

To the management authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools, and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Reducing Costs to Parents – School Uniforms

Circular 0063/2013.

Purpose of this Circular

The Minister for Education and Skills has moved to tackle the costs of school uniforms by strengthening the role of parents in how schools decide their policies on uniforms.

Where schools have a uniform, parents must meet the costs, which may vary from school to school. The Minister for Education and Skills considers it appropriate, therefore, that any school that currently has a uniform (as distinct from a general dress code), or is contemplating the introduction of one, should consult parents. Schools may also wish to engage with students, where a Student Council exists, and with the Parent Association, where one exists.

The Minister is requesting school authorities concerned to use the questionnaire at Appendix 1 to carry out a consultation with parents over the course of the current school year, and in time to allow the Board of Management consider the outcome and make changes, where warranted, that could apply from September next.

The questionnaire, which has been developed in consultation with the education partners, gives parents an opportunity to respond to two main questions. The first is to simply ascertain if parents want the wearing of a uniform, where it exists, to continue. The second question applies where a parent favours a uniform. It asks the parent to indicate a preference around what may be termed generic uniforms as opposed to bespoke designs. This question is aimed at identifying whether parents favour changes to uniforms that could reduce costs and make uniforms more affordable.

While this circular is of particular relevance to schools that currently have a uniform, or are contemplating introducing one from September next, the questionnaire should also assist other schools in consulting parents in later years where the introduction of a uniform is being considered by the Board of Management.

The Department suggests that questionnaires be sent to parents by February 2014 before deciding on the position to be adopted for the 2014/15 school year. The Board of Management should consider the information in returned questionnaires, and let parents know the outcome. Parents are not required to sign ballots, and schools are obviously free to identify outgoing ballot papers, if they wish, by means of a stamp or other distinguishing feature.

Any enquiries regarding this Circular should be directed to:

- Parents, Learners and Database Section, Department of Education & Skills, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.
- Email address: uniform_ballot@education.gov.ie
- Tel. 090-6483881 / 090-6483959 / 090-6484264 / 090-6484267 / 090-6484268. .

This Circular is available on the Department of Education & Skills website at www.education.ie

**Tom Deegan, Principal Officer,
December 2013.**

TEMPLATE QUESTIONNAIRE

(Where the answer is Yes or No, please tick the check-box beside your chosen answer).

Part 1: Whether or not a school should have a uniform

Q1. Do you want a school uniform for this school? Yes No

If yes, please continue to Part 2
If no, no further response is required

Part 2: Choices that could impact on the level of expense

Q2. Would you like the school to have a uniform for which the items of clothing or footwear could be bought in different shops or department stores? Yes No

Q3. Where any of the following are relevant to your school, please express a preference;

(a) Generic clothing or footwear: Yes No

(Generic means items that are in colours and styles that are readily available in different shops and department stores).

(b) Bespoke items: Yes No

(Bespoke items means items of clothing that are in less common colours/mix of colours, design, pattern, or style that is unique to the school and where the number of suppliers are limited, often to one supplier only. This includes where crests are a feature or the school name is printed on items).

(c) Crests: Yes No

And, if yes, should it be;

Iron-on: Yes No

Sew-on: Yes No

(d) Branded or designer sportswear: Yes No

(e) Branded or designer footwear (including sports footwear) Yes No

Part 3: School blazers

Q4. Would you like the school to have (select one)?

No blazer Blazer only Blazer and jumper