

# SCHOOLWEAR ASSOCIATION

## Implementing the 'Cost of School Uniform' Guidance

The Schoolwear Association welcomes the Department for Education's draft guidance on the '[Cost of School Uniform](#)', which we believe takes a balanced and proportionate approach that will help to ensure parents get value for money from uniforms, without creating unreasonable burdens on schools or uniform suppliers.

Although the final guidance has not yet been published, we know that schools are keen to understand what it would likely mean for them. We have therefore produced this fact sheet for school leaders to share our latest insights and provide practical advice about how best to prepare for the forthcoming guidance.

In most cases, we expect that schools will already be fully compliant with the new guidance, and will be able to confirm that they have followed the legal requirements of the Bill through a documented internal review process. Our overriding advice to school leaders is therefore not to panic, and to work with governors and their uniform suppliers to see how their existing uniform policies line up with the expectations of the new guidance.

### 1. Cost of uniforms

The guidance has been developed by the government to ensure that the cost of school uniform is "reasonable and secures best value for money for parents".

Importantly, it recognises that the quality and durability of a garment are important considerations alongside its base cost, as we know that high quality uniforms are sustainable and long-lasting, producing savings for families over the longer term.

Our research found that this year the average cost of compulsory secondary school uniform and sportswear items for a new pupil is £93 – so we suggest schools work with their supplier to use this as a benchmark to assess their own costs.

### 3. Sole supply arrangements

Schools are able to maintain sole supply arrangements where there is a proportionate and competitive procurement process. This is important, as these arrangements provide better value for money for families, ensure year-round availability of products for all pupils, and enable retailers to provide tailored affordability support to those who need it.

In support of this, earlier this year the Association issued [practical uniform tendering guidance](#) to schools to simplify the sole supplier procurement process and ensure that there is robust competition at the point of selecting a uniform supplier. We hope that schools find this guidance helpful when reviewing their own arrangements.

### 2. Second-hand uniform sales

There is a clear expectation on schools to ensure that second-hand uniform is available for parents to acquire, and information about this should be published on schools' websites.

We understand that the government wants to introduce this element of the guidance in the coming months, so we would encourage schools to discuss this with their suppliers who may already be able to help where second-hand uniform is concerned or alternatively be able to put a provision in place as part of a uniform contract.

Schools should also consider that uniform items that are made of high quality materials will last much longer than those made of lower quality materials, and would therefore be more suitable for second-hand sales.

### 4. Re-tendering contracts

Many schools will be tied into existing contracts with uniform suppliers and so will not yet be able to comply with the guidance. The government does not expect them to re-tender immediately, but rather to comply when their uniform supply contract is next renewed. Schools should therefore not rush into re-tendering, but should work with their suppliers on next steps.

Schools with smaller uniform contracts may also not need to re-tender at all, as the government is considering only requiring a full tender process under OJEU rules if the uniform contract is valued at more than £180k through its life. Schools with smaller contracts would then only need to source a few quotes from suppliers to inform their appointment decision.