

23rd September 2020

Dear Parent,

I hope that you and your family are well.

It has been really enjoyable getting to know the students here, and I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome. The start of term has been a little different this year, school is a very different place, but as usual staff and students are working well together to make our return a very positive one. I would also like to thank you for your support in getting us 'up and running'; more than ever before, it is really important that we work together this year.

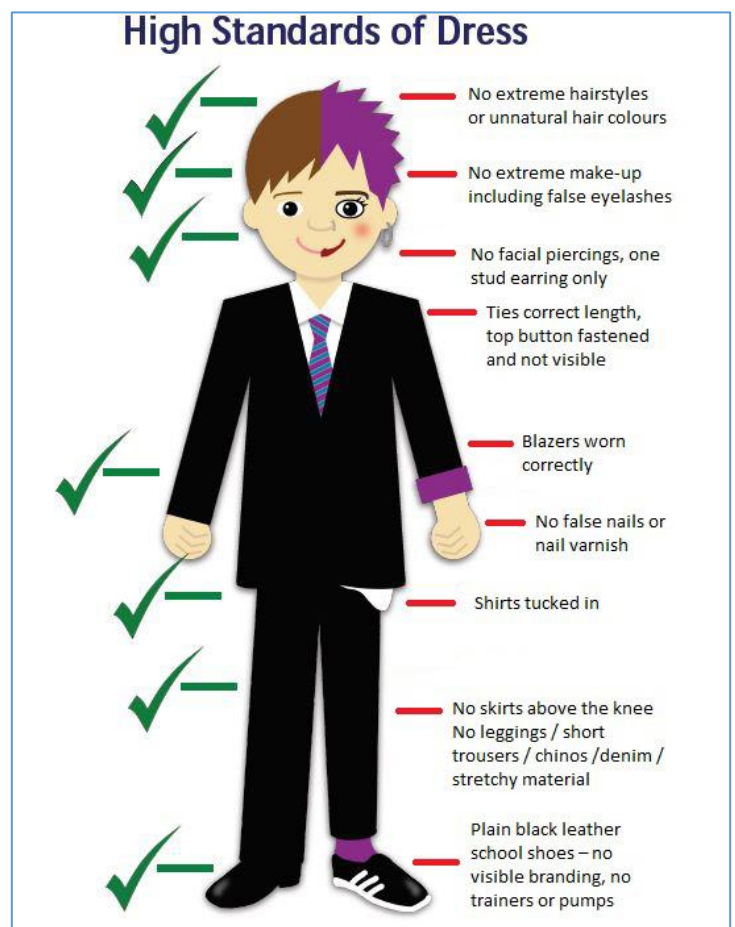
Since our return to school, we have been asked a number of questions about our uniform expectations. I hope this letter clarifies our long-held 'uniform and general appearance' expectations so that we can move forward together on this.

Firstly, I would like to stress that uniform is important to us. We are incredibly proud to be Sheffield Park Academy; wearing our uniform with pride is an essential part of celebrating not just who we are, but also, what we're about. Wearing the uniform is an outward sign of the respect that we show to each other here because we all buy-in to the values of the school. The uniform is smart, business-like and an essential part of preparing for life after school. Wearing a uniform is not about suppressing individuality, quite the opposite, it is about providing the same standard for all students whatever the family circumstances may be at the time, so that we can celebrate differences and work well together.

Secondly, I feel it is important to mention that we have not changed uniform policy this year. Uniform is exactly the same as it was last year (and the year before that). Nor have we changed the vast majority of our expectations on general appearance (they are almost the same as last year, and the year before that). The uniform policy is available at <https://www.sheffieldpark-academy.org/information/uniform>. The uniform web-page includes the picture to the left, it shows our general expectations, whilst the policy itself goes into more detail; this picture is also in the Student Planner and we sent you numerous links to it during 'lockdown' and the summer holidays.

One (hopefully) temporary addition to the uniform policy is the provision (by parents) of a reusable 'face covering / mask'. Face coverings help us reduce the risk of spreading the infection to other students, staff, our families and the wider community. Wearing a covering / mask is more than just uniform policy, it is an essential part of being a responsible member of the community, working together to stop the spread of a potentially life-threatening illness. Face coverings must be an appropriate design for a school setting.

There is one additional part of student 'uniform and appearance' that the policy now addresses. False nails and nail varnish will not be allowed. Students will often say that nail varnish is a way to express individuality and/or enhance the attractiveness of their hands. Many would like to wear



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bright colours as fashions change. This is, like eye-catching make-up, not appropriate for the working environment in school. We do not want to encourage an environment where students are competing in terms of their appearance or how “fashionable” they look. In addition, we are aware that nail varnish or extensions can pose risks for students undertaking practical work in certain subjects. Long false nails or extensions can be trapped or ripped moving round the school through doors and corridors, causing considerable pain and upset. They can also cause harm to others in PE or drama practical work. These are situations which are easily avoided but not allowing them in the first place.

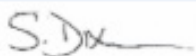
In the past, the Academy has not always been as rigorous as it could have been in upholding uniform standards; I apologise for any confusion this may have caused. Apart from the two changes mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the policy has not changed. What has changed, however, is our expectation that every student will follow the policy because we are determined to see our students looking great and wearing a smart uniform with pride.

What next with uniform?

- We will review uniform policy and expectations, for staff and for students, regularly in line with best practice. I will be asking for your views via an online survey in the coming days and from the results of that, I will ask a small group of parents / carers to work with us to consider how we improve uniform, behaviour and standards in the future. When you receive the link, please let us know your views; I’d like to hear from all in the community about how we can improve standards and support our great students in presenting the most positive image of themselves, and of this school. The standards detailed in this letter will form the basis of our expectations.
- The Academy will continue to uphold existing uniform and appearance standards. We hope that you will work with us to fix all uniform issues as quickly as possible.
- We recognise that changing hair colour, hairstyle or removing nails extensions etc. may require a little longer due to some restrictions on appointments. Although a delay is not ideal, we are happy to work with families. Thank you to those families who have already worked with us to rectify uniform issues, we appreciate your support. Please let us know if it is not possible to fix issues before **Monday 5th October** and we will try our best to support you.
- **By Monday 5th October** all uniform issues should be resolved; uniform and appearance should be in line with the policy. We will always try to be consistent, and please check with us if you are uncertain about what is, or is not allowed.
- From **Monday 5th October**, students in incorrect uniform will be asked to borrow some fresh and clean academy stock or parents will be able to drop-off appropriate items. If neither is possible, the student will not be allowed in mainstream provision e.g. lessons or social times. They will follow their normal timetable from Internal Exclusion.

We recognise that some students may want to resist changing back to the agreed standard, so we hope that you will support us on this. These rules are not new, and they are not there to make lives uncomfortable; they will be upheld because we want the highest standards for our students in everything that they do. Thank you in advance for your support on this.

Yours sincerely



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