

JUNE 2009 NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

SCHOOL UNIFORM

I would like to thank all the pupils and parents who have already shown support for our new uniform. It is clear that the majority of pupils have moved over to our white shirt and school tie preference since it was announced in January. We hope that, with your continuing support of our school, that the rest of the pupils will adopt our new dress code from August as intended.

A final policy has been delayed until the new term to allow our Head Boy and Head Girl to lead their Deputies and Prefects in taking forward their ideas and strategies for encouraging all of our youngsters of the many benefits of wearing a single uniform. This Senior Pupil Leadership Team will also be responsible for setting out the final list of rewards and consequences. Such decisions will be taken after they have consulted with the Pupil and Parent Councils and school staff.

I think this is a fabulous opportunity to give our pupils and is another practical experience in organisation, leadership, management and inter-personal development. This will provide our pupils with more life-skill experiences and help prepare them for the world after school.

Hopefully, the following questions posed by pupils recently will give sufficient information as to the current guidance.

Why do we have to have a new uniform?

When I first arrived at Oban High School a very large number of parents (but also pupils and staff) complained that we had a variety of uniforms and asked for a decision to be made on which one to promote.

Why don't we phase it in?

If we try to phase it in, we will be in the same position we are in just now – having a number of uniforms – which is what most people complained about.

However, I do think that allowing pupils to wear some existing garments with logos (i.e. cardigans which show off the white shirt and tie, or fleece tops which are only used as jackets) is sensible and will not dilute the principle of a single uniform, requested by so many parents.

What if a parent cannot afford a new uniform?

We have chosen to introduce the new uniform (which only affects the top half) after the Summer holiday. Summer is traditionally the time when most people change their worn-out uniforms anyway.

If any parent has financial difficulty in buying a uniform at any time, a clothing grant may be available. They should contact School Support on 01369 708508 for advice.

Can pupils wear polo shirts, black shirts, black shorts, sweatshirts, joggies, white trainers etc.?

These items are not part of our uniform. Neither are items of fashion, beach or sportswear which pupils have attempted to wear recently (e.g. Hawaiian shorts, hot-pants or vest / bikini tops)

There is no change for the need to have black trainers, black trousers or black skirt, black shoes and clan T-Shirts.

The key change is that the white shirt and school tie will be the focus of the uniform.

How long should the skirt be? And, are tank-tops ok?

Skirts should be long enough to retain a pupil's dignity when they bend over and plain black v-neck tank-tops are acceptable.

What will the consequences of not wearing uniform be?

We do not wish to send pupils home or remove them from their lessons. Exceptions to this would be where clothing worn by a pupil could be considered dangerous, offensive or inappropriate (e.g. flammable joggies, swear words on tops, football or musical band tops which incite division / offense or various forms of clothing exposing bare legs, breasts or midriff. Clearly these are all unacceptable in a school setting.

Ideally, we would expect a parent to come to school with appropriate clothing rather than the pupil miss school. However, we will send a pupil home if the parent requests such a strategy.

It is the view of the current Pupil Council that pupils who do not wear uniform should not benefit from any rewards events the pupils organise themselves such as the Jingles or school Discos. The Pupil Council is also currently of the view that pupils who refuse to identify themselves with the school during the school day should not be allowed to represent the school in the evening or at weekends.

The Senior Pupil Leadership Team led by the Head Boy and Head Girl, in consultation with pupils, parents and staff will lead this aspect of the school under the supervision of the Head Teacher.

My parent says I can just ignore the rules, is this true?

We will continue to ask that all parents and pupils support the new uniform as fully as they can. To the few who persistently challenge this decision, we have to point out that this only serves to undermine the wishes of the majority and distracts from the excellent achievements of Oban High School's pupils. Further, it sends out the message to our pupils that we can merely ignore "the rules" if we don't like them. This is not a message we would want to encourage to our children as we all try to prepare them for the world of work where uniform is the norm and refusal to wear it ends with dismissal.

Will you recycle the old uniform?

Yes, pupils can leave any unwanted items in school on the last day of term and the Eco Group will ensure they are appropriately disposed of. Otherwise, parents may recycle via charity shops or recycling stations as they wish.

What about uniforms with wear left in them?

Oban High School would encourage pupils to use these as casual wear throughout the vast number extra-curricular activities we arrange. There are more than 30 clubs who are looking for members.

Peter Bain, Head Teacher