

The UK's first report into attitudes
around school uniforms - conducted by
Trutex in association with The Diana Award



attitudes to school uniform

children

teachers

parents

The word 'attitudes' is rendered in large, white, lowercase letters. Various characters are positioned around it: a boy sits on the 'i', a girl sits on the 't', a boy stands on the 'd', a girl stands on the 'e', a teacher stands on the 's', and a parent stands on the 'a'. A pink arrow labeled 'parents' points to the 'a', a blue arrow labeled 'children' points to the 'i', and a green arrow labeled 'teachers' points to the 's'.

Trutex are proud to partner The Diana Award and
support their Anti-Bullying Ambassadors Programme

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3 stakeholders

teachers

parents

children

1,318^{*} people

from across the UK took part in the research



Foreword

Teachers, parents and schoolchildren all agree that wearing a uniform to school can help to reduce the incidences of bullying, according to new research by uniform makers Trutex working in association with charity The Diana Award.

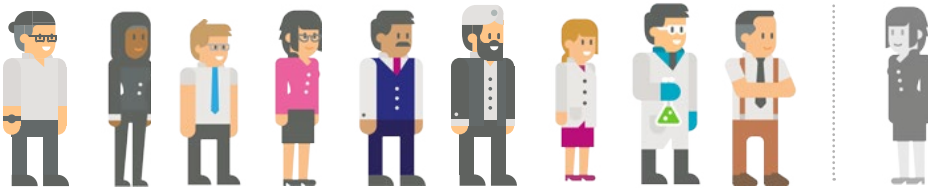
The research found that teachers overwhelmingly believe school uniforms help to reduce bullying and that they contribute to a happier school community and better-behaved students. Indeed, teachers are the most positive about the benefits of school uniform, claiming it helps children to fit in and improves the perception of schools.

Parents and school children also recognise the benefits of school uniforms in reducing bullying, although they are less enthusiastic than teachers about this attribute. But while, given the choice, children would rather wear their own clothes, parents admit that school uniforms make their lives easier.

Trutex, which produces four million items of school uniform every year, commissioned three pieces of research from each of the three key stakeholders – teachers, parents and children, comprising 1,318* people – on their attitudes to school uniforms. It worked in association with The Diana Award, a charity established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, which runs an anti-bullying campaign as part of its remit to foster, develop and inspire positive change in the lives of young people.

*YouGov surveyed 604 children aged between six and 15 years old online between 13th and 20th April 2017. Opinium surveyed 534 parents of school aged-children between 10th - 14th March 2017. 180 teachers surveyed online between 20th March 2017 and 17th April 2017.

