



School Uniform Policy

BR3

Last updated: 25 July 2024

Review Date: 31 August 2025

Contents:

Statement of intent

1. Legal framework
2. Roles and responsibilities
3. Cost principles
4. Equality principles
5. Complaints and challenges
6. School uniform supplier
7. Finding and consulting suppliers
8. Template documents
9. Uniform assistance
10. Non-compliance
11. School uniform
12. Adverse weather
13. Labelling and lost property
14. Monitoring and review

Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) believes that a consistent school uniform policy is vital to promote the ethos of a TCAT school and provide a sense of belonging and identity for all pupils, regardless of their protected characteristics or socio-economic circumstances.

For the purposes of this policy, “**uniform**” includes the following elements of pupils’ appearance:

- Clothing, including the school uniform itself, variations of the school uniform such as PE kits, and other clothing worn at school, e.g., non-uniform
- Hairstyles and headwear
- Jewellery and other accessories
- Cosmetics such as makeup and nail polish

This policy lays out the measures TCAT has taken to ensure a consistent, fair and inclusive uniform policy, and to implement a uniform that reflects the needs of all pupils, is affordable, and provides the best value for money for both the school and pupils’ families.

We believe that pupils learn most effectively and achieve their best outcomes when they are comfortable, able to be themselves, and dressed in a way that sets an appropriate tone for education.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2011
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021
- DfE (2021) 'Cost of school uniforms'
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'
- DfE (2024) 'School uniforms: guidance for schools'
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2022) 'Preventing hair discrimination in schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT and school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- (Conduct for Learning) Behaviour Policy
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- LGBTQ+ Policy
- Tendering and Procurement Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board in collaboration with the Local Governing Body is responsible for:

- Establishing, in consultation with the Headteacher/Head of School and school community, a practical and smart school uniform that accurately reflects TCATs and the school's vision and values
- Ensuring that the school's uniform is accessible, inclusive, and does not disadvantage any pupil because of their protected characteristics or socio-economic status
- Listening to the opinions and wishes of parents, pupils and the wider school community regarding changes to the school's uniform
- Ensuring that the school's uniform is accessible and affordable
- Demonstrating in this policy how best value for money has been achieved
- Ensuring compliance with the DfE's 'Cost of school uniforms' guidance
- Processing and approving all eligible School Uniform Assistance Application Forms

The Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Enforcing the school's uniform rules on a day-to-day basis
- Ensuring that teachers understand this policy and what to do if a pupil is in breach of the policy

- Listening to the opinions and wishes of the school community in regard to the school's uniform and making appropriate recommendations to the Trust Board via the Local Governing Body
- Providing pupils with an exemption letter as appropriate, e.g., for a pupil who has a broken arm and requires a loose-fitting shirt

Staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that pupils dress in accordance with this policy at all times
- Where appropriate to their role, disciplining pupils who are in breach of this policy
- Ensuring that pupils understand why having a consistent and practical school uniform is important, e.g. school identity

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing their children with the correct school uniform as detailed in this policy
- Informing the Headteacher if their child requires an exemption to the uniform rules for a period of time, with a reason why
- Ensuring that their child's uniform is clean, presentable and the correct size

Pupils are responsible for:

- Wearing the correct uniform at all times, unless the Headteacher has granted an exemption
- Looking after their uniform as appropriate
- Understanding and respecting why a school uniform is important to the school, e.g. trust and school identity and community

3. Cost principles

TCAT will ensure that its school uniform is affordable and accessible to all pupils and does not place an unreasonable financial burden on parents.

In accordance with the 'School Admissions Code', the Executive Headteacher/CEO will ensure that TCAT uniform requirements do not discourage parents from applying for a place for their child at any TCAT school.

