What's the point of school uniform?

You might hate your school uniform, but I think it's there for good reason, says 15-year-old Chloe Spencer.

A shirt, tie and blazer may not be the ingredients for my favourite outfit, but if I were given the choice, I wouldn't throw away the idea of school uniform. Wearing a uniform is a badge of pride, creates an identity for a school and is an important part of being a school student.

"Uniforms show that you are part of an organisation. Wearing it says we're all in this together," Jason Wing, head teacher at the Neale-Wade academy in Cambridgeshire, says.

"Also, if you wear your uniform with pride, it means you are half way there to being respectful, buying into what the organisation is all about.''

Claire Howlette, an English teacher, agrees: "Uniforms give students a sense of belonging to a particular school and create an identity for the school in the community."

My school is one of many that seem to be reverting to a more formal uniform – this September I will be wearing a shirt and blazer instead of my old jumper and polo shirt. A number of students have complained about the change, but general opinion is that the jumpers and polo shirts were "childish".

A school uniform teaches students to dress smartly and take pride in their appearance. Howlette says: "Uniforms help students to prepare for when they leave school and may have to dress smartly or wear a uniform."

Some people believe that a school uniform can improve learning by reducing distraction, sharpening focus on schoolwork and making the classroom a more serious environment, allowing students to perform better academically.

Perhaps most importantly, a uniform means students don't have to worry about peer pressure when it comes to their clothes. When everyone is dressed the same, worrying about what you look like isn't so important. There is no competition about being dressed in the latest trend, which would put a great deal of financial pressure on students and parents. Potential bullies have one less target for their insults; it's hard to make fun of what someone is wearing when you're dressed exactly the same.

In America, where a majority of schools do not have a uniform, roughly 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by other students. This might not be directly linked to what they're wearing, but having a uniform can be a safety net for many students who might otherwise suffer from bullying. A strict uniform gives the impression that rules are strict too, perhaps helping maintain a sense of order at school.

Although wearing a school uniform is less expensive than buying a whole wardrobe of outfits, uniform can still be pricey. Many schools have a specific supplier, and wearing cheaper alternatives can result in punishment if the black skirt you're wearing isn't exactly the right black skirt. Finding uniform that fits you, especially if you're limited to one shop, can also be a struggle.

Recently the Liberal Democrats held a conference about the cost of school uniforms across

England. The education minister David Laws is to issue new guidance to end the practice of using a single uniform supplier, enabling parents to shop around for uniform. If schools decide to change their uniform, for example with a new emblem or colour, changes should be restricted to one or two items, preferably with sew-on logos. Changing from a one-supplier system could help families with the cost of school uniform.

Although it might seem a shame to miss out on those two years of dressing as you like at school, I welcome the smart dress code. Not only does it make getting dressed each morning a lot easier, but it sets sixth formers up as role models for younger students, and that's important.

Macy Vallance, a year-eight student, says: "I like uniforms because everyone is the same and no one can be left out by the way they are dressed. Our new uniform looks smarter, which is good." My uniform might not be what I would wear in my own time, but it gives me a sense of belonging, takes away the pressure of what to wear and deters the bullies. School uniform isn't fashionable, but that's exactly why I think it should be here to stay.

Source: http://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2013/oct/03/why-wear-school-uniform

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Arguments about Uniforms

Many well intended adults have justified the use of school uniforms for many different reasons. While they make valid points I often disagree with them. Below are the 3 points I disagree with the most or you can skip down to what I believe is a summary of valid pro and con arguments about uniforms.

Theme 1: **Uniforms will stop other students by being judged on how they look / Uniforms will make it harder for cliques to form.**

Response: No matter what you dress students in, they will always find a way to pass judgement upon their peers. If it's not based upon the style of clothes worn there are many other superficial ways to judge people and form cliques. Including:

• hair style

• hair colour

• height

• weight

• accessories (necklaces, watches and etc.)

• odor (type of purfume/colone and etc.)

• the way one walks

• smoking habits

This list is by no means exhaustive, but you get the idea. Yes cliques can be a problem in schools. Yes judging people upon their appearance can be bad in schools. However making everyone wear the same type of clothes is not going to make the problem magically disappear. Instead of hiding from the problem why not tackle it head on. Teach your kids to accept the odd kid out. Teach your kids not to judge based upon superficial criteria. Kids can be taught to be open to all sorts of people. However, by making everyone wear the same types of clothes, I believe you are just

sending the message that since you can't accept each other when you are different, we're going to make you all the same. How will your child ever cope in the adult world when they actually do encounter someone who is different then themselves.

Theme 2: Uniforms will save families money / Students won't pressure their parents to buy clothes some families can't afford.

Response: Firstly uniforms have not saved my family money. If one avoids buying name brand clothing, clothes can be relatively affordable. When my mom bought my little brother his uniforms. She bought him 2 separate outfits. 2 golf shirts, 2 pairs of pants, 1 sweatshirt and 1 vest came to around $250.00. She could have easily bought a full weeks worth of street clothing (7 shirts, 3 pairs of pants) for slightly less money. Mind you, we aren't in the habit of buying new wardrobes every time a new school year starts, this is just a comparison. It should also be noted that when you buy uniforms, regular street clothing also needs to be bought for weekends and during the summer.

Some might say, "Wait a second. My kid's T-shirt costs $40 or more." It is not that difficult to find long lasting clothing in the 10-20 dollar range. The only catch it may not have your child's favourite company logo that is endorsed by a multi-millionaire. So what if your kid says that all the cool kids have Nike shirts? This is an ideal time to teach your child there is more to life than a cool logo. This would also be a good time to teach your child not to choose their friends based upon what logos their peers wear. If all the parents didn't buy their kids all logo clothing or taught their kids not to put emphasis on the logos, this wouldn't even been an issue.

Theme 3: Uniforms will make it easier to identify those who are not from the school and therefore increase security/safety.

Response: This is what I consider to be the only valid point. I guess sometimes students from other schools do go to other schools to cause trouble. I guess if they're in a t-shirt and baggy clothes they will stick out like a sore thumb. So from that respect the school will be protected from unruly outsiders. However, I somehow doubt uniforms will stop circle beatings in the pit and students sneaking in contraband weapons. I am also sure it would not be that hard to borrow uniforms from friends who may go to the uniform school. If there is a will, there is a way, especially with students who have lots of time conjure up ways to create mischief.

Pro-Uniforms	Anti uniforms
• Save money on clothing	• Uniforms ultimately cost more
• Uniforms will cut down on teasing and cliques	• Uniforms do not teach children how to deal with people who are different then themselves.
• Schools will be safe from	• Cliques will still form.

outsiders • Parents will no longer have to buy designer labels • Uniforms will separate the public schools from the catholic/private schools.	• It is impossible to prevent all outside intrusion • Children will still ask for designer labels for outside of school clothing. (Uniforms will not make this issue go away.) • If you need uniforms to distinguish between public and catholic/private schools it's time to re-evaluate where your child is going. • Uniforms teach children that in order to get along everyone must conform to the same standards.

Source:
http://www.angelfire.com/ca/bygranite/uniforms/args.html