day, otherwise the daughter would not have gone to school. This is because she would have been too ashamed to go to school wearing her trainers (she would have got picked on). Similarly, trainers for PE lessons need to be branded to avoid bullying.

Information regarding school uniform policy was contained in starter packs. The standards are also set out in the homework diaries, and the child and parent has got to sign to say that they will adhere to the rules.

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

The teachers are very strict with the uniform requirements. For example, pupils must wear black socks. If pupils attend school without uniform the teachers either inform the parents or send the pupil home immediately. Pupils are inspected first thing in the morning before assembly and if they are not uniform the teacher approaches them and either sends them home or contacts the parents – unless there is a letter from parents/ doctor giving a valid reason.

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

The eldest daughter is in year 11 and is in the top set in every subject. One of the school trips involves visiting a space shuttle in the USA which costs over

£2,000. Because the adults in the household are not working they could not afford it meaning the daughter was unable to go, but it is perceived by the respondent that most of the families of those children in the top set are relatively wealthy meaning that everyone else can go on the trip. The daughter of the respondent is the only person not going on the trip, and has to sit on her own in a class for two weeks. People are allowed to pay in instalments, but £200 a month is still not affordable. This trip is curricular for science and is meant to be key to the pupils' learning.

Additionally, there was another trip last year to Poland for Religious Education which cost £300 for a weekend. Again, the daughter could not go due to the cost.

There is no help whatsoever from the school in terms of school trip costs. The letters informing parents of trips contain nothing relating to help/advice for poorer parents and there are no mentions of voluntary contributions. This is the same even for trips within school hours which can often cost up to £20 – there is no mention of voluntary contributions or assistance from the school, the child either goes or not depending on payment. According to the respondents, the school have never offered to help out with the cost of trips.

There is a degree of resentment that children with behavioural problems get their trips paid for, yet their daughters are well-behaved and are performing well at school have to pay for theirs.

One day trip to a museum as part of history cost £30 – no voluntary contribution was offered.

Specialist equipment

It is a requirement to have full stationery including geometry sets, rubbers, pencils, calculators (the eldest needs a scientific calculator costing £13 because she is in the top maths set) and so on. The school are very strict on this. For example, during exams teachers will not provide equipment to pupils – the onus is on the pupil to provide everything.

GCSE science books (biology, chemistry and physics) had to be purchased at £3/£4 each. Parents were advised that they needed to get these books for their

child. Art books need to be paid for costing £1. If they do not pay the £1 they do not get an art book to work in.

Computer/access to internet

Homework often involves printing out documents. This takes up a lot of ink and the cartridges are £30 each. If the children mention in school that the printer isn't working and therefore are unable to complete their homework they are told that there are no excuses. There are facilities at school to do homework during lunchtime but they get called geeks if they do their homework at school, which will cause friction between friends. This also means that the household needs to have access to the Internet.

Schools social events

No discos or proms.

Transport

Bus fares are 30p a day, but if they lived in the street directly behind the one in which they live in they would have a free pass – they are just outside the catchment area by a matter of meters. Transport to school should be free to all.

Impact of non-participation (trips, social events etc)

Children are upset that they cannot go on trips because all of their friends tend to go on them.

Other issues

'What I find these days with schools is that everything comes at a cost. Everything is at a cost. If it's for the uniforms, how they get to school, school trips...it's always money all the time. Not a week goes by when they come home and one of them has got to have money for something. It doesn't seem to stop.'

'They are clever girls [the daughters], but don't hold them back because of costs.'

Family 3

Family Profile

- One female lone parent with two children (15 year old female and 14 year old male both at the same secondary school).
- The parent works in a care home part-time.
- Tax credits being claimed
- Live in social housing in an area of deprivation
- School is also in an area of deprivation

School uniform requirements

- Black trousers
- Black cardigan/ jumper
- White shirt
- Green and grey tie (red and grey for 6th form pupils)
- Black shoes
- No logos or badges on anything
- The jumper can have a logo on it if you choose to but this is not compulsory
 - Not many children as school wear the logoed jumper
- PE kit
 - White t-shirt (logoed - compulsory)
 - Black shorts (logoed - compulsory)
 - Green rugby top for boys (but only if they want to do rugby)
 - Green socks

Purchasing school uniform

The tie has to be bought from the school. All other items can be bought from anywhere. The white t-shirt, black shorts and the rugby top have to be bought from the school.

Pricing is reported to be reasonable. For the logoed PE t-shirts it costs about £4 and will last for a whole year. Socks are around £2 and ties cost £2.

‘They [school uniform and PE kit items] are not really expensive when you compare to the prices anywhere else.’

As the uniform is black and white and can be bought anywhere, availability is not really an issue. Affordability is a real issue at the beginning of each year because both children have to have completely new sets of uniform. It costs a total of

£200-£250 for them to go back to school in September uniform-wise. During the year other items are needed, for example if they grow out of their shoes.

If the children want to go away during school holidays or need anything new (not school related things) they have to wait until after September. The parent budgets in advance to make sure there is enough money for the uniform in September. As soon as they break up in July she starts to buy items if she can afford them to stagger the cost.

Support for purchasing school uniform

Availability, cost, choice, strategies (eg, buying large sizes, hand-me-downs, limiting numbers bought)

The parent is claiming family tax credits, which means that she is not entitled to free school uniform. The respondent mentioned that if income support is being claimed she could claim a grant at the beginning of September from the government, plus there is a grant available in April to buy items if things need replacing.

‘If child tax [family tax credits] or working tax is being claimed you are not entitled to any help at all.’

The parent found this out by going to the local education department to see if she was eligible for support. The education department carried out an assessment on the spot and decided she was not entitled to anything.

The school sent out letters to parents explaining about free school uniform. With it there was a form to fill out which needed to be taken to the education department. The education department would then decide whether to allocate free school uniform/ grants depending on what’s written on the form. The school do a good job of publicising these options to parents in the opinion of the parent.

The parent only works part-time, and there are reportedly many people in the area that do not work and are on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA). The parent feels that those on JSA have a similar disposable income to her, despite not working. This is because those on JSA do not pay accommodation costs, council tax and benefit from other things – such as school uniform grants. The respondent’s children are not entitled to free school meals, despite their hardship.

‘They [people on JSA] get everything free and we get no help at all.’

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

The parent thinks it is good to have all the children dressed the same so that there are no differences in clothing (for example, branded items) between affluent and less affluent families.

The school is thinking about changing the uniform at the moment - possibly bringing in polo shirts instead of collared shirts and are considering having different coloured polo tops for lower years (years 7 and 8), higher years (years 9-11) and sixth form. The new polo tops will require a logo. They will cost £7/£8. The respondent felt that this was not good value because the children will probably need more than one, and the colours will fade quickly as they are going to be grey and green, so will need replacing more frequently than if they were white shirts. There will be an additional cost between years 8 and 9 as well, because previously a white shirt *may* have been able to last throughout the whole of senior school. It is also more difficult to pass down items when there are different colours for different year groups. The polo shirts idea came from the school council, and a school vote was held. The polo shirts negate the requirement for a tie (hence why the polo tops were popular among the school pupils).

The school has sent out letters regarding the change, and pupils have been made aware through verbal consultation at school. The consultation went ahead a full 6 months ahead of the change (change to take place next September).

Overall views of school uniform – children

The children do not like wearing school uniform, but understand that it is a good idea. The colours were felt to be a little depressing (the uniform is black and white), but made the choice of clothing each day a little easier.

‘If I had to find an outfit every morning I know I would be late.’

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

If pupils forget their ties they have to wear one from a store of spares, but apparently these spares are not school ties, but old fashioned ones.

If other items of uniform are missing pupils tend to get sent home unless there is a note from home or a valid reason otherwise. Pupils get sent home with a view to coming back to school as soon as they have changed into correct uniform. If pupils cannot get home (either travel reasons or if parents are not in) they have to sit in a different room doing classwork with their head of year all day. The school are quite strict on this, and it is common for parent to be contacted or for pupils to be sent to the head's office to discuss non-compliance.

There is spare PE kit available, but if GCSE PE pupils forget their uniform they get an instant 1 hour detention after school as standard (although they can still borrow items from the spares).

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

There is one big trip every year. This year it was a skiing trip to France which costs over £700. This is without skiing kit and spending money, so the respondent estimated that the total cost was likely to be over £1,500. This was during the last week of term in December. The trip is not curricular. There are options to pay in instalments. Plenty of notice is given for this trip, they inform parents a year in advance, but the deposit had to be paid within a week of receiving the first letter. The first letter came out in November, which was very close to the expensive time of Christmas.

School trips during school time are quite infrequent and depends on the GCSE options (for example, GCSE drama students have quite a few trips to theatres and so forth). Parents have to pay for these day trips. There are no mentions of voluntary contributions - *you either pay and go or not pay and don't go*. In primary school, contributions were voluntary, but at the secondary school it was reported that there are no such mentions. There is no mention of financial help/support on the letter although the parent feels that the school would be happy to listen if a phonecall was made to the school office.

Sometimes there is only three or four days notice for day trips meaning there is not a lot of time to get the money together. There needs to be more notice given.

It is quite common for parents to not send their children to school on days of school trips if they cannot afford to send their children on them. The pupils should be in school, but the parents think that keeping their children home for the day goes some way to compensate them for missing out on the trip. Those staying in school do not do much work at school when everyone else is out so it makes sense to let children have the day off if they are missing out on a trip.

Specialist equipment

Calculators are required. Materials are required to make a dress is required for the daughter doing GCSE technology. If material is not bought for the dress project, the pupils will fail the exam. There is no financial help from the school. The dress is 60 per cent of the mark and the exam 40 per cent, so if the dress is not made 60 per cent of the marks are instantly gone. The cost of the material depends on what dress the pupils are making and the quality of material they decide to use. The cost of material ranges from £20-£50.

Two books needed to be bought for GCSE English. The exams are based on these two books, so they need to be bought in order to complete the exam. Again, there is reportedly no help from the school in the event of hardship. There are books in the school library, but there is high demand for them and they cannot be kept for very long.

It was mentioned that the school advises pupils to buy their own musical instruments if they take music as an option. This is not made clear before deciding on options.

Computer/access to internet

A lot of homework is done via the Internet so doing homework would be difficult without it.

Schools social events

There are parties at school where every pupil has to bring in one item of food.

Impact of non-participation (trips, social events etc)

The children seemed to be unfazed by the fact they were missing out on the ski trip.

Other issues

Food costs £3 a day per child – they tend to visit a local café, vans or kebab shop/chip shop to eat.

Recommendations

The Government needs to help out parents who are working but are not earning much.

‘Just because parents are working does not mean they can afford everything.’

