

Why Dress Code at Bob Hawke College?

John Burke 6 May 2020

I have written this paper in response to the current College community conversation regarding the cooler weather and the variations that we are seeing students wearing the College uniform. It attempts to frame the conversation in the following manner:

- **Why have a Dress Code?**
- **What are the current issues? and**
- **What do we need to do to resolve these issues?**

Our Uniform

The Bob Hawke College uniform was created during 2019 and involved extensive consultation with the community via parent forums. The Bob Hawke College Advisory Group also provided feedback and direction.

Bob Hawke College is located in a place that is connected to a number of different stories of Subiaco. We are keen to honour these stories and one of the ways we have done this is through our school uniform.

The plaid check design, developed exclusively for the College, includes 'Subiaco Red' which represents the colour of the red brick commonly used for houses in this area. Recognising our College's namesake, the design has been named 'The Bob Hawke Check'.

The Bob Hawke College athletic uniform incorporates a unique artwork created specifically for the College by artist, Jade Dolman. The artwork tells the story of a journey, Katitjin Bidi (Knowledge Journey). This is the journey of students through their education and their youth.

Why Dress Code?

Dress codes are tangible evidence of the standards expected of students at the College and play an important role in promoting the positive public image of our College to the broader community. Our dress code supports all students to participate fully in school life.

Dress codes can help create a sense of identity and a school culture in which every student experiences a sense of belonging.

The Department of Education Policy states that the principal of a WA public school is to ensure that their school has a Dress Code.

Our Aim: To have 100% compliance with the Bob Hawke College Dress Code: not because students **have** to, but because they and their parents understand and share the importance of having consistent student wearing of the uniform.

Our Dress Code:

- Adheres to State and federal human rights, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation;
- Ensures that requirements are similar for all students and include gender neutral options;
- Provides parents and students with details of the school's dress code in writing at the time of enrolment; and
- communicates to students they are required to comply with the dress code.

Benefits of Having a Consistent Application of Uniform

There are benefits for students wearing uniform. A uniform can be vital in creating a sense of school identity and community, and can become a source of collective connection for students.

It has utility in preventing bullying and social distraction. If everyone is wearing the same clothes, there is less opportunity to identify socio-economic or trend difference.

Overall, the uniform is a cheaper option: it is commercially designed to be hard wearing and a cost effective way to dress students five days a week.

From an evidence perspective, there is research that suggests school culture and environment can be enhanced by a collective understanding of why uniform is important.

The following site , the *Harvard Kennedy Centre Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy* provides a number of research abstracts RE the benefits (or otherwise) of uniforms:

<https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/education/school-uniforms-research-achievement/>

There is little or no evidence that uniform impacts positively on student outcomes (Hattie 2015).

Current Issues (in no particular order):

- Uniform supply and convenience
- Parents and students feeling that the existing winter options (vest, jacket & trousers) do not provide enough warmth for students
- Another winter option will not be provided in time for winter 2020
- College response to students not conforming with dress code
- Staff seeking clarification of expectation
- Adolescents seeking to self-express students customising whatever they wear
- Community engagement
- Cultural transition from primary to secondary school

Strategy Moving forward:

1. 12/13 May: Clarify issues with P&C and College Board whilst maintaining a period of maintenance* at the College
2. 15 May: College Update outlining position
3. 18 May: Clarify College position at Executive
4. 19 May: Communicate to Whole Staff expectation and application of consequences for breach of Dress Code

*Maintenance: staff clarifying reasons for students not wearing uniform, and making a reasonable decision in response.

By the end of week 4 I aim to have a position on how we aim to achieve 100% compliance with the Dress Code that reflects this process.