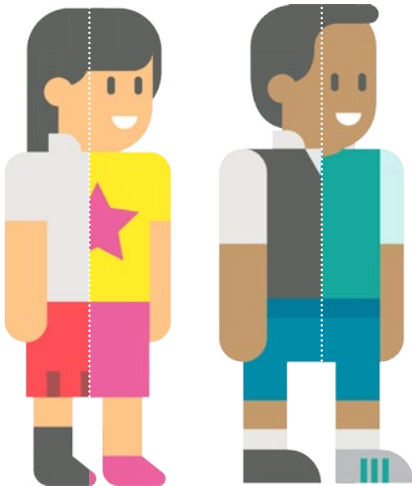
Key findings



9 in 10

teachers

believe **school uniforms help to reduce bullying**



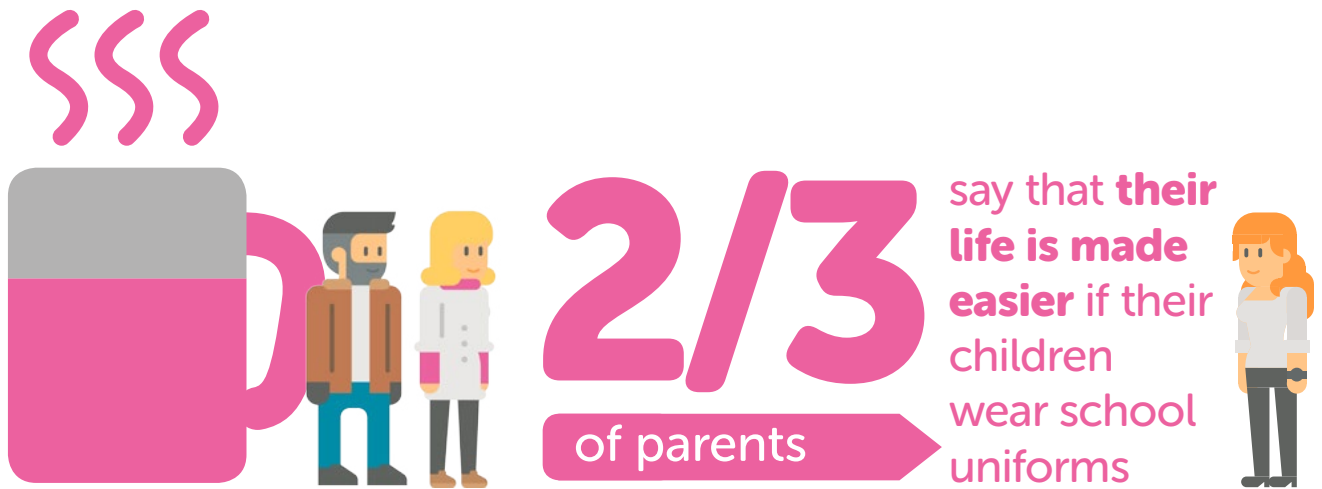
almost
1/2
of children

believe that **wearing a school uniform reduces bullying**



2/3
of parents

believe wearing school uniforms **puts everyone on a level playing field**



6 in 10
children

aged between 6 and 15 years old would prefer to wear their own clothes to school



7 out of 10 children believe wearing a school uniform helps them to fit in



Introduction

Uniforms are a fact of life for British school children. Almost every secondary school (98%) and the majority (79%) of primary schools¹ require students to wear some form of uniform, ranging from a formal blazer and tie combination to a more relaxed polo shirt based outfit. It is a tradition dating back to the 13th century, and one which Britain exported overseas.

98%

of secondary schools

in the UK require students to wear some form of uniform



79%

of primary schools

in the UK require students to wear some form of uniform



¹Information from Office of Fair Trading

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514978/School_Uniform_Guidance.pdf

³<https://nobullying.com/bullying-statistics-2014/>

Schools in the United Kingdom are not legally required to impose a uniform policy but the Department of Education 'strongly encourages' schools to have uniforms believing that they play a 'valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone'².

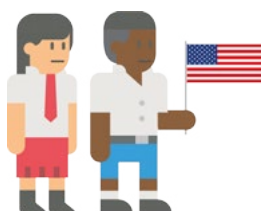
While the government department does not detail the ways in which uniforms play such a 'valuable role', there is increasing evidence that schools which strictly enforce uniform policies experience fewer incidences of bullying as potential bullies find it harder to identify their targets, who often are those children who do not quite fit in.

A uniform levels the playing field. It removes the pressure on children to wear the latest fashions or designer labels, and can reduce perceived inequalities between students from different socio-economic or family backgrounds.

Uniform plays a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of a school and setting an appropriate tone.



Department
for Education

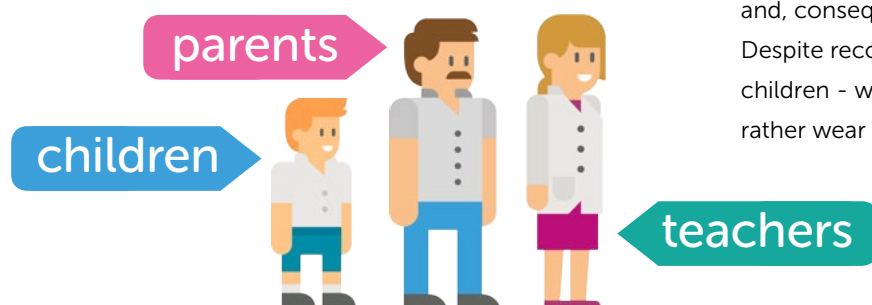


In the United States, where fewer than a quarter of schools enforce a uniform policy, preferring instead to implement dress codes, **more than 160,000 children miss school every day due to bullying and other classroom intimidations** while one in ten teenagers drop out for similar reasons. Being bullied at school is a way of life for 28% American students, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, with those who are considered 'different' most at risk³. However, these numbers could also significantly underestimate the problem because it has also been suggested that **at least 20% of children are reluctant to confide in teachers or parents that they are being bullied**.