Family 4

Family Profile

2 adults, 2 children (twins in first year of secondary school)

Both parents working

No benefits claimed (fairly well-off family)

School is based in fairly wealthy area with low levels of deprivation

School uniform requirements

Shirt, tie, jumper, hoody and trousers/skirt

The hoody and the PE top have to have a logo on them which is compulsory

Some pupils have the name on the back of their hoody/ PE top as well, but this is optional (the parents thought that this is a bit of a security flaw bearing in mind some of the 'dodgy characters' that can be found wandering around the area. The school *suggests* that the names go on these items.

There are rumours that blazers are going to be compulsory soon. A new head came in to post this year, and is apparently keen to see the pupils in blazers. This is only a rumour however, and no information has been sent home.

Boys need rugby tops and football boots etc

Purchasing school uniform

There is plenty of choice of where to buy the uniform from because it is black

The logoed items however need to be bought from one of two specialist suppliers which are small local stores. These items are expensive. The PE polo tops are £12 each, and at Asda they are three for £5. The prices are high because there is no competition. These two shops supply for all the local schools.

Uniform is available enough and affordable enough to the family, although the logoed items are too expensive. The school have made an effort to make items wisely available.

Yearly cost is about 150-200 pounds.

Support for purchasing school uniform

The family was not made aware of any support available in the event of hardship. It was felt that this didn't really apply to this family, but support may be made aware to poorer families. No second hand uniform available to buy.

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

Parents were positive overall regarding uniform as they think it is easier as they know what they need to wear everyday meaning there is no fuss early in the morning. As the daughters are twins it takes them ages to decide what to wear at the weekends. If they got to wear what they wanted to school it would take a very long time to get ready for school. Uniform is also good because it prevents there being any pressure in terms of fashion.

The parents were sent a letter at the start of term which outlined the requirements for the school uniform. The uniform requirements are also listed in the homework diaries. No letters have been sent home since the twins started in September.

From a teacher's perspective it is felt that school uniform requirements place a burden on teachers as it takes up a lot of their time to police it.

Overall views of school uniform – children

Children agreed that it is easier to just wake up and put on the same outfit every day. It was mentioned that the uniform is not as comfortable as regular clothing.

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

If a pupil arrives at school without correct uniform they get sent to the school office where they are given items from the stock of spares. This is the same for PE classes as well, although the spares are located in the PE department.

If a pupil is continually in non uniform a letter gets sent home.

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

Trips are always not very well organised. One senior school trip was advertised before the twins even left primary school. The parents received a letter regarding a netball trip costing £150 each (no information regarding support with payment

on it). The problem with this was that the twins did not know if they would get on to the netball team meaning it would have been a bit of a risk paying the money.

‘Before they even got into [secondary school] there were these barrage of demands for 100s of pounds for all these things...before they have even started!’

A further problem is that the twins do not get to play netball at school anymore because they did not pay the money to go on the trip. The twins feel that they are good enough to get on the team, but are marginalised because they did not pay for the trip. Similarly the pupils that have paid for the trip are in the netball team, even if they are not very good at the sport.

‘Loads of people go to netball and they say [the netball coaches] ‘Who’s going on the netball tour?’ Then loads of people put their hands up, and four of us [those not going on the tour] get sat on the side for an hour, and then we go on for two minutes and that’s the end.’

A school friend is one of eight from a poor family, and happens to be excellent at netball. She was picked for the team twice, but never actually played because she was not going on the tour.

‘It’s a lot of pressure, you know, you’ve got kids and they are like “oh I want to go on this thing”, and you feel a lot of guilt if you don’t let them go.’

Although the netball trip was extracurricular, the school does reward pupils for being involved in extracurricular activities meaning that those who cannot participate in things like this are indirectly penalised.

There was another trip which was educational which cost over £100. A deposit had to be paid in advance, although not everyone was guaranteed a place on the trip. The respondents said that it was too risky with twins to sign up, as it would have been awful if one had a place and the other didn’t. Also, they had only just started at school and didn’t know if they would be with their friends – it was very poorly organised.

Music lessons are not compulsory, but if pupils want to do it they have to pay £75 a year, regardless of the instrument. On top of this there are music exams which start off at £30 and get more expensive as the pupils progress.

Furthermore there is considerable pressure on parents to buy expensive music books. This is frustrating because the respondents feel that most of it can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet. The school recommends what shops to get these books from as well rather than saying that you can shop around. The school could probably buy a load in on bulk to make it cheaper for parents but they do not do this. There were nine people playing violin at primary school because it was free to learn, because of the cost at secondary school only three or four play.

The school does subsidise lessons for talented musicians in situations of hardship however.

There are no mentions relating to voluntary contributions in letters for school trip.

'You either go or you don't.'

Specialist equipment

They need full stationery items. It says in the school booklet that pupils are welcome to ask teachers if they do not have a particular item, but if they do ask teachers to borrow something the teacher gets frustrated and questions why the pupils has not got the said item(s).

The twins do each have a laptop, but this is not compulsory. However:

'I can't imagine how they would manage without computers. They are on them constantly doing their homework'.

There is a learning resource centre which pupils can access at lunchtimes if they need Internet access.

School meals are expensive - £20 a week each as it is a canteen style setup so rather than buying a cheap set meal, they buy individual items which costs more.

Family 5

Family Profile

- Husband and wife (main respondent) and six children:
 - Girl aged 7, at primary school
 - Boy aged 9, at primary school
 - Girl aged 11, at secondary school
 - Girl aged 13, at secondary school
 - Girl age 14, at secondary school
 - Girl age 16 (left school).
- Both parents are out of work – mother was a school special needs support worker but was made redundant almost a year ago due to lack of funding, father has long term health problems so not worked for many years.
- Family is in receipt of out of work benefits.

School uniform requirements

Children are at three different schools – all require school uniform (including PE kit). T-shirts and jumpers have to have the logo (including PE t-shirts). School fleeces are optional (has never bought them). Other items have to be grey or black but you can get them from Asda. The junior school changed from brown and blue to grey and blue a few years ago. One of the other schools wanted to introduce blazers but pupils voted against this (on line) so it was not implemented.

Purchasing school uniform

There are two main suppliers, with one specialist school outfitters being slightly more expensive. Cost is a big issue as such a large family – grants helped massively this year, but previously was working so wasn't eligible for help, which was difficult. Often has to borrow money from grandfather to pay for items, and saves over the year *a portion each week* so that can replace items during the summer holidays. Mum also buys larger sizes if possible (although the girls won't wear baggy clothes), and limits the number of items to one of everything except for tops.

A common problem is items of clothing going 'missing' (presumed stolen, as they were labelled). Respondent's son has 'lost' two tops already this year and mum had to borrow money from grandfather to replace it (each top cost £15).

Support for purchasing school uniform

Awareness/receipt of grants

School uniform grant of £100 is notified automatically if on benefits so the respondent just had to fill out the forms. The respondent got £29 per year for the children at secondary school, but this year got £158 for all 5 children - *it was a help but not really enough*. Uniform usually costs around £350. The respondent reported that next year will be difficult as she will have to get uniforms for 5 children but won't get the £100 grant.

Second hand uniform

As far as the respondent is aware, there is no second hand uniform shop. There is a lost property, and when respondents' son's jumper went 'missing' for a second time, they took one from lost property. One of the schools sells the uniform directly itself but it is the same price. What would be useful is for them to sell off the lost property – one school used to do this but does not any more.

Support from extended family

The respondent reported being very reliant on loans from her grandfather. Items of clothing were not usually handed down as they only have one item of each so they tend to wear out the items.

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

A few years ago the primary school was thinking of introducing blazers, a consultation took place online and there was an overwhelming lack of support so the idea was dropped. There has been no opportunity for consultation about school uniforms since then, either for the parents or for the children.

'It is very very expensive to get it, sometimes I have to tell the children to wear them for a second year as they are about £15 each. '

It was stated that people judge children if they are in their own clothes (which was seen as a negative thing), plus it is safer when children go on a school trip as the children can be easily identified.

Overall views of school uniform – children

All of the children spoken to (all girls) would prefer to wear their own clothes, although the older children recognised the value of uniform in terms of equity among children and better to be able to identify children on a school trip

‘If you got lost, they would know you’re at [xxx] school.’

Mention was also made of being able to identify who went to what school (both positives and negatives associated with this).

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

In the secondary school, if the child has not conformed to school uniform requirements they have to spend the day in a separate ‘quiet’ room.

‘If they’re not wearing the correct uniform they have to go to a quiet room and be segregated from the other children... even if you give them a note... it’s disgusting... that’s discrimination in itself... that’s quite bad.’

The parent did speak to one teacher about this, but did not really get anywhere
‘rules are rules’.

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

The schools do not generally advise parents that there is support for the cost of school trips. The respondent found out from other parents that she was entitled to support *after* two of her children did not go on trips because of the cost – the other two have subsequently gone on the trip because they received financial support via the school. The mother does feel pressure to send her children on the trips as she does not want them to miss out.

‘you’ve gotta send them... you don’t want them to miss out.’

Interestingly, one of the older girls indicated that she did not want to go on the residential trips as it was only the 'posh' children who went (ie, whose parents could afford it). Additional costs for residential trips can be significant, such as wellies, waterproof coats etc. Respondent has never been advised that they could receive help for the cost of day trips. The last trip was to Alton Towers and it was £28 – the respondent struggled to afford this, plus the additional spending money for them. If they really want to go, the children will look for support from other family members.

'I will do my best or ask my grandad to borrow the money.'

Specialist equipment

One of the main additional costs is for cookery (for two of the girls). The ingredients required are often not ones that they have in their store cupboard so have to be bought especially (and often are not used again). Cost per week for the two girls is estimated at £7, over an 8 week period. Also has to pay £5 a term for 'tech'.

Computer/access to internet

Family has no internet access at home because of the cost of it, which is a disadvantage for the children when doing homework. They use the library facilities, but have to queue and can only have access for an hour at a time. The mother feels that the children are at a disadvantage in their school work as they do not have home internet access (she had hoped Plaid Cymru would get in this year as they were offering computer access free to homes).

Schools social events

School proms and Record of Achievement nights are a considerable expense – for the oldest daughter who left school last year a special dress was required. Some parents spent £100s on dress, hair, makeup, jewellery etc.

School fundraising/charity events

Lots of charitable donations are required at school, and they often specific how much you should be donating. The respondent indicated that it would be better if you are on a low income to leave the amount flexible.

Transport

The family does have a car – if they did not, the cost of transporting the older children to secondary school (in the neighbouring town) would be problematic. A few months ago when their car broke down and they could not afford to fix it the children had to stay off school as they could not afford the bus fare.

