Uniform Policy

The Sittingbourne School

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Contents

1. Policy Statement
2. Aims
3. Travelling to and from school
4. Uniform Expectations
5. Summer uniform
6. PE Kit
7. Jewellery and make-up
8. Equipment
9. Provision of Second-Hand Uniform
10. Compliance with the Equality Act 2010
11. Compliance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance
12. Complaints and Uniform Appeals
13. Common questions and answers

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1. Policy Statement

The Sittingbourne School holds high expectations and standards for all our young people, and we encourage a professional learning environment which prepares our students for the world of work and employability. We are developing a reputation in the local community as being a school that is well respected for its high standards and as an integral part of that we encourage our students to wear their uniform with pride. The wearing of uniform also removes opportunities for peer pressure and bullying with all students dressed to the same standard.

All Sittingbourne School students are therefore expected to maintain this high standard by coming to school smartly dressed in their full school uniform and wearing it in the conventional school style.

To further maintain this high standard of uniform, students are not allowed to wear any jewellery, including earrings and any other piercing, with the exception of a wristwatch. (We would recommend that ears should be pierced only at the beginning of a main holiday to allow time for healing so the earrings can be removed on return to school.) Discreet, natural make-up is allowed; however, any form of painted or acrylic nails, or brightly coloured make-up is not.

Parents and carers are reminded that you must be at least 18 years before you can have a tattoo; it is illegal for anyone to have a tattoo under 18 even with a guardian's consent.

The school welcomes children from all backgrounds and faith communities. If there are reasons linked to religion or beliefs that require a particular dress code - for example, wearing or carrying a specific religious artefact, dressing modestly or covering of the head - the school will look sympathetically at such requests. We will also consider the needs of individual students where the uniform policy may need to be adapted. If any parent has comments/ideas relating to school uniform they should make representation to the Headteacher in the first instance.

2. Aims

This policy aims to provide clear expectations for all stakeholders to ensure that all members of our school community can be included.

We anticipate the full support of parents and carers in maintaining a high standard of dress and see the wearing of the school uniform correctly as the responsibility of all members of the school community: students, parents/carers and staff. This policy will be used by all staff in conjunction with the school's behaviour policy and non-compliance of uniform expectations will be addressed by communities. Students not conforming to our uniform expectations, and not willing to resolve any issues, may be sent home to change or will be isolated within school. In order to support, students without correct uniform will be lent the required items by the school for a short period of time; they are expected to comply with this and return the items at the end of the school day. Students refusing to borrow the required clothing may not be permitted in lessons and parents will be contacted.

We do understand that the initial expense of a school uniform can be costly, but over time it has been found that it becomes more affordable, avoids conflict and is more manageable both for the students and their families. In order to support the expense, only our blazer, tie and school PE top are restricted to our school uniform suppliers, with generic items such as skirts, trousers and shirts being widely available from the large retailers. To further support in this initial outlay, one of our main suppliers also provides a six-weekly payment plan for the purchase of uniform.

In order to prevent lost items, we ask that all items of uniform are clearly marked with the owner's name. This is particularly essential for blazers and P.E. kit, which are both easily misplaced and expensive to replace.

3. Travelling to and from school

When students are travelling by public transport, or are walking or cycling to or from school, they are expected to conform to the uniform policy.

All students should have a strong school bag of a suitable size for school, large enough to carry an A4 book. Minimum essential equipment includes a pen, pencil and ruler.

Students are expected to wear their full uniforms on attendance to any school trips.

4. Uniform Expectations

UNIFORM	EXPECTED	School Supplier	UNACCEPTABLE
Blazer	Navy blue blazer with school crest embroidered on pocket, to be worn at all times in terms 1-5.	Forsters or Eastenders	
Year group tie	Colour stripe is specific to communities. It is to be worn in an appropriate and conventional length and style.	Forsters or Eastenders	Short length or unconventional knots.
School pullover (optional)	Plain, woolen, navy blue, V-neck, school style jumper worn underneath blazer in colder weather.	Any uniform retailer	Sweatshirts, hooded fleece tops or similar items are not permitted. Crew necks or logos.
School shirt or blouse	Plain white, standard collar with a top button which should be worn tucked into the waistband of skirt or trousers.	Any uniform retailer	A plain white vest or top can be worn under the shirt for warmth but must not show past the shirt sleeves or any logo be visible through the shirt or blouse fabric.
School trousers	Plain black, straight leg trousers.	Any uniform retailer	Not denim, cord, jeggings, leggings, tight or low fitting. No cargo trousers, skinnies or fashion styles.

