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SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY

Updated in accordance with the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026

1. Introduction & Rationale

Inchmarlo Preparatory School (RBAI) recognises the significant value of a school uniform in promoting a shared sense of identity, community, equity, and belonging among our pupils. A uniform acts as a social equaliser and significantly reduces pressure on families to provide expensive commercial clothing. This policy has been fully updated to comply with the *School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026*, ensuring that all mandatory uniform elements remain fair, practical, inclusive, and sensitive to the financial circumstances of all households.

The complete school uniform must be worn by all pupils throughout the journey to and from School, when attending School Prize distributions, plays, concerts, and on other officially designated occasions.

2. Core Statutory Principles

In alignment with Northern Ireland Department of Education statutory directives, this uniform policy adheres strictly to the following principles:

- **Affordability & Accessibility:** Uniform rules are structured to minimise excessive costs and ensure that families are not placed under unreasonable financial pressure. Eligibility benchmarks for Free School Meals are utilised to monitor general affordability thresholds.
- **Equality & Inclusion:** The policy strictly complies with human rights and equality legislation. Reasonable adjustments that do not generate additional costs are fully supported for pupils with disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN), such as accommodating sensory sensitivities via alternative garment fabrics or fastenings.
- **Comfort & Practicality:** Garments are chosen to be comfortable, practical, and fully supportive of active school life, active play at break times, and practical learning (with explicit consideration for play-based pedagogical approaches at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1).
- **Safeguarding Wellbeing:** No pupil will ever be excluded from school activities or penalised for a uniform breach caused directly by affordability or financial hardship.

3. School Uniform Requirements (P1 – P7)

To safeguard affordability, the school minimises the number of compulsory branded or school-specific items. Standard generic uniform items may be purchased from any preferred high street retailer or supermarket.

A. Daily School Uniform

- **School Blazer:** The central feature of the uniform is the traditional blazer featuring the School Arms on the breast pocket, configured with three black buttons and flaps over the lower pockets. To accommodate parent preferences regarding cost and care, parents may purchase the traditional wool flannel version or select an approved, lower-cost, machine-washable acrylic blazer alternative. Tracksuit tops and hoodies must never be worn underneath the blazer.
- **Shirts:** Plain white or grey long-sleeved or short-sleeved shirts, which must be worn fully buttoned to the neck. Generic multi-packs from any standard retailer are fully acceptable.
- **School Tie:** The official black tie with gold stripes must be properly secured at the collar and, when exposed, worn at a conventional length. Ties can be obtained directly from the school office or the official outfitter. If the school were to require multiple suppliers to stock all variations of the school tie, then it's likely suppliers would be resistant to stocking the tie because of the limited number of ties they could sell each year and the number of variations they would be required to carry, to cater for houses and honours. With the current cost price £4.10 + VAT, it is likely a supplier's retail price would start at £8.20 + VAT; the school's sales price of £7.50 including VAT is best value.

- **Pullover (Optional):** If a pullover is worn, it must be mid-grey, feature a V-neck, and display a narrow edging in the official School colours.
- **Trousers / Shorts:** Trousers must be mid-grey without turn-ups (such as the standard Trews Club 1880 style). Mid-grey school shorts are also permitted. These items are widely available as generic options across multiple suppliers.
- **Socks:** * For P1 – P4 Pupils: Knee-length grey banded Inchmarlo socks must be worn. Garters may be used to keep socks properly secured.
    - For P5 – P7 Pupils: Socks must be plain grey or plain black.
    - *Note:* Trainer socks are strictly prohibited for all year groups.
- **Shoes:** Pupils must wear solid black leather shoes. Shoes must be of a conservative style and must not display prominent metal adornments, commercial logos, or loud advertising motifs.

B. Outerwear & Seasonal Adaptations

The uniform is designed to remain suitable and comfortable for all seasons through simple layering, eliminating the requirement for separate summer and winter uniform codes.

- **Overcoats:** In cold or wet weather conditions where an overcoat is required, pupils are fully permitted to wear a non-branded, plain outdoor

coat. While black or dark conservative tones are preferred, coats must simply remain free of obvious or loud advertising, logos, motifs, or slogans. There is an optional Inchmarlo waterproof coat available for purchase through the school office.
- **Headgear:** No headgear may be worn with the school uniform except for the official School issue cap (applicable for P1–P4 pupils) or the official winter woollen hat designed in school colours.
- **Scarf:** The official School Scarf is knitted with transverse black and gold stripes and is optional for inclement weather.
- **Summer Adjustments:** During warm periods, pupils are encouraged to adjust for comfort by removing pullovers or blazers during active classroom lessons.

4. Physical Education (PE) & Games Kit

In strict compliance with statutory Guideline 7 for primary-age children, branded or school-specific PE kit items are entirely optional and not a compulsory requirement. PE uniforms focus heavily on generic, low-cost items to eliminate financial barriers to physical activity.