Other issues

The respondent was keen to stress that she found it more difficult to manage the cost of schooling when she was in work (on a low income). Now she is in receipt of benefits they are entitled to help with the school uniform grant, support with cost of residential trips and free school meals. When she was working, the cost of school meals for the children was £235 a month. The children did not want to have sandwiches as those that had sandwiches had to sit in a different part of the dining hall so could not sit with their friends.

Recommendations

More support should be available for families that are on a low income, but working. It was harder to manage then than it is now as there is more help on benefits.

‘I hate being on benefits but if you’re working you’re not necessarily better off... ‘

They should also provide buses from one town to another (not just for rural areas) – the older girls all go to school in the next town as there’s no secondary school here. Respondent also feels that there should be free school meals for everyone.

Family 6

Family Profile

- Husband and wife and two children:
 - Girl aged 15, at secondary school
 - Boy aged 17, at FE College
- The father works full time.
- Family does not receive any benefits

School uniform requirements

Although only one child is still at school, the family were keen to discuss their experiences of sourcing school uniforms for both their children, (who went to different secondary schools), since their son experienced a number of problems with his school.

Their daughter is required to wear a uniform which consists of a school jumper with a logo, a polo shirt, trousers or a skirt. Although the school requires the jumper to have a logo it does allow pupils to purchase the jumper from any store so long as it is the right colour, and get the logo stitched on by a local supplier. These requirements were felt to be reasonable and flexible. The school requires a PE kit, but do not require specific colours or logos so this was felt to be very reasonable.

The son was required to wear a logoed jumper that was only available at the school, and grey trousers. The school was very strict in enforcing these requirements

Purchasing school uniform

All of the items required by the daughter could be bought at any store so long as they were in the right colours. This was felt to be the best way forward in allowing families to budget accordingly and buy items of the quality they wanted.

Sourcing their son's uniform had been very problematic as he was very tall for his age, and finding school trousers in the right colour had been quite a problem. These took a long time to find and were eventually located via the internet. The school showed little patience whilst the family tried to find these trousers.

Additionally, the school uniform was only available from the school shop at specific times. The jumper was found to be of a poor quality and did not represent value for money.

Support for purchasing school uniform

Awareness/receipt of grants

The family was not aware of any grants, but did not feel that they would be eligible for this support.

Second hand uniform

The family was not aware of any second hand uniform outlets or provision, but did not feel that they needed this support.

Support from extended family

The family advised that they continue to receive support for buying school uniforms from their grandparents. They discussed that although they receive a fairly good income, financially supporting two children through education could still be challenging especially as they were growing and frequently required new clothing.

Perceptions and experiences of school uniform policy

Overall views of school uniform – parents

The parents had mixed views about school uniforms advising that schools should be flexible in their requirements. They liked the fact that their daughter could buy a jumper from wherever she wanted, enabling them to choose items of good quality and meet her desire for some style, and have the option to get the logo sewn on.

They found their son's school's approach to uniform very restrictive and unfair, in that the jumper available was expensive and of a poor quality. Additionally, the school's inflexibility and lack of understanding about the problems they were experiencing in finding trousers in the right colour to fit their son was felt to be very disappointing. The school's approach was felt to have been insensitive, especially since it did not contact them and they only found out that there had been pressure placed on their son when they noticed that he was stressed about going to school. It was also felt that the school had been inconsistent in applying

its school uniform policy with regard to the colour of trousers and this was stated as being very unfair.

Overall views of school uniform – children

The children were neutral about the need for school uniform. They said that it was good at for ensuring that pupils were easily identified on school trips. They also discussed how it can be seen as being fair, but schools weren't always consistent with how they applied the rules so this made it unfair. Furthermore, the son discussed how everyone managed to get on in college whatever they were wearing and he couldn't see why this would be any different at school if children were given the choice of what to wear.

They felt that there should be flexibility available in allowing families to buy items of school uniform from wherever they wanted. The daughter discussed how school uniform should be brightened up and be made more stylish, whilst the son felt that schools needed to have a better understanding about the difficulties of finding school uniform if you were very tall for your age.

Non-compliance – experiences of/reasons for, outcomes and impacts

The daughter's school takes a light touch to enforcing school uniform with pupils being reminded to wear the correct items of clothing when they next come into school. In some cases pupils are given detention, or are unable to participate in lessons such as PE if they are not in the right uniform or kit. She also felt that the school did not always take a consistent approach to enforcing school uniform, with pupils who repeatedly broke the rules eventually being ignored and allowed to 'get away with it'.

The family still feel upset with their son's treatment at secondary school for wearing non-regulation coloured trousers whilst they sought to locate a pair of trousers in the right colour in a size that was hard to find. He was repeatedly brought to the head's office and admonished by several senior members of staff who, it was felt, would not listen to reason when advised about the problems he was experiencing in finding the right colour clothing. He was also threatened with exclusion. The fact that the school had not informed the parents about the problem was felt to have been an issue since they would have been able to

inform the school about the problems they were having and hopefully got the school to take a more even handed approach with their son.

Other costs related to schooling

School Trips

In general, the family felt that school trips were 'very expensive' and it was also felt that schools did not always provide enough notice about school trips so that they could be budgeted for. The children in this family did generally participate in day trips, but were not so interested in residential and overseas trips, since the costs were so high. Residential trips were felt to be far too expensive and the family discussed how they would rather use their money to fund family holidays abroad. The parents discussed how schools do go sometimes 'hard sell' school trips with Power Point presentations. There was also no indication that costs were voluntary in any correspondence about school trips.

'The children do keep asking for money for school trips'

'There is no notification that it is a voluntary contribution.'

Specialist equipment

One of the main additional costs encountered by this family was for cookery, which the daughter has taken as an option GCSE. The ingredients generally need to be bought for each lesson since they are quite specific, and cost around £5 - £8 per week. This was felt to be expensive at times since the food brought home was often inedible. The daughter advised that a class mate had to withdraw from this option subject due to the costs, since he was from a lone parent family with four children. The class felt this was unfair and were sad for their classmate. Overall, it was felt that more help should be provided for pupils studying cookery based courses.

Books for English also had to be bought, with pupils being advised that these were optional; however it was felt that the teachers made a fuss about those who did not have the books so you would feel pressurised to buy them.

'You feel awkward when you don't have the right books and you don't want others looking at you.'

Additionally, the children discussed how they like to have their own scientific calculators, since the schools only have enough for people to share. This was not felt to be ideal when doing maths, and that having up-to-date hi-tech calculators was desirable in order to do well.

'My neighbour sometimes shares with me and this slows me down.'

Computer/access to internet

The family has access to the internet, and feel lucky to have this at home plus computers and lap tops to access it. Both children discussed how they knew of classmates who did not have the internet at home, but this fact was not always taken into consideration by teachers who set a lot of homework tasks based on internet research. This was felt to put these classmates at a disadvantage with their learning and that teachers should take pupils' access to the internet into account when setting assignments.

'Teachers do always expect you to have access to the internet.'

School social events

School proms have not presented any cost issues as yet for this family.

School fundraising/charity events

Lots of charitable donations required, and they often specified how much you should be donating, it would be better if you are on a low income to leave the amount flexible.

Transport

Transport costs to and from school have not been an issue for this family.

Other issues

The children discussed how classmates were often aware of the financial circumstances of their peers, and felt that schools did not have a good understanding of the problems that some families might experience in financing school uniforms or specialist equipment.

Recommendations

Schools should be flexible with their school uniform requirements as finding the right colours and sizes can be problematic especially if children are very tall for their age. It was also felt that schools should be aware of the additional financial outgoings of families with more than one school aged child. The family were also concerned that schools needed to take into account that a lot of people are losing their jobs so cannot afford what they once used to.

School 1

Profile of school

This secondary school has around 720 pupils on roll (which includes a sixth form) with around 16 per cent claiming free school meals. The school draws pupils from a range of social background and a large proportion live in rural communities.

School uniform policy

School uniform requirements

The advised that it school has a uniform in place which consists of a polo shirt with an optional logo (95 per cent of pupils choose to wear the logo), a jumper or fleece and black trousers or skirt. The sixth form has a separate uniform.

The school reported that it does not allow trainers and stated that this was due to health and safety reasons, plus it discourages competitiveness about labels and brands

‘Trainers look untidy and encourage competition with different makes and so on’.

Pupils were generally happy with the school uniform and thought it was a good thing especially in giving the school a distinct identity with the logo. They also discussed how the uniform kept everyone equal since the standards were the same for all, and this could reduce bullying too. They felt that the uniform was comfortable to wear and that the polo shirt was better than a shirt and tie. However, they discussed how they would like the uniform to be brighter and more colourful.

The opportunity to individualise their uniform, possibly by adding a belt would be welcomed by pupils, who described feeling envious of sixth formers who had more flexibility with their uniform. They also discussed how they would like to wear tee-shirts under their polo shirts when the weather was very cold (this was especially true for the boys). The girls in the group recommended the option to wear skirts too, since these were felt to be smarter for special occasions such as a choir event.

Availability of school uniform

The school has established a relationship with a UK wide school uniform supplier. The items are available from the supplier online. The agreement with the supplier has led to the school receiving a proportion of the profits from the sales which the school directs to school funds. Arrangements have also been made for a local shop to stock items from the supplier, since the school governors wanted a local shop to benefit from the school's relationship with the supplier. Originally the supplier offered the local shop a 10 per cent discount on its stock on the arrangement that the shop provided the school with some of the profits. However this has not worked out in practice with the shop changing hands and sometimes struggling to sell some items of uniform that it has ordered. For example, the shop found that it was not selling the fleeces it had ordered, and it advised the school that it was experiencing cash flow problems. This resulted in the school buying the fleeces from the shop and selling them at cost to pupils. The school found this a very positive experience and is now considering taking on all sales within the school.

'It was relatively easy to administer and a pleasurable experience – we sold them at £10 whereas they were £16 in the shop. So we are now considering creating a shop in the school to supply all of the uniform. We take a third off the price.'

Pupils advised that the uniform was easily available, using the catalogue to buy items from the school, or from a shop in the town.

Changes to the school uniform

The school uniform was changed five years ago with the school being very keen to consult with pupils, parents, governors and staff during the changeover period. A range of considerations were outlined for all groups; the cost; health and safety, creating a school ethos, equality for pupils from different backgrounds, and paying attention to the Welsh Assembly Guidelines.

'We changed uniform the year the guidelines came out so we did follow them.'

Paying close attention to cultural issues and inclusion was also a prime concern of the school when it was developing its new school uniform policy, to ensure

that it encompassed the needs of all pupils in order to maximise their participation in school life.

‘You just try and be as inclusive as possible, and if [the pupils] see that you are trying they co-operate; they don’t want to be different – they have to be to a degree because that’s the nature of their culture and traditions, but they don’t want to stand out any more than they need to. So they are very willing to co-operate.’