Each school will assess the overall cost implications of its uniform policy regularly, including prior to making any changes to the school uniform. When evaluating whether costs are reasonable and proportionate, each school will take into account the opinions and situations of:

- Economically disadvantaged parents
- Parents with multiple children who are, or will be in the future, pupils at the school
- Parents of younger children, as they are likely to grow quickly and require new sets of uniform more frequently
- Parents of pupils with protected characteristics that may impact their ability to access the uniform
- LAC and PLAC

Each school will evaluate the cost of its uniform based on the overall collection of uniform items that parents would need to purchase for a pupil, rather than on the cost effectiveness of individual items; this will include consideration of the fact that parents will need to purchase multiples of certain items, e.g., shirts and socks, to ensure their child can come to school in clean uniform every day.

Each school will keep variations in school uniform for different groups of pupils, e.g. year group-specific items or house colours, to a minimum to ensure that pupils can get the most wear out of their uniform and that parents can pass some items down to younger siblings.

Each school will keep branded uniform items to a minimal level that is reasonable for all members of the school community. TCAT defines a branded uniform item as any item of clothing that cannot be purchased at a range of retailers, e.g. supermarkets, due to the item's logo, colour, design, fabric or other unique element. Where a TCAT school requires an item of branded clothing, it will assess how prices can be kept as low as possible and put measures in place to facilitate this. This may include:

- Offering sew-on or iron-on logo patches for blazers and jumpers that can be bought at non-specialist retailers, instead of requiring specific branded jumpers
- Ensuring branded items are longer-lasting and unlikely to be worn out quickly, e.g. ties
- Making donated second-hand uniform available for purchase at a lower price or free

TCAT and each school will meet the DfE's requirements and recommendations on costs and value for money. Care will be taken to ensure that school uniform is affordable for all current and prospective pupils, and that the best value for money is secured through reputable suppliers.

TCAT will work with multiple suppliers to obtain the best value for money possible. Any savings negotiated will be passed to parents where possible. TCAT will not enter into exclusive single-supplier contracts or cash-back arrangements. More information on supplier processes can be found in the 'School uniform supplier' section of this policy.

TCAT will not make frequent changes to uniform requirements and will take the views of parents and pupils into account when considering any changes.

4. Equality principles

TCAT takes its legal obligation to avoid unlawfully discriminating against any protected characteristic very seriously. In line with this, each TCAT school will aim to ensure that its uniform policy is as inclusive as possible so that all pupils can access a school uniform which is comfortable, suitable for their needs, and reflects who they are, while avoiding any direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics or socio-economic status.

Each TCAT school will ensure that parents and pupils are consulted over any changes to school uniform, and that, where appropriate and with pupils' consent, views and advice are sought specifically from pupils, and parents of pupils, who:

- Are transgender or non-binary
- Are of a religious or cultural background that has specific dress requirements

- Have SEND and/or sensory needs

Parents' concerns and requests regarding school uniform and amendments to it are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher/Head of School with their Local Governing Body and where necessary the Trust Board, and always in accordance with TCAT's Complaints Procedures Policy.

Information on how TCAT ensures its uniform policy does not discriminate against pupils with specific protected characteristics is outlined below.

Gender

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain gender, each school will ensure that the cost of uniform is as equal in price as possible across items for all genders.

This includes:

- Adhering to the procedures laid out in the 'Cost principles' section of this policy
- Not directly requiring pupils of a certain gender to buy additional uniform, e.g., by requiring female pupils to buy both trousers and skirts
- Not indirectly requiring pupils of a certain gender to buy additional uniform, e.g., by offering football in PE to only male pupils and requiring they buy football boots to participate
- Not holding pupils of different genders to different uniform standards, e.g., by banning certain hairstyles for only one gender

Each TCAT school will implement a gender-neutral uniform, meaning that pupils will not be required to wear specific items based on their gender, and may wear any of the uniform items listed in the 'School uniform' section of this policy regardless of the legal sex recorded on the school's records. Transgender pupils are supported to access the uniform that best reflects their gender expression in line with the LGBTQ+ Policy.

Religion and belief

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain religion, belief or culture, each TCAT school will ensure that there is flexibility to allow pupils to present themselves in a way that adheres to their dress requirements as far as possible, within the uniform requirements specific to each school.

Each school will endeavour to meet all requests for amendments to the uniform for these purposes; however, the needs and rights of individual pupils will be weighed against any health and safety concerns appropriate to the circumstances, e.g., if safety headgear needs to be worn.

