Underhill School and Children's Centre

School Uniform Policy

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Statement of intent

Underhill School and Children's Centre believes that a consistent school uniform policy is vital for:

- Promoting the ethos of a school.
- Providing a sense of belonging and identity.
- Setting an appropriate tone for education.

For the purposes of this policy, "uniform" includes the following elements of pupils' appearance:

- Clothing, including the school uniform itself, variations of the school uniform such as PE kits, and other clothing worn at school, e.g. non-uniform.
- Hairstyles and headwear.
- Jewellery and other accessories.
- Cosmetics such as makeup and nail polish.

This policy lays out the measures the school has taken to ensure a consistent, fair and inclusive uniform policy, and to implement a uniform that reflects the needs of all pupils, is affordable, and provides the best value for money for both the school and pupils' families.

We believe that pupils learn most effectively and achieve their best outcomes when they are comfortable, able to be themselves, and dressed in a way that sets an appropriate tone for education.

In writing and updating this policy, the school will:

- Engage with parents and pupils.
- Consider how this policy might affect groups represented in the school, especially those who share protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Consider how comfortable the uniform will be for pupils.
- Take a sensible approach to allow for exceptions to be made, e.g. during adverse weather.
- Ensure that the uniform is suitable and safe for pupils who walk or cycle to school.
- Choose a PE kit which is practical, comfortable, appropriate to the activity involved and affordable.

- Ensure the policy is easy to access and understand.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2011
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
- DfE 'Cost of school uniforms'
- DfE 'School Admissions Code'
- DfE 'Developing school uniform policy'
- Equality and Human Rights Commission 'Preventing hair discrimination in schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- LGBTQ+ Policy
- Tendering and Procurement Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Establishing, in consultation with the Co-headteachers and school community, a practical and smart school uniform that accurately reflects the school's vision and values.
- Ensuring that the school's uniform is accessible, inclusive, and does not disadvantage any pupil because of their protected characteristics or socio-economic status.
- Listening to the opinions and wishes of parents, pupils and the wider school community regarding changes to the school's uniform.
- Ensuring that the school's uniform is appropriate, practical, accessible and affordable for all pupils, taking account of the cost of individual compulsory items and the overall cost of the uniform, including PE kit and any clothing required for school activities.
- Ensuring that the number of compulsory branded items of school uniform and PE kit does not exceed the statutory limit and that all branded items are kept to a minimum.
- Giving high priority to the cost and value for money of the school uniform and being able to demonstrate how best value for money has been achieved when developing or reviewing the uniform policy and supply arrangements.
- Ensuring that arrangements are in place for current and prospective parents to acquire second-hand uniform in a timely and accessible way, and that information about these arrangements is published on the school website.
- Ensuring compliance with the DfE's 'Cost of school uniforms' guidance.
- Processing and approving all eligible School Uniform Assistance Application Forms.
- Ensuring compliance with obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Co-headteachers are responsible for:

- Enforcing the school's uniform rules on a day-to-day basis.
- Ensuring that teachers understand this policy and what to do if a pupil is in breach of the policy.
- Listening to the opinions and wishes of the school community in regard to the school's uniform and making appropriate recommendations to the governing board.
- Providing pupils with an exemption or amendment letter as appropriate, e.g. for a pupil who has a broken arm and requires a loose-fitting shirt.

Staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that pupils dress in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Where appropriate to their role, disciplining pupils who are in breach of this policy.
- Ensuring that pupils understand why having a consistent and practical school uniform is important, e.g. school identity.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing their children with the correct school uniform as detailed in this policy.
- Informing the Co-headteachers if their child requires an amendment or an exemption to the uniform rules, including where this relates to a protected characteristic, disability, medical need or other individual circumstance.
- Informing the school where they are experiencing difficulty meeting the cost of the uniform.
- Ensuring that their child's uniform is clean, presentable and the correct size.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Wearing the correct uniform at all times, unless the Co-headteachers have granted an exemption or an amendment.
- Looking after their uniform as appropriate.
- Understanding and respecting why a school uniform is important to the school, e.g. school identity and community.

