

Task (Group A) - Collect all the advantages you can find in the text. Consider the following criteria: Equality, financing, behavior.

Task (Group B) - Collect all the disadvantages you can find in the text. Consider the following criteria: Equality, financing, behavior.

The pros and cons of school uniforms

Do rules around clothing promote discipline and inclusion or are they a pricey constraint on individuality?

School uniform has long been a hot topic of debate among students, parents and teachers alike. Pegasus Primary School in Birmingham has been forced to backtrack on plans to make pupils wear a branded sweatshirt or cardigan, following an angry reaction from some parents. Vince Green, chief executive* of the Summit Learning Trust, which runs the school, told BBC Radio 4's "Today" programme that the logo was important because it provided "that sense of belonging, that sense of family – just as it does if you play for a sporting team". According to research conducted by The Children's Society in May, parents in the UK spend on average £422 a year on secondary school uniforms, and £287 for primary school pupils. One in eight families have had to cut back on food to afford uniforms from specific suppliers. "For too many families, uniforms cost way too much money," Mark Russell, chief executive of the charity, told "Today". One reason the question of school uniforms is "so explosive", said Will Hazell for the inews site, "is because it touches on children's home lives and parental supervision". The Week takes a look at some of the pros and cons. Uniforms should be a "social leveller", Green told the "Today" programme. Wearing the same clothes "fosters* a sense of inclusion and equity in school students", said Education Times, and can help with "laying the foundation of an equal society".

Supporters say a uniform can help build "a sense of identity and cohesion*", said Hazell. Mark Lehair, founder and first headmaster of Bedford Free School, told the news site that he was "taken aback by the enthusiasm" for uniforms among parents. A 2007 study from Oxford Brookes University found that uniforms often "directly contributed* to a feeling of school pride". A Hull councilor* has called for a uniform subsidy* to help struggling families, saying parents were "having to choose between school clothes and essentials, like food and rent", said BBC News. "Demand for help has doubled compared to last year," Labour's Jessica Raspin told the broadcaster.

While some supermarkets offer cheaper options such as plain trousers or white shirts, "many schools demand logos on clothing that is sold at only one supplier", said The Times. Despite

Department for Education guidance that schools keep branded items to a minimum, The Children's Society poll* showed that the average pupil was expected to have three, while 29% of secondary school pupils were required to have four or five.

About 22% of UK parents told the charity that their child had been given a detention for breaching* uniform policies, due to being unable to afford the correct uniform, according to Schools Week. Uniforms became more common in the US in the late 1980s "with the promise that they would curb* gang violence and crime", said The Washington Post. Uniforms, teachers say, "have become a no-nonsense way to stave off distractions" and focus on learning. [...]

However, a study by the Education Endowment Foundation, which was set up by the government to evaluate initiatives*, found there was "no robust evidence" that a uniform alone would "improve academic performance, behaviour or attendance". The growing support for school uniforms in the US is "one of the great surrenderings of liberty* in modern history", said Mark Oppenheimer for The New Yorker. Uniforms are "yet one more way that the surveillance* of the unpowerful – the poor, people of colour, and that great unheard group of the young – has become increasingly acceptable".

At university, "I can wear whatever I feel fit and it has by no means interrupted my learning", student blogger Emily Moor wrote for HuffPost. It is "unrealistic" to expect students to "grow to make their own decisions when they are not even allowed to choose their own trousers". Uniforms can even be "a kind of instrument of control", deputy headteacher* Alistair McConville told the inews site, which cuts against society's need for individuality. Conversely, uniforms might help families who are struggling financially, according to Dame Rachel De Souza, chief executive of the Inspiration Trust, which runs 13 schools in England. "There is no peer pressure on students to have the latest trainers," she told the inews site. Parents say "they're changing how they shop for the school year", according to The Washington Post. "There are fewer late-summer buying sprees for everyday clothes."

A uniform could also make the morning routine run more smoothly for hassled parents*. A 2018 survey from Plan International UK found that a third of British girls said they were sexually harassed while in their school uniforms. Of course, there is no real evidence that they would have been safer out of school uniform.

But Labour MP Emma Hardy, also a former teacher, has raised concerns about how schools seemingly police female students' uniform to a greater extent than they do with boys, particularly with regards to modesty rules. In Wales, guidance now encourages schools to introduce gender neutral uniforms, said Hazell.

Vocabulary: **chief executive**: Hauptgeschäftsführer; **to foster sth. (encourage development)**: etw. Fördern; **cohesion**:

Zusammenhalt; **to contribute to sth.**: etw. beisteuern/ einen Beitrag leisten; **Hull councillor**: Stadtrat; **subsidy**:

Zuschuss; **Society poll**: Gesellschaftsumfrage; **detention for breaching**: Festnahme wegen Verstoßes; **to curb**:

eindämmen/einschränken; **initiatives**: Initiativen; **surrenderings of liberty**: Freiheitsentziehung; **surveillance**:

Überwachung; **deputy headteacher**: stellvertretender Schulleiter; **hassled parents**: gestresste Eltern.