School Uniform Policy

Merley First School

Version	1.0
Approving Body	Trust Board
Date ratified	September 2026
Date issued	October 2026
Review date	September 2027
Owner	Director of Education/CEO
Applies to	All Trust Schools, all Trust staff

Version	Date	Reason
1.0	September 2026	To establish a Trust wide school uniform policy in line with DfE guidance.

2. Policy statement and purpose

At Merley First School, as part of Initio Learning Trust, we believe that a school uniform plays a fundamental role in setting an appropriate tone for learning and fostering a strong sense of community, equality, and pride. Wearing a uniform acts as a social equaliser by removing visible distinctions of wealth or fashion, allowing students to be valued and judged on their character and effort rather than their attire.

Our uniform policy is designed to uphold the core values and beliefs of Initio Learning Trust:

- **Promoting equality:** Uniforms create a level playing field across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, reducing fashion-driven peer pressure and bullying.
- **Focus on learning:** Removing choices around daily outfit selection eliminates unnecessary distractions, reducing cognitive load and simplifying morning routines.
- **Sense of belonging:** A shared uniform enhances site security by making intruders quickly identifiable, while building community identity and a shared sense of collective responsibility.
- **Preparing for the workplace:** Adhering to a uniform code instils self-discipline and a professional mindset essential for future careers.

In alignment with DfE statutory guidance, our school is committed to ensuring that uniform items remain affordable, practical, durable, and accessible to every family in our community.

3. Legal Framework & Statutory Compliance

This policy complies with all relevant national legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Department for Education (DfE) guidance on the cost of school uniforms.
- Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026).
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Equality Act 2010.

Mandatory Limits on Compulsory Branded Items (Effective 1 September 2026):

- **Primary schools:** Must limit total compulsory branded uniform and PE items to **3 or fewer**.

4. Uniform Requirements & Cost Considerations

No uniform at Merley First School will be so costly as to restrict any pupil from attending or fully participating in school life. To achieve maximum affordability and high value for money, the school adheres to the following core principles:

- **Prioritising generic items:** Most uniform items can be purchased widely from high street stores and supermarkets, allowing parents to shop competitively.
- **Quality, durability, and sustainability:** Procurement decisions prioritise garments that resist wear and tear, wash well, and maintain appearance over long periods.
- **Avoiding single-supplier:** Single-supplier contracts are avoided where possible, and supplier arrangements are subjected to regular retendering to secure competitive pricing.
- **Transition:** In alignment with Initio Learning Trust standards, basic items are consistent across trust schools to minimise additional expense during school transitions.

5. School Specifics

5.1 Merley First School Main Uniform

School Main Colours: **Royal Blue**

A. Generic Items (Available from any high street retailer or supermarket):

- Plain white shirt or polo shirt
- Grey trousers, grey shorts, grey skirt, or grey pinafore
- Summer gingham dress - blue/white checkered or striped (optional)
- Plain grey, black or white socks, or plain grey/black/white tights

B. Compulsory Branded Items (Strictly adhering to statutory limits):

- **Branded Item 1:** School Jumper / Cardigan with School Logo
- **Branded Item 2:** PE Top with Logo

5.2 Physical Education (PE) Kit Specifications

To maintain affordability and inclusion, the PE kit is kept simple and practical. Branded PE items are strictly limited to a maximum of one item across the entire kit.

- **PE Top:** Branded Merley PE top with logo
- **PE Bottoms (Generic):** Plain black or navy shorts, tracksuit bottoms or opaque sports leggings.
- **Cold Weather Outerwear (Generic):** Plain black or navy sweatshirt or fleece.
- **Footwear:** Suitable supportive sports trainers (any colour).
  Designer labels or commercial branding are prohibited to prevent peer pressure.

5.3 Outerwear, footwear and accessories

- **Footwear:** All pupils must wear plain black, leather (or leather-look) shoes with flat soles. Canvas shoes, high heels, open-toed footwear, and black trainers or trainer-style shoes with logos are not permitted in order to maintain equality.
- **Outerwear:** Outdoor coats should be warm, weatherproof, and safe for travel to and from school (e.g. reflective elements encouraged). Denim or leather jackets and hoodies are not permitted as daily outerwear.
- **Jewellery and accessories:** For health and safety, jewellery is restricted to a wristwatch (smart free) and one pair of small, plain metal stud earrings. All jewellery must be removed or taped for PE lessons.

6. Inclusion, equality, and reasonable adjustments

Merley First School is dedicated to inclusivity and ensuring no pupil is disadvantaged due to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 or specific individual circumstances.

- **Religious and cultural beliefs:** Requests to adjust the uniform policy to accommodate religious dress requirements (such as headscarves, turbans, hijabs, or religious artefacts) are welcomed and supported. Headwear worn for religious reasons should align with school uniform colours (e.g., plain black, navy, or white) where practical.
- **Special educational needs & disabilities (SEND):** Reasonable adjustments will be made for pupils with SEND, medical conditions, or sensory sensitivities (e.g., removing tags, allowing softer fabrics, or adapting footwear). Parents should contact the SENCO to arrange adjustments.
- **Hair and hairstyles:** The school champions equality and complies fully with EHRC guidance on hair discrimination. Natural Afro-textured hair, protective styles (such as braids, locks, and twists), and religious hair practices are respected and protected.
- **Sex and gender neutrality:** Uniform options are non-gendered. All pupils may choose from the approved range of uniform items (trousers, skirts, shorts) regardless of sex or gender identity.
- **Adverse weather adaptations:** During extreme heatwaves or severe cold, temporary adaptations will be announced (e.g., permitting PE kit/shorts in hot weather or allowing additional warm layers/trousers in extreme cold).

7. Financial support, hardship, and second-hand provision

We are committed to supporting all families in accessing high-quality uniform without financial strain.

- **Second-hand uniform:** High-quality, second-hand uniform items are freely accessible to all parents throughout the year via the school office and PTA pre-loved sales.

- **Financial hardship:** Families experiencing financial hardship can access discrete support, including local hardship grants or uniform assistance. To request confidential assistance, please contact Rebecca Baldwin - Headteacher] at office@merleyfirstschool.org

8. Non-compliance and behaviour policy

When a pupil does not adhere to the uniform policy, staff will take a supportive, considerate, and fair approach to understand the underlying reasons.

- Non-compliance due to financial hardship or family emergency will never result in immediate disciplinary sanctions. The school will offer immediate practical support, such as loaning clean items or providing access to second-hand stock.
- Where non-compliance is persistent and unrelated to financial hardship, the school will engage with parents directly to resolve the issue in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

9. Complaints

Disputes or concerns regarding the school uniform policy should be raised in the first instance with Rebecca Baldwin - Headteacher]. Formal complaints regarding school uniform will be handled in accordance with the school's official Complaints Policy, available on the school website.

This policy is published on the school website and reviewed annually by the Local School Committee and Initio Learning Trust Board to ensure ongoing compliance with statutory guidance, affordability standards, and community needs.