



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE 1411](#)

Main Petitioner: Luca Scarabello

Subject: School uniform

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform school uniform policies by stopping gender-specific uniforms and changing clothes worn for uniforms to more comfortable, less physically restrictive, more affordable and practical garments.

Background

Many schools encourage the wearing of school uniform although pupils are not obliged by law to wear this form of dress. Head teachers can, however, insist on an acceptable standard of dress. Banning particular garments or jewellery should be based on reasonable grounds.

The importance of dress code was noted in the report of the [Discipline Task Group – Better Behaviour, Better Learning](#) (2001). This recommended that:

“...schools should consult with pupils, teachers and parents/carers in order to agree a dress code for children and young people. Local authorities should support schools in the implementation of their agreed dress codes”. (p30)

An update in 2004 found that most schools had introduced dress codes, in consultation with pupil councils, parents, carers, school boards and staff and sanctioned by the local authorities. Over 89% of schools have introduced dress codes and have done so successfully.

A survey by the Office of Fair Trading in 2006 found, based on sample data, that 75% of state schools in Scotland specify uniform requirements, compared to 84% in England, 81% in Northern Ireland and 64% in Wales (quoted in school clothing grant report referred to below).

Scottish Government Action

Other than the recommendation of the Discipline Task Group, there is no specific Government guidance on the issue of dress codes. In relation to the argument about affordability, the Government had a working group on school

clothing grants. The [report](#) was published in January 2011 and found significant disparity between the average grant and the average cost of school uniform. The main recommendation of the group was that the Scottish Government and COSLA should produce joint guidance for local authorities in respect of the school clothing grant.

Scottish Parliament Action

There has been little parliamentary activity on the specific issue of the type of dress code in schools, although there was a petition in 2007 on the school clothing grant issue (PE 999). In June 2011, Rhoda Grant asked what support the Government will provide to low-income families to help meet the costs associated with school in this parliamentary session.

[Question S4W-00900 - Rhoda Grant \(Highlands and Islands\) \(Scottish Labour\) \(Date Lodged 15/06/2011\)](#)

Answered by Michael Russell (27/06/2011):

This is a matter for education authorities. However, we will look to work with local authorities to identify steps we can take in the future to improve support for low income families to help meet the costs associated with school, for example, school uniforms and school trips.

Camilla Kidner

Senior Researcher

22nd November 2011

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