



Carrickfergus Grammar School

Uniform Policy Rationale and Affordability Framework

Introduction

Carrickfergus Grammar School recognises the importance of maintaining a school uniform which reflects the values, ethos and identity of the school whilst also ensuring that uniform requirements remain affordable, practical and proportionate for all families.

The school acknowledges its responsibilities under the relevant Northern Ireland legislation and guidance relating to school uniform affordability, equality, consultation and value for money.

In reviewing its uniform policy, the school undertook consultation with parents and pupils and carefully considered:

- affordability and value for money;
- durability and longevity of items;
- equality and inclusion considerations;
- practical suitability for school life;
- parental feedback;
- opportunities to reduce unnecessary cost;
- availability of generic alternatives where appropriate;
- and access to pre-loved uniform support.

A parental consultation survey was undertaken with 220 responses received.

A pupil survey was undertaken with 178 responses.

A steering group comprising of Governors, teachers, members of the school's Parents' Association and co-ordinators of the school's pre-loved uniform shop was created to review existing uniform policy and propose amendments in line with the School Uniforms Act.

This document outlines how the school is aiming to meet the guidelines outlined in the Act. At various junctures throughout the document there is reference to 'Amendments' to policy which reflect how the school's uniform policy has evolved as a result of the School Uniforms Act.

1. Rationale for School Uniform

Carrickfergus Grammar School believes that school uniform plays an important role in:

- fostering a sense of identity and belonging;
- promoting pride in the school community;
- encouraging high standards and professionalism;
- reducing visible social inequality amongst pupils;
- supporting positive behaviour and school culture;
- ensuring pupils are dressed appropriately and safely for learning;
- and assisting the school in presenting a clear and recognisable identity within the wider community.

The school's consultation process demonstrated very strong parental support for school uniform generally.

- 93% of parents surveyed agreed that school uniform helps to foster a sense of community and identity amongst pupils.
- 93% of parents surveyed agreed that school uniform helps to foster a sense of equity amongst pupils.
- 77.8% of pupils believe that a school uniform helps to foster a sense of community and identity.
- 78.4% of pupils believe that school uniform helps all pupils to feel equal.

This feedback strongly supports the continuation of a school uniform policy.

2. Rationale for Branded Items

The school has carefully reviewed the number of branded items required and seeks to ensure that branding is limited only to items where there is a clear educational, pastoral or identity-based rationale.

Blazer

The school blazer remains a central part of the Carrickfergus Grammar School identity.

The blazer:

- promotes a strong sense of belonging and school pride;
- supports the school's culture of high standards and professionalism;
- allows pupils to be readily identifiable during educational visits and public events;
- contributes positively to safeguarding and supervision;

- provides consistency across the school community;
- and reflects the long-established ethos and traditions of the school.

The school recognises the need to balance identity with affordability and has therefore reviewed parental feedback regarding cost and durability.

Parental survey responses demonstrated:

- 80% of parents indicated that they are prepared to pay slightly more for higher quality and more durable items.
- 70% of parents indicated that uniform items are often used beyond one academic year or passed on to younger siblings or family friends.
- The majority of parents reported receiving between one and two years of wear from a full wool blazer.
- A significant majority of parents expressed support for consideration of a mixed wool/polyester blazer option at a lower price point.

As a result, the school will continue to review blazer material options to ensure an appropriate balance between:

- durability;
- comfort;
- presentation;
- sustainability;
- and affordability.

AMENDMENTS:

- 70% of parents favoured the introduction of a blazer made from a mixture of wool (60%) and polyester material which would retail at a cheaper price. Some suppliers are now offering a 'hybrid' woollen (60%) / polyester blazer at a cheaper cost than the 100% woollen blazer.

School Tie

The school tie remains a branded item because it:

- contributes significantly to school identity;
- is a relatively low-cost item;
- assists with maintaining a professional appearance;
- and supports consistency across the pupil body.

The tie is durable, transferable between siblings and generally requires infrequent replacement.

AMENDMENTS:

- Following discussion with local uniform suppliers, the price of a standard Carrickfergus Grammar School tie has been reduced to £7.

