

How to Design a School Uniform

More and more schools have instituted uniforms to cut down on expense, gang activity and discipline problems. Uniforms also make economic class differences less visible. If choices are available within the uniform guidelines, most students will find something they feel comfortable wearing. A uniform tells a lot about a school, so make sure your uniform is stylish and distinct.

Functional requirements of a uniform

- Durability (two years wear)
- A dirt-resistant colour
- Washability with little or no ironing or dry cleaning required
- Suit all figure types
- Not inhibit students from becoming involved in normal activities
- Adjustable
- Patterned fabric needs to be a small two-way pattern for economical use of fabric
- Sun safe

Other considerations

- Colours should suit most colourings. Bright red for example is a hard colour for many people to wear
- Is within the price range of all students in the school. Some families have very low incomes
- Available for sale from an accessible outlet
- Winter clothing needs to be loose enough for students who feel the cold to wear additional layers underneath.
- **Does your school or P&C Committee have the budget** to afford the new uniform? Do you have a cashflow forecast? Where will uniforms be stored? And how long can you afford to store them?
- If your school aims to generate income from sale of uniforms, then it is strongly recommended that you brand all uniforms with the school logo, otherwise parents will be more likely to source substitutes elsewhere.
- **Logos make it yours.** Ensure that the school logo is a registered trademark that can only be reproduced by authorized parties.
- **More is less.** Putting together a uniform program can be fun. One of the most enjoyable parts of my work has been sitting with schools and working with them to create a look that reflects their identity. Uniform programs become diluted – less uniform – when they have too many options, colors, and styles. We advise schools to start modestly and add items gradually. Schools will tell you that it is always easier to add items than it is to try to eliminate them from a program when families have already made a substantial investment.
- **Avoid fashion trends.** School uniforms are not high fashion. They never have been nor should they be. That is not to say that school uniforms have to be boring, they don't. At P&C Uniforms, we have over 100 different styles in all fabrics and colors, and patterns. The challenge of school uniforms is delivering a consistent product year after year. A school uniform company trying to be fashion-forward is like a dog chasing its tail. It will always be behind.

Designing the uniform

Prepare and give your uniform design brief to a professional uniform design / manufacturer for the purpose of obtaining a uniform design concept – P&C Uniforms is such a company, and will create a mock up of how the uniform would look. This saves lots of time and money with sampling.

You are not obliged to purchase from the design company, but it is ethical to advise your intentions. Some design companies may request that you pay for samples, so make sure that you ask first. In your brief, offer a description of styles, fabrics, colours, logos to be incorporated in your school uniform. Your uniform designer should be able to provide you with a catalogue of styles and fabrics for both the summer and winter school uniforms, sports uniforms, and accessories.

After you have selected preferred styles and fabrics, being careful to maintain consistency of colour and theme, discuss the functional and aesthetic requirements of the design that you have used. Be careful about introducing too many styles and fabrics. It can result in significantly higher cost and you will not be very popular with other parents with students at the school!

Research other local schools' uniforms, and stay away from similar styles and fabrics. Incorporate your school's colors into your uniforms. Darker colors and plaids are the easiest fabrics to care for because they don't show dirt. Also, make sure you choose durable fabric, with reinforced knees and pockets.