

Running a successful second hand uniform sale

Background

There is increasing pressure on schools to reduce the additional costs associated with sending a child to school. For most families, the biggest additional cost is school uniform. Many PTAs run second hand uniform sales, some as a fundraiser but increasingly as a way to support the school and help parents afford school uniform.

Benefits

Parents purchasing uniform from second hand sales obviously benefit from the reduced costs as do those keen to pass on uniform that has been outgrown. However, depending upon how the sale is run these parents may also benefit from a share in the monies raised from the sale of their items.

Many schools are keen to maintain a set uniform. This can be made more achievable through second hand sales.

Government policy

New guidance published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) came into effect in September 2007 and aims to minimise the cost of school uniform. It stipulates that governing bodies should ensure the uniform chosen is widely available in high street shops, retail outlets and from internet suppliers rather than just from a more expensive sole supplier¹.

School Governing bodies have been told that they should use their purchasing power to buy in bulk and pass on any savings to parents. Governors can not operate as sole suppliers in order to raise additional funds through the sale of new school uniform.

The NCPTA has confirmed with the DCSF that this sole supplier guidance also applies to PTAs. However, the policy does allow PTAs to fundraise from the sale of second hand uniform.

Organising a Sale - hints and tips

- if laundry is going to be difficult make it clear to parents that only items that have been freshly washed and ironed will be accepted for sale
- ask parents to remove any name tags prior to donation to prevent there being any confusion over ownership after the sale
- hold sales regularly and give parents plenty of advance notice. Some PTAs hold weekly sales, others once or twice every term whilst some PTAs combine sales with other events.
- presentation is important. Items need to be in good condition and well presented. Free standing clothes rails are available for little charge, make it easier to display bigger items and can be used time after time

¹ A 'sole supplier' is where uniform (usually branded items such as sweatshirts and ties) is only available from one place and the school uniform policy requires the branded items to be worn and does not allow alternatives eg a plain sweatshirt.

- many parents simply want to come and get what they need and then go. The PTFA at Kingsdown and Ringwood School Primary School in Kent found that attempts to make sales more social were unsuccessful, “Parents just want to browse the items available, buy and go,” notes Sue Blundell the chair.

There are various ways to run a successful second hand uniform sale. The following case studies provide a good illustration of how NCPTA members are already making them work to suit the needs of their school and parents.

Recycling

The PTA at St George’s RC Primary School in York was keen to eliminate any stigma attached to purchasing second hand uniform. Its scheme is promoted to parents with an environmental message: recycling old uniform helps other parents and cuts down on waste.

Parents are asked to donate any unwanted items meaning that profit made goes directly to the PTA. Items are washed, checked and if necessary repaired by the PTA. They are then packaged into individual resealable plastic bags which feature the PTA’s logo. Sales take place every week with items retailing at a nominal £1 each which is sufficient to cover the PTAs costs whilst making a modest profit.

Sales are already having a significant impact at the school: in the first three months an impressive total of 125 items have been ‘recycled’.

Parents take a cut

The Dame Allan’s Schools Parents Association (DASPA), Newcastle has been selling second hand uniform for well over ten years. They offer parents an opportunity to make money on the sale of outgrown uniform.

Parents place school uniform for sale and either donate any monies raised to DASPA or alternatively the Parents Association sells uniform on behalf of parents: 75% of the selling price goes to parents and the DASPA keeps the remaining 25% to cover its costs.

Selling uniform on behalf of parents needs to be carefully managed:

1. Parents have to complete a form listing all the items for sale and the price to be charged on their behalf. Each item has to be individually labeled with the child's name/parent’s details and the price before it can be accepted for sale.
2. Each item is verified against the list as it arrives and during the sale helpers know that they have to keep the labels of any items sold.
3. At the end of the sale sold items are highlighted on the original list and the amounts raised for the parent and DASPA calculated. All labels are kept in case of discrepancies.
4. Parents pick up any unsold items and monies owed to them. If they do not come and pick up the unsold items and money both are deemed donated to DASPA. If for some reason a parent cannot attend the sale they have to contact a member of the second hand uniform committee and make alternative arrangements prior to the sale.

This National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA) information sheet aims to provide clear advice but should only be considered as a general guide. Further information sheets are available from www.ncpta.org.uk. For more specific advice please contact info@ncpta.org.uk or 01732 375460.

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Carolyn Zammit-Maempel has run the second hand sales for the DASPA for six years, "It sounds complicated but it all seems to work very well. Uniform is a big expense so parents appreciate the chance to buy and sell it second hand."

Uniform is also sold at DASPA events. The Parents' Association always makes sure to invite new parents to the summer fair so that they can buy second hand uniform for children about to start at the school. Uniform lists are always available so that parents can check what is needed.

Uniform for all

Members of the Kingsdown and Ringwoud School PTFA in Kent have been running second hand uniform sales for the last four years. Nominal amounts only are charged to cover the PTFA's costs.

Sue Blundell, Chair of the PTFA makes it clear that the uniform sales are not regarded as a fundraising project and that the Association holds plenty of other events which do raise money.

Recently the PTFA has started working with the school office staff to ensure that any child who, for whatever reason, hasn't got a full school uniform can call on the second hand uniform supply. Often this is about ensuring children have a full uniform including items such as a PE kit.

Kingsdown and Ringwoud headteacher, Janet Murray, emphasizes the value of second hand uniform sales and is grateful to the PTA for making these possible: "As a headteacher I really appreciate the PTFA selling second hand uniform. Some families do struggle to afford new clothing and selling second hand is a great way of getting cheap, good quality uniform with no stigma attached. Well done Kingsdown & Ringwoud PTFA."

Further Information

Full guidance on school uniform issued by the DCSF is available from the Teachernet website:
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform/>

January 2008

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