Race

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils of a certain race, TCAT will ensure that its uniform requirements at any TCAT school does not constitute unlawful indirect discrimination through blanket rules. This includes:

- Not banning hairstyles related to a pupil's ethnic origin, e.g. natural Afro hairstyles

- Not banning hairstyles worn because of cultural, family, and social customs, e.g., cornrows
- Not banning head coverings related to a pupil's culture or ethnic origin, e.g. African heritage head wraps

Each TCAT school will follow the good practice guidance provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission on 'Preventing hair discrimination in schools.

SEND and medical conditions

To avoid disproportionately impacting pupils with SEND or medical conditions, each TCAT school will ensure its uniform requirements take into account the needs of these pupils. This includes:

- Ensuring the school uniform uses soft, stretchy fabrics and avoids intricate buttons or hard seams
- Allowing variations to the standard uniform for pupils whose medical conditions may impact how they dress, e.g., pupils with casts who require loose-fitting clothing or pupils with hair loss-related conditions who wish to wear head coverings

Where the needs of these pupils cannot be met in the standard uniform policy, individual adaptations to the uniform will be considered by the Headteacher/Head of School and permitted wherever possible.

5. Complaints and challenges

TCAT will endeavour to resolve all uniform complaints and challenges locally and informally, in accordance with the TCAT's Complaints Procedures Policy.

Each school will refer individuals who wish to complain to the Complaints Procedures Policy and request that they follow the procedures outlined therein.

When a complaint is received, TCAT will work with the complainant to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome.

6. School uniform supplier

TCAT uses a range of school uniform suppliers. Each TCAT school will publish the suppliers it specifically uses to parents.

The school uniform supplier will accept school uniform assistance vouchers.

The Trust Board will ensure that a written contract is in place with the supplier for branded items. TCAT will tender the uniform contract in line with our Tendering and Procurement Policy, whether changes to the uniform are made or not.

The Trust Board will be able to demonstrate how uniform is procured at the best value for money. The Chief Finance Officer will work to ensure that the items are procured as cheaply as possible without compromising on the quality, e.g., by requesting standard-style items from the supplier rather than more intricate and unique designs.

TCAT will not sign contracts with suppliers before requesting visualisations and samples of proposed uniform.

Where the school is proposing to change suppliers, TCAT will reach out to suppliers by October in the determination year.

7. Finding and consulting suppliers

If TCAT or the school is considering changing its suppliers and seeks a list of available suppliers, it will consider the following options:

- Consulting an industry body
- Researching local suppliers
- Consulting with other schools and networks
- Having informal discussions with potential suppliers to help determine the school's own needs

If TCAT or the school prepares to request bids from potential suppliers, it will consider the following elements:

- What products parents will need
- Existing contractual commitments
- Length of tender process
- The school's evaluation process

8. Template documents

TCAT and our schools will use the DfE's 'Procuring uniform supplies' template documents to ensure that they undergo the procurement process correctly. The templates consist of an invitation to tender, a request for quotation, and a pricing schedule.

TCAT and our schools will use the invitation to tender template to ask questions of suppliers. TCAT and our schools will then use the pricing schedule to ask suppliers to submit their prices. Full instructions on how to use the templates are included in each of the documents.

9. Uniform assistance

Each school will support disadvantaged families in meeting the costs of uniforms. School uniform assistance will be provided via a voucher that can be spent on school clothing. The budget for the school uniform assistance scheme will be derived from pupil premium funds.

For parents to claim school uniform assistance, their children should be eligible for FSM. Eligibility will be determined by checking original documents from the relevant authority, detailing receipt of the benefit and the address of the pupil.

Families who meet the criteria will be asked to complete a School Uniform Assistance Application Form and return it to the in-school Pupil Premium Coordinator, contact details for who can be obtained from the specific TCAT school.

Each school will hold second-hand school uniforms for parents to access; access to these uniforms will be made available upon request made to the Headteacher/Head of School.

Parents will be invited to donate their child's uniform when they no longer need it.

