

Guidance on supply arrangements for school uniforms and mobile devices

The CCPC has prepared some high-level guidance for school management to consider when making decisions regarding supply arrangements for school uniforms and mobile devices. This is in line with the Department of Education and Youth [Circular 0032/2017](#), which aims to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs including ICT devices. Please consider whether the arrangements you have in place stop families shopping around and getting better value.

Recommendations on school uniforms

We strongly encourage schools to evaluate their uniform policy to ensure that it works for parents and students. This means considering what pieces of uniform are required, as well as the supply arrangements. It is important that parents and students are consulted as part of this process. This can be done individually with students and parents, and/or through a school's Parents Association and Student Council. The goal of any school uniform policy should be to ensure that suitable, reasonably priced and good-quality uniforms are available to all parents.

- **Uniform items should be as generic as possible**
- **Iron-on or stitch-on crests should be available**
- **Avoid appointing a single exclusive supplier for uniforms**
- **Any exclusive suppliers should be appointed after a competitive process**
- **Schools should regularly review arrangements with exclusive suppliers**

Uniform items should be as generic as possible

We recommend that a school's uniform requirements be as generic and substitutable as possible. This means avoiding branded or unique items, such as jumpers or polo shirts with distinctive colours or embroidered crests, ties with a unique pattern, and skirts with a distinctive length or design, and instead favour plain or common items, or items which can be purchased from a wide range of retailers.

This recommendation also applies to PE gear. To ensure the greatest range of choice and better value for parents, schools should avoid requiring branded PE gear such as embroidered sweatshirts, jerseys, t-shirts, and tracksuit bottoms. Instead, schools should specify generic and plain versions of these items. This allows parents to choose from a wider range of competing retail outlets, including supermarkets and large retailers, and maximises their ability to shop around and get the best value for money. This also drives competition between suppliers.

Iron-on or stitch-on crests should be available

We recommend that schools give families the choice to use iron-on or stitch-on crests. This allows parents to shop around competing suppliers for the ‘base’ uniform item and potentially reduce their costs. Schools could also promote sustainability by allowing parents to reuse and recycle crests from one year to the next and from one uniform item to another.

Avoid appointing a single exclusive supplier for uniforms

If schools require bespoke uniform items, they should avoid appointing a single exclusive supplier and instead ensure uniforms are available from multiple competing retailers. This encourages retailers to compete and gives parents a choice around price, quality and convenience.

Where schools have multiple uniform suppliers, it is important that these suppliers are able to compete with one another. Therefore, schools and suppliers should avoid clauses in any supply arrangements which might raise competition concerns – such as clauses which fix or set minimum prices for suppliers.

Schools should regularly review arrangements with exclusive suppliers

If your school appoints one exclusive uniform supplier, you should choose the supplier following regular competitive selection processes, not on the basis of historical or established relationships.

We recommend that the selection criteria used in the selection process cover, among other things: quality, price, and level of service. This enables competition to occur at the selection stage and allows schools to agree the exclusive arrangement with the supplier or suppliers who offer the best mix of quality, price, and service to parents. Schools should communicate with parents about the details of the competitive process used to ensure the exclusive supplier will offer good value, quality and service to parents. It is important that this arrangement is not awarded for an excessively long period. We recommend that this selection process should be re-run on a regular basis, such as every two to three years, to ensure that parents continue to get good value.

Recommendations on school mobile devices

The use of mobile devices such as tablets and laptops as learning tools in Irish schools is becoming increasingly common. In order to navigate this, [Oide – Technology in Education has created technical and purchasing considerations to help guide schools through this process.](#)

Schools are advised to consult with members of the school community, including parents and students, when planning for the introduction of digital technologies. They should also consider the cost implications of introducing mobile devices such as tablets and laptops before making a decision.

- **Schools should avoid requiring parents to purchase non-essential items as part of a technology bundle**
- **Exclusive suppliers should only be appointed after a competitive process**
- **Schools should regularly review arrangements with exclusive suppliers**
- **Schools should communicate with parents on how any exclusive suppliers are appointed**

Schools should avoid requiring parents to purchase non-essential items as part of a technology bundle

While there are practical reasons why schools may require parents to buy devices from a single exclusive supplier, schools should take care to ensure that parents are not restricted in purchasing other non-essential complementary products.

Requiring parents to buy a bundle of products or services together may limit competition, consumer choice, and could unnecessarily increase costs for parents. Schools should allow parents to obtain insurance and device accessories independent of the purchase of a specific device.

Where parents are obliged to purchase a bundle of products, schools should communicate with parents on the reasons for the product choices and the steps taken to ensure that the bundle offers good value for money.

Exclusive suppliers should only be appointed after a competitive process

Some schools avail of public procurement frameworks established by the Department of Education and Youth and the Office of Government Procurement to purchase devices which are either kept by the school and provided to students as needed or resold to parents. These procurement frameworks ensure that objective criteria are used to select suppliers with appropriate specifications, agreed pricing, and levels of service. We encourage schools using these frameworks to continue to do so which will enable them to comply with procurement requirements and achieve agreed, transparent pricing.

If the school is not availing of public procurement frameworks, then the school should consider allowing parents to buy their own devices from wherever they choose (subject to meeting minimum technical requirements) as this allows parents the freedom to shop around and purchase their preferred device from their preferred retailer. Parents may also be able to avail of refurbished or reconditioned devices, enabling even greater sustainability and competition.

Alternatively, the schools should run a competitive selection process for a device supplier from which parents are required to purchase devices directly. This enables competition to occur at the selection stage and enables schools to agree the exclusive arrangement with the supplier that offers the best mix of quality, price, and service to parents. For further guidance on considerations which apply for selecting school device suppliers, please see related [Oide resources](#).

Schools should regularly review arrangements with exclusive suppliers

We recommend that schools avoid arrangements that are automatically renewed. Instead, we recommend that these arrangements have set durations and schools conduct a new selection process at the conclusion of the arrangement rather than simply re-appointing the current supplier (approximately every two to three years).

Schools should communicate with parents on how any exclusive suppliers are appointed

Competition among back-to-school suppliers leads to increased choice and value for parents. Schools may have very practical and understandable reasons for appointing exclusive suppliers for devices. Schools should communicate these reasons to parents along with details of the competitive process used to ensure the exclusive supplier will offer good value, quality, and service to parents.