The school advised that the uniform adopted was ‘more or less’ what the pupils had suggested. There was some debate about whether to retain the school tie, with many of the parents saying that they wanted to keep collars and ties, but staff did not want them any more and the pupils wanted something more comfortable.

‘Parents said how are they going to get used to wearing a tie, and who’s going to teach them how to wear a tie, if they don’t do so at school!’

It had been found that enforcing the wearing of ties was an area of tension between staff and pupils with it taking on a disproportionate level of importance. It was therefore decided to have polo shirts instead which pupils advised would be more comfortable and practical. The school has found that this change has improved staff-learner relationships.

‘Before when I saw the children in the morning I’d be saying ‘put your shirt in, do your tie properly’ and so on. Now I’m more likely to say ‘Morning Dafydd, how are you, what did you do at the weekend?’’

During the consultation process, pupils were asked what type of uniform they wanted. Unsurprisingly, they requested fashionable and branded items, which the school used as a debating point, requesting them to consider issues around cost, and fairness and inclusivity, with pupils deciding on a uniform that was felt to be fair.

The school also considered what adaptations were required for its Muslim faith pupils, and sought guidance from a local Muslim college. It was agreed that these pupils could come in their traditional dress but in school colours, and the

girls could wear black tracksuit trousers and a porous PE top, and their -hijab for PE.

There have been requests recently by girls wanting a new kit for the school sports team who want logoed tracksuits and kits like other schools. This is being reviewed at the moment, but the school feels that the cost may not be appropriate with the money required for this change being spent better elsewhere.

The pupils involved in the discussion had started the school after the introduction of the new school uniform, and advised that the school should still consult with pupils about their views of the school uniform. They advised that they have been discussing the possibility of having tracksuits, saying that they would help with team identity and that they would also keep them warmer in the winter. They also liked the idea of having their names on their kits, having seen pupils from other schools with this type of kit.

Implementing school uniform policy

The school reported that parents are advised about the school uniform before their children start at the school. The school has found that most parents are very supportive of school uniform, wanting their children to look tidy.

In terms of enforcing the uniform policy, the school advised that 95 per cent of pupils abide by the uniform requirements most of the time; and that those who do not follow these requirements do so to break the rules as opposed to not being able to afford the uniform. The school has found that enforcing the new school uniform has been more effective than the old one, and felt that ongoing dialogue between teachers and pupils aids this.

‘The conversation is different. The ethos is different, the attitude is different. But the children know they have to be tidy. One of the things I don’t do is to keep going to the parents about any issues; we have to trust the children to know what’s required.’

Interestingly, the school has established a ‘Hafan’ (literally a haven) within the school, which provides a range of support and resources to pupils including providing spare school uniform for those in need or who have forgotten a particular item. The Hafan has a stock of school shoes which pupils are also able

access. The school advised that pupils who have arrived at school not wearing the correct uniform are immediately sent to the Hafan to collect any items of uniform that they require.

If pupils have turned up in trainers with a note from home, advising that their shoes are being repaired the school reported that it accepts this. However, if there was no note or it was a reoccurring transgression she or he would be sent to Hafan collect shoes since the school has purchased a supply of shoes. For reoccurring offenders, the school has confiscated branded shirts for up to a week to assist in enforcing the school uniform requirements.

‘As soon as they are in the door they get sent to Hafan. If they are recurring offenders then we might keep the shirt for a week. We’d phone the parents, and in most cases they say ‘well I sent them off this morning in school uniform’

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school has implemented a range of support mechanisms for pupils and families to assist them with school uniform, with these being mainly based in the Hafan. The Hafan recycles school uniform items the school has enabled parents to access this to get what their children require. Additionally, pupils are able to drop into the Hafan, to get items when they need them. The school advised that the Hafan is used by all pupils so there is no stigma attached to going there.

‘Because Hafan works on so many levels there isn’t really an issue or any stigma involved in terms of children going there; some children keep their books there, or their timetables so they go and check what they are meant to be doing; others come to school without having breakfast and they can go to Hafan to get breakfast... there are children who go to Hafan who are from well off backgrounds – they’ve forgotten or lost their coat and need to borrow one; they’re cold and want to borrow a fleece and so on. So it takes away any stigma.’

Pupils in need have been able to borrow items from the Hafan for extended periods, and this was found to be particularly true of pupils borrowing shoes from the Hafan.

Those who are in need might ‘borrow’ the coat for a week... and then it just ‘goes’. ‘And we’re fine with that, we’re happy to help in that

regard...With shoes, in the main those who borrow shoes do so because they are from the poorer families.'

The school stated that it feels that it has an open door policy for families who are struggling with the uniform, and are open to dialogue with parents.

Pupils described using the Hafan to borrow pieces of PE kit and uniform and said that it was part and parcel of school life, finding the staff in the Hafan very helpful and approachable.

Other costs related to schooling

School trips

The school advised that it offers a lot of school trips and discussed how it was very difficult to ensure that all pupils can be included and participate fully. The school discussed how it has therefore sought to apply a range of approaches in attempting to make these trips as affordable as possible, whilst also acknowledging that in some instances pupils may miss out since support cannot be provided.

'If you pay for one you have to pay for them all; but you want them to go, you don't want someone missing out on something all of their friends are able to experience because they can't afford it, but we can't just write a blank cheque. So there are a lot of issues.'

Helping families who receive benefits was felt to be difficult because it could generate ill feeling, although this was felt to be minimal at this school. The school advised that it does not advertise the fact it can help some, since a lot of families would come forward. However, the school described how it seeks to identify pupils in need by asking in class who wants to go on a school trip in class and if someone doesn't come forward to put their name down, they are asked quietly afterwards, if there are any reasons why they cannot attend the trip.

'We ask 'I thought you wanted to go on that', and they might say, 'Well I do but things are a bit tight at home...', so we find out.'

Allowing pupils to pay for trips in instalments was identified as being one area of good practice in lightening the financial impact of residential trips. In some cases

the payment schedules have been altered and extended beyond the date of the trip to enable pupils to go on school trips. Being watchful of when pupils bring in their deposits for these trips was also felt to act as an alert to identifying when pupils might struggle to finance a trip.

The school was mindful of pupils who may come from homes where there may not be obvious financial difficulties. This was felt to be quite difficult to assess, but it was also felt that the school has a good level of awareness of pupils' circumstances, so help was targeted quite well.

Finding ways to keep the costs down as much as possible was identified as one way of trying to make trips affordable and accessible to a wide range of pupils. For example, travelling on a Tuesday or Wednesday reduced costs as does holding skiing trips in January out of school holiday time.

Additional funds to support the costs of school trips have been sourced from local businesses which were identified as being particularly supportive to the school, with businesses sponsoring kits and bags. Fund raising events have also been undertaken by school sports teams travelling overseas to help bring the costs down.

'We're always looking to bring costs down and we are extremely fortunate that the local community is very very supportive. The other nearest schools are 15 and 16 miles away so there is no competition for local support.'

The school also advised that the Hafan also organises trips twice a year using money from school funds to ensure that most pupils have the opportunity to participate in school trips, and make these part of a reward system, for example for good attendance, behaviour or achievement.

Pupils discussed that the school runs a lot of trips, and that there can be a lot going on at the same time. Most pupils reported that they were able to participate in school trips, but found it difficult to articulate the impact of costs on their families within a group setting, indicating some level of discomfort about the issue. Pupils advised that they were aware that some young people were unable

to participate in school trips, but they did not necessarily stand out since there were too many trips to keep track of who was and was not attending.

Overview and recommendations

- Having a robust but fair school uniform policy in place has been an essential part of the school identity and reflects its ethos
- The Welsh Assembly Government guidelines helped and informed the school in developing and implementing its own uniform policy
- It is important for schools to develop their own identity and school uniform policy
- Involving pupils, parents, governors and staff in the consultation process for the new uniform helped in ensuring that an appropriate and workable policy was implemented
- The Hafan approach works well for pupils and makes sure the focus has been on keeping them in school by providing items of uniform to replace missing or inappropriate items
- Pupils like the Hafan approach and use it as part of their school routine
- Pupils would welcome ongoing discussion about school uniform policy; and
- Supporting the costs of school trips has been an ongoing challenge, but school fund has supported some pupils who are in need.

School 2

Profile of school

This is a secondary school with approximately 850 pupils including over 200 in the school sixth form. The school draws pupils from a diverse range of social backgrounds with the catchment area encompassing a Communities First area alongside urban, rural and affluent areas. Around 15 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school is bilingual with around 65 per cent of pupils having Welsh as their first language.

School uniform policy

The school reported that all young people are required to wear a school uniform with separate school uniforms for sixth formers. Pupils in Years 7-11 are expected to wear a polo shirt and a sweatshirt which have the school logo sewn onto them. Separate badges are not available to sew onto these items which are supplied by two local outlets. The school has made arrangements with the suppliers to freeze the prices of the clothing, with only one cost increase in the past three years. Trousers, coats, socks and PE kits can be bought from any supplier so long as they adhere to the colours stipulated in the school uniform policy. All pupils are required to wear black shoes with trainers being prohibited for day-to-day wear.

Having logoed items of uniform was felt to be important in providing the school with its own identity which engenders a sense of belonging amongst pupils.

‘Every school is unique, having a badge is a statement, it lets the pupils be proud of where they are from.’

The requirements for PE kit were kept to a minimum to ensure affordability for all, so pupils are not required to have separate tops and shirts for different sporting activities. Additionally, logos are not required for the kit and the items can be purchased anywhere so long as they are the appropriate colours.

The school stated that it is very satisfied with the school uniform and sensed that parents are also very much in favour of it.

‘If it’s not broken it doesn’t need fixing. If my phone was constantly ringing and plethora of concerns about costs then I would have to

something about it...90 per cent of our parents would be distraught if we removed uniform.'

Pupils were generally very positive about having a school uniform reporting that it ensured that everyone as equal as possible and not competing with each other to have the most up-to-date styles and labels. However pupils did report that they found school uniform 'dull and boring'.

The tendency for a lot of young people to try and individualise their uniforms in some way and 'test' the rules was also discussed, with pupils having mixed views as to whether this was appropriate or not. Some felt that being able to express their individuality in some small way, for example wearing boots or jewellery was acceptable, whereas others stated that having a simple and easy to wear school uniform saved a lot of time in getting ready and that it was best to save your favourite clothing for outside school.

'Some people try and bend the rules wearing skinny jeans and Ugg boots'

'It doesn't matter if the uniform isn't stylish, it's just school.'

