

Physically Active Uniform



Description: The introduction of a new ‘activity permissive’ **uniform that supports physical activity** (e.g. polo shirt, comfortable trousers and appropriate footwear for physical activity during break times) and associated policy changes to relax rules about uniforms at school.

Reach

- **All students** are affected by uniforms/uniform policies within a school

Equality

- Uniform changes may be more effective for increasing physical activity in **girls**, as they most often report school uniform as a barrier to being active.
- Studies show that **boys** don’t usually see their uniform as a barrier to activity in school. However, this does depend on the specific school policies about uniforms. For example, some schools do not allow uniforms to get dirty during the day, (e.g., from playing football at lunch), which has been reported as a barrier to activity at school.

Acceptability

- Within research evidence and our CASE advisory groups, uniform changes (i.e., making the uniform more conducive to physical activity) were considered acceptable by students.
- There are some individuals and groups that hold the belief that formal **uniforms leading to better behaviour and academic success** (although the evidence for this is very mixed) - therefore some **schools** and **parents** might oppose a more ‘physically active’ uniform.

Feasibility

- The initial cost of a new uniform may be a barrier for some parents.
- There are many examples of schools that have successfully implemented more relaxed/activity permissive uniforms, indicating that introducing and maintaining this may not be a problem.

Effectiveness

- There is limited evidence for the effects of **uniform changes** on adolescent activity.
- In **primary schools**, one study showed that a sports uniform (opposed to a more traditional ‘winter’ uniform) was associated with greater activity in 10-year old **girls**.

- Evidence is mixed regarding whether a **traditional 'smart' uniform** positively impacts behaviour and achievement in school. There is no evidence to suggest an activity permissive uniform is associated with negative academic outcomes.

Cost

- The costs of school uniform is commonly borne by the parents, not the school. The average total expenditure on school uniform for the 2014/15 school year was approximately **£200** per child.
- The additional costs of this policy change (compared to buying a standard uniform) are likely to be zero or even negative, i.e. a switch from the standard uniform to the activity permissive one would **save money**. This is because some of the more pre-professional dress (blazer, tie) could be dropped.
- The introduction could be phased to enable parents to purchase the new uniform only when their child requires a replacement.
- Resource implications to disseminate the policy change among staff and parents are likely one-off, and very modest investments. It may communications with parents via the standard communication channels. There may be a small cost for admin time, and for producing and printing leaflets; this will depend on the size of the school.