School skirt	Black skirt with Charleston style pleats, worn at knee length.	Any uniform retailer	Jersey, stretch, satin, denim, lace, cord or patterns are not permitted, and skirts should not be tight to the hips. Skirts should be knee length. As a guide, skirts should be longer than the ends of the fingertips when arms and hands are held straight down by the side of the body.
School shorts (term 6 only)	Black, knee length and smart, tailored/chino style shorts in school trouser material	Any uniform retailer	Sports shorts; bermuda shorts; cargo/combat shorts; lycra shorts; denim/jean shorts
Shoes	Plain black leather or leather style shoes, fully closed in with a low heel. Plain black boots may be worn underneath trousers.	Any uniform retailer	Backless, open toes, sling-backs, or high heels are not allowed. Trainers must not be worn in place of shoes.
Socks	Plain black, if worn with trousers. Plain black or white if worn with a skirt or shorts.	Any uniform retailer	Socks must not be worn above the knee..
Tights	Plain black or natural tights.	Any uniform retailer	Coloured or patterned tights. Bare legs are not permitted without socks.
Coat	Conventional, warm, waterproof outer coat, preferably black, blue or grey.	Any retailer	Half zipped tops, sweatshirts, sports tops, gilets, denim, hooded fleece tops or similar items are not permitted.

5. Summer uniform

To address the high temperatures we typically experience in the summer term, the school uniform is as follows for **Term 6 only**:

UNIFORM	**EXPECTED**
Blazer	Not required
Year group tie	Colour stripe is specific to communities. It is to be worn in an appropriate and conventional length and style.
School pullover (optional)	Not required
School shirt or blouse	Plain white, standard collar with a top button which should be worn tucked into the waistband of skirt or trousers.
School trousers	Plain black, straight leg trousers.
School skirt	Black skirt with Charleston style pleats, worn at knee length.
School shorts	Black, knee length and smart, tailored/chino style shorts in school trouser material
Shoes	Plain black leather or leather style shoes, fully closed in with a low heel. Plain black boots may be worn underneath trousers.
Socks	Plain black or white if worn with a skirt or shorts. Not to be worn above the ankle.

Tights	Plain black or natural tights.
Coat	Not required

6. PE Kit

PE KIT	EXPECTED	School Supplier	UNACCEPTABLE
Top	Navy blue with white shoulder flash.	Forsters or Eastenders	Any colour other than navy.
Joggers or leggings	Plain, navy blue.	Any retailer	Any colour other than navy. Obvious, visible logos. Jersey tracksuit bottoms, lounge wear.
Shorts	Plain, navy blue.	Any uniform retailer	Large, visible logos.
Base layer (optional)	Plain, navy blue.	Any retailer	Any colour other than navy.
Rugby Top (optional)	Reversible, navy blue and white.	Forsters or Eastenders	
Sweatshirt (optional)	Plain blue crew neck sweatshirt.	Any retailer	
Trainers and football boots		Any sport retailer	
Gumshield (highly recommended)		Any retailer	
BTEC sports studies top (optional)	Individually named.	School	

7. Jewellery & make-up

	PERMITTED	UNACCEPTABLE
Jewellery	Wristwatch.	Any other jewellery, including earrings.
Make-Up	Discrete, natural make-up.	False nails, painted nails or brightly coloured make-up. False eyelashes

8. Equipment

All students will be required to bring to school sufficient equipment to engage in a full day's learning. Students must have the following items with them every day in school:

- A bag big enough to carry A4 exercise books to and from school
- Black or blue ink pens
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scientific calculator
- Reading book (from school library)
- Reusable water bottle

9. Provision of Second-Hand Uniform

In line with Department for Education guidance to ensure school uniform remains affordable and sustainable for all families, The Sittingbourne School operates a pre-loved uniform scheme.

- Availability: High-quality, second-hand uniform items are available for purchase directly from our Student Services department.
- Stock and Pricing: Available items fluctuate depending on supply but typically include core uniform pieces and PE kit at significantly reduced prices.
- Uniform Donations: To keep this scheme running successfully, we kindly ask parents and carers to donate any clean, good-condition uniform items that their children have outgrown. Donations can be dropped off at the main school reception at any time during the school year.

10. Compliance with the Equality Act 2010

The Sittingbourne School is committed to promoting equality, celebrating diversity and ensuring that our uniform policy does not unfairly disadvantage any student. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the school ensures its uniform expectations are practical, inclusive, and non-discriminatory across all protected characteristics.

Religious and Cultural Dress

The school welcomes children from all backgrounds and faith communities. If there are reasons linked to religion or beliefs that require a specific dress code—such as wearing or carrying a specific religious artefact, dressing modestly or covering the head—the school will look sympathetically at such requests.

Race and Cultural Heritage

Our policy avoids race-based discrimination by ensuring that uniform and appearance standards are inclusive of all cultural backgrounds. This includes welcoming protective hairstyles, natural Afro hair, cornrows, braids, locks and twists, in line with the Halo Code and national equality guidelines.

Sex and Gender Identity

The Sittingbourne School provides a gender-neutral uniform framework. All students, regardless of sex or gender identity, have equal access to the same uniform options, including trousers, skirts, and shorts (during Term 6).

