

March 2024

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

Re: Uniform Policy 2024- Consultation

We are seeking your input on the suggested changes to the school uniform policy, which is planned to come into effect from 1 September 2024. Your opinion is valued, and we believe that involving the school community in this decision-making process is essential.

You will find the details of the proposed changes to the uniform policy in this letter alongside a frequently asked questions section. We would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to review the document and share your thoughts with us via the link provided at the bottom of this letter. The Governing Body and Trustees have considered the proposals in line with the Department for Education Statutory Guidance – Cost of School Uniform (see link below).

The proposal:

- To replace the current black optional skirt with an optional academy specific patterned pleated skirt. Students would not be allowed to wear their current black skirt from September 2024.

What is wrong with the current uniform and why change this?

Currently there are significant inconsistencies in the skirts that are worn, and this is in part, due to a wide range of commercially available black skirts. Many of these are considered 'fashionable' and are not appropriate for school or a designer label shows a disparity between those that can afford items, and those that cannot.

The variety of styles available means it is exceedingly difficult for staff, parents and students to understand and agree what does, and does not meet school uniform policy requirements. Some teaching staff and students have commented that they feel uncomfortable in challenging or being challenged over inappropriate uniform. The proposed skirt will eliminate these inconsistencies and any uncertainty as to whether a particular skirt meets our uniform policy. The proposals under consultation can help create a distinctive identity from that of other schools and help promote pride within the school.

Please note students would continue to have the option not to wear a skirt and wear school trousers in line with the academy policy.

The consultation will end at **9.00am on Monday 22 April 2024**. Replies to the consultation can be sent via the link below, posted to the Principals PA via the school address or left at reception. The consultation will also involve students who will receive the consultation survey as well as part of a planned series of events w/b 15 April 2024 with form tutor representatives and student council members.

Principal: Mr S Barlow
South Axholme Academy
Burnham Road, Epworth
Doncaster, DN9 1BY
Tel: (01427) 872121
E-mail: admin@southaxholme-iet.co.uk
www.southaxholmeacademy.co.uk

To complete the consultation, please use this link;

[UNIFORM CONSULTATION SURVEY FOR COMPLETION](#)

The academy is committed to working in partnership with parents and we are always willing to discuss concerns. However, we do expect all parents to work in mutual co-operation with the school and to treat staff with the respect. Please note abusive, personal or inappropriate comments submitted as part of the consultation will not be included within the consultation feedback.

Yours sincerely



Mr S Barlow
Principal
South Axholme Academy

FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

Why do we have school uniform?

Our school uniform plays an important part in communicating our school ethos and expectations. Wearing a uniform is a badge of pride. It helps build a sense of community within our school. It gives students a sense of belonging and creates an identity for our school in the community.

Wearing the school uniform correctly demonstrates a student's respect for their school and for others and contributes towards good school discipline. It teaches students to take pride in their appearance.

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Some businesses now have a more relaxed view towards business dress, should the school not adopt this approach?

The Governors and Trustees are clear that uniform plays a major role in the South Axholme Academy values and they agree with the Department for Education that uniform can play a key role in promoting the ethos of a school, provides a sense of belonging and identity and sets an appropriate

tone for education. The academy has always had a uniform, and this is made clear to parents and carers on entry to the academy.

Why has this information and consultation not happened sooner?

A series of meetings have happened prior the consultation with uniform suppliers considering price, availability, style, and durability / value for money. This information has then been shared and discussed with South Axholme Academy Governing Body in February and discussed at IET board level earlier this week.

Why have you selected the proposed colour and not allowed a choice by students or parents?

An analysis has taken place on the colour, style, price and quality of skirt. There are cheaper patterned skirts however, it was felt the quality was not as durable as those offered by our current supplier – Sports Wear International. If the academy decided on a bespoke skirt and colour away from the options provided by Sports Wear International this would add a further significant cost. From the range they have readily available and in stock annually we have selected the skirt that contains the colour black, matching the blazer. This skirt also distinguishes the academy from other schools. Photos of this are shown below. Whilst we considered using an alternative supplier for the skirts the quality, cost, availability and convenience to parents of using Sports Wear International was considered the best option.

Would students have to wear the new optional skirts?

As is the current policy skirts can be worn by any student and are optional. If students do not want to wear skirts, they can wear black school trousers. They would not be allowed to continue to wear their black skirt or be allowed to wear other coloured skirts. There are no plans to replace the current requirements for black school trousers with specific details found on the academy website.

Why are tailored shorts not being considered as well?

These have been discussed however, initial discussions with students have indicated only very few students would wear these, typically some Year 7 only. By adding another potential optional garment, we believe this could increase the cost to parents and carers with potential minimal usage after purchase.

