

## School Uniforms

### **Introduction**

The practice of wearing school uniforms was introduced in the sixteenth century in charity schools for poor children of England. This step was made in order to dress children who cannot buy suitable clothes for studying at school. Public schools started to use uniforms only in the end of the nineteenth century. The wearing of school uniforms is very important for both students and teachers. One of the main reasons is to create a sense of pride, to unite the students of a particular school and present them as something unique. The school uniform creates a certain atmosphere that stimulates students to study better. In addition, it works as a psychological factor; school uniform distinguishes students of one school from students of another one, the principles of “us-them”. People are used to accept those who look similarly to them as friends and allies; thus, if everyone looks the same, it declines the number of conflicts and increases the productivity.

Nowadays, school uniform has an image of “elite schools”. The best schools of the world have their own uniforms; to wear one is the biggest desire for many students in the world, and they take great pride in it. Nevertheless, today the desire of wearing school uniforms among students is quite low. Young people do not like to wear uniform for various reasons. Somebody believes that a particular uniform does not suit him or her, other states that it hinders to introduce his or her personality.

According to this fact, school uniform is a very contradictive issue, which has both agreement and disagreement from students and teachers. However, the presence of school uniform is a requirement, and students should obey this rule though they did not establish it.

### **School Uniform and Its Purpose**

School uniform is aimed at the establishment of discipline, equality among students and a sense of self-worth. The majority of parents are glad that there is such a thing as school uniform because they do not have to worry what their children wear at school.

One should differentiate two types of school uniforms. Public school uniforms are used for practical purpose, while private schools' uniforms are targeted more on the advertisement of a particular school. As a rule, school uniforms are made of low-cost materials, so parents should not spend much money on it. Moreover, according to a new federal law, since 2011, parents have a right to claim a school tax uniform break up to 800 dollars for each child. Thus, parents can decline their costs on school uniforms and save even more money.

One of the purposes of school uniforms is to teach children to dress smart and take care of their appearance. School uniforms predetermine not only the wearing of a particular suit of certain colors; it also means that students should pay special care to their haircut and personal hygiene. Uniform prepares students for the adult life, when they finish school and have to wear suits or uniforms. For example, all government institutions require that their staff wear uniforms; among them are layers, bank workers or police officers. All these people have to wear uniforms every day, and a person who has never done it before experiences discomfort because it is difficult for him or her to wear uncommon clothes.

Another purpose of school uniforms lies in the educational process. Researchers believe that different clothes distract students' attention during classes and thus worsen the quality of the learning process. On the other hand, when all students have the same clothes, the desire to learn a mohawk or new leathers of the classmate is lower. Thus, students can concentrate their attention on the lecturer and the lesson and stop to observe the environment. This purpose can be viewed

positively from a teacher's point of view but not from a student's one. Nevertheless, there are also benefits for students as well. Uniforms mean the equality among students; the participants of the learning process may not worry about how they look like, and there is no competition about being dressed according to the latest trend. As a result, both students and parents save much money due to this fact. Moreover, such a widespread phenomenon as bullying, which is often based on a student's appearance, also decreases. Abusers probably could not use the argumentation that their victim is dressed in a strange or a weird way because everyone has exactly the same clothes. In the United States, there are quite many schools where school uniforms are not required, and the students have a right to wear what they want. The statistics shows that in 2012, almost 160 000 students missed classes every day in order to avoid intimidations or attacks by other students because of their clothes. Probably, this kind of bullying is not based solely on clothes, but still, it can reduce this phenomenon. Uniform is a safety net that protects students who may suffer from bullying. A strict uniform means also the obeying of the strict rules and creates the sense of order at school.

Wearing a school uniform is much cheaper than the entire wardrobe of clothes, and it eliminates the constant dilemma of how to dress the next morning. Many schools have its own suppliers of uniforms in order to avoid confusion when the black skirt is not as black as it is needed, or it has a bit different design. Thus, a single supplier is the best decision in this case because it can offer that exactly type of clothes that is required in a particular school. The education minister of England David Laws raised the issue about a single supplier of school uniforms and the costs of such uniforms. He states that a single supplier of a school uniform could be very useful, especially in those situations when a school decides to change something in its school uniform, for example, a new emblem or new color. In this case, if the changes refer

only to one or two items of the school uniforms, there is no need to buy a new one if the supplier can change it according to new rules. The one-supplier system can help families to save money and reduce costs of school uniform.

Macy Vallance, an eight-year student says that she likes school uniform because everyone looks the same and thus it is good to be like others; the school uniforms make you look smarter. She also believes that it gives her the sense of belonging to something big, to be the part of a certain group where others look like you. Thus, even students think that uniform is something more than a style of dressing.