Skirt

The school skirt is moving to mid-calf length in September 2026 from the current knee-length skirt. This was communicated to parents in February 2025, and in June 2025 parents were notified that the school would instigate a year-long 'transition' period. This 'transition' period was to ensure that pupils got maximum use out of any current skirts, and to give parents substantial time to prepare for the transition.

Prices for the mid-calf length skirts are extremely comparable with the price of the outgoing, pleated knee-length skirt.

School will continue to monitor the full transition to the new skirt, and based on feedback will continue to work with suppliers to ensure that the new skirt offers maximum comfort for pupils.

PE and Games Branding

The school recognises the need to minimise excessive compulsory branding within PE and Games provision.

Branded items are currently limited to those required to:

- identify pupils representing the school;
- promote a sense of belonging and teamwork;
- ensure consistency during fixtures and sporting events;
- and provide durable sportswear suitable for regular physical activity.

The school will continue to review the extent of branding required within PE provision.

Carrickfergus Grammar School believes that dedicated PE and Games clothing remains appropriate for the following reasons:

- hygiene and comfort during physical activity;
- suitability for outdoor and indoor sporting activities;
- safety considerations;
- durability under sporting conditions;
- weather appropriateness;
- and encouragement of active participation in physical education.

The school also recognises the need to ensure that PE requirements remain proportionate and affordable.

Parental consultation demonstrated:

- strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of current PE kit;
- majority support for the current PE list remaining broadly acceptable;
- and significant support for greater purchasing flexibility through an additional online supplier option.

The survey demonstrated that:

- almost 70% of parents rated the quality of the current PE kit positively. Only 11.3% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of the branded PE kit;
- 57% of parents indicated that the current PE kit list is acceptable as it currently stands;
- 80% of pupil responses indicated satisfaction with the quality of PE kit;
- 93.3% of pupils responded with 3, 4 and 5 when asked how comfortable you the PE kit was when doing sport. (1 not comfortable, 5 very comfortable).

The school will therefore continue to review:

- the number of compulsory PE items;
- opportunities to reduce unnecessary duplication;
- and the potential for increased flexibility through generic or optional items where appropriate.

The school also notes that a clear majority of parents (77.7%) indicated that they would be willing to purchase branded sportswear where pupils are representing the school in competitive sport.

AMENDMENTS:

The school has considered very carefully its current PE kit. The following amendments will apply to policy:

- School will be much more explicit in its uniform policy, giving parents and pupils clear (and visual, where applicable) guidance on what are essential and what are non-essential items of PE kit;
- The school PE hoodie remains popular with pupils. A new, cheaper, non-branded school hoodie will be available from suppliers for wearing from September 2026. This should retail at under £30, compared to the current cost of £54 for a school hoodie. A school hoodie is optional
- The school 'training polo' will move to the same colour for both boys and girls (navy). This will be introduced in a staggered capacity, starting with Year 8 in September 2027. This means that parents of pupils with younger siblings of a different gender who ultimately attend the school can re-use the training polo. Girls in Year 9 upwards who

already own a maroon training polo can continue to use this, or they can wear the navy training polo, should they wish.

- Essential branded kit is being reduced. The track pants / hoodie and quarter zip are all optional from September 2026. From September 2024, on Games days, pupils have been permitted to wear PE kit to school. This will continue on the premise that it supports parents with washing of uniform / kit. Track pants must be worn until the commencement of Games. If a pupil does not have track pants, school uniform can be worn and pupils can change into essential PE kit at the commencement of Games.
- The cheaper 'House' t-shirt, retailing at under £10, is optional for timetabled PE lessons. The training polo or rugby jersey may also be used for Games lessons.

4. Generic Items and Opportunities to Reduce Cost

The school actively seeks to minimise unnecessary cost by permitting a range of generic items which may be purchased from supermarkets, high street retailers or online suppliers.

These include items such as:

- shirts;
- trousers;
- tights;
- socks;
- and other basic uniform items.

Parental consultation demonstrated significant use of generic purchasing options.

The majority of respondents indicated that they purchase several standard items from non-specialist retailers.

