



# CHANGING SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY

## **Rationale:**

School councils are responsible for:

- developing and reviewing their dress codes in close consultation with their school community to ensure:
  - the code reflects the values of the school community
  - there is a balance between the rights of individual students and the best interests of the whole school community
- deciding annually if amendments or a full review of the dress code are required.

## **Aims:**

To ensure schools develop and review their student dress codes appropriately.

A dress code:

- is a written statement of school council expectations regarding student appearance
- applies:
  - during school hours
  - while travelling to and from school
  - when students are engaged in school activities out of school hours
- may:
  - define standards for the general presentation of students
  - set out broad guidelines about student appearance
  - require students to wear a school uniform
  - define specifications for garment design and colour.

## **Implementation:**

The dress code purposes should be clearly identified. These purposes may include:

- promoting a sense of identity and pride
- cohesion and good order in the school
- allowing all students to feel equal
- preventing bullying and competition on the basis of clothing
- ensuring students' appearance reflects the expectations of their school community
- enhancing the profile and identity of the school and its students within the wider community
- strengthening the spirit of community within the school
- enhancing individual student safety and group security
- ensuring all students are dressed safely and appropriately for school activities
- encouraging students to develop pride in their appearance
- preparing students for the expectations of workplaces
- encouraging students to present themselves appropriately for a particular role

The school council should carefully consider the forms of consultation that will be undertaken in developing or reviewing a dress code. For example consultation could include:

- letters to parents and carers
- surveys
- information in newsletters

- information on the school website.

This consultation process should:

- explain the purposes of the dress code and the reason for any proposed changes
- guarantee opportunity for the viewpoints of parents or carers, teachers and students to be expressed. The mechanism for consultation should be identified in the student dress code policy or, alternatively, be recorded in school council minutes
- outline any proposed changes to uniform supply arrangements
- provide for careful consideration of any information and viewpoints collected in the consultation process before finalising the decision-making process
- seek out and consider the views of different groups within the school community (such as from different cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds or other groups that may have special needs)
- allow for careful consideration of the practicality of garment design, materials used in construction, and the cost implications of proposed items
- provide a timeline for implementation of the dress code.
- The school council must be able to demonstrate to its school community that it has considered the cost implications of its selected school uniform and taken into account the ability of its parent population to afford it.

Schools should be aware that some students may wish to observe particular religious and cultural requirements while also complying with the school dress code. These could include:

- head coverings
- facial hair
- clothing lengths
- adornments such as certain jewelry.

Schools should discuss these requirements with students and parents or carers to ascertain their cultural and religious significance and how they might be accommodated within the school's dress code policy.

As the dress code takes precedence over a student's individual preferences the school council should consider if the dress code:

- is compatible with state and federal human rights and anti-discrimination legislation (see: Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Requirements within [Related policies](#)).
- ensures that any gender specific requirements accord with school community standards and anti-discrimination legislation
- clearly outlines the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers, students and the school
- is respectful of the cultural norms of the school community
- is reasonable by contemporary standards and avoids unnecessarily intruding on students' rights in matters of personal appearance
- allows for individual expression through alternatives within overall garment requirements
- is suitable to the role of a student and the tasks and functions they perform
- takes into account health and safety issues
- allows students to dress comfortably in all weather conditions
- provides clothing for sports or physical education that is practical and that all students will feel comfortable wearing
- supports informal or incidental physical activity such as lunchtime sport, walking or cycling to school
- is communicated clearly to students, parents or carers prior to enrolment, providing a basis of assent
- requirements can be met by all students and parents/carers. The range and cost of garments should reflect the capacity of families to provide them

- is supported by strategies to assist families who may have difficulty meeting uniform costs and this information is communicated to the school community
- outlines the dress code complaints/concerns process
- outlines the consultation and decision-making processes for reviews and amendments
- will be reviewed if circumstances change significantly.

**Important:** School councils should document their dress code consultation and development process as evidence that they have consulted with their school community. The school council's dress code policies may be required as evidence or used by bodies such as Ombudsman Victoria in resolving disputes.

**Reference:**

- This policy has been developed in conjunction with the DEECD's School Policy and Reference guide <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...	<b>August 2018</b>
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