### **Arguments about School Uniforms**

School uniforms are often introduced as a positive innovation that brings many advantages for teachers, students and their parents. The most widespread statements are:

- Uniforms will prevent students from judging people by their looks;
- Uniforms will save families' money;
- Uniforms will make it easier to identify those who are not from the school and therefore increase security.

These three factors are often presented as the main advantages of school uniforms, but they still should not be perceived as absolute truth. These phenomena should be critically analyzed taking into account both positive and negative aspects.

The first statement says that uniforms will make it harder for cliques to form and will stop or at least reduce the bullying of students. One should take into consideration the fact that a person who wants to abuse somebody always finds a way to do it, even if the reason is absolutely senseless. Those who have once been the victim of bullying know that abusers can use anything as

a cause for ridicule, and the clothes are often one of the factors. There could be provided probably the endless lists of the reasons why a student can be judged, such as:

- Haircut and hair color.
- Height – a tall person is a Gulliver, while low height means that a person is dwarf, though the difference in height could be not so dramatic.
- Weight. Probably weight is one of the most common reasons for abusing. In the United States, every third child has problems with weight. Nevertheless, this fact is usually not taken into consideration, when one states about the necessity of school uniforms.
- Accessories. They can include anything, from a wristwatch to jewelry made of gold or other precious metal. Those people who state that uniform makes everybody equal because all students wear the same clothes and there is no need to dress according to the latest trend probably forget the fact that material well-being of a person is not expressed solely by their clothes but also by the things that this person has or does not have.
- The gait. Indeed, even such a small thing can be a reason to start abusing somebody.

Unfortunately, this list can be endless, and a person who finished school not so long ago can provide numerous examples of bullying. The problem of bullying does not lie in different clothes; moreover, the clothes are not even in the top of this list. Nevertheless, teachers still state that school uniforms decline the level of bullying and thus they are so necessary to obey. In fact, teachers should pay more attention not to the students' appearance but to inner problems that are especially common among teenagers. The same type of clothes will not solve the problem of bullying, but if the teachers will try to teach their students to establish good relations with their classmates and accept a person as he or she is, even with his or her weird manner, then the issue

of bullying will be not dramatic today. The providing of one school uniform is the attempt to hide the problem; uniforms do not help in this situation, and the teachers must accept it. School uniforms are rather a brand than the attempt to unite students; it is provided in order to introduce the school to the audience and to attract the potential students.

The second statement says that uniforms help save families' money. According to this statement, families spend less money on their children's wardrobes because there is no need to buy many clothes for school when parents can purchase only uniforms. However, one forgets the fact that children have to wear something on those days when they do not visit schools, on weekends or in summer. The necessity to buy clothes exists, and school uniform does not reduce the costs because it creates the additional ones.

The third statement says that school uniforms will increase the safety of children at school. Probably, it is the only valid advantage of school uniforms. Sometimes, students from others schools come and bring only troubles. In fact, it is difficult to say at the first glance whether a particular student studies in this school or not. The school uniform will guarantee the protection from outsider guests and decline the possible conflicts at school.

To sum up, it can be said that school uniforms have both advantages and disadvantages. To the advantages one may refer such arguments as saving money on clothing, declining the level of bullying and teasing, no need of buying designer labels, the chance of protecting from the outsiders. The anti-arguments consists of the following positions: uniforms cost more, they do not teach how to behave with those people who differ, cliques do exists, children keep asking for designer labels, uniforms create the box model of thinking.

### **Conclusion**

School uniform is presented as the instrument that helps to increase the level of education, decline the bulling and prepare students for the adult life, where uniform is an essential part of many professions. On the other hand, despite these advantages, one may state that school uniform does not solve all the problems that school faces, and it even creates new ones. For example, students lose such ability as cooperation with those who differ from them. Students get used to the idea that all those who surround them have the similar appearance; in real life, all people are different, and they have to learn to find the common language with those who have a different appearance.

The issue of school uniforms is very important today because of such phenomenon as globalization. Nowadays, children try to find themselves in the large world, and when they do it, they introduce it through their appearance. School uniform suppresses this opportunity, and children are not able to demonstrate their world to the audience. In my opinion, school uniform does make students closer, but only in the particular area, in a particular school. However, life is not limited only to school, and children should learn how to deal with those people who are outside the school. Thus, I believe that school uniform has a negative influence on such principles as tolerance and the ability to accept something new. In fact, children lose such experience, and they believe that the world is divided into black and white. I think that school uniform creates more barriers than destroys them. Thus, teachers should pay attention to teaching students to accept the fact that the world is very complex and they must learn how to live in it.