The research, conducted on behalf of uniform maker Trutex and campaigning children's charity The Diana Award, finds that the three stakeholder groups most familiar with school uniforms - teachers, parents, pupils - all recognise that the outfit can play a role in reducing bullying.

Teachers, who have a bird's eye view of classroom politics, are the most positive about the benefits of school uniforms, ranging from playing a role in reducing bullying to improving students' behaviour.

The majority of school children agree that wearing a school uniform helps them to 'fit in' with their classmates and, consequently, can play a role in reducing bullying. Despite recognising these attributes, if given the choice, children - with a handful of exceptions - would still rather wear their own clothes to school than a uniform.



all recognise that uniform can play a role in reducing bullying



the greatest advocates of uniforms

Of the three stakeholder groups surveyed, teachers have probably the greatest understanding of classroom politics and the cliques that can develop among pupils. They have a first-hand view of the social interactions between their students, perhaps seeing behaviours that school children would not share with their parents.



9 in 10

teachers

believe school
uniforms help to
reduce bullying

Teachers⁴ are overwhelmingly in favour of school uniforms, according to the survey.

Nine out of ten (89%) of teachers believe that school uniforms help to reduce bullying in the classroom.

⁴Online survey Opinium, surveyed 180 teachers between 20th March - 17th April 2017



of teachers

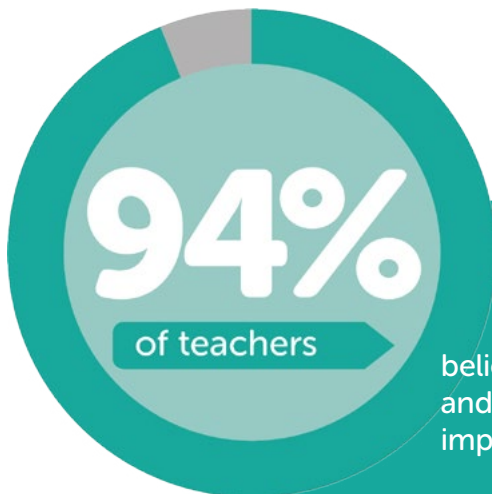
believe that wearing uniforms help students to 'fit in'

95% of teachers believe that wearing uniform helps students to 'fit in',

as their standardised outfits make it harder to identify social classes or family backgrounds or who owns the latest 'must have' trainers.

It is not just bullying behaviour that school uniforms affect

Teachers also perceive other benefits from wearing school uniforms:



of teachers



believe that the perception of parents, local communities and even potential students towards a school can be improved if they see its pupils wearing school uniforms

This could have a positive knock on effect, transforming the school into 'first choice' for parents and pupils.



see the uniform as contributing to a happy school community

9 in 10



teachers

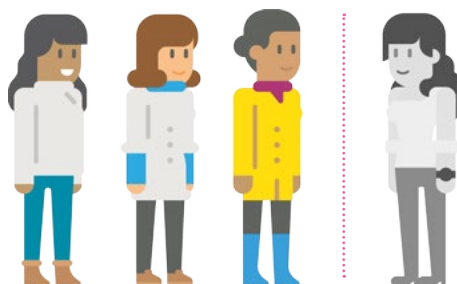
believe that a school uniform **positively** **affects pupils'** **behaviour**

What do parents think of school uniforms?

The arrival of a new academic year may also lead to a flurry of tabloid articles about pupils being excluded from school because they were wearing the wrong sort of shoes or inappropriate skirts, for example, and irate mothers and fathers complaining about a head teacher's intransigence, but **it seems the majority of parents favour school uniform.**

⁵Opinium surveyed 534 parents of school aged-children between 10th - 14th March 2017

3 in 4 Mums



say school uniforms make their lives easier

In short, a school uniform makes a parent's life easier. **Two in every three (66%)⁵ parents of school aged children say that the fact they wear uniforms makes their life easier.** Mothers, in particular, recognise their convenience: three in four mums say school uniforms make their lives easier.

Just 18% of parents say school uniforms do not make their lives easier, which may reflect personal circumstances, such as a daily battle with a child who does not want to wear one. Three in ten (29%) London-based parents find uniforms do not make their lives easier.

