

SCHOOLWEAR ASSOCIATION

Implementing the 'Cost of School Uniform' Guidance

The Schoolwear Association strongly welcomes the Department for Education's final 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.

Our fact sheet provides practical advice about how best to implement the guidance, and the key milestones school leaders will need to be aware of:

- Schools should attempt to be compliant with much of this guidance by September 2022, particularly by making second-hand uniforms available to acquire and by publishing uniform policies on their websites.
- Schools are exempted from implementing any uniform changes as a result of the guidance by summer 2022 if "this would breach a pre-existing contract or informal agreement with a uniform supplier".
- Where a tender process is required, schools have until Dec 2022 to implement it, so that the new uniform is ready for the summer of 2023, subject to existing contracts.

In most cases, we expect that schools will already be fully compliant with the new guidance or will only need to make minor changes to their policies in order to comply with it. Our overriding advice to school leaders is therefore not to panic, and to work with governors and their 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 is £93 per pupil – 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 contract should be re-tendered at least every five years.

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.

Our members are happy to work with the schools where we are suppliers to set up second-hand uniform shops. In most cases, this is something we already do.

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. Contracts

The guidance recommends that schools should have a contract with their uniform supplier.

Many schools will be working with existing contracts, and so will need to honour these before a review can take place. 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 guidance clarifies that "the value of the contract will determine the type of procurement procedure a school needs to undertake". These schools are only likely to need to source three quotes from suppliers to inform their appointment decision.