

SCHOOL UNIFORM: GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

Is your school uniform comfortable, practical, and affordable? Is your school's uniform policy implemented in a way that makes everyone feel welcome and a part of the school community, or in a way that stigmatises and shames particular individuals or social groups?

We've shared some ideas below for steps you could take to understand the reasons behind school uniform policies, and perhaps even make changes to them. Let us know if they work or are helpful!

Here's how to bring about change in your school uniform.



In the first instance, speak to a teacher or member of the leadership team at your school about the issue you have. Ask them what the reason is for that particular rule. That way, if you do decide to push for change, you can start with a better understanding of where the decision-makers are coming from.

It's wrong and against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their gender, gender reassignment, age, race, disability, religion / belief, or sexuality. These are all called 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. It's your school's responsibility to make sure you feel these different parts of your identity have been recognised and taken into account when putting school policies together. You have a right to be treated fairly. If you think your school's policy doesn't do this, you can raise that issue with school leaders or governors.

If you and other students feel strongly about an issue related to school uniforms (or anything else!), the best way to make change happen is to organise together as a group, share ideas, and plan together so that your voices can be heard. You could also raise the subject at a school council meeting or with existing student voice groups.

Ask others to help you.

Encourage parents, carers, or other members of your community to get involved, if you think they might be able to help your teachers to better understand the issues you are raising. Ask a teacher whether there are channels or processes to go through which are specific to your school, or ask the teacher to communicate the message for you if you don't feel able to do it.

School governors often play a key role in decisions around uniform. You could send them a petition, or contact your school's parent-governor. Your school website or one of your teachers should be able to tell you who to contact.

Think about different ways of spreading the word.



There are numerous platforms you could use to express concerns such as school council meetings, meetings with teachers/school leaders or social groups in school like feminist societies. If you don't have all of these available, maybe you could think about starting one up?

If you feel you have tried all the official and formal school channels to get your voice heard and not getting anywhere, then consider alternatives. You could organise a collective protest about the issues you want to be addressed, like the students at Pimlico Academy did (click [here](#) to read more about their campaign!)

Think carefully about how you will phrase your argument when discussing with teachers, parents, or governors. E.g...

- When you do this _____ it makes me feel _____"
- "Next time, please could you _____ instead?"
- "The policy says this _____, but my experience is _____, so maybe we could _____ instead?"



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Look around for inspiration!

Read, watch videos, listen to podcasts, speak to other people, reach out to other similar campaigns and groups. The more you learn about your cause, the more confident you will be when you're fighting for it.

Want to tell us your story of fighting for uniform change, or give us feedback or ideas to add to this document? We'd love to hear from you! Email us via info@schoolofsexed.org

Take a look at places like BBC news to see what's happened at other schools with uniform. There are plenty of stories of students, parents, carers and teachers making change and sharing their views and experiences about school uniform rules. This might also help remind you that you're not alone!



Get creative! Could you create a vlog on this subject? Or keep a diary of your daily experience in your school uniform? For instance, you could write about how long it takes you to prepare in the mornings, the number of times you get pulled up about something to do with uniform rules in the day, how the uniform makes you feel at different points in the day, the responses you get in different places e.g. at school but also on the bus or in the street. Your teachers might not be aware of what your experience is like, and this could provide insight.



This document was created by a team of academics, student teachers and MA students at UCL, in collaboration with School of Sexuality Education. @school_sexed