

Summary Writing- 6

Many schools insist that students wear school uniform. The style of uniforms varies from country to country: in some countries the uniform is formal with a blazer and tie, but in others, student uniform may consist of a tunic or even a tracksuit. The heads of schools tend to favour the wearing of uniform for their students because it encourages a sense of belonging to the same group, like being easily identified as a member of a community. Furthermore, school uniform reduces the possibility of some students being seen to be better off than others through wearing designer clothes. All students look the same, both rich and poor, and so school uniform is a great leveller of social groups. Children can concentrate on their studies without worrying whether or not they're dressed in the latest fashions. There is no competition to be 'coolest' in the class or pressure to spend time admiring the latest pair of shoes or new jacket being flaunted by a classmate. Many schools claim that wearing a uniform also reduces bullying in the form of teasing or mocking someone over what they wear.

Outside school, students are clearly identified. This is a good thing because they are ambassadors for their school and, if they misbehave, the school can be quickly informed. A fear of bringing their school into disrepute, or a fear of being identified and their teachers or parents notified, might prevent some students from indulging in antisocial behaviour, especially in big cities. Conversely, good behaviour admired outside the school day could cause adults to see a particular school in a good light and want their children to attend it - well-behaved students in uniform are an eloquent advertisement for their school. Very young children might aspire to be pupils at that school when they are older because the students inspire them by their exemplary behaviour. On the other hand, some students are not so keen on wearing uniform, arguing that it suppresses their individuality and freedom to express themselves. What is the point, they say, in everyone being identically dressed? Doesn't that lead to robots rather than human beings, a bland group of people who are unable to think for themselves or to be creative? Others might say that parents have to buy yet more clothes for their children when they have to buy school shirts, trousers, ties, even special shoes, and so school uniform costs rather than saves money in the family and puts an extra burden on its finances. This is clearly more significant in a family with a limited income. Some students use their uniform to rebel against the school rules, by wearing their uniform scruffily or customising it with non-uniform accessories. Some teachers argue that too much of their time is taken up with sorting out petty issues over school uniform regulations when they should be teaching.

Whatever your views on school uniform, it seems unlikely that those who would like it abolished will get their way. Too many headteachers believe that it helps students be more equal and enhances good behaviour to risk letting it go.

(a) What are the benefits and disadvantages of schools enforcing uniform culture. Write a summary in 150 words.

(b) Interviewer's Question: "If wearing a school uniform means being mistaken for misbehaving students from another school, doesn't that prove uniforms do more harm than good?"