3. Cost principles

The school will develop its uniform policy in relation to the following starting principles:

- The school will seek to ensure that the uniform is affordable. In so doing, the school will consider the cost of individual compulsory items and the total cost of the school uniform, taking into account all items of uniform or clothing parents will need to provide while their child is at the school.
- The school will ensure that no individual item is unnecessarily high cost and will take reasonable steps to minimise costs.

- The use of branded uniform items will be minimised in accordance with the branded items section of this policy.
- The school will seek to ensure that uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money, including the quality and durability of the garment.
- The school will seek to ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire. Information on second-hand uniforms and when they will be available to be purchased will be published on the school's website.

Principles in practice

In accordance with the 'School Admissions Code', the Co-headteachers will ensure that the school's uniform requirements do not discourage parents from applying for a place for their child.

The school will assess the overall cost implications of its uniform policy regularly, including prior to making any changes to the school uniform. When evaluating whether costs are reasonable and proportionate, the school will take into account the opinions and situations of:

- Economically disadvantaged parents.
- Parents with multiple children who are, or will be in the future, pupils at the school.
- Parents of younger children, as they are likely to grow quickly and require new sets of uniform more frequently.
- Parents of pupils with protected characteristics that may impact their ability to access the uniform.
- LAC and PLAC.

The school will evaluate the affordability of individual compulsory uniform items as well as the overall collection of uniform items that parents would need to purchase for a pupil. This will include consideration of the fact that parents may need to purchase multiples of certain items, e.g. shirts and socks, to ensure their child can come to school in clean uniform every day or where spare items are likely to be needed.

The school will keep variations in school uniform for different groups of pupils, e.g. year group-specific items or house colours, to a minimum to ensure that pupils can get the most wear out of their uniform and that parents can pass some items down to younger siblings.

The school will meet the DfE's requirements and recommendations on costs and value for money. Care will be taken to ensure that school uniforms are affordable for all current and prospective pupils, and that the best value for money is secured through reputable suppliers.

The school will seek to secure the best value for money from its uniform supply arrangements. Any savings negotiated with suppliers will be passed on to parents. The school will avoid single-supplier contracts unless regular tendering competitions are run where more than one supplier can compete for the contract and best value for money is secured. Where a single-supplier contract is used, it will be re-tendered at least every five years. The school will not enter into cashback arrangements. More information on supplier processes can be found in the 'School uniform supplier' section of this policy.

The school will not make frequent changes to uniform requirements and will take the views of parents and pupils into account when considering any changes.

Where changes to uniform specifications are necessary, the school will take reasonable steps to minimise the financial impact on parents, e.g. by allowing pupils to continue wearing existing uniform for a reasonable period where appropriate.

The above consideration to cost will also apply to the school's PE kit and clothing required for extracurricular activities. The school will avoid requiring additional uniform specifically for extracurricular activities or interschool competitions wherever possible. No pupil should feel unable to fully participate in PE, extracurricular activities or represent their class or the school because the required clothing is too expensive.

4. Branded items

The school will limit the number of compulsory branded items of uniform and PE kit to three or fewer.

The school will confirm with parents and pupils which branded items will be compulsory within the above limit and the specification of other optional branded items. All branded items, whether compulsory or optional, will be kept to a minimum and generic alternatives will be permitted for optional branded items.

Parents will be informed of any requirements for generic alternatives of non-branded uniform, e.g. the colour, shade, fabric or fit, so that these items can be purchased appropriately.

A branded item is an item with distinctive characteristics, e.g. the school's name or logo, that make it unique to the school. An item will also be considered branded where its colour, design, fabric or other distinctive characteristic means that it is only available from the school's appointed uniform supplier.

A branded item will be deemed compulsory if a pupil is required to have or wear the item:

- For general use at the school.
- To travel to or from the school.
- To take part in any lesson, club or activity facilitated by the school, including after-school activities.

The limit on branded items will apply to any branded bags, and any items required only at particular times of the year, e.g. summer uniform.

Where pupils are able to choose between different branded items, e.g. being able to choose between wearing a branded skirt or branded trousers, this will only count as one item as the pupil is only required to have one of those items.