Do school uniforms help to reduce bullying?

More than half of the UK's parents believe that wearing a school uniform reduces the incidences of bullying in their children's schools.

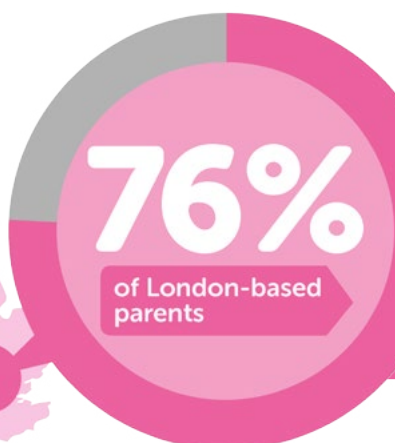
Six in ten (61%) of parents believe that wearing a uniform counteracts bullying within schools, with just a handful (11%) disagreeing.



61%

of parents

believe that wearing a uniform counteracts bullying within schools



76%

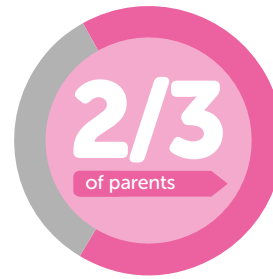
of London-based parents

are more likely to agree that wearing a uniform reduces the incidences of bullying



7 in 10

Mums believe uniforms reduce the pressure on students to wear the latest fashion

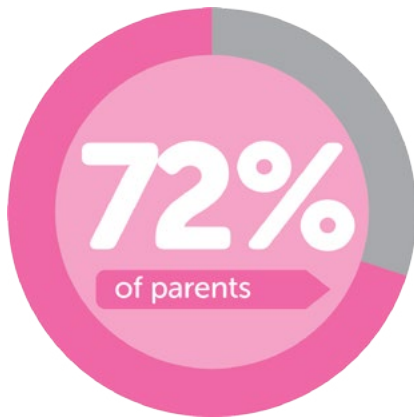


who agreed that wearing school uniforms reduces bullying, believe this is because **uniform puts everyone on a level playing field**

Of those parents who agreed that wearing school uniforms reduces bullying, two thirds believe this is because a uniform puts everyone on a level playing field.

Mothers and fathers had similar views on this, but they differ quite dramatically around the issue of fashion. About seven in ten (68%) mothers believe uniforms reduce the pressure on students to wear the latest fashion, which has a knock on effect on bullying, but only 56% of fathers share that view.

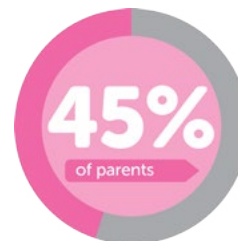
Parents of teenagers are also of the view that uniforms mean their children do not need to live up to the latest trend, with 72% of parents of 16 and 17 year olds agreeing that uniforms reduce the pressure to wear up-to-date designers and looks.



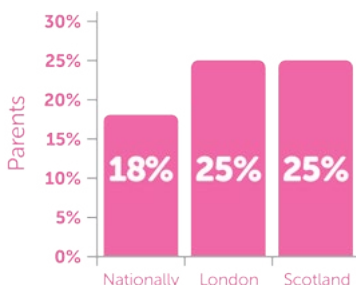
of 16 and 17 year olds agreeing that uniforms reduce the pressure to wear up-to-date designers and looks

Do school uniforms promote the spirit of identity?

While headteachers choose school uniforms to create a unique identity for their schools, just 45% of parents believe that the outfits promote a spirit of identity among pupils, although mothers were slightly more (47%) inclined to accept this than fathers (42%).



believe that **uniform promotes a spirit of identity** among pupils



Do school uniforms help to prevent gang activities in school?

Just 18% of parents believe that school uniforms prevent gang activities, but this low finding could indicate that gang issues are not a major issue within British schools. However, one in four Scottish parents and a similar number of London based parents do view uniforms as instrumental in reducing gang activities within schools, suggesting greater knowledge of this problem.

What do the children say?