Most of the young people advised that they complied with school uniform requirements and liked the sense of identity given by the uniform since they were proud of their school and proud to be associated with it. Pupils also strongly stated that having a uniform limits anti social behaviour in schools such as bullying and stealing since it helps to ensure that everyone is equal.

When asked about what changes they would like to the school uniform, pupils discussed how they would like it to be more adaptable to different weather conditions, saying that it wasn't always suited to hot or cold days. Pupils also advised that they would also like more flexibility with footwear, stating that they would like to be able to wear trainers since they are more comfortable and practical than shoes.

Availability of school uniform

The school reported that it feels that there is a good level of choice and availability of school uniform outlets since it has linked with two suppliers for logoed items and other items can be bought from a range of retailers. The school

stated that it has negotiated good deals with the suppliers to ensure that the costs are affordable and are kept static as far as possible.

Pupils had mixed views about the availability of the uniform, reporting that one of the suppliers had erratic opening times that did not suit their requirements. However they were positive that there were two suppliers which ensured that there was some fairness in pricing. Pupils were also positive about the fact that they could buy non-logoed items from any shops and this helped their parents find the best prices and best fits for them, since they advised that getting the correct sizes of clothing could sometimes be difficult.

'If there was one shop supplying the uniform it could take advantage so it's good that we have two to choose to go to.'

Changes to the school uniform

The current school uniform was introduced five years ago when it was felt that the school uniform requirements needed updating, since many young people were not wearing their ties. This change coincided with a new head coming into the school. Most of the consultations were undertaken internally and involved input from pupils, utilising the school council and a consultation with sixth formers. The Welsh Assembly Government's guidelines were not in place at this time. However, the school felt that it followed a 'common sense' approach to developing the new uniform taking into account requirements for a practical wearable uniform whilst also allowing it to provide the school and its pupils with a recognisable identity to enhance the sense of community. For example the sixth formers wanted to have a blazer, but it was felt that this would not be appropriate or practical for pupils.

Pupils reported that they were generally happy with the school uniform and saw no real need to change anything apart from relaxation of some of the rules around trainers and jewellery. They advised that changing it would cause problems in parents being required to buy new items.

Implementing school uniform policy

The school described how it actively seeks to ensure that all pupils adhere to school uniform policy by continually noting where individual pupils are deviating from the uniform and alerting them to this straight away, advising them to dress

in the appropriate uniform for the next school. Reasons for non-compliance were sought and noted so that lack of uniform due to medical or financial circumstances could be noted. The school advised how ensuring that staff have a good level of understanding about individual family circumstances was part of the school's uniform enforcement approach to limit pupils from being continually being questioned why they do not have items of clothing. The school advised that staff briefings are used to advise teachers if individual pupils do not have an item of school uniform due to current financial circumstances. The school advised that it felt that this approach works well.

Most transgressions from school uniform policy have been where pupils have chosen to wear trainers rather than shoes. The school advised that staff are conscientious in enforcing this element of the policy since sturdy footwear is the safest and healthiest option for young people, with the school providing guidance based on health research to actively encourage pupils to wear shoes. However, it was an ongoing challenge to enforce this aspect of the policy since pupils like wearing trainers and some styles of footwear could be difficult to differentiate between trainers and shoes. The school advised that it has been considering buying a stock of black shoes for pupils to purchase to further encourage young people to wear shoes.

Pupils discussed that teachers were generally consistent in enforcing school uniform policy and were mostly fair. However, pupils reported that they found that teachers were stricter with younger year groups, (especially with pupils in Year 7) and that this was particularly true when enforcing the PE kit requirements. Pupils reported that those without full PE kits were offered spare kits from school, but these were generally old and sometimes unclean, this therefore acted as an incentive to ensure that they had the right kit. Pupils also reported that some of their peers who did not bring the correct kit had to sit out of lessons.

'The teachers are fairly strict with us about our uniforms.'

Pupils also reported that some of their peers constantly challenged the school uniform policy and would continually come into to school wearing a range of adaptations and non-uniform items. It was felt that although teachers constantly

reminded and reprimanded this group of pupils, they still carried on doing what they wanted and this was a source of irritation. Pupils advised that wearing trainers was the most frequent breach of school uniform policy.

‘Some people test the rules a lot and are always outside the deputy head’s office.’

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school advised that it provides additional support to families who need help with buying the full uniform in a number of ways including; providing items of second hand school uniform and in some instances new items where families are experiencing extreme financial hardship. Publicity about this support has been limited through formal channels (such as school newsletters and handbooks) with the school preferring to apply a discrete approach supporting families on an individual basis, since this is felt to avoid stigmatising any young people who are receiving support. Used items of uniform are cleaned and stored and given to pupils who need additional items of clothing. The school contacts parents prior to providing spare uniform asking them if they would be happy if the school provided some items of spare uniform.

‘We recycle items of uniform quietly so that young people can have more than one sweatshirt or polo shirt.’

‘We are sympathetic to the needs and situations of individual families.’

Young people discussed that the costs of uniforms could be difficult to meet, especially as new items were frequently required as they grow rapidly. Pupils reported that their parents did sometimes say that they were not aware of support available for families requiring additional support in buying school uniforms. Pupils also advised that the costs of school uniform increased greatly when they moved to secondary school. Pupils were unaware of any support or help available to help with buying school uniforms.

Additional costs of schooling

School trips

School trips were seen as being an intrinsic aspect of school life and activities, with the school offering a wide range of outings, ranging from local day trips to

overseas visits. School trips were felt to enrich the curriculum and learning experience for young people. However, it was acknowledged that making trips accessible and affordable to all pupils was not always practical, with this being particularly true for overseas visits.

The school reported that it does not advise parents that contributions for school trips are voluntary, since this would make some trips unviable. The school advised that it does seek to provide financial support to families where appropriate to ensure that all pupils have the chance to participate in school trips, with school funds being used to support pupils from lower income families. This support was not publicised and cases are dealt with on an individual basis. The school discussed that it needs to undertake a fine balancing act in identifying and providing support for pupils who need it due to family financial circumstances and ensuring that those who can afford to finance trips do so.

School trips were valued by pupils, with many saying that they enjoyed the opportunity to go outside school and see different things. Some older pupils questioned whether all trips ran by the school were worthwhile, reporting that they sometimes felt pressured into going by teachers. However, pupils did advise that the school was generally helpful in providing support to ensure that most pupils went on school visits. Pupils advised that young people can often feel left out if they have not participated in a school trip that many of their peers have, and that it can be awkward when discussing experiences that others have not been able to share in. Pupils did express that fairness should prevail, and questioned whether it was fair to provide funding for school trips to badly behaved peers as an incentive to raise their behaviour.

Year 11 Ball

The school has a ball for Year 11 pupils once they have completed their GCSEs the costs of attending the ball are covered by school arranging sponsorship deals with local companies. This was felt to ensure that the ball is accessible for all pupils.

Pupils in the sixth form advised that the ball was an enjoyable way to end Year 11 and marked the end of their hard work.

Overview and recommendations

- Having a school uniform enables the school to have an identity which pupils and staff can feel proud of
- Schools should be trusted to apply common sense when developing their school uniform policy
- Parents like school uniform and would not welcome the removal of it
- Involving pupils, and staff in the consultation process for a new uniform allowed all options to be considered
- Having a good awareness of pupils' personal circumstances enables the school to provide support with trips and school uniform without stigmatising young people in need
- Pupils value having a comfortable and practical school uniform and would welcome adaptations to ensure it can be adjusted to suit weather conditions
- Pupils would like some flexibility in personalising their uniform

School 3

Profile of school

This is a secondary school with approximately 1100 pupils (aged 11-16), with around 24 per cent claiming free school meals. The catchment area is one of high deprivation including Communities First areas, but draws pupils from a range of backgrounds, although the population is skewed more to the deprived end of the scale. The school was formed two years ago following the merger of two secondary schools.

School uniform policy

School uniform requirements

The school advised that all pupils are expected to wear school uniform, with the basic requirements consisting of a shirt and jumper, a school tie and trousers or skirt. The only variation of the uniform was for Year 11 pupils who become prefects, the school reported that these pupils are presented with a special tie as gift from the school. PE kits with a logoed top are also a standard requirement, along with shorts or jogging bottoms. The school advised that it provides a kit for pupils who are representing the school for sport.

It is interesting to note that some pupils in Years 10 and 11 were undertaking courses at a local college as part of their curriculum. Those undertaking a construction option they were required to buy specialist safety boots.

Most pupils were very positive about having a school uniform, especially since the school has a reputation in the area for having a very good school uniform, with other schools locally being envious of this uniform. The colour of the school uniform was felt to be a particularly positive aspect of the uniform since it helped to make pupils to stand out in public making them easily identified. Pupils thought that this was good for safety reasons too, since they could be easily identified when they are outside of school. However, pupils advised that they did not like their school ties since they were uncomfortable particularly during warmer months. They also advised that white shirts were not ideal because they can become see-through.

Pupils also discussed how school uniform can help to promote a notion of respect and manners amongst each other and interestingly reported how non-

uniform days tended to be accompanied with louder classes and poorer behaviour.

Having a school uniform was also identified as removing a certain amount of stress in getting ready for school by pupils since they did not have to decide what to wear each day. Uniforms were also felt to reduce peer pressure since there were expectations on non-uniform days for pupils to wear the 'right' brands of clothes with parents being 'pushed' to buy the right things.

Pupils also discussed that there are some young people in the school who do not adhere to school uniform policy, and as a consequence it ruins it for everyone who does abide by it. There was also a sense amongst a few pupils that they would be better off being allowed to wear their own clothes as they advised that this gave them more confidence and were less restricting.

Availability of school uniform

The school advised that logoed items could be purchased from one main supplier, a shop based near to the school. The school stated that it had negotiated favourable pricing terms with the supplier and said that it felt that the cost was as low as possible. Non-logoed items could be purchased at any retailer providing parents with a range of choices.

Prior to this, the school used to buy uniform from a supplier, and parents would come in to the school and buy them from the school during the summer holiday. The school reported that this process took up a lot of space and staff time. During this time, another supplier was selling the uniform without the school's sanction. This led to discussions between the school and the supplier and, an agreement was made for the school to hand over the supply of the uniform products to this supplier. It was also felt that the retailer had the capacity (both physical space and human resource) to handle the process efficiently. It was felt that this agreement would benefit parents as the cost could be kept low. The school advised that although it would miss out on a revenue stream, the school would benefit in different ways by less pupils being without uniform as it was now cheaper to buy. The new arrangement was also felt to provide better availability to parents since the shop is open all year round, rather than just in the summer holidays, plus there was now an option to can order items online.

