



**10 October 2022**

**Agenda Item: 6**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND  
INCLUSION**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE COST OF SCHOOL UNIFORM**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide information to the Select Committee about school uniform and about the existing school clothing policy including comparative rates of neighbouring local authority areas. The existing budget is £500 per annum and any expenditure must be met by the Council. Any additional expenditure, or increased rates as a result of a change to the existing policy would require a Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

**Information**

**Information in relation to school uniforms**

2. The Department for Education strongly encourages schools to have a uniform that can play a key role in promoting the ethos of a school, providing a sense of belonging and identity as well as setting an appropriate tone for education. Every education setting is free to choose the school uniform requirements for their organisation and could decide not to have a uniform, either for the whole setting or for selected year groups.
3. Guidance was issued under the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021 that requires all schools to review their current uniform policy to determine if any changes are required. The appropriate authorities of relevant schools are expected to have regard to this guidance when developing and implementing their school's uniform policy, as well as ensuring that their uniform is affordable. In considering the costs, schools are required to think about the total cost of all aspects of the uniform, including physical education clothing and items required for other specific subject areas. Schools are also expected to ensure that their uniform supplier arrangements give the highest priority to cost and value for money and keep the use of branded items to a minimum. Each school's uniform policy should be published on the school's website to ensure that it is available for all parents, including parents of prospective pupils, and should be easily understandable.

4. Schools are also expected to ensure that second-hand uniforms are available for parents to acquire. Information on how second-hand uniforms can be accessed should be clear for parents of both current and prospective pupils and should be published on the school's website.
5. Governing boards are expected to ensure that their education setting is compliant with the School Uniform Guidance by September 2022 unless this would breach a pre-existing contract, an informal agreement with a uniform supplier or where a school needs to run a competitive tender to set up a new contract for their uniform.
6. The affordability of school uniform for families on low income can be a key concern. Most schools and academies in Nottinghamshire have additional systems of support in relation to school uniform for families who are facing exceptional difficulty and/or when there is a major change to the uniform of the school. Parents and carers are encouraged to contact their child's school, or potential school, directly to request further information about the help that may be available to them.

### Information in relation to Nottinghamshire County Council school clothing allowances

7. School clothing allowances are discretionary and any allowance must be funded by the Council. Discretionary clothing allowance has not been available since 2010/2011 for families living in Nottinghamshire. The Council maintained discretion to consider, under Section 510 of the Education Act and Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2002, requests for assistance from families in exceptional circumstances to support the most vulnerable families. Included in this category are families who have lost clothes in a fire, a flood, theft, have been made homeless or who are fleeing domestic violence.
8. Most neighbouring local authorities do not offer school clothing allowances and where offered the majority are lower value than that offered in Nottinghamshire:

Local authority	Amount	Age range	School type	Income
Nottinghamshire	Maximum of £50	All school age	All school types (main/acad/free)	Assessed
Nottingham City	£15 £20 £40 £30	Reception/Y1/Y11 Year 4 Year 7 Year 9	Maintained only Maintained only Maintained only Maintained only	FSM* qualifier only FSM qualifier only FSM qualifier only FSM qualifier only
Derbyshire	No scheme			
Doncaster	No scheme			
Leicestershire	No scheme			
Lincolnshire	No scheme			
Rotherham	Financial support in vouchers via school	Key transition points (reception; infant to a junior school; primary to a secondary school)	Only transition staged	FSM qualifier only (Household support fund linked)
Sheffield City Council	£75 £125	Primary age Secondary age		Upon receipt of proof of financial hardship (Household support fund linked)

\*FSM – Free school meal

9. A maximum allowance of £50 per qualifying pupil has been set within the existing Nottinghamshire County Council policy. As a guide a scale of payments are adopted as:

- 50% of the maximum allowance for primary age children
- 75% of the maximum allowance for other secondary age children.

This applies to all school age children and to families living out of the County if their children attend a school in Nottinghamshire. Each case is assessed individually, and an amount determined, for example a family that has requested support following a house fire where all clothing has been destroyed would receive consideration for the maximum allowance payable at £50 per child. In other cases where the family require some additional support with clothing, the amount payable is usually set at 50% of the maximum allowance (that is, £25 for primary age) and 75% of the maximum allowance (that is, £37.50 for secondary age) depending upon the specific family circumstances.

10. To date in the 2022-2023 financial year, 97 requests for support have been made. There has been an increase in requests as a result of the arrival of families on the Homes for Ukraine (H4U) Scheme. Those families awarded allowances who were part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme have been funded outside of the Council budget (central source from Department for Education). There has been an increase in the claims to date during this financial year (excluding H4U) which could be attributed to the current cost of living situation but there is no firm evidence regarding this.

- 84 applications for children were approved (67 H4U)
- 13 applications for children were refused (6 H4U – repeat applications).

11. Information is available on the Council's public website about the school clothing allowance and advice on how applications can be submitted. In addition, information is included in the Admissions to Schools: Guide for Parents each year.

12. Clothing Allowance payments over the last four years are as follows:

Financial Year	Number of payments made through the Clothing Allowance	Clothing Allowance Costs attributed to NCC
2022-2023 *	84 (17 NCC/ 67 DFE)	£280
2021-2022	15	£311.25
2020-2021	3	£78.75
2019-2020	4	£118.15

*\*The data for the financial year 2022-2023 is partial - from April- August*

For 2022-2023 17 applications have been received directly, the additional payments are made through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme funded outside the Local Authority policy.

## **Other Options Considered**

13. In line with the County Council's financial regulations, school clothing and footwear allowances are reviewed annually.
14. Consideration could be given to increasing the rates set within the policy, but any additional expenditure would need to be met by existing Council budget. The policy must be reviewed before the next financial year.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

15. The existing arrangements enable the most vulnerable families, irrespective of age or the type of school their child attends, to apply for assistance with school clothing allowance. The values set are intended to support families with the cost of school uniform.
16. Statutory guidance from the Department for Education requires all schools to consider the cost of school uniform when developing and implementing their uniform policy. Schools must ensure that uniform is affordable and branded items kept to a minimum.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Select Committee considers whether the current policy is sufficient and whether they would wish to influence future policy development in the area of school clothing allowances through pre-decision scrutiny.

**Peter McConnochie**  
**Service Director, Education, Learning and Inclusion**

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## **Constitutional Comments (KK 09/09/22)**

17. The proposal in this report falls within the terms of reference of the Children and Young People's Select Committee.

## **Financial Comments (MDN 14/09/22)**

18. The budget for Children and Families Services for 2022/23 anticipates that a determination will be made in respect of discretionary powers not to assist students as recommended in this report.
19. There may be a small amount of funding claimed to support families with the cost of school clothing and footwear under exceptional circumstances. Based on the claims made in 2021/22, the cost is likely to be under £500 (see **paragraph 12**). There will be no specific

budget for this but as the cost is minimal it can be contained within the overall Education, Learning & Skills budget of £6.6m.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[School Uniform Guidance for Schools updated 19 November 2021](#)

[Education \(Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms\) Act 2021](#)

[Cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Financial support for students in Post 16 Education and exceptional payments for school clothing and footwear 2022/23 - report to Children & Young People's Committee on 7 March 2022](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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