6in10

children

aged between 6 and 15 years old would prefer to wear their own clothes to school



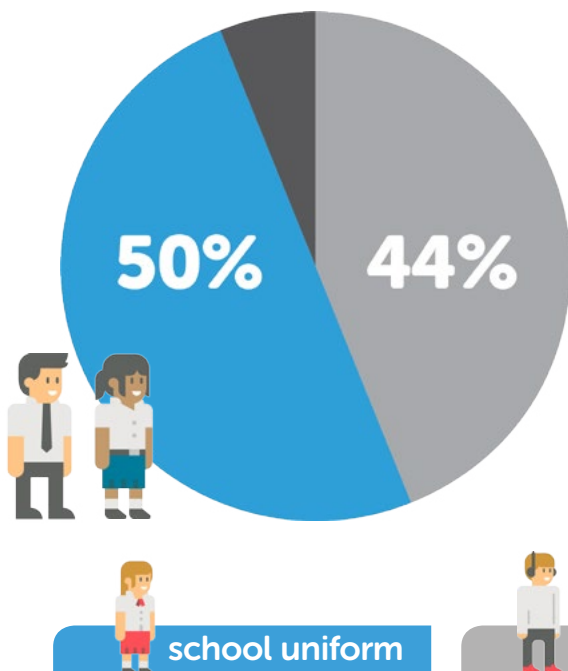
It comes as no surprise to discover that, if given the option, children would prefer to wear their own clothes to school. Almost six in ten (59%) of 6 to 15 year olds surveyed would rather wear their own outfits, against 37% who are quite happy wearing their school uniforms. The preference revealed no gender bias. Boys are only marginally keener (60%) than girls (59%) about the chance to wear their own clothes.

Although across the South of England there is more enthusiasm. Two in three (65%) children based in the South of England are keen to abandon a school uniform and report for classes in their own clothes.

The research also reveals that age is a factor

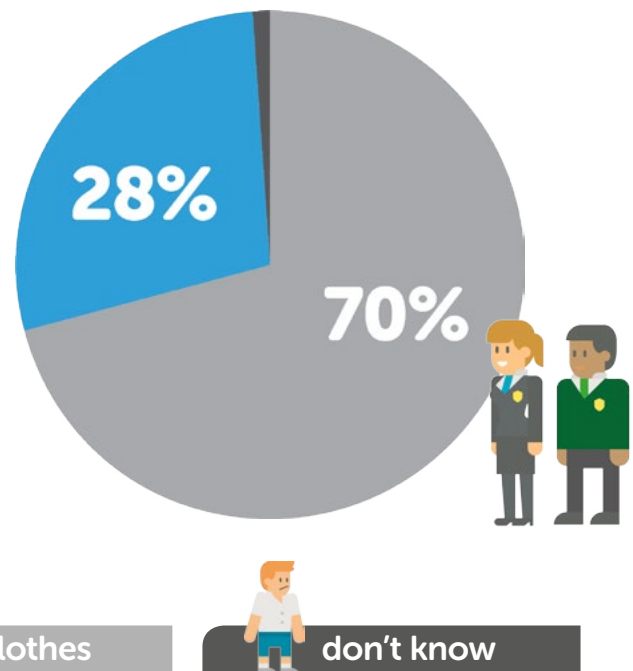
Between the ages of six and ten, children consistently demonstrate a preference to wear their own clothes to school⁶, **but when they reach 11 years old, and are poised to move from primary to secondary school, there is a sharp change**, although it only lasts for that transitional year.

What 11 year olds want to wear at school



Half of all 11 year olds would rather wear a school uniform. In fact, the number of 11 year olds who want to wear a uniform (50%) outweighs those who do not (44%). It is the only point in the survey where a willingness to wear a uniform is greater than a willingness to wear own clothes, and may demonstrate some anxiety in students around changing schools and 'standing out'.

What 14 year olds want to wear at school



There is also a surprising result for 14 year olds. Seven in ten (70%) say they would like to wear their own clothes to school, which is a dramatic jump from the 58% of 13 year olds who expressed a similar view.

This teenage rebellion is short-lived, however. By the time they reach 15 years old, the numbers drop and just 57% of 15 year olds would like to wear their own clothes to school.

⁶YouGov surveyed 604 children aged between six and 15 years old online between 13 and 20 April 2017.

Does wearing a uniform help children fit in?