Pupils reported that they felt that the price of the school uniform has increased since the school stopped selling the uniform. Additionally, pupils advised that the shop is difficult to access for a lot of their families so this has meant further costs in the form of time and travel for some people. Although pupils acknowledged that the uniform could be bought over the telephone or online, they also discussed how some families did not have access to the internet. The opportunity to try on uniform before buying it was also felt to be important, so not being able to access it locally made this difficult to do.

Changes to the school uniform

The current school uniform was introduced two years ago with the merging of the two schools. The school described how a lot of consideration went into the development of this with particular attention being paid to the costs of the uniform.

‘When the uniform was created for the new school, a lot of consideration went into the cost of the uniform. This was mainly because a lot of parents already had children in one of the two schools that was due to be merged.’

All items requiring a logo were provided to all students in Years 8-11 (Year 7 pupils had to buy theirs as they would have had to buy a new set of uniform anyway). This was quite an intensive process, since all pupils had to be measured, and all eligible pupils were given a sweatshirt, tie and PE kit polo top. This was funded by the LEA since they were the main driving force behind the merging of the schools.

The school discussed how it has ongoing consultations about adjustments to the school uniform both with pupils and their parents. The school council has recently been involved in discussions about the length of school skirts, and the school regularly sends letters to parents reminding them about requirements. This was particularly during poor weather conditions, with pupils deviating from the policy wearing; jeans, trainers and Ugg style boots.

Pupils discussed how the school council is used to explore their views relating to important school decisions. Uniform has been a common theme and the council has been pressing the head teacher to allow the pupils to wear a summer school

uniform. This would involve the removal of the tie but as yet the head teacher has not granted permission for this. The head teacher has felt that if ties were not compulsory for summer, it would be hard to reinforce it for the rest of the year. A few members of the school council feel that blazers look professional, but the head teacher does not want to pursue this as an option given the increased cost.

Implementing school uniform policy

The school described a number of processes that it has in place for ensuring that pupils wear their school uniform. Form tutors monitor uniform daily, and when a learner comes into school without correct uniform they are spoken to and asked for the reasons for not wearing their uniform. The school advised that when form tutors assess that there is a genuine reason for non-compliance, some flexibility is given, and pupils are requested to do their best to correct it for the following day. In the meantime the pupils are asked to wear items from a store of spares (the spare stock is washed daily by the onsite support staff to ensure that it is wearable and acceptable for pupils).

When a form tutor has found that a learner has provided a poor reason for non compliance, basic disciplinary procedures would be followed; that is the tutor contacts the parent/ carer to discuss the problem. The parent/carer would then be given an opportunity to correct the problem, and flexibility is given if there are valid reasons.

When pupils frequently break uniform rules, the school advised that they can be isolated – either with their form tutor or progress manager. This only happens when the learner turns up wearing few or none of the required items.

The school felt that it does its best to deal with situations like this fairly and sympathetically, without making much of an issue. In certain instances the head teacher would give pupils a note excusing them from uniform which they can show to other teachers.

Additionally the school advised that it contacts parents if serious uniform lapses arise.

‘The school is continually in dialogue with parents if serious uniform issues occur.’

However, it was felt that most pupils respond positively and issues are resolved straight away.

Pupils discussed how the school strictly enforces the wearing of school uniform and that this is applied fairly in most cases. They discussed how wearing their school uniform ensured that they did not stand out for the wrong reasons.

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school advised that some pupils in genuine need have been bought items of uniform by the school itself. This has been done sensitively without any other pupils knowing and it has happened infrequently. For example, a pair of shoes was bought for a pupil who was in genuine need recently, and support has been provided by the school to help pupils buy safety boots for their construction course.

‘A lot of the time families do not like asking, but we know the youngsters well enough to think that there is going to be a problem [financially] to access the course if they did not have this equipment [the boots] then we can sort it out.’

Transition and induction evenings have been used to inform families about the financial support that is available to them through the Assembly uniform grant and other sources. The school has used these events to discuss any queries or concerns that families have with the costs of schooling and the school has also produced a welcome pack that contains all this information.

Overall, the school felt that the uniform was kept as cost effective as possible since only three items are required from a specialist outfit, and second hand uniform was also available. However, the school also advised that there were some issues around second hand uniform with some cultures and religions not permitting the use second hand uniform.

Other costs related to schooling

School trips

The school advised that if families are in receipt of income support, they do not have to pay for school trips since they can apply to the LA for support. This

support has been communicated to parents through letters that the school sends out.

'If parents approach the school and state that they cannot afford a particular trip, the school does its best to offer a partial contribution or cover the whole cost if possible. It is difficult though, as the school does not always have enough funds to cover these costs.'

The school advised how it is careful about raising the issue of voluntary contributions in letters because it could 'open the floodgates' meaning hardly any parent would come forward with payment. The school does not hide the fact that help is available to parents, but thinks that it could be an area for improvement.

At the end of the year the school discussed how it runs activity trips which are not educational (for example trips to theme parks). The school has been flexible with respect to the cost of these trips making sure enough revenue is collected to cover the costs of the small number of pupils who cannot afford them.

Pupils advised that their parents need to see if they can afford the trip in the first instance before giving them permission to go. Pupils discussed how young people who cannot go on trips miss out on enjoyable experiences and possibly their learning, and that these young people can feel left out because they have to sit in a classroom working when everyone else is out on the trip.

Pupils discussed that their parents do find that some trips are quite expensive in terms of cost. These have included trips to Germany for language lessons and a trip to the USA to go skiing (this was £600). Pupils also discussed how some trips were not necessarily educational but are said to 'assist in learning' meaning that parents have to make a difficult decision whether it is worth paying for the trip to aid their learning.

Other costs

The school advised that free places are made available to pupils for the school prom as a reward for outstanding behaviour, thus limiting the impact of costs on parents.

The school discussed how it has a strong tradition of choir and music and this is supported by music lessons which are provided by the LEA meaning pupils do not have to pay for these.

The school has also sought ways to ensure that all pupils can participate in food technology, and has introduced a system whereby a contribution is made at the start of each term for the subject. Pupils are requested to pay a contribution and the school provides the ingredients. This has meant that everyone can take part and the revenue generated by those that do pay has been able to cover the costs of the stock.

‘There are some publications that pupils are encouraged to buy if taking, in particular, geography and history. This is on a voluntary basis and are not disadvantaged if they do not buy them.’

The school has arranged for pupils to buy these from the school at a reduced cost, and also ensures that there are copies available from the school library so that pupils who cannot afford them are not disadvantaged.

‘The copies are cheaper if bought in the school rather than buying from the high street.’

Overview and recommendations

- Having a school uniform policy in place has been an essential part of establishing the school’s identity
- It is important for schools to develop their own identity and school uniform policy
- Involving pupils in an ongoing consultation process about school uniform has allowed for open discussion about issues that need to be addressed
- School fund can be used to support pupils by providing free places for the school prom
- Supporting the costs of school trips has been an ongoing challenge, but ensuring that parents who are in receipt of benefits are aware of LA support helps to alleviate some of the financial burden
- Pupils would welcome being able to adapt their uniform in the summer to make it more cooler and comfortable to wear; and
- Pupils would like to be able to buy their uniform from a supplier that is closer to the school.

School 4

Profile of school

This is a community primary school with approximately 150 pupils. The school's catchment area is one of high social deprivation (within the top 10 per cent of Welsh Index of Deprivation) and is based in an urban Communities First area. Around 36 per cent of pupils claim free school meals, with more being eligible but not claiming.

School uniform policy

School uniform requirements

The school was formed over eighteen months ago through the merging of an infant and junior school. Each of these schools had a separate school uniform, however, not all pupils wore the uniform and there was limited enforcement of wearing the uniform. The school was therefore undergoing a transition process and currently there was no school uniform in place, with pupils being guided to dress sensibly and practically for school. Consequently, no formal PE kit was in place either.

The school advised that it intends to implement a school uniform policy in the coming months to coincide with a move to a newly built school. Consultations were in progress with pupils and teachers to develop a school uniform that would be appropriate in enabling the pupils to learn and play safely and happily. The school advised that it wishes to ensure that pupils' views and ideas are heard and debated in selecting a new school uniform to allow them to have a sense of ownership. This was felt to be a challenging task in enabling pupils to be part of the decision making process whilst also getting them to consider a range of factors when choosing the uniform, such as practicality, cost, and warmth.

The head teacher attended a training session by the Child Poverty Group about how to minimise the costs of schooling, which was found to be very helpful in informing heads about the financial circumstances of families on low incomes. It was also felt to be useful in providing advice about minimising the cost of school uniforms on families, and providing guidance on issues to consider when developing school uniform policy, as well as other issues around school costs.

‘The Child Poverty Group workshop was a real eye opener I hadn’t thought about a lot of the issues until then.’

School uniform policy was not considered to be an issue requiring significant priority within the school, since it was felt that there were many more pressing matters to focus time and attention within the school rather than checking to see if pupils were wearing the correct coloured items of clothing. It was felt that pupils already have a strong sense of belonging and affinity to their school and having a school uniform would not significantly alter this, nor more importantly, would it have a positive impact on their learning. The role of school uniform to act as an equaliser was also questioned, in that it was felt that pupils from low income families would always stand out to some degree due to inability to purchase additional items of clothing, so wear and tear would be more visible for these pupils.

‘Each school is totally unique with different issues and learner needs that need to be considered.’

The quality and comfort of most standard school uniforms were also questioned, with the school feeling that poor quality synthetic materials were often used, which do not lend themselves well to physically active young pupils.

Pupils discussed how they were currently taking part in consultations for a new school uniform. They provided a range of ideas about what that they felt would be important features of a new school uniform. They liked the idea of having bright colours for their school uniform and also thought that having their names on a top would be helpful to get to know who each other was. However they also considered that having names on their tops could possibly make it more expensive to buy. Warmth and comfort were felt to be the most important qualities of a new uniform so that they could run around in the play ground, whilst also being at ease in the classroom.

Availability of school uniform

The school advised once the uniform requirements have been decided, it will seek to ensure that these are available from a number of outlets including supermarkets. A supplier has been working with the school to develop some

ideas of what a new uniform could look like, but affordability and availability will be central to the final requirements.

‘We need to consider where parents can buy school uniform as it isn’t a mobile community. We also do not want to have one supplier having a monopoly.’

Changes to the school uniform

As described above, the school was in the process of developing a new school uniform. Consultation across pupils, parents, school staff and governors was felt to be essential. As an example, the school advised that a box of logoed rain coats for one of the previous schools on the site were still in the school office because they had been ordered without consultation, and subsequently no interest or need had been demonstrated by pupils or their parents.

The school advised that developing a new school uniform is a significant challenge, and that it will be essential to get the right balance of having a uniform that meets pupils’ recommendations which also provides value for money.

‘It is an absolute minefield, we have so much to consider. The children want all sorts of colours and badges. We have to explore the options with them.’