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We recognise that some students may have specific medical conditions, physical disabilities or sensory processing needs that make certain aspects of the standard uniform challenging to wear. The school will consider the needs of individual students where the uniform policy may need to be adapted.

Making a Request: Parents or carers who wish to request a reasonable adjustment or adaptation to the uniform policy on the grounds of religion, belief, medical need or disability should make representation to the Headteacher in the first instance. Each request will be considered thoroughly and compassionately on an individual basis.

11. Compliance with Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

Department for Education guidance to schools on uniform can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform/school-uniforms

In developing and implementing this uniform policy, The Sittingbourne School fully complies with the statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (*Cost of school uniforms*, statutory guidance under the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021).

The school has given high priority to cost considerations, value for money and sustainability for all families through the following measures:

- **Limiting Branded Items:** To minimize costs for parents and carers, the school keeps branded or restricted uniform items to a strict minimum. Only the blazer and tie are required to be purchased from our specialist uniform suppliers.
- **Use of High Street Alternatives:** All other core uniform items—including plain white shirts, black trousers, pleated skirts, black shorts, plain jumpers, plain socks, and tights—are generic and widely available from major retailers and affordable high street outlets.
- **Second-Hand Uniform Provision:** In line with statutory expectations, the school operates a dedicated pre-loved uniform scheme managed by the Student Services department. High-quality second-hand uniform items and PE kits are made available at significantly reduced prices. See section 9 above for more information.
- **Direct Financial and Practical Support:** The school provides direct support to families struggling with uniform costs through short-term lending arrangements or purchasing assistance via the student's year team.
- **Fair Supplier Agreements:** Uniform supplier contracts are reviewed regularly through open and competitive processes to ensure ongoing quality and high value for money for families.

12. Complaints and Uniform Appeals

The Sittingbourne School values open communication and welcomes constructive feedback from all stakeholders regarding our uniform expectations. We understand that disputes or concerns regarding the implementation of this policy may occasionally arise.

- **Informal Resolution:** In the first instance, parents or carers who have concerns about how the uniform policy is being applied to their child should contact their child's year team or community lead. Most uniform issues can be resolved quickly and collaboratively through this informal discussion. Please use our contact form here to contact your child's year team: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEgZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform
- **Formal Complaints:** If a uniform dispute cannot be resolved informally, or if a parent wishes to challenge a decision regarding a requested uniform adaptation, a formal complaint can be lodged via our online complaints form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfCxRcn7asAf4dkageyzSG8vbiZI-AtsdeU5oO1xM_GE57RMA/viewform
- **Procedure:** All formal complaints regarding school uniform will be handled in accordance with the Swale Academies Trust's **Complaints Policy**. This policy outlines the specific stages of review, timelines for responses and options for escalating the matter to the Governing Body if necessary.

13. Common questions and answers

Q) Trainers/a hoody/earrings don't disturb their learning so why can't my child wear them in school?
A) As soon as there is variation in what a child can wear there becomes the option for the item to be either expensive or cheap, fashionable or unfashionable. Once this happens, students can feel anxious about falling victim to unkind comments for wearing the "wrong" type of clothing or jewellery. Therefore, to reduce anxiety, increase safety and reduce potential distractions caused by students wearing "fashion items" in class, uniform is compulsory for all students. When wearing a hood, it makes an individual harder to identify. This can then cause a safety issue as we may be unable to identify if a person is meant to be on the school site or not.

Q) Uniform can be expensive. What shall I do if I can't afford to buy/replace what is needed?

A) Any parents/carers who are struggling to purchase the required uniform should contact their child's year team. We are able to provide support to families by lending or purchasing items to/for students to ensure they comply with the uniform policy.

Q) My child had their ears/nose pierced over the holiday/for their birthday but the hole will heal up if they take the piercing out within two weeks. Can they keep the earring/nose stud in for just a week or two to prevent this?

A) We would recommend that ears should be pierced only at the beginning of a main holiday term (not half term holidays as they are only one week long) to allow time for healing so the earrings can be removed on return to school. All jewellery other than a watch will be confiscated if seen in school.

Q) In the summer months, why can't students just wear PE kit?

A) It's understandable why some might suggest wearing a PE kit during the summer months. However, crucially for summer comfort, we believe students will actually be cooler in their white cotton school shirts with shorts or skirts than in a navy polyester PE kit. Cotton is a natural, breathable fabric that allows for better air circulation and prevents sweat more effectively than polyester, especially in direct sunlight. Darker colours like navy also absorb more heat.

In addition, while our PE kit is designed for physical activity, it's not intended as a substitute for a full school uniform. The school uniform, even with summer adaptations, maintains a level of formality and distinction that the PE kit doesn't. This helps foster a more focused and academic environment, setting it apart from sports lessons.