

Response to Government Inquiry Into Dress Codes and School Uniforms in Victorian Schools

Benefits and costs of mandatory school uniforms

- Parents find it a cheaper alternative to dressing their children in current fashions.
- Students are more easily identified as belonging to the school, providing benefits not only while on excursions but also providing prompt recognition of school aged individuals not attending the school that enter the school grounds.
- There is no peer pressure when all students are dressed alike.
- A compulsory dress code means there is a way of ensuring students come dressed appropriately and practically for the activities they undertake during the day.
- When choosing items to be selected as a part of a school uniform the school community making these decisions need to be mindful of the socio-economic climate of the area.

Views of the School Community about dress codes and school uniforms

The parent community is in favor of having dress codes and compulsory school uniforms provided that uniform items are sensible, easily obtainable, practical, inexpensive and that the dress code is not carried to the extreme.

The most cost effective and practical uniform procurement arrangements

It is ideal to have a commercially run uniform shop on-site, but also to have the ability to purchase uniform items elsewhere. The advantage of not having a compulsory logo is that clothes may be purchased from many different sources, keeping the cost of providing students with uniforms lower.

Where uniform shops have been run and stocked by parent groups (PFA etc) the school is often financially disadvantaged as money is tied up in stock and often a minimum number of a particular item is required to be ordered from stockists which causes problems when only 1 or 2 of a particular size item are required.

The difficulty of being locked into an exclusive contract with a particular company occurs where logo's are made compulsory within the school is that there is no competition for business, and prices are often higher from the contracted company than those offered by other companies as a result.

Matters which need to be considered to ensure dress codes and uniform policies are consistent with anti-discrimination legislation and health promotion policies.

See attached policy. Our policy is consistent with Sunsmart recommendations with regards to the compulsory wearing of hats between designated dates. We have an exemption clause for religious/medical reasons, at the Principal's discretion.

Appropriate enforcement and sanctions

It is difficult to enforce compulsory dress code too rigidly within a government Primary School as disciplinary steps taken for being out of uniform are limited by the tide of public opinion.

Appropriate exemption criteria and processes.

Leaving this to the discretion of the Principal, after appropriate written application has been supplied from the parent/caregiver works well at our school.