Both pupils and the school discussed how hooded jacket tops may be included in the uniform since they provide warmth and are practical. Pupils described how they like wearing ‘hoodies’ as they look right and keep them warm, with many wearing them to school already.

Implementing school uniform policy

The school described how it intends for the new uniform to require minimum enforcement. It was felt that there were many other aspects of schooling and education that deserve time and attention over and above monitoring whether pupils are wearing the right coloured tops or shoes.

Pupils also discussed how they were generally happy wearing what they liked to school, but welcomed the chance to have a school uniform. They described how they would like the uniform to be fairly flexible and did not wish for their teachers to be too strict in telling them what to wear as they did not want it to feel like secondary school.

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school was reviewing how it would provide support to families who need assistance with buying school uniform items once the new uniform comes into place. The school advised that it intends to minimise the financial impact on families but envisages having a supply of second hand uniform available for pupils who require items of uniform.

Additional costs of schooling

School trips

The school advised that planning and organising school trips that require minimal financial support from parents was something that they played particular attention to ensure that pupils were able to gain the benefits of off site learning. School trips were felt to enrich the curriculum and provide the children with opportunities to see and experience places and activities that they would not be able to through their home lives.

Where possible, the school advised that it funds all trips through utilising funding and grants that the school has for particular programmes and activities, such as health related funding being used to support trips to leisure centres. Where trips do require parental support, the school reported that it does not advise parents that contributions for school trips are voluntary, since this would make some trips unviable. However, the school advised that it does seek to provide financial support to families where appropriate to ensure that all pupils have the chance to participate in school trips, with school funds being used to support pupils from lower income families. This support was not publicised and cases have been dealt with on an individual basis.

‘We ask for deposits for school trips, when this doesn’t come in we guess there’s a problem and try and find out what it is and arrange help.’

‘We would never stop a kid from going on a trip if they couldn’t afford it.’

School trips were valued by pupils, with many saying that they enjoyed the opportunity to go outside school and see different things. Pupils had limited

awareness of the costs of school trips, and advised that they were able to participate in all of the trips that the school arranged.

School equipment

The school reported that it provides all stationery items required by pupils since this ensures that they are all able to participate fully in lessons and saves time in sorting out who needs to be provided with items. It was felt that the pupils have respect for their sets of stationery and that most pupils look after these items well.

‘Everyone has a set of pens and pencils in a pot. No one can say ‘I haven’t got this or that.’ All equipment to learn is there.’

Access to the internet

Provision has been made for pupils who do not have access to the internet at home to use school facilities at break times and after school. The school advised that it will also be participating in the ‘One Laptop Wales’ initiative.

Overview and recommendations

- Involving pupils in deciding what their school uniform policy is essential in allowing them to have ownership of the final uniform and it enables them to consider what factors are important to consider when deciding what types of clothing to have
- Attending a training session with Children in Wales has proved to be valuable in raising awareness about how the costs of schooling can impact on low income families
- Ensuring that pupils feel warm, comfortable and happy in their school clothes is essential in engendering a good working environment
- School uniform should require minimal enforcement and not distract from teaching and learning
- Using school funding to support a range of school trips that are directly linked to the curriculum helps in minimising the costs for trips
- Advice and guidance should be available to show where schools can get extra funding to support children to go on trips
- Pupils value being included in the consultations about their new school uniform
- A practical and warm uniform that is also colourful are pupils’ priorities

School 5

Profile of school

The primary school has approximately 140 pupils. The school's catchment area draws pupils from a village community who are from a range of social backgrounds, but most come from an area that is relatively economically disadvantaged being in 25 per cent most deprived wards in Wales. However, the school is not within a Communities First area. Around 16 per cent of pupils claim for free school meals, but it was estimated that around 20 per cent of pupils could be eligible for this provision. Anecdotally, it was advised the village population has a strong sense of pride and it was felt that there can be reluctance amongst families to claim for benefits for which they are eligible.

School uniform policy

School uniform requirements

The school advised that it has a school uniform in place that comprises of a sweat shirt or hooded jacket in the school colours, which can be logoed but pupils have the option of buying non-logoed items along with a polo shirt and trousers or skirts. Pupils also have tee-shirts in their house colours which they were required to wear for special school events such as the Eisteddfod.

Having logoed items of uniform was felt to be a good way of providing the school and pupils to have a community identity, and the colours within the logo were also felt to help make pupils easily identified when they were on trips outside school. However, the school was flexible in allowing pupils to wear items of clothing without the logo.

'Items don't have to have the school logo as we are very aware that they can be much cheaper elsewhere without them.'

The requirements for PE kit were kept to a minimum to ensure affordability for all, with basic shorts and tee-shirts in school colours being from any store being required. Pupils can also wear their house tee-shirt for PE.

The school discussed that it is very satisfied with the school uniform in place, and advised that pupils also feel happy with it since most of them wear it.

Informal feedback from parents also suggested that there was a good level of acceptance and compliance with the school uniform.

‘We encourage rather than force school uniform, we want the children in school and to be happy.’

Pupils were generally very positive about having a school uniform reporting that they liked their school and being identified with it especially when they were out on school trips. Girls discussed that they liked the flexibility to wear either skirts or trousers, preferring trousers because they were warmer and better for physical activities and running around the playground. They also advised that they liked being able to wear trainers as they were the most comfortable footwear for school. Pupils also reported that they liked the hooded tops as these were very good at keeping them warm as they could cover their heads with the hoods when outside.

‘Our uniform is very comfy we like it a lot.’

‘We can do more things in a uniform if it is comfortable, we can play better and move about.’

Availability of school uniform

The school has made arrangements with a local manufacturer and supplier to provide uniform at an affordable price. A small proportion of the profits from the sales of the uniform was given back to the school, which contribute to school funds. The school discussed how these arrangements have generally worked well, with the school being able to provide feedback to the supplier about the quality of the products. For example, parents complained about the cuffs of sweatshirts fraying so resulting in these were replaced with more robust products. Other items of the school uniform could be purchased from supermarkets. The supplier was felt to be generally responsive to feedback and was improving its flow of products into the school following some slow and erratic supplies in the early stages of the arrangement. This was a relatively recent arrangement and the school advised that the costs of the uniform were less than those of the previous supplier.

'We do everything we can to keep the costs of the school uniform affordable.'

Pupils advised that they felt that their parents were satisfied with the availability and cost of the school uniform.

Changes to the school uniform

The current school uniform was introduced around two years ago, whereby minor alterations were made to an existing uniform. These changes consisted of a change to the school logo and the introduction of hooded tops as an option, plus a stronger level of encouragement from the school for pupils to wear the uniform. Items with the new logo were phased in with pupils being able to wear the old logoed items until they grew out of them.

Informal consultations with parents were undertaken by the school. The school advised that parents are very forthcoming in providing feedback about all aspects of the school, with an open door policy being operated by the head teacher. It was felt that since there had been no objections to the introduction of the new uniform that parents were happy with the changes.

'We always listen to parents; there is an open door for them to discuss issues. They are used to coming into the school and we have very measured discussions with them.'

The Welsh Assembly Government's guidelines were reviewed and the school felt that it had considered all factors in ensuring that it was affordable and easily available for families, and that it applied its own common sense approach which was in line with the guidelines.

Some parents had requested for a logoed book bag to be part of the uniform, and the school looked into this. However, it was decided that the costs quoted did not offer value for money.

Pupils reported that they were generally happy with the school uniform and saw no real need to change it. When asked about what changes they would like to the school uniform, pupils were generally happy only advising that they would like some warmer school trousers.

'We like it, school would be worse without it, people would look scruffy.'

‘School uniform lets everyone look the same especially on school trips.’

The school was also anticipating how incoming changes to the foundation stage were going to impact on families since the curriculum will encourage pupils to go outside and play in all types of weather. A rain suit has been recommended to facilitate this aspect of the curriculum, possibly consisting of waterproofs and wellingtons. The school discussed how the requirement of these additional items will increase the costs of school uniform.

Implementing school uniform policy

Ensuring that pupils were attending school and participating fully in their lessons was stated as the main priority of the teachers rather than enforcing school uniform policy. Some pupils were reported as having difficult home circumstances (where parents are substance misusers for example), therefore it was often an achievement to have the children attending school regularly and important not to apply strict uniform requirements so as not to discourage attendance.

‘We don’t insist on school uniform, we encourage children and parents to follow it.’

The school reported that almost all of the pupils wore the uniform, but a small proportion did not. Additionally, some pupils who wore uniform regularly would sometimes turn up in their own clothes. A policy of gentle encouragement to wear the uniform has been applied by the school with pupils being discreetly reminded to wear their uniform when they come to school in non-uniform. However, the school advised that school uniform requirements were enforced when pupils went on school trips, so that they could be identified easily.

The pupils said that they were happy to wear their uniform and that most of the children in the school were also happy to do so. They advised that some pupils don’t always wear their school uniforms and this was often because their uniforms were in the wash. They felt that teachers were fair in ensuring that they wore their uniforms and did not discipline pupils when they were not in their uniform.

‘The teachers remind you to wear your uniform if you forget something.’

'We can get bits of uniform from lost property when we've left something at home.'

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school stated that it has sought to provide additional support to families who need help with items of uniform and has provided pupils with sweatshirts and house tee-shirts when the need has arisen. The flexibility of the uniform requirements was also felt to aid families since they could buy items at any shop or supplier at the most affordable price. Since the school's predominant concern has been the attendance and participation of all children in the school, it was also felt that individual pupils were not being unduly singled out or excluded from activities because of a lack of school uniform.

The school also sought to offer second hand school uniform by selling it at a school fayre. However, there was extremely low take of the items for sale and second hand uniform was now being sent to a partner school in Rwanda at the suggestion of the pupils. It was felt that the strong sense of personal pride in the local area may have inhibited parents' willingness to buy second hand school uniforms. The school also reported that it has amassed a lot of items of school uniform and stores these in lost property. Pupils have been reluctant to collect items of lost school uniform, which the school finds difficult to understand. These items have been provided as spares when pupils require them before being sent to Rwanda.

'We have an inordinate amount of lost property, school sweatshirts through to sports branded coats which the children seem to be reluctant to collect for some unknown reason.'

Pupils discussed how they thought that the cost of school uniforms was generally affordable for them and that their parents were happy to buy what was required.

Additional costs of schooling

School trips

The school advised that it arranges a wide range of school trips for pupils and that these were an important part of school life and learning for all of the children, with trips being planned to reflect the curriculum. Most school trips

arranged by the school are day trips with one residential trip for Year 5 and 6 pupils. Providing parents with advanced warning was felt to be the most appropriate way of ensuring that families could budget for these school trips.

