

19 May 2014**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND
INCLUSION****EXCEPTIONAL PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOL CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR
2014/2015****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval to continue to adopt an agreed scale of payments for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances, subject to discretion.

Information and advice

2. School clothing allowances are discretionary and any allowance scheme must be funded by the County Council. Discretionary school clothing allowance has not been available since 2010/2011 for families living in Nottinghamshire. However, the County Council retains discretion to consider requests from families for support with clothing and footwear under exceptional circumstances. Discretionary payments of £379.16 were made during the 2013/2014 financial year.
3. In order not to fetter its discretion, the County Council must consider, under Section 510 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2002, requests for assistance from families in exceptional circumstances. This applies to all school age children and to families living outside the County if their children attend County schools.
4. Exceptional circumstances are defined as "families who have experienced and can demonstrate severe hardship which has resulted in the family being unable to afford the cost of school uniform and where this affects the ability of the children attending school". Included in this category would be families who have lost clothes in a fire, a flood, theft, have been made homeless or are fleeing domestic violence.
5. In order to ensure that there is consistency and fairness in the amounts paid out under the category of exceptional circumstances, it is proposed to continue to adopt, as a guide only, a scale of payments up to a maximum allowance of £50 per qualifying pupil:
 - 25% of the full allowance to infant school children
 - 50% of the full allowance to junior school and Year 11 children
 - 75% of the full allowance to other secondary school children.
6. This is a guide only, as the County Council must consider the circumstances of individual cases in order not to fetter its discretion.

Other options considered

7. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for recommendation/s

8. In line with the County Council's financial regulations, school clothing and footwear allowances are reviewed annually and as explained in this report it is proposed to continue to provide a fair and consistent approach for determining the amount of allowances paid under the exceptional circumstances category.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

10. The provision of clothing and footwear allowances remains an important element of the County Council's overall programme to overcome social and educational disadvantage and the County Council will continue to consider requests for provision of clothing assistance support for pupils from financially disadvantaged backgrounds in exceptional cases.

RECOMMENDATION/S

11. That approval is given to continue to apply, as a guide only, a scale of payments for allowances granted under the exceptional circumstances category up to a maximum of £50 per qualifying pupil: 25% of the full allowance for infant school children, 50% of the full allowance for junior school and Year 11 children and 75% of the full allowance for other secondary school children. Individual circumstances will be taken into consideration when determining the amount.

John Slater

Service Director, Education Standards and Inclusion

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Marion Clay
Group Manager, Support to Schools Service
T: 0115 9772073
E: marion.clay@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LM 16/04/14)

12. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (KLA 15/04/14)

13. As the recommendation is to continue with existing arrangements, there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/atoz/s/school-clothing-grants/

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0414