- **Permitted PE Attire (Generic & Low-Cost Focus):**
  - Plain white polo shirt or the school's general primary uniform top.
  - Plain black games shorts.
  - Plain white or plain grey ankle socks.
  - Standard plimsolls or running trainers suitable for sports.
- **Optional Branded Items:** While branded variants (such as the Inchmarlo Rugby Shirt, Inchmarlo Games Socks, or the official School Tracksuit) are available via official stockists, their purchase is entirely at the discretion of parents.
- **Equal Treatment Guarantee:** There will be absolutely no difference in the treatment or perception of pupils based on whether they wear generic or optional branded PE gear. If permission is given by staff to wear a school tracksuit top or a specific sport top on PE days, it is equally permissible for a pupil to wear an equivalent generic plain top or their daily school sweater.
- **Representative Teams & Equipment:** The school endeavors to provide school-owned kits for all pupils selected to represent Inchmarlo in competitive or representative sports teams, ensuring no child is excluded due to kit costs. Common sports equipment—such as hockey sticks, cricket helmets/pads, tennis rackets, and badminton rackets—is provided directly by the school during PE and games lessons to eliminate the need for personal parental purchases.

5. Pupil Haircuts & Appearance

- General Cleanliness: Hair must be clean and neatly presented at all times.
- Style Guidelines: A tidy, conventional hairstyle that is cut above the collar and does not fall over the face represents the required standard for all

pupils. Hair must remain exclusively of the pupil's natural colour. Under standard uniform guidelines, extreme styles or extreme clipper lengths (defined as a grade one or below on any part of the haircut) are not acceptable.
- Inclusivity Exemptions: The school fully respects diversity and individual identity. Hairstyle rules will be relaxed and permitted in any circumstances where the parents, pupil, and school agree that the wearing of a specific hairstyle is an expression of culture, heritage, religion, or is required explicitly on medical grounds.

6. Uniform Procurement, Suppliers, and Value for Money

- Procurement Freedom: Generic elements of the uniform (such as shirts, trousers, plain socks, generic black shorts, white polo shirts, and conservative footwear) can be sourced freely by parents from any high street retailer or supermarket.
- Official Outfitter: School-specific crested items (such as the school tie, traditional blazer, school cap, crested pullover, or striped socks) can be purchased via our designated outfitter, Warnocks (Belfast).
- Value for Money Safeguards: To ensure open competition and fair pricing, the school bases uniform guidelines on the most affordable appropriate options. Should the school enter any exclusive or limited-supplier agreements for specific branded items, the Board of Governors is legally required to publish a clear "Value for Money Declaration" on the school website, detailing the cost differentials achieved compared to standard retail pricing.

7. Affordability Support: Uniform Banks & Loans

To actively support environmental sustainability and relieve financial pressures on households, Inchmarlo operates the following support frameworks:

- School Uniform Bank: Operating at the IPA Summer Fair, the school facilitates access to high-quality, pre-used uniform items. Parents are strongly encouraged to donate outgrown uniforms that remain in good condition.
- Uniform Loan Scheme: The school maintains a confidential lending stock for core uniform items, particularly for short-term needs, lost items, or competitive team representations, ensuring no child faces barriers to school life.
- Discretionary Subsidies: In instances of temporary financial hardship or family circumstances, families may approach the Headmaster to discuss school-discretionary cost support or subsidy schemes.

8. Procedure for Uniform Enquiries & Non-Compliance

- Staff Responsibility & Modelling: Members of staff are expected to set an excellent professional example by wearing duty clothing that holds an

acceptable degree of formality appropriate for the day's activities. While staff remain vigilant regarding uniform guidelines, enforcement must be carried out with extreme sensitivity.

- Supportive Inquiries: Where a boy appears in class improperly dressed, the teacher will gently ask for the reason in a private, discreet manner designed to respect the pupil's dignity and privacy.
- Financial Protection (No Penalties): In strict compliance with statutory Guideline 15, pupils must never be penalized, reprimanded, or sent home for uniform breaches caused by financial hardship or affordability issues.
- Resolution Process: If a pupil experiences a temporary uniform issue (e.g., an item is lost, damaged, or delayed in replacement), they may show a note from their parents to the Headmaster. Where no note is present, the teacher will verbally notify the Headmaster. The Headmaster will meet with the pupil compassionately to understand the circumstances, confirm if financial hardship or lost property is a factor, and coordinate a supportive resolution (such as deploying a temporary loan item or granting a reasonable transition period). A single breach, or an issue involving a lost or stolen item, will never result in a pupil being excluded from activities or classes.

9. Policy Consultation and Review

The Board of Governors will substantively review this school uniform policy at least once every three years, alongside an annual review of affordability benchmarks (such as monitoring Free School Meal eligibility shifts). Any subsequent updates or revisions will actively consult parents, pupils, and stakeholders via transparent methods that accommodate accessibility needs. Comprehensive logs of consultations, uniform costs, and supplier choices will be regularly maintained and published directly on the school's website.