This demonstrates that the school's current arrangements already provide families with opportunities to reduce overall uniform costs.

The school will continue to review opportunities to:

- reduce compulsory branding;
- increase flexibility;
- and maximise affordability for all families.

5. Affordability and Value for Money

Carrickfergus Grammar School recognises that affordability must remain central to all decisions relating to school uniform.

The school seeks to ensure that:

- uniform costs do not deter families from applying to the school;
- pupils are not disadvantaged due to financial hardship;

- and all pupils can participate fully in school life.

The school's consultation process demonstrated generally positive views regarding value for money.

Most respondents rated the value for money received from school uniform as moderate to strong.

The school recognises, however, that affordability pressures exist for many families and therefore commits to:

- ongoing review of supplier arrangements;
- consideration of lower-cost material options where appropriate;
- limiting compulsory branded items;
- supporting access to generic alternatives;
- and maintaining strong pre-loved uniform provision.

The school also notes that parents demonstrated strong awareness of the fact that uniform may be purchased from more than one supplier, supporting competitive pricing and parental choice.

6. Pre-Loved Uniform and Support for Families

Carrickfergus Grammar School strongly supports access to pre-loved uniform arrangements.

The school operates a pre-loved uniform shop in order to:

- reduce costs for families;
- promote sustainability;
- support affordability;
- and extend the lifespan of uniform items.

Parental consultation demonstrated:

- strong awareness of the pre-loved uniform shop;
- and ongoing use of the service by families.

The school will continue to:

- promote the availability of pre-loved uniform;
- encourage donation of high-quality used items;
- and support families experiencing financial difficulty.

No pupil will be penalised for uniform issues arising directly from affordability concerns.

The school will continue to address such matters through supportive and discreet pastoral processes.

AMENDMENTS

Based on feedback, the school will endeavour to open the pre-loved uniform shop at greater frequency and at times more suitable to working parents. These times will be well publicised by the school.

7. Consultation

Carrickfergus Grammar School undertook consultation with parents and pupils regarding school uniform and PE provision.

The consultation process included:

- parental survey consultation;
- pupil survey consultation;
- review of affordability considerations;
- review of branded and generic items;
- review of PE and Games requirements;
- and consideration of opportunities to reduce cost.

A total of 220 parental responses were received and analysed as part of the review process.

A pupil survey was undertaken with 178 responses.

8. Equality, Comfort and Practicality

The school is committed to ensuring that uniform requirements:

- comply with equality and human rights legislation;
- are comfortable and practical for pupils;
- are suitable for all seasons;
- accommodate reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- and support inclusion and participation for all pupils.

The school recognises the importance of balancing:

- high standards of presentation;
- affordability;
- practicality;
- comfort;
- and equality considerations.

Uniform expectations will therefore continue to be reviewed carefully and proportionately.

9. Transition Arrangements

Where changes to uniform requirements are introduced, Carrickfergus Grammar School will ensure that:

- reasonable transition periods are provided;
- families are given sufficient notice;
- existing items may continue to be used for an appropriate period where possible;
- and unnecessary financial burden is avoided.

10. Website Publication

Carrickfergus Grammar School will publish the required uniform information, including:

- uniform policy documentation;
- value for money information;
- pre-loved uniform arrangements;
- and affordability support information

on the school website in line with Departmental guidance.

11. Costs or range of costs of Compulsory Items

Uniform Item	Approximate Cost (depending on size)
Plain white shirt	£9 - £11
Plain white blouse	£9 - £11
Traditional black school trousers	£20 - £30
Pleated calf-length skirt	£26 - £36
Socks	£4 - £5
Tights	£5 - £6
Black man-made fibre blazer	£65 - £100
School Tie	£6-£7
Plain black leather shoes	£25 - £65

PE / Games Kit Item	Approximate Cost (depending on size)
CGS Rugby Jersey (Boys)	£47
CGS Shorts or Skort	Shorts £20, Skort £30
CGS Training Polo	£30
Socks	£11
Rugby Boots (Boys)	£20-£50
Training Shoes	£20--£50

