The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Uniform Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Uniform Policy	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Uniform decisions are sensory decisions for many of our pupils. PACE shapes how we apply our expectations — accepting differences in tolerance, curious about what works, never shaming a pupil for what they wear:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021, the DfE's statutory guidance on Cost of School Uniforms, and the Equality Act 2010.

4. Approach

The New Walk School operates a low-key dress code rather than a strictly enforced uniform. We have found that for our pupil population — many of whom have significant sensory differences — a relaxed, supportive approach to clothing produces better engagement and self-esteem than rigid uniform enforcement. Identity comes first; clothing follows.

5. Expectations

Pupils are expected to wear clothing that is: clean and in good repair; appropriate for the activities of the school day, including PE; safe (closed footwear, no clothing that creates a hazard around equipment); and not displaying language or imagery that would distress others.

The school provides plain school sweatshirts and polo shirts for any pupil who wishes to wear them; these are optional. The school holds a stock of these items free of charge for any family who would find purchase a barrier.

6. Sensory adjustments

Where a pupil has sensory sensitivities, the school works with the pupil and family to identify what they can comfortably wear. This may include allowing soft trousers, removing labels, using particular materials or, in extreme cases, allowing the pupil to wear the same trusted item every day. Such adjustments are agreed in writing as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

7. Religious and cultural dress

Pupils may wear religious or culturally significant dress. The school works with the pupil and family to balance any practical considerations (e.g. PE) with the pupil's religious freedom.

8. Cost

In line with statutory guidance, the school's dress code keeps costs to a minimum. There are no compulsory branded items. Optional branded items are available at low cost and provided free where there is need.

9. Application

Where a pupil arrives in clothing that does not meet the expectations above, staff respond relationally — they will offer alternatives from the school's stock, speak privately and respectfully with the pupil, and contact the family where there is a recurring concern. Pupils are not sent home for uniform reasons.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.