

SCHOOL SUPPORT AND BENEFITS · GUIDE 1

School Uniform: Help with Costs

SHORT ANSWER

School uniform can be expensive — especially with more than one child — but help is available. Schools in England must keep uniforms **affordable**, and from **September 2026** they can only require a maximum of **3 branded items** (4 for secondary and middle schools if one is a tie), including PE kit. Second-hand uniform must be offered, and grants or other support may be available from your council, school or local charities.

Your child's school must

- Keep uniform costs reasonable and good value for money (legally binding DfE guidance).
- Limit compulsory branded items — max 3 (or 4 with a tie at secondary/middle schools) from September 2026, under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026.
- Avoid single-supplier contracts and allow high-street and supermarket options.
- Make second-hand uniform freely available to all parents and publish its uniform policy on its website.

Remember — no shame in second-hand

There is no shame in not being able to afford brand-new uniform. Uniform exists so all children are treated equally — new or second-hand, it serves the same purpose. A growing number of families choose second-hand because it is cost-effective and better for the environment: around **350,000 tonnes of clothing** go to UK landfill every year.

Where to find help with uniform costs

- 1 Check your local council.** Enter your postcode at gov.uk/help-school-clothing-costs to see if your council offers a school uniform or clothing grant. Not all councils in England provide one — if yours doesn't, try the next step.
- 2 Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.** You may be able to get a school clothing grant: apply via mygov.scot/clothing-grants (Scotland), gov.wales — the Pupil Development Grant (Wales), or nidirect.gov.uk/school-uniform-grant (Northern Ireland).
- 3 Ask your child's school directly.** Some schools have funds for low-income families, allow payment in **interest-free instalments** (this must not cost more overall), or can lend second-hand uniform until you can buy your own.
- 4 Ask friends, family and your community.** Many schools and communities run uniform swap or donation schemes — good-quality second-hand uniform is a sustainable, money-saving choice for any family.
- 5 Contact local charities.** Local charities may have discretionary funds to help with school uniform costs. The Traveller Movement can also point you towards support.

What changed? The law on branded items (September 2026)

Under the **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026**, no school in England can require more than **3 branded items** of uniform and PE kit (4 for secondary and middle schools if one is a tie). "Branded" includes anything only available from a particular supplier — including bags and kit for school clubs and activities. Schools must publish their uniform policy online and make second-hand uniform easy to get. Read more at gov.uk ("Cost of school uniforms" guidance).

Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at info@travellermovement.org.uk