10. Non-compliance

Staff will be permitted to discipline pupils for breaching this policy, where relevant to their role, in accordance with the school's Conduct for Learning (Behaviour) Policy.

The Headteacher/Head of School, or a person authorised by the Headteacher/Head of School, may be permitted to ask a pupil to briefly go home to remedy breaches to the school's uniform. When deciding whether to allow a pupil to return home, the member of staff will consider the pupil's age and vulnerability, the length of time it will take, and the availability of the pupil's parents. A parent will always be contacted before sending the pupil home – if contact with the pupil's parent cannot be made, the pupil will remain in school.

Where a pupil has been sent home to rectify uniform breaches, the absence will be recorded as 'authorised'. If a pupil repeatedly breaches uniform rules, or takes longer than necessary to rectify the absence, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

Parents will be notified of pupils' breaches of school uniform in all cases.

11. School uniform

Each TCAT school will publish their specific uniform requirements to parents and on their school website. Each school will ensure changes to uniform are notified well in advance of the start of a new academic year, and that provision has been made to transition uniform at the lowest possible cost implication to parents.

Pupils in our secondary provisions who choose to wear skirts will also be required to wear black tights. Black jeans or leggings will not be permitted.

Each TCAT school will have their own requirements for footwear which can be obtained from the school and the school website.

Where required, parents who do not wish to buy the optional branded PE kit must acquire a PE kit meeting the criteria set out by the individual TCAT school.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child brings their PE kit to school when needed.

Jewellery

Each TCAT school has individual rules on jewellery which can be obtained from the school and the school website.

Pupils will be advised that jewellery is their personal responsibility and not that of the school. Lost or damaged items will not be compensated. All jewellery must be removed during practical lessons, including PE lessons and science experiments in line with requests from staff.

Bags

Pupils are advised to use an appropriately sized waterproof bag to carry their books and equipment. It should hold A4-sized workbooks comfortably without causing any damage.

School bags featuring inappropriate images, slogans or phrases will not be permitted.

Each school will discourage pupils from bringing valuable bags to school. TCAT will not be liable for lost or damaged school bags.

Hairstyles and headwear

Each TCAT school has requirements set out for hairstyles and headwear which can be obtained from the school and on the school website. Each school reserves the right to make a judgement on whether a pupil's hairstyle, hair colour or headwear is inappropriate for the school environment; however, the school will ensure that any such judgements do not discriminate against any pupil by virtue of their protected characteristics. Each individual pupil's scenario will be considered where any judgements on appropriateness are to be made, and parents will always have the freedom to complain via TCAT's Complaints Procedures Policy.

Pupils with long hair must ensure that this does not impede their vision, cover their face, or cause a health and safety risk. Long hair must be tied up during practical lessons where requested, e.g. during PE.

Makeup and cosmetics

Each TCAT school has requirements set out for makeup and cosmetics which can be obtained from the school and on the school website. Each school reserves the right to make a judgement on whether a pupil's use of makeup is inappropriate for the school environment; however, the school will ensure that any such judgements do not discriminate against any pupil by virtue of their protected characteristics. Each individual pupil's scenario will be taken into account where any judgements on appropriateness are to be made, and parents will always have the freedom to complain via TCAT's Complaints Procedures Policy.

Pupils wearing excessive makeup as deemed so by the Headteacher or their delegates will be required to remove it.

12. Adverse weather

All pupils will be advised to wear weather-appropriate clothing.

Pupils will be advised not to wear any jumpers or blazers during heatwaves. If outside during break times, pupils not wearing sun-safe clothing will be advised to stay in an area protected from the sun, or spare clothing is provided.

13. Labelling and lost property

Parents will be advised to ensure that all pupils' clothing and footwear is clearly labelled with their name and year group.

Any lost clothing will be taken to the lost property area within each school. All lost property will be retained for a half-term and will be disposed of if it is not collected within this time.

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO, Headteachers/Heads of School, Local Governing Bodies and the Trust Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2026.

Signed by:

_____ Executive
Headteacher/CEO Date: _____

_____ Chair of the Trust
Board Date: _____