Different branded uniforms may be adopted for different key stages; however, the school will consider cost implications for parents in doing so.

When making decisions about compulsory branded items, the school will consider how it can maintain the benefits of a branded item while also keeping costs low. This may involve using sew-on or iron-on labels or limiting branded items to longer-lasting items such as ties, rather than items that need to be purchased more frequently or in larger quantities, e.g. shirts.

The school will ensure that the specification of any branded item, e.g. its colour, cut, trim, fabric, weave or embroidery method, does not add significant avoidable cost. Specialist tailoring, custom-colour fabrics and bespoke piping or braiding that materially increase costs will generally be avoided.

Sew-on or iron-on logos applied to uniform items will be considered branded items and included within the school's prescribed limit of compulsory branded items.

All loaned or gifted branded items will be captured within the limit if they are required to be worn. Additional branded items may be loaned, given out, or made available for sale by the school; however, wearing such items will be optional.

Where optional branded items are made available, wearing an equivalent unbranded version of that item will also be permitted.

Generic unbranded items worn by pupils will still need to meet the requirements of this policy and should be fit for purpose.

For sporting activities and competitions, pupils will not be required to wear branded items to take part in an activity, unless these items count towards the limit on branded items. The school may give out free additional branded items for sporting competitions and events.

If a pupil is unable to wear a loaned branded item, e.g. for a medical or health reason, the school will allow them to wear a suitable alternative.

5. Equality principles

The school takes its legal obligation to avoid unlawfully discriminating against any pupil very seriously.

In line with the above, the school will aim to ensure that its uniform policy is as inclusive as possible so that all pupils can access a school uniform which is comfortable, suitable for their needs, and reflects who they are, while avoiding any direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics or socio-economic status.

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy

The school will ensure that parents and pupils are consulted over any significant changes to school uniform and will consider how proposed requirements may affect different groups represented within the school, particularly pupils who share protected characteristics or who may require adaptations or reasonable adjustments.

Parents' concerns and requests regarding school uniform and amendments to it are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Co-headteachers and governing board, and always in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

If a requirement will affect a group with certain characteristics more than others, the school will:

- Carefully consider whether the requirement is the best way to achieve aims.
- Think about what mitigations could be put in place.
- Ensure that the requirement is justified and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim to be lawful.
- Allow for flexibility to enable necessary exceptions.

Information on how the school ensures its uniform policy does not discriminate against pupils with specific protected characteristics is outlined below.

Gender

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain gender, the school will ensure that the cost of uniform is as equal in price as possible across items for all genders.

This includes:

- Adhering to the procedures laid out in the 'Cost principles' section of this policy.
- Not directly requiring pupils of a certain gender to buy additional uniform, e.g. by requiring female pupils to buy both trousers and skirts.
- Not indirectly requiring pupils of a certain gender to buy additional uniform, e.g. by offering football in PE to only male pupils and requiring them to buy football boots to participate.
- Not holding pupils of different genders to different uniform standards, e.g. by banning certain hairstyles for only one gender.

The school will implement a gender-neutral uniform, meaning that pupils will not be required to wear specific items based on their gender, and may wear any of the uniform items listed in the 'School uniform' section of this policy regardless of the legal sex recorded on the school's records. The school will consider individual requests for adaptations to uniform requirements where necessary, including requests relating to gender reassignment or gender identity, taking account of its obligations under equality and human rights law.

Religion and belief

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain religion, belief or culture, the school will ensure that there is flexibility to allow pupils to present themselves in a way that adheres to their dress requirements as far as possible, within the school's uniform policy.

The school will act reasonably through consultation and dialogue when considering requests for adaptations to accommodate religious or belief requirements. Restrictions will only be imposed where justified, e.g. because of genuine health and safety, security, cohesion or good-order considerations.

Race

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain race, the school will ensure that its uniform policy does not constitute unlawful indirect discrimination through blanket rules. This includes:

- Not banning hairstyles related to a pupil's ethnic origin, e.g. natural Afro hairstyles.
- Not banning hairstyles worn because of cultural, family and social customs, e.g. cornrows.
- Not banning head coverings related to a pupil's culture or ethnic origin, e.g. African heritage head wraps.

