



SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY

STAFF DRESS CODE POLICY

Policy owner	Safe Start School
Updated	October 2026
Review date	October 2027
Applies to	All employees, agency staff, volunteers and other adults working on behalf of the School

1. Purpose

Safe Start School expects all staff to present themselves in a professional, safe and appropriate manner. Dress and appearance should support positive professional relationships with pupils, parents/carers, colleagues and external professionals, while

recognising individual identity, religion or belief, disability and other protected characteristics.

The School recognises that staff work in an SEMH environment and may need to respond to behaviour, participate in practical activities, support pupils outside the classroom and, where necessary, use approved physical intervention. Clothing and footwear must therefore be suitable for the duties being undertaken.

2. Principles

Staff are responsible for their own presentation, appearance and personal hygiene. Clothing should be clean, appropriate to the role and workplace, and should not create an avoidable health, safety or safeguarding risk.

Standards will be applied consistently and reasonably. The School will not apply the dress code in a way that unlawfully discriminates against an employee.

3. General expectations

Staff should wear clothing that:

- is appropriate to their role and the activities they are expected to undertake;
- is not excessively revealing or sexually provocative;
- does not display offensive, discriminatory, abusive or otherwise inappropriate words, images or slogans;
- does not display party-political campaigning material while staff are acting in their professional capacity;
- is culturally sensitive and respectful of others;
- does not create an avoidable health and safety risk to the wearer, pupils or others; and
- allows the member of staff to carry out their duties safely and effectively.

4. Acceptable clothing

Examples of normally acceptable clothing include:

- blouses, shirts and smart tops, including long- or short-sleeved items;
- smart plain T-shirts or polo shirts;
- smart-casual trousers or non-ripped jeans where appropriate to the role;
- smart, tailored shorts or skirts of an appropriate length;
- dresses that provide appropriate coverage for the school environment; and

- secure, sensible footwear that is appropriate to the role and activities being undertaken.

This is not an exhaustive list. Managers should consider the overall suitability, safety and professionalism of clothing rather than relying solely on a particular item or style.

5. Teaching Assistants and practical pupil-facing roles

Where the School requires a particular uniform or standard for Teaching Assistants or other practical pupil-facing roles, staff should wear:

- plain white T-shirts or School-logo polo shirts, where provided/required;
- dark trousers or black/dark jeans that are not ripped; and
- secure, sensible footwear suitable for movement, practical activity and the needs of the pupils being supported.

Any role-specific requirement will be communicated clearly by the School.

6. Clothing and footwear that may be unsuitable

Depending on the role, activity and circumstances, the following may be unsuitable:

- clothing that is excessively revealing, transparent or exposes underwear;
- very short or excessively tight clothing that is unsuitable for the duties being undertaken;
- strappy tops or vests where these do not provide appropriate coverage for the school environment;
- clothing displaying offensive, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate images or wording;
- ripped clothing where this creates an unprofessional appearance or safety concern;
- flip-flops, sliders, unsecured sandals or similar footwear where they present a safety risk; and
- very high heels or other footwear that prevents the employee from safely undertaking their duties.

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Decisions should be based on the employee's role, the activity being undertaken, safeguarding considerations, health and safety and the need for professional presentation.

7. Jewellery, accessories and personal appearance

Jewellery, accessories, nails, hair and other aspects of personal appearance should not create an avoidable safety risk or prevent staff from carrying out their duties effectively. Where a risk is identified for a particular activity or pupil, the School may require an item to be removed, secured or adapted for the duration of that activity.

8. Religion or belief, disability and reasonable adjustments

The School respects clothing, headwear and other items worn because of religion or belief. Any restriction will only be considered where there is a legitimate reason, such as a specific health, safety or safeguarding requirement, and will be handled sensitively.

The School will also consider reasonable adjustments to this policy for disabled employees where required. Staff who require an adjustment should speak to their Line Manager or HR. Individual circumstances will be considered rather than applying the policy rigidly.

9. Health, safety and safeguarding

Where a risk assessment, pupil-specific plan, practical activity, PE session, educational visit or other duty requires particular clothing, footwear or protective equipment, those requirements take precedence. Staff must comply with any PPE or safety instructions relevant to their role.

10. Tattoos, slogans and political material

Visible tattoos are not prohibited solely because they are tattoos. However, offensive, discriminatory, sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate imagery or wording must be covered while at work where reasonably practicable.

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries and political impartiality when working with pupils. Clothing or accessories used to promote a political party or candidate, or which could reasonably undermine the School's duty of political impartiality, should not be worn while undertaking professional duties.

11. Concerns and management action

Where a manager considers that an employee's dress or appearance does not meet this policy, the matter should normally be addressed privately and sensitively. The manager should explain the concern and, where appropriate, allow the employee a reasonable opportunity to correct it.

Before taking formal action, managers should consider whether the issue may relate to religion or belief, disability, pregnancy or maternity, sex, gender reassignment, race or another protected characteristic, and whether an adjustment or alternative approach is appropriate.

Repeated or serious failure to comply with a reasonable dress requirement may be addressed under the School's normal management or disciplinary procedures.

12. Queries

Staff who are unsure whether an item of clothing, footwear or an aspect of appearance is suitable should seek advice from their Line Manager before wearing it to work. HR advice should be obtained where a concern involves equality, reasonable adjustments or a potentially sensitive individual circumstance.

13. Related legislation and policies

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Education Act 1996 requirements concerning political impartiality, where applicable
- School Staff Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

- Behaviour / Physical Intervention procedures, where relevant

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there is a change in legislation, statutory guidance, School practice or identified need.