

Notice of Motion – School Uniform and Free School Meals

Proposer: Councillor J Tustain

Seconder: Councillor K Taylor

Full Council notes:

- A cost-of-living crisis is affecting families across Hampshire, with inflation currently running at over 10%. Parents are struggling to afford school uniforms and lunches for their children.
- In 2021 the government passed the Education (Guidance about Cost of School Uniforms) Act and issued Statutory Guidance which mandates schools to “consider the costs of school uniform requirements, minimise branded items, and ensure items are available from suppliers which have evidenced their value for money”.
- Across Hampshire, it is understood that some schools still expect and require pupils to buy branded uniform items, which are often significantly more expensive than unbranded alternatives.
- Across Hampshire County Council, the number of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased from 6.7% to 17.12% in the last four years.
- In 2018, the Conservative government reduced the free school meal annual eligibility income from £16,190 to £7,400.

Full council believes:

- No family should struggle to provide the basics, such as school uniforms and food, for their children.
- There is no justification for school uniform policies that require families to purchase branded items that are significantly more expensive than unbranded alternatives.
- No child should be adversely affected by poverty of their right to a decent education and the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Full council resolves to:

- encourage all Hampshire schools to comply with the Statutory Guidance issued pursuant to the Education (Guidance about Cost of School Uniforms) Act.
- Ask the council leader to write to the Minister of State for Education to review the eligibility criteria for free school meals, including those below the poverty line, defined as 60% of the current median household income of £31,400.
- Ask the council leader to write to Hampshire MPs to lobby the Minister of State for Education and their government on this issue.
- To place on record our thanks to all council services, community organisations and charities involved in supporting families of Hampshire through the cost-of-living crisis and beyond.