The school will follow the good practice guidance provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on 'Preventing hair discrimination in schools'.

SEND and medical conditions

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils with SEND or medical conditions, the school will ensure its uniform policy takes into account the needs of these pupils. This includes:

- What flexibilities, adaptations, adjustments or alternatives might mitigate any negative impact on these pupils.
- Adopting a more comfortable or less restrictive uniform.
- Determining a more flexible policy that allows pupils to choose from a range of items so they feel more comfortable.

Where a pupil's needs cannot be met through the standard uniform requirements, the school will consider individual adaptations or alternatives. The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils where necessary to avoid unlawful discrimination.

The school will ensure that it works with a supplier that acts in accordance with the school's values and principles on equality and inclusion.

6. Complaints and challenges

The school will endeavour to resolve all uniform complaints and challenges locally and informally, in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

The school will refer individuals who wish to complain to the Complaints Procedures Policy and request that they follow the procedures outlined therein.

When a complaint is received, the school will work with the complainant to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome.

Where the subject of a complaint relates to a pupil's protected characteristic, the governing board will carefully consider requests to vary this policy.

The school will agree a procedure with its uniform supplier to deal with complaints about the supply and quality of uniforms.

Pupils will not be prevented from participating in classroom teaching, breaktimes or extracurricular activities because their family is unable to afford the correct uniform.

7. School uniform supplier

The school's current school uniform supplier is:

- Smiths Schoolwear
- Station Parade, 25 Cockfosters Rd, Barnet EN4 0DW
- 020 3818 3622

The school uniform supplier will accept school uniform assistance vouchers.

The governing board will ensure that a written contract is in place with the supplier for branded items. Where the school has a single-supplier contract, it will be subject to regular tendering competitions and will be retendered at least every five years.

The governing board will give high priority to cost and value for money when procuring school uniform and will be able to demonstrate how best value for money has been achieved. The Co-headteachers will work to ensure that the items are procured as cheaply as possible

without compromising on the quality, e.g. by requesting standard-style items from the supplier rather than more intricate and unique designs. Any savings negotiated with suppliers will be passed on to parents.

The school will not sign contracts with suppliers before requesting visualisations and samples of proposed uniform.

8. Finding and consulting suppliers

If the school is considering changing its suppliers and seeks a list of available suppliers, it will consider the following options:

- Consulting an industry body, e.g. Schoolwear Association
- Researching local suppliers
- Consulting with other schools and networks
- Having informal discussions with potential suppliers to help determine the school's own needs

If the school prepares to request bids from potential suppliers, it will consider the following elements:

- What products parents will need
- Existing contractual commitments
- Length of tender process
- The school's evaluation process

The school will consider the environmental impact and sustainability of the uniform and how uniform items are sourced, alongside cost and value for money. This will include considering the durability of garments and, where appropriate, how sustainably they are produced.

9. Template documents

Where appropriate, the school will use the DfE's 'Procuring uniform supplies' template documents to support the procurement process. The templates include an invitation to tender, a request for quotation and a pricing schedule.

The invitation to tender template can be used to ask questions of potential suppliers, while the pricing schedule can be used to request suppliers' prices. Full instructions on how to use the templates are included within each document.

Schools will use the invitation to tender template to ask questions of suppliers. Schools will then use the pricing schedule to ask suppliers to submit their prices. Full instructions on how to use the templates are included in each of the documents.

10. Uniform assistance

The school will support disadvantaged families in meeting the costs of uniforms.

For parents to claim school uniform assistance, their children should be eligible for FSM. Eligibility will be determined by checking original documents from the relevant authority, detailing receipt of the benefit and the address of the pupil.

The school will consider individual circumstances where a family is experiencing difficulty meeting the cost of school uniform but does not meet the eligibility criteria for the school uniform assistance scheme, and will provide or signpost appropriate support where possible.

The school will hold second-hand school uniforms for current and prospective parents to access in a timely and accessible manner. The school will consider how second-hand uniform can be accessed discreetly where necessary. Information on how and where second-hand school uniform can be acquired will be published on the school website.