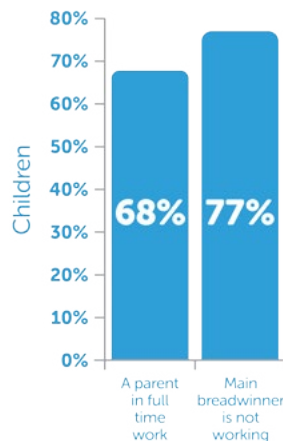
While students are not overwhelmingly supportive of school uniforms, they do agree that there are tangible advantages to wearing one. Seven in ten school children (68%) believe that a school uniform helps them to 'fit in' at school.



The research found that three out of four (75%) six and seven year olds believe that wearing a uniform helps them to fit in. **Seven in ten (70%) 11 year olds, who are the demographic most supportive of wearing uniforms,**

also agree that school uniforms can help them feel part of the crowd. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, 14 year olds, who overwhelmingly prefer to wear their own clothes to school, are not quite as convinced that a uniform can help them fit in (57% agree).

Childrens family's financial situation also appears to play a role in whether a child agrees that a school uniform helps them to fit in



Just 68% of children with a parent in full-time work associate school uniforms with fitting in. **But 77% of students who live in homes where the main breadwinner is not working, believe wearing a uniform helps them to blend in with their classmates,** which might suggest that they feel school friends would be unable to distinguish their family's financial status if everybody is wearing the same outfit.

Does wearing a uniform make school a happier place to be?

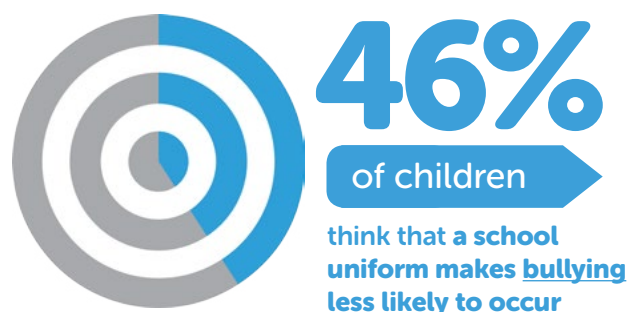
Slightly more than one third (35%) of children also believe that wearing a uniform makes school a happier place to be.



These results hold broadly steady across different age groups, regions and socio-economic backgrounds, although **half of those six years old (50%) surveyed believe wearing a uniform helps to make school a happier place.**

Does wearing a uniform help to make bullying less likely at school?

46% of children believe that wearing a uniform also helps to make bullying less likely at school, which includes 18% who strongly agree with the suggestion. **It is hard to make fun of what somebody is wearing, when everybody is wearing the same outfit.**



Just one in four (25%) disagree with the suggestion, implying that - while a uniform may not be the outfit of choice for most children - **the majority do recognise that it brings unexpected benefits.**

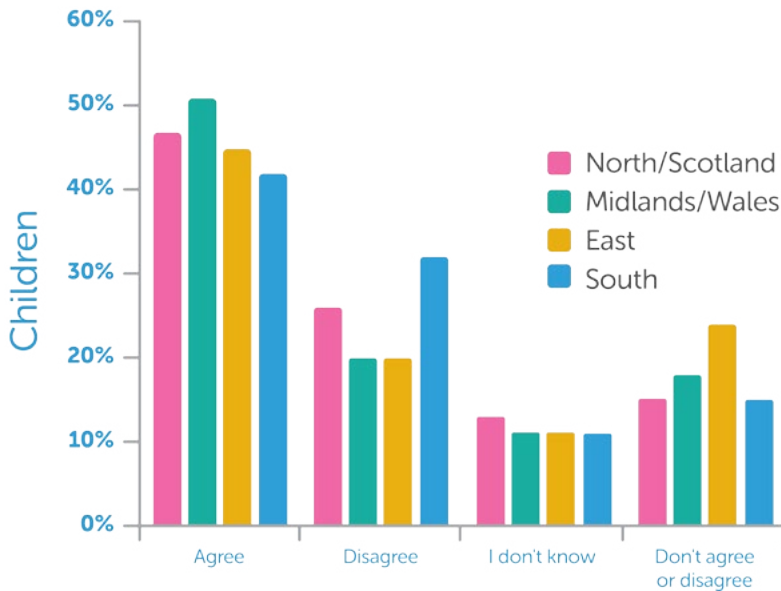
The survey revealed that 11 year olds, who are the most likely age group to choose to wear school uniforms, very strongly associate uniforms with a reduction in bullying. Three in five 11 year olds (60%) believe wearing a uniform makes bullying less likely at school, with only 13% who do not see a link between the two issues.