Providing support for pupils from low income families to participate in school trips was reported as being a sensitive issue in ensuring that this was only available to families that could not afford the fund these. It was felt that most families would seek to find the money to send their children on school trips whatever their income, and that some families who could finance a trip may seek to take advantage of support where this was available. Therefore, voluntary contributions were not advertised in school trip letters, and cases were dealt with on an individual basis. The school advised that in some cases, social services will help to pay for pupils whose families are being supported by them, although this could often require fraught liaison to identify who was responsible for funding the trips.

Payment by instalments has been made available for parents in order to ease the expense of the residential trip. Individual arrangements have been made with families who have struggled to extend the payment period after the trip has occurred, but this is not publicised.

Pupils discussed how they thoroughly enjoy school trips and gain a lot from them, describing how the residential trip had enabled them to develop their confidence and independence through allowing them to undertake fun but challenging tasks and by meeting young people and tutors from around the world. They discussed that the trips could be expensive and that some of their class mates sometimes did not participate and they felt a little sad about this since the trips were so good.

‘We like going to [residential venue]. There are lots of activities and it helps you be more confident. You meet lots of people too.’

‘We save up for the [residential trip] and bring in money every couple of weeks. It is worth it.’

Overview and recommendations

- School uniform is important, but pupils need to be encouraged to wear it rather than having strict rules
- Having an open door policy for parents ensures that there is an ongoing dialogue about the appropriateness of the school uniform
- Working with a local supplier has allowed the school to source a range of affordable items which are appropriate for learner needs
- Parents are encouraged to support and fund school trips since these are very important aspects of education
- Providing flexible payment schemes for families helps to ensure that school trips are affordable
- Pupils are proud of their school uniform and like how it gives their school an identity
- A practical and warm uniform that is also colourful are pupils' priorities

School 6

Profile of school

The primary school has approximately 170 pupils. The school's catchment area draws pupils from an urban area and are from predominantly low income backgrounds, with a significant proportion of pupils from BME and Traveller families. The school is set within a Communities First area, and is in the process of becoming a Community School. Around 65 per cent of pupils claim for free school meals, but it was estimated that around 80 per cent of pupils could be eligible for this provision. It was stated that all eligible families are encouraged to claim for free school meals but it could be problematic for some families to complete the required forms. The school advised that some non-claiming families run up debts for school meals but it was a challenge to get these families to claim for their meals.

School uniform policy

School uniform requirements

The school advised that it has a school uniform in place that comprises of a sweatshirt in the school colours, which can be logoed but pupils have the option of buying non-logoed items along with a polo shirt and trousers or skirts. The school stated that it provides school council members with sweatshirt in a different colour (chosen by the members each year) as a gift in recognition of their contribution to school life.

'Children have more of a sense of belonging when they wear their school uniform...We actively encourage it, but don't impose it. All we insist on is that they have a jumper in the school colour.'

Encouraging the pupils to wear school uniform was felt to be very important by the school since it helps to make school a place that is different to home, where a uniform is an outward sign that you are ready to learn.

Having logoed items of uniform was felt to be a good way of providing the school and pupils to have a community identity, although it was not essential to have the logo.

The requirements for PE kit were kept to a minimum to ensure affordability for all, with basic shorts and tee-shirts from any store being required.

The school discussed that it is very satisfied with the school uniform in place, and advised that most pupils comply with the requirements.

Pupils were very positive about having a school uniform reporting that they liked their school and being identified with it especially when they were out on school trips. Having a distinctive sweatshirt for pupils in the school council was felt to be a very good idea as it allowed all pupils to know who was in the school council and meant that they knew who to approach to discuss any issues that they thought needed raising by the council. Pupils also discussed how they liked the school logo as it is their school's own badge.

The pupils said that they were happy to wear their uniform and that most of the children in the school were also happy to do so. They felt that teachers were mainly fair in ensuring that they wore their uniforms and did not discipline pupils harshly when they were not in their uniform, although some could be quite firm in reminding them to wear it.

'We like the uniform it gets us noticed when we are outside of school. It is good to be seen when we are being good!'

'We would like it to be brighter, it's not a very fun colour.'

Availability of school uniform

The school has made arrangements with a supplier to provide uniform at an affordable price within the school. This is sold at cost price to parents to ensure affordability and to encourage the wearing of school uniform. The school discussed how these arrangements generally work well. Other items of the school uniform could be purchased from supermarkets.

Pupils advised that they felt that their parents were generally satisfied with the availability and cost of the school uniform, but some discussed how it can be expensive for families where there are a lot of children.

Changes to the school uniform

The current school uniform has been in place for a number of years, although it is only in recent times that the school has sought to encourage children to wear a school uniform.

The Welsh Assembly Government's guidelines have been reviewed and the school felt that it is applying good practice especially since so many of the pupils come from low income families.

Pupils reported that they were generally happy with the school uniform and saw no real need to change it, although they discussed that they would like it to be a brighter colour, and recommended a range of different colours that it could be. Pupils also recommended that they would like to have a distinctive uniform for Year 6 pupils who act as buddies for younger children so that they could be easily identified. The pupils were very keen to feed this idea back to their head teacher after the discussion group.

Implementing school uniform policy

Ensuring that pupils were attending school and participating fully in their lessons was stated as the main priority of the teachers rather than enforcing school uniform policy, however a policy of gentle encouragement was in place with teachers gently reminding pupils that they should come to school in their uniform when they attend in their own clothes. Some pupils were reported as having unsupportive home circumstances where parents were disengaged with their children's education and school life; therefore it was very difficult to get these children to come in school uniform. In these few instances the school stated that it provided the pupils with a sweater which the pupils keep in their school locker.

'We never insist that parents buy a school jumper, we know their situations and circumstance. Where families can't buy the jumper we quietly buy them one...It's not the children's fault if they don't have the uniform.'

The school found that many pupils did not have a PE kit and were reluctant to wear spare pieces of second hand kit. Getting parents to provide PE kits was found to be problematic in many of these cases. This non participation was having a negative impact on teaching and learning in the school, with pupils sitting out of PE lessons due to their lack of kit, and sometimes being disruptive and not co-operating with teachers. The school therefore decided to purchase a set of new PE kits for each year group, which pupils without kits could borrow. The school laundered these kits and kept these in each class. Participation in PE has increased significantly since the introduction of the kits and has eliminated

behavioural problems. The school advised that although there was an investment cost to the school, it had been worth it for the benefits that have been brought through its provision.

The school reported that almost all of the pupils wore the uniform willingly, but a small proportion did not. Additionally, some pupils who wore uniform regularly would sometimes turn up in their own clothes. Ongoing gentle encouragement and reminders was felt to be the best way forward. Parental engagement was in the process of ongoing development by the school, since parental involvement had been traditionally low in the area. Therefore, it was felt that these relationships could be put at risk by overzealous enforcement by the school.

‘Some children opt in and opt out of uniform, particularly the older ones who are finding themselves and like to test things. We gently advise them that they should be wearing their uniform. We say things like ‘Oh no uniform today, that’s a shame, we’ll see it tomorrow. Okay?’

Providing support to families requiring additional help

The school advised that it has sought to provide additional support to families who need help with items of uniform and has provided pupils with sweatshirts. The flexibility of the uniform requirements was also felt to aid families since they could buy items at any shop or supplier at the most affordable price for them. Since the school’s predominant concern has been the attendance and participation of all children in the school, it was also felt that individual pupils were not being unduly singled out or excluded from activities because of a lack of school uniform.

Pupils from the Travelling community are eligible for support in buying their school uniforms through specific funding for this group. These families are supported by the school in receiving this financial help. The school advised that this help has not been publicised beyond the target group since this could cause resentment, especially for families on low incomes. It was felt that it was unfortunate that assistance with school uniforms was mainly directed at pupils in secondary school.

Pupils discussed how they thought that the costs of school uniforms could be expensive, but that they worked out cheaper than other clothes since they wore the uniform every day.

Additional costs of schooling

School trips

The school advised that it arranges a wide range of school trips for pupils and that these were an important part of school life and learning for all of the children. Most school trips arranged by the school are day trips with one overnight residential trip for Year 6 pupils. Providing parents with advanced warning was felt to be the most appropriate way of ensuring that families could budget for these school trips, and that teachers were generally very good at scheduling trips to limit the impact. A lot of trips have been within the local area to limit costs, and where possible the school uses public transport rather than hiring a coach to save money.

Providing support for pupils from low income families to participate in school trips was reported as being an area of concern, since inclusivity is at the heart of the school's ethos. Voluntary contributions are requested in letters informing parents about school trips. The school advised that children are approached on an individual basis if there appears to be a problem with affordability, consent forms not being returned for example. Teachers would ask pupils if there was a problem with costs, and if so pupils would be advised to return the consent form and the school would support the trip. As stated earlier, the limited level of parental engagement with the school sometimes makes it difficult to discuss issues with parents, and it can appear that the children have not approached their parents about the trips. Nevertheless, discussions with pupils generally ensure that all pupils can go on their school trips.

‘We provide the help that we can. We know parents do manage, but acknowledge that it is a struggle.’

The school has a small Parents Teacher Association that raises additional school funds and the school advised that this supports the funding of school trips.

Pupils discussed how they thoroughly enjoy school trips and gain a lot from them, describing in depth a range of school trips that they had been on and what they had learned.

‘You don’t think you are learning but you are.’

‘You get to learn stuff in a fun way.’

The costs of school trips did concern pupils, with some reporting that their parents had expressed surprise at the costs of some school trips. Pupils were particularly concerned about families where there were twins in the same class because this doubled the costs for the family. Pupils also advised that the costs of a trip had been reduced following feedback from parents about it being too expensive.

‘School trips can be expensive, especially if there are twins, it costs them twice as much.’

Other costs

The school advised that it provides all materials and stationery equipment for pupils so that all can participate to the same level in class without any hindrance of not having pens, rulers and colouring pencils.

A range of creative and cultural activities have been put in place at the school which all pupils are able to participate in, since it was felt that it would be unfair to provide music lessons only to those who can afford them. Activities in place have included dance and singing lessons.

Pupils decide which charities the school supports, this has helped to limit the number of charity and fund raising events in the school.

Cookery lessons are also delivered by the school, which the pupils find very enjoyable. The school advised that it provides the ingredients for these activities.

Overview and recommendations

- School uniform is important in helping to create a positive learning environment
- Having a small number of essential items helps to make the uniform affordable

- Seeking ways to fund creative learning activities for all pupils ensures all pupils are included and are able to gain from this provision
- Funding support for pupils from Traveller families has helped them buy uniforms, this sort of support should also be available for low income families in primary schools
- School provision of a PE kit has enabled a lot of pupils to participate in PE who do not have their own kit