Millions of Families to Benefit from Lower School Uniform Costs

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Government to cut school uniform costs for around 4.2 million children, saving families an estimated £73 million per year

Millions of families across England are set to benefit from a major reduction in school uniform costs, as part of a new legislative push by the Department for Education under the government's *Plan for Change*.

According to new government analysis, over 4.2 million children in approximately 8,000 schools will be affected by new laws that will cap the number of branded uniform items schools can require to just three – excluding ties. This landmark policy, included in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, could save families an estimated £73 million each year.

Currently, parents are spending an average of £442 to equip a child for secondary school, and £343 for primary, with many citing the high cost of branded clothing items as a major burden. A recent survey found that nearly one in five schools has actually increased the number of branded uniform items over the last year, despite existing guidance urging them to limit such requirements. Nearly half of schools surveyed were found not to be following current non-statutory guidance to keep branded items to a minimum.

In response, the new mandatory cap aims to give parents the freedom to shop around for more affordable options, easing the back-to-school financial pressure for millions of households. On average, the measure could save families up to £50 per child each year on uniforms alone.

The changes are part of a broader package within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which is currently progressing through the House of Lords. The bill aims to tackle financial pressures on families and remove barriers to education by implementing wide-reaching reforms, including the introduction of free breakfast clubs in all schools.

Together, these reforms are expected to put up to £500 a year back into parents' pockets, according to government estimates.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson commented: "Looking smart at school shouldn't cost the earth, and no parent should have to choose between buying food for the week or a school jumper.

These new laws will save families hundreds of pounds a year and ensure that no child's education is held back by the size of their parent's pay packet.

This bill is about more than just money—it's about removing barriers, keeping children safe, and making sure every school is up to the standard of the best. That's what our Plan for Change is all about."

School uniforms, while promoting equality and school pride, have increasingly become a source of anxiety and exclusion, with some families struggling to meet costs. In extreme cases, children have missed school because they didn't have the right branded attire.

Lynn Perry MBE, Chief Executive of Barnardo's, welcomed the reforms: "We support the government's decision to cap the number of branded items required by schools. It's simply not right that children are arriving at school in ill-fitting uniforms or unsuitable footwear because of the high costs.

These are essentials, and rising prices are making them out of reach for too many families. We hope to see further action in the upcoming child poverty strategy to tackle the root causes affecting so many children's lives."

The policy builds on existing statutory guidance, which already instructs schools

to consider the cost of uniforms, but the new legislation will go further by making the cap enforceable by law.

The Department for Education says the move aligns with its long-term mission to break the link between background and success, ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive—regardless of their family's income.

With the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill advancing in Parliament, the government reiterates its commitment to transforming the education system so that every child in every school can access the resources they need to succeed, without financial barriers standing in their way.

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