

# **Midlothian schools no longer allowed to enforce branded uniforms on pupils**

**Schools in Midlothian will no longer be allowed to enforce branded uniforms on pupils under new directions to be introduced from August this year.**

Midlothian councillors approved a range of 'expectations' drawn up by its school staff and pupils following consultations which aim to reduce the costs for families at a meeting this wee.

And they added an additional directive which will ensure schools cannot promote or demand branding on uniforms in the future.

The additional line, approved by councillors, and taken from national guidance says "branded items of uniform and blazers should not be compulsory, nor promoted or encouraged by schools".

Midlothian councillors agreed last summer to direct its schools to adopt unbranded uniforms amid concerns about the additional costs involved.

A report to councillors this week set out the Midlothian Expectations drawn up after its Parent & Learner Liaison Officer (PLL0) consulted with pupils, parents and school leaders on school uniform policy.

It found strong opinions across the schools about some aspects of uniform including a desire to retain items such as P7 leavers hoodies and different colours used by different schools.

The report said that the expectations had been created for all schools but allowed for local decision making 'based on local context'.

They include all schools having a uniform and clothing policy which meets the needs of pupils and the wider community and is clear and accessible.

Schools are also asked to support families with access to pre-loved uniform and promote the school clothing grant, available via the council and to carefully consider their approach to "special occasions, school trips and dress-down days" to "mitigate any barriers to participation".

Councillor Kelly Drummond, who brought the original motion last summer, put forward an amendment to the 'expectations' to add the line about branded items no longer being compulsory, which was backed by fellow Councillor David Virgo and accepted by colleagues.

Councillor Ellen Scott, cabinet spokesperson on education, told the meeting the work carried out by the schools to draw up the new policy and address issues surrounding uniforms should be recognised.

And she praised efforts to reduce costs of the school day for families as well as find ways to identify pupils without additional branding.

She said: "Most schools provide uniform banks which not only support the cost for families but are a greener way to live.

"Most of the schools go for colours, something to make pupils

visible to teachers. That is quite important in the schools, especially the big schools. You have got to know your pupils and there has been incidents where pupils from outside the area have gone into our schools so having colours at least helps a lot.”

Councillor Scott said one of the most important points was to ensure the views of staff and pupils were taken into account on any uniform policy adding they ‘know what suits their school best’.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter