



Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education

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Thank you for your letter concerning the impact that single-supplier contracts can have on the cost of school uniform.

The Department for Education strongly encourages schools to have a uniform as it can play an important role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone. It is for the governing body of a school (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to decide whether there should be a school uniform policy, and if so, what it should be. It is also for the governing body to decide how the uniform should be sourced.

Whilst school uniform can have a hugely positive impact on a school in terms of providing cohesion and community for the pupil population, no uniform should be so expensive as to present a barrier to accessing the school.

As you are aware, the department publishes best-practice guidance on school uniform for school leaders to support them with developing and implementing school uniform policy. The department's guidance advises schools that, in setting their school uniform policy, they should give high priority to cost considerations and achieving value for money for parents.

In particular, our guidance states that uniform items should be easily available for parents to purchase and schools should keep compulsory branded items to a minimum. The guidance is clear that schools should avoid single-supplier contracts, but where schools do choose to enter into such contracts, they should ensure these are subject to a regular competitive tendering process to ensure value for parents.

The Government has announced its plan to put the school uniform guidance on a statutory footing and will do so when a suitable opportunity arises. This will send a clear signal that we expect schools to ensure uniform costs are reasonable. I am pleased that you agree that this will be a helpful step towards ensuring families receive value for money when purchasing school uniforms.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education