School uniforms

*Equality, unity and identity, not just quality and preparing for university*

Every parent knows how difficult it is to watch your child getting bullied. Being a parent is also really expensive, especially if you have a better cause for your money than 10 sets of summer or winter clothes for your entire offspring. Everyone wants to feel like they belong somewhere, for young people this is particularly very important. For all this stated above, there is one simple and inexpensive solution: school uniforms.

First of all, wearing school uniforms reduces peer pressure and bullying. If the students are obligated to wear identical clothes, there won’t be any judgement about certain choices or expressions that people want to make with their clothing. Additionally, students won’t see the differences between cheap and expensive clothing. This is what makes it impossible for bullies to criticise students by their economic or social status. Also, a 2010 study by the University of Houston found that the average absence rate for bullied females in middle and high school decreased by 7% after the introduction of uniforms. Secondly, parents don’t have to pay as much money as they would before on clothing. If these students all have to wear the same outfit every day at school, they would need about 2 or 3 sets of clothes. The average price of a school uniform in the United Kingdom is between £150-250 a year, according to ‘The cost of school uniforms 2015’ by the Department of Education. The students won’t need as much clothes to wear during their free time when they have to wear school uniforms during classes. Besides, the money parents don’t have to spend on free time clothes, can be spend otherwise. For instance on extra classes (music, sports, theater, languages, art, you name it!) that will help the education of their children.

A final reason to obligate students to wear uniforms is the feeling of unity they will get in return. A study from Oxford Brookes University found that uniforms ‘often contributed to a feeling of school pride’. If students all wear the same uniform that really stands out (for example with the school color or emblem), they will feel closer to the other students and more united. This would be a major benefit for troubled students. They would feel a sense of ‘belonging’ with the rest of the students and it would be easier for them to attempt school.

Some people claim that the obligation of these uniforms restricts the right of self expression. Clothing choices are ‘a crucial form of self-expression’, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada. And I completely agree with this last statement. However, obligating school uniforms will not interfere with the right of expressing your style or identity. There is much more to this than just clothing. You are completely free in choosing all kinds of accessories, like jewelry, headphones and bags. Important to note: in 1969 students (who were obligated to wear uniforms) started to wear black bracelets to demonstrate against the war in Vietnam. Students are for example also free to choose what kind of haircut they want. A lot of magazines show girls how the can express themselves with different hairstyles, scarfs and nailpolish. So this is not at all suppressing the right of self expression.

In short I would like to state again that there are a lot of positive reasons and huge benefits to obligate school uniforms. No one likes a bully, no one likes to spend a lot of money on clothes (especially if there are a lot of alternative ways to spend this money!) and everyone likes to feel like they’re a part of something bigger. There are creative ways to express yourself through your appearance that has nothing to do with clothing. My opinion: I would choose school uniforms at the drop of a hat!