



Dear Head Teacher,

The importance of uniform post 'lock down'

We appreciate this is a difficult time for Schools and Head Teachers. School Leaders are facing many challenging decisions that need to be made in a short period of time. We are also aware that you may have given thought to dress codes when your students return and wanted to share why we believe it is essential that schools should continue to specify that uniform is worn post lock down.

Wearing uniform is the safest option

The overwhelming priority for all involved in education is the safety and wellbeing of students and school staff. In this respect, we believe that wearing uniform is the safest option for everyone whilst there is still a risk of COVID-19. Wearing uniform provides a visual distinction between school and home life each day, and reinforcing the fact that students should remove it for washing at the end of each day during this period will help to limit the potential risk of transference of COVID-19. We do not believe the same would be true if uniform were not worn.

To assist if schools are concerned about the implications of wearing clean clothes every day, it may be possible to allow pupils to alternate between day uniform and school PE kits on a daily basis, making it easier for items to be washed without any additional purchases being required. Currently, it is believed that the virus only lasts for a relatively short period of time on fabrics, reducing the transmission rate and risk of infection.

The well-known benefits of wearing uniform

You may have seen last Friday (15 May), that some schools held a school uniform day in order to help children feel more connected to their school while studying at home. The BBC reported that one pupil said: *"It really helps me to concentrate when I'm doing my home schooling and I think it brings us all together as a community."*

Government guidance remains very supportive of the benefits of uniform and this certainly echoes with the feedback we receive from school, parents, and pupils. We believe that in these challenging times the value of a school-specific uniform to your school is greater than ever:

- Representing great value for parents, uniform is designed to be washable and durable. It will withstand the rigours of day to day school life as well as reducing expenditure on high street or fashionable brands, particularly when so many households have been impacted economically by the pandemic.
- It has been shown that uniform acts as a social leveller and reduces bullying in schools. Our research showed that 70% of school leaders agree that removing branded uniform would increase bullying and undermine social cohesion. We think this is particularly relevant given the mental wellbeing challenges that many school children have faced from the pro-longed lock down.
- Uniform plays an important role in helping children to focus on their studies, improving attainment.
- Uniform fosters a sense of inclusion in school, something that is supported by our recent survey of school leaders, of which 95% agree that a uniform promotes pride and belonging for a pupil in their school and local community.
- A uniform also plays an important role outside of the school gates, helping to improve security and pupil safety on the journey to school. Using a uniform to identify that your pupils are following social distancing rules on the way to school will help to keep your community as safe as possible.

The Schoolwear Industry is ready to support you

Despite the fact that our retail stores have been closed since the start of the lockdown period, as an industry we have continued to manufacture the garments for schools across the UK and supply these into stores ready for a time when the current restrictions are eased and we can open our doors again. Of course there are a number of areas to consider this year in terms of how we transact, but it is important to understand that we are prepared and ready to support your school, parents and pupils safely over the summer and in the run up to Back To School in September.

Now more than ever, relying on established relationships and clear communication is vital to get society back to some form of normality and we encourage you to continue to work closely with your specialist uniform suppliers to make the return to school as efficient and safe as possible.

As parents, we know that the safe return to school will provide families with a huge sense of relief and we look forward to seeing children looking smart in their uniform on their first day back.

Your continued support is hugely appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Easter and Mark Stevenson

Co-chairs, Schoolwear Association.