3 in 5

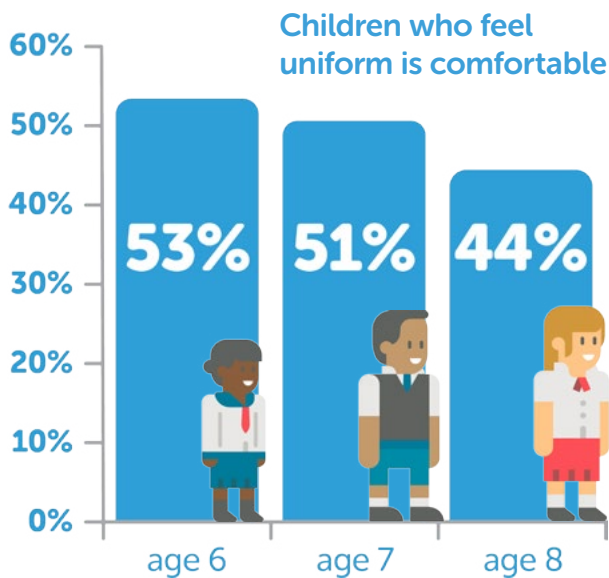
11 year olds believe wearing a uniform makes bullying less likely at school

⁶YouGov surveyed 604 children aged between six and 15 years old online between 13 and 20 April 2017.



Across the regions, the general findings held true although one out of every two (51%) children at schools in the Midlands and Wales believe wearing uniforms reduces the incidences of bullying at school.

Do children find wearing uniform comfortable?



While school children recognise that wearing a uniform can make a school a happier place and reduce the likelihood of bullying, they also have several gripes about the outfits. Almost half (47%) find school uniforms uncomfortable to wear while 53% feel that a uniform doesn't allow them to show their personalities.

Younger children are least likely to moan about comfort.

More than half of all six (53%) and seven year olds (51%) have no such qualms about their uniforms, and about a third agreed that they were uncomfortable to wear (6 year old 33%, 7 year old 35%). And even eight year olds are ambivalent: 46% agreed that school uniforms are uncomfortable while 44% did not.

It is only really when children get to the age of 11 that they start to grumble. Twelve year olds are big moaners - 59% think uniforms are uncomfortable - but the prize for moaning goes to 14 year olds, who are consistently negative to the idea of wearing school uniforms. Almost two thirds (63%) think uniforms are uncomfortable.

Across the regions, 59% of school children in the South of England think uniforms are uncomfortable against 31% in East England.





42%

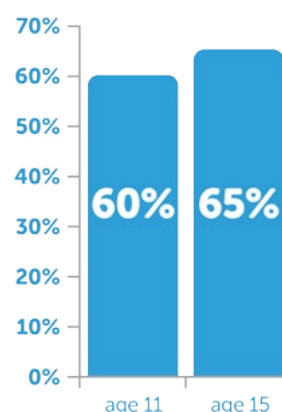
of 7 year olds

feel that their personalities shine through when they wear uniform

Does uniform allow children to demonstrate their personality?