The school will consider how pupils will be supported where they do not have the correct uniform, including who will be the point of contact for families and pupils who need support with uniform.

Parents will be invited to donate their child's uniform when they no longer need it.

11. Non-compliance

Before taking disciplinary action, the school will consider any reasons for non-compliance that may be outside of the pupil's control.

A considerate approach will be used where financial hardship or other circumstances outside the pupil's control may be the reason for non-compliance. The school will work with the pupil and their family to resolve the situation and provide or signpost appropriate support where necessary.

Staff will be permitted to discipline pupils for breaching this policy, where relevant to their role, in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy. Any disciplinary action will be reasonable and proportionate and will take account of the reasons for non-compliance.

Pupils who are unable to comply with the school's uniform requirements for financial reasons will not miss classroom teaching, breaktimes or extracurricular activities as a result.

Parents will be notified of pupils' breaches of school uniform and, where appropriate, the school will work with them to rectify any issues regarding non-compliance.

12. School uniform

Clothing

The school uniform is detailed on the school website: https://underhillschool.co.uk/uniform

Jewellery

The school rules on jewellery are as follows:

- One pair of stud earrings may be worn – no other piercings are permitted.
- A non internet enabled wristwatch may be worn.

Pupils will be advised that jewellery is their personal responsibility and not that of the school. Lost or damaged items will not be refunded. All jewellery must be removed during practical lessons, including PE lessons and science experiments.

Exceptions to the school's jewellery requirements will be considered where necessary, e.g. for religious, cultural or medical reasons.

Bags

School bags featuring inappropriate images, slogans or phrases will not be permitted.

The school will discourage pupils from bringing valuable bags to school. The school will not be liable for lost or damaged school bags.

Hairstyles and headwear

The school reserves the right to make a judgement on whether a pupil's hairstyle, hair colour or headwear is inappropriate for the school environment; however, the school will ensure that any such judgements do not discriminate against any pupil by virtue of their protected characteristics. Each individual pupil's scenario will be taken into account where any judgements on appropriateness are to be made, and parents will always have the freedom to complain via the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

Pupils with long hair must ensure that this does not impede their vision, cover their face, or cause a health and safety risk. Long hair must be tied up during practical lessons, e.g. during PE.

Subject to any reasonable adjustments, adaptations or exceptions required because of a pupil's individual circumstances, the following hairstyles, hair colours and headwear are not considered appropriate for school:

- Brightly coloured dyed hair
- Headwear with bold patterns or colours
- Excessive hair accessories
- Headwear featuring inappropriate words or images

Makeup and cosmetics

Pupils are permitted to wear make up or nail varnish to school. False nails and nail extensions are not permitted.

13. Adverse weather

The school will take a sensible and flexible approach to uniform requirements during extreme or adverse weather, particularly where the UK Health Security Agency has issued a

weather-health alert. Pupils will be permitted to make appropriate adaptations to their uniform to remain safe and comfortable.

During periods of very hot weather, the school may relax its usual uniform requirements, e.g. by allowing pupils to wear shorts or PE kit.

During periods of very cold weather, pupils will be permitted to wear appropriate additional clothing to remain warm, e.g. coats, hats, scarves, gloves and additional layers.

The school will ensure that its uniform requirements do not prevent pupils who walk or cycle to and from school from wearing clothing necessary for their safety, e.g. a coat that makes them more visible when travelling in dark conditions.

14. Labelling and lost property

Parents will be advised to ensure that all pupils' clothing and footwear is clearly labelled with their name and year group.

Any lost clothing will be taken to the lost property box by the school office. All lost property will be retained for half a term and will be disposed of if it is not collected within this time.

15. Non-uniform days and personal items

When planning non-uniform days, the school will consider:

- Any impact it may have on attendance.
- The expectations on appropriate clothing.
- The Behaviour Policy.
- The ability of pupils from low-income families to fully take part, e.g. where costumes or dressing up are involved.
- That participation should not be dependent on parents or pupils making a financial contribution.

16. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the chair of governors and the Co-headteachers. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2027.

The school will engage with parents and pupils when reviewing this policy.

Any subsequent changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff, pupils, parents and other relevant stakeholders.