



Brian Morris  
Report on Uniform Equality Program.

I will try explain in depth the workings of the program as I see it, including, benefits, checks and balances the council will need to perform to ensure we comply with Financial Regulations and best practice.

As I said in Council, School children face isolation and bullying caused by lack of school uniform, this is backed up by many reports into child poverty and the situation is not getting any better as more parents are struggling to pay for their children's uniform.

Put yourself in the shoes of a parent with three children of school age, before you can even think about P.E kit school trips and the like you have a bill of £225, if you have two adults working this may not be too much of a problem but if only one or neither are working the situation can be quite impossible, where will the money come from to be able to send your children to school dressed in the correct uniform in order that they don't stand out from the rest of their school mates. What adds insult to injury is the Government's warning that a child can be suspended or even expelled if they repeatedly attend school without the proper uniform.

Difference causes all sorts of problems and a school environment can be a breeding ground for the bully who looks for someone who is different from the rest, unfortunately an individual without the correct school uniform is different and a target for the bully.

A school has the responsibility of helping students deal with issues such as self discipline, peer pressure and individualism, uniforms help address some of these issues, they eliminate some unwanted distractions, allowing children to focus on their studies and not worry about the school bully who identifies targets by difference.

School uniform cultivates equality and spares children from spending too much time thinking about what to wear or worrying about not having the latest fashions. School uniforms can spare unnecessary social embarrassment removing the opportunity to judge a child on their appearance and can remove some children feeling inadequate because they don't have the latest fashion.

Keighley Town Council can show that as a Council it can change the prospective outlook for some disadvantaged children in our town, for the first time we can make a positive difference to many children's lives in Keighley, help them reach their full potential, not by education that's not the Councils remit.

By enabling them to go to school, be on a level playing field with friends whose families can afford a school uniform, attend classes and more importantly be the same as the rest, thereby remove the stigma and potential as a target for the bullies.

Despite community involvement, charitable giving, and other forms of economic balancing, there are always families who struggle to put their children into school uniform. Punishing a child by removing them from a school because of an inability to afford a uniform is ridiculous and goes against the principals of equal learning opportunities. Schools are trying to ensure that their pupils are properly attired but that can mean diverting funds from the main budget this means that there is less money to spend on books, stationery and teaching aids so with this scheme all pupils benefit.

The program must always be conducted in a way that remains confidential, no individual person should be identified by any form produced by the Council, and no name should be attached or sought. By using the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) rather than identifying the child it refers to, this information is confidential and only the relevant school will know to whom it refers. This program ensures confidentiality and prevents any Council Staff Member, Councillor or supplier from obtaining any information they are not legally entitled to.

In conversation with the Schools it was ascertained that some parents are very reluctant to be seen as a charity case, so it has been decided to offer the option for any parent or guardian that wishes, the opportunity to pay some or all of the cost back to the Council by way of payments to the school over the school year.

Any contribute will be on a voluntary basis and the monies collected by the school will be returned to the Council and be reinvested back into the program for the following year, in this event the scheme will be part funded year on year by the parents themselves.

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### **How it works**

To qualify parents must be in receipt of either:

- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)
- Child Tax Credit only with annual income below £16,105
- Child Tax Credit & Working Tax Credit with annual income below £6420
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit including those with a take home of pay of up to £610 per month
- Long Term Incapacity Benefit (school clothing grant only)
- Widows Allowance if not in full time employment (school clothing grant only)
- Child Tax Credit & Working Tax Credit with annual income below £16,105 (school clothing grant only)

The final qualifying criteria to be eligible for the grant in the form of a voucher the child must not just qualify for but be in receipt of free school meals on a weekly basis.

The School will inform parents who are eligible for the program by letter in the normal way but with a slight change of wording, the letter will include.

(As a recipient of this voucher you may if you are able make a contribution toward the cost of the uniform over the School year, if you do this will be reinvested back in to the program where we will be able to help more children in future, this however is purely voluntary, if you do take up this offer any monies can be paid to the School who will forward any funds received to the Council).

All the above will be the responsibility of the School to check as they already receive the information required direct from Government agencies and the District Council.

The Town Council do not need to know these personal details, all that is needed is confirmation by each school that the vouchers they issue are going to parents whose children meet the required criteria.

### **Issuing Vouchers**

A voucher will be completed by a designated person at each school.  
Each voucher will contain the following information:

- Voucher Number
- School name to be added to all three parts by the School.
- UPN (Unique Pupil Number) To be added to all three parts by the School.
- Signature of designated person issuing voucher
- Date

The School will retain part one of the voucher for accounting purposes of the council.  
Hand part 2 and 3 to the parent or guardian for them to redeem at the uniform provider listed in Supplier box.

### **Supplier will then**

- Provide uniform items listed on the voucher.
- Enter date of transaction in Part two and Three.
- Sign Part Three.
- Detach part Two and keep for own records.
- Send Part Three with Invoice to the Council.

Multiple vouchers can be listed on each Invoice but only one school per Invoice will be accepted for accounting purposes.

All Invoices must show.

- Supplier Business Name
- Voucher number.
- Goods Supplied including prices if size affects the price of goods.

**Note.**

The vouchers provided by the Council have no cash value and are none transferable, the cost of any voucher taken as payment for goods without a valid U.P.N number will not be borne by the Council.

**Supplier Invoice.**

It is the responsibility of the supplier to invoice the Council for any voucher they have received and fulfilled, they must identify on the invoice. Only one school per invoice.

- Voucher Number
- The School that issued the voucher
- The U.P.N. (Unique Pupil Number)
- Uniform supplied
- Date

The supplier must include the voucher with the corresponding invoice as no payment will be made without the voucher.

**Council Checks and Balances.**

The RFO will ensure a constant in monitoring and payments.

The Clerk will ensure the program is conducted in a manner that is legal and run with all best practice and transparency on behalf of the council.

On receipt of an invoice and the corresponding vouchers from a supplier the RFO will:

- Ensure the claimed for vouchers are on the invoice.
- Check at random a selection U.P.N. numbers with the school.
- If all is correct the RFO can authorise payment in the normal way.
- If a problem is found with the invoice or a voucher the RFO will inform the supplier and withhold payment until the issue has been resolved.
- At each meeting of Finance and Audit Committee the RFO will report make a financial report for the Committee on the funds used from the designated budget including any anomalies and the uptake of the program.