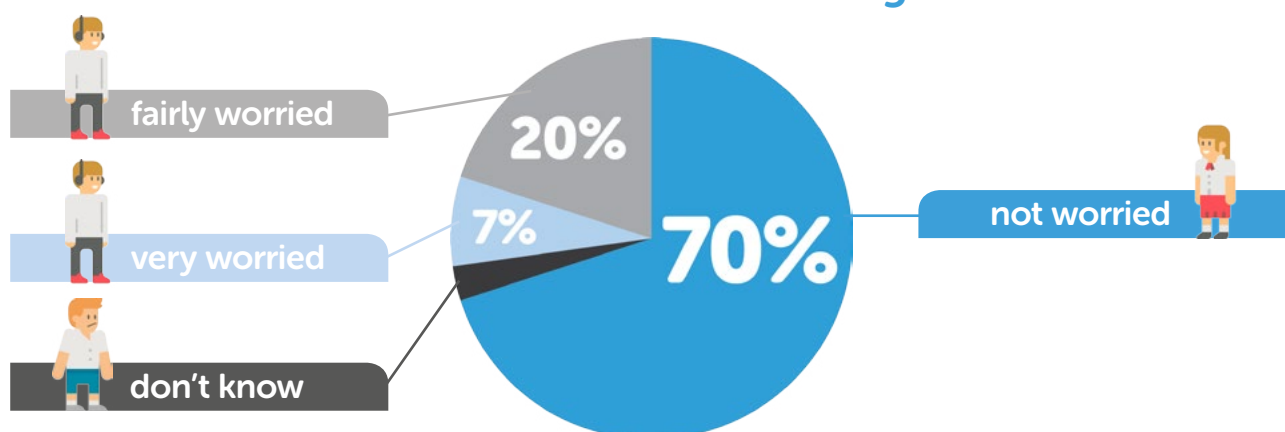
More than half (53%) of all students believe that wearing a uniform prevents them from demonstrating their **individuality**. Seven year olds are the least worried about this: 42% feel that their personalities shine through even when they are wearing a uniform! But as students get older their views change.

Even 11 year olds, of whom more than half express a desire to wear a school uniform, believe that it strips them of their personality. Six out of ten (60%) 11 year olds believe wearing a uniform doesn't allow them to show their personality. This percentage rises across the years, peaking with 15 year olds, of whom 65% who share this view.



11 and 15 year olds who feel a uniform strips them of their personality

How would children feel about not wearing a uniform?



Despite recognising all the pros and cons, when asked to imagine there was no school uniform and that they were allowed to wear their own clothes, seven in ten (70%) school children said they would not be worried at such a prospect.

Surprisingly, the age group most worried about the prospect of wearing their own clothes to school are 15 year olds. More than one third (36%) of 15 year olds would be worried, including 11% who would be 'very worried' by the development. This response is in line with their views on wearing own clothes to school,

where 15 year olds are the least keen of the teenagers.

Why is this? It may reflect their slight maturity over other pupils, which gives them a greater understanding of the link between bullying and school uniforms and their adolescent insecurities about appearances.

11 year olds, who are most keen among the age groups to wear a uniform to school, are surprisingly remarkably sanguine about being told they can wear their own clothes. Two thirds of 11 year olds (66%) would not be worried at such a prospect, even though more than half indicate a desire to wear uniforms.

⁶YouGov surveyed 604 children aged between six and 15 years old online between 13 and 20 April 2017.



Conclusion

teachers

parents

children

School uniforms do play a role in helping children to 'fit in', reducing bullying and creating a happy environment within classrooms

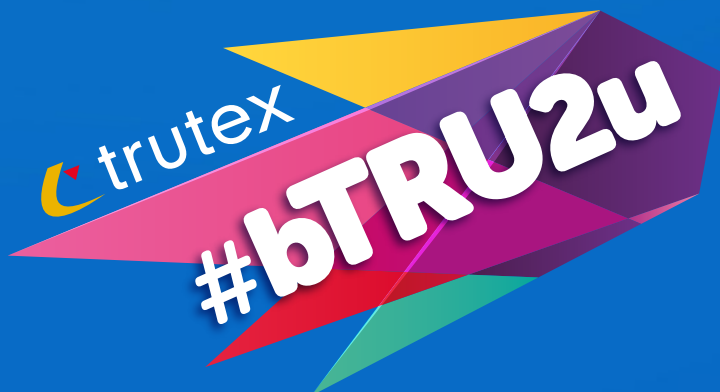
This view is particularly held by teachers, who are right at the cutting edge watching the daily social interactions between pupils, but parents and children also agree that uniforms have a stabilising influence on the classroom.





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Believe in yourself. Be your true colours.

What is #bTRU2u all about?

As part of the partnership with charity The Diana Award, Trutex has launched the #bTRU2u campaign to support their Anti-Bullying Ambassadors Programme.

The #bTRU2u campaign aims to reach as many young people as possible to benefit from The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Ambassadors Programme - to empower young people to tackle bullying in their schools and communities.

Find out more:

www.trutexbTRU2u.co.uk



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