

Solway Community School

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SOLWAY COMMUNITY
SCHOOL

14th September 2018

Dear Parents/Carers

School uniform

One of the great things about the British education system is choice. Many of us are privileged to be able to choose to send our children to a school with a strict or relaxed approach to uniform; one which fits our own values as a parent.

School uniform is something that 97% of schools in the UK have. The benefits of having a uniform, and expectations about presentation, are widely recognised, and Solway, along with every other school in Cumbria, has expectations and a uniform for several reasons which are made clear to parents and students from the beginning of Year 7, and that form a part of the home school agreement. We expect that by choosing Solway, aware of these expectations, parents and students will respect the reasons why we have a uniform code, support the school and share our values.

We have a strong belief that wearing a uniform is a positive thing. It creates an identity for a school, teaches students to dress smartly and take pride in their appearance. When everyone is dressed the same, worrying about what you look like isn't so important. Research shows that a school uniform makes for a more serious school atmosphere, which in turn improves behaviour and leads to improved attainment. Students are in school to learn, not worry about what they look like. We want our students to feel proud of their school, and reflect this in the community. It is effectively their place of work and to wear a uniform is excellent preparation for the world after school where they may well have to do the same. It also makes life easier for students and parents in that there are no decisions to be made about what to wear, and peer pressure is irrelevant. For some parts of our uniform code, health and safety concerns are the main concern; for PE and technology subjects, no jewellery at all can be worn. Acrylic nails are equally inappropriate for school and for practical subjects in particular and as a result these are also not allowed in school.

It is a pleasure to see that the vast majority of students arrive at school looking very smart. Standards of uniform have over the recent past improved and I am pleased to say that black jeans are a distant memory. Nonetheless, we will continue to improve clarity and consistency as we move forward - an endless but worthwhile task. Staff will continue to praise students who are meeting expectations and challenge those who are not. Unlike other schools we try and avoid excluding students for uniform related issues; however, we may internally isolate students if they are not in the correct uniform, and this is not a negotiable policy.

We sent a letter home at the end of summer term re-stating our uniform code; the letter is on the school website, on Facebook and the code is in the students' planners. This code quite clearly states that students are allowed to wear one stud in each earlobe, no other facial piercings, and no other jewellery except a watch. Our current issue is with piercings. We are disappointed that

a handful of students came back to school in September with nose piercings, additional ear piercings, and one with a tongue piercing, all of which clearly contravene the school policy.

Despite this, we recognise that, as I have said, we should seek to improve clarity of our uniform code; also, we are aware that times change and schools should be cognisant of this and take on board students' feelings. Therefore, Governors and senior leaders have agreed that we will take a step towards students in this matter. We very strongly discourage further students from nose piercing. However, we will allow students who have had their nose pierced to wear plastic retainers which are transparent and virtually invisible for a limited period of time until their piercings have healed. The retainers must then be removed, and the school policy remains the same; no nose studs or rings may be worn in school.

Of course, school policies may not cover every specific eventuality. For example, although the school policy did not specifically say no tongue piercings, no facial piercings obviously includes this and it is clear that tongue piercings are not acceptable for school children and by implication are not allowed. The one student who has had her tongue pierced has replaced the solid bar with a plastic, transparent bar which will be removed as soon as her tongue has healed. Please be very clear that no further tongue piercings will be allowed, in any circumstances. If you or your child have an issue, a specific concern about uniform, or are unsure whether the way your child would like to present themselves at school will be acceptable, please come and speak to us first.

We remain firm that we will continue to demand a high standard of uniform and presentation for our school. To that end, we have agreed as a governing body that we will discuss at our next meeting uniform as a whole, particularly girls' trousers. We appreciate there are many retailers offering a range of 'school' trousers which do not meet our uniform expectations and we will be considering our response to this. I will of course keep you up to date with any changes or decisions made.

I hope this serves to clarify the current position on uniform. Please do not hesitate to contact me at school should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely



Judith Schafer
Executive Headteacher

David Davidson
Chair of Governors