Could the uniform have been phased into the academy?

This was considered however, the Governors and Trustees believe that the benefits identified in earlier points regarding a sense of belonging and identity needs to happen across the academy.

What is the cost of the new skirt?

The proposed skirt will cost the following for 24-25. This would only be available from Sportswear International but remains optional.

Prices Junior £21.90 and Senior (Inc VAT) £27.45

Do the skirts come in a variety of sizes?

In a similar way to blazers skirts come in different waist and length sizes. We would expect that the skirt length meets the current requirements. All skirts have an adjustable waist feature to allow for growth.

The new proposal will see an increase in cost for parents. In difficult financial times could this not be delayed, or the current uniform continue?

The academy understand that many families are struggling in regard to the cost of living. The proposed optional skirt purchase will be typically more expensive than a black skirt purchased from normal retailers. Most students do purchase multiple skirts or skirts annually and we believe that the skirt selected provides similar durability to that of the blazer as well as adjustable waist options which can grow with the student. The academy would continue to support hardship cases as it does currently.

How does the proposed changes meet the statutory guidance on school uniform?

The academy, Governors and Trustees follow the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021. They understand that the importance of considering the cost implications of any changes and value for money including the quality and durability of the garment.

The academy will continue to make available second-hand uniform and purchase some of the new skirts to support families if required. The academy continues to have stitch on badges for much of its uniform.

Why does the skirt requirement need to be a school specific pattern? Why can it not be a school specific black pleated skirt?

Our current stockists Sportswear International do sell black pleated skirts to allow a one-stop shop approach, however, uptake has been low with a preference for black skirts from other retailers. As highlighted previously this then creates inconsistencies in the type of skirt purchased with many not meeting the academy uniform policy.

A more cost effective and durable school patterned skirt would provide parents with more clarity regarding the regulations on skirts.

What do other local schools have for their uniform?

Our two nearest secondary schools, Axholme Academy - North Lincolnshire and Hayfield Academy - Doncaster, both have optional patterned skirts. Other schools within North Lincolnshire and Doncaster also have optional coloured patterned skirts.

Other schools within North Lincolnshire and Doncaster have specified coloured skirts similar to our current arrangement, black, navy and grey being the most common. There is a school in Doncaster whose dress code does not specify a specific uniform.

Have other schools been contacted regarding their move to coloured skirts?

Yes, other schools have been visited and views taken from stakeholders about the impact of a change to patterned skirts.

How might a proposed uniform change promote positive relationships?

Introducing a change to the uniform with consistency of skirts worn eliminates the potential conflict arising over suitability. This allows teachers and students to concentrate on what is important - teaching and learning.

The Department for Education recognise the importance of school uniform highlighted below: We strongly encourage schools to have a uniform as it can play a key role in:

- promoting the ethos of a school
- providing a sense of belonging and identity
- setting an appropriate tone for education

How does our uniform meet the equality act 2010?

The [Equality Act 2010](#) prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include sex, race, religion or belief, and gender reassignment.

To avoid discrimination, our academy will:

- Avoid listing uniform items based on sex, to give all students the opportunity to wear the uniform they feel most comfortable in or that most reflects their self-identified gender

Is the school making money from the change?

The school will not profit or receive any source of income in any way from any change in uniform that may be introduced.

What other feedback has the academy received about the uniform?

Some staff, students and parents have commented that they feel the standard of our school uniform looks inferior to those worn by students at other local schools.

How is the academy consulting with stakeholders over proposed uniform changes?

The school is consulting widely. Our prospective Year 6 parents will also have an opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposals. Staff at the school will be consulted. We have also shared proposals and sought feedback from the Governing Body. We have opened consultation to parents and students across the academy. Students will have further opportunities post Easter to discuss the optional skirt proposal.

Consultation with students will take place via a variety of different methods including the consultation Microsoft Form and a week of discussions and opportunities to share thoughts. The school will continue to reflect on feedback provided by stakeholders in assessing whether any further consultation opportunities would be helpful.

If there is a change to school uniform, what assistance is available to support families in purchasing new uniform?

Student uniform grants are available to those students, whose parents are eligible for Free School Meals.

What happens after the consultation finishes?

The comments will be collated and shared with the Governing Body at their next meeting on Tuesday 23 April. The Governors will decide based on the consultation, and this will be shared with Isle Education Trust at a further meeting.

We would hope to have confirmation by early May as we are conscious that some parents may want to plan to purchase their uniform for September.

Government Link on – Guidance School Uniforms

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform/school-uniforms>

Government Link on Cost of School Uniforms

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-of-school-uniforms/cost-of-school-uniforms>

Potential Style and Colour - please see the next page

