



## Ashwood Secondary College

### Uniform Exemption Policy

#### College Uniform Background and Context

Ashwood Secondary College aims to provide teaching experiences and learning environments that promote the academic success and personal growth of all students. It seeks to provide a caring and welcoming community that fosters and celebrates success. It has in place throughout the school a diverse range of programs that promote the individual pursuit of excellence in a collaborative learning environment drawing on a supportive relationship that exists amongst students, staff, parents and the wider local community. Ashwood Secondary College is proud of its school community and culture.

Uniform is to be worn at all times by students at Ashwood Secondary College. Uniform Policy has the support of parents and School Council and this policy is communicated to parents on enrolment. Students' appearance at school should be neat, practical and discreet so that it doesn't distract from the uniform. The Uniform Policy includes regulations for jewellery and acceptable accessories. These rules exist so as to enable students to participate actively and safely in school programs.

The implementation of the Uniform Policy will be monitored by the Education Sub-Committee of School Council, a committee which has representatives of staff, students and parents. The Uniform Policy will be reviewed every three years, but each year a 'mini' review will be held. The introduction of a new school uniform in 2016 is significant and involves a three year transition period which will require close monitoring and annual review.

#### EXEMPTIONS

It is important to note that the policy provides for an Exemption Process in accordance with anti-discrimination considerations. Ashwood Secondary College will consider applications for exemption on a number of grounds:

- where an aspect of the dress code offends a religious belief held by the student and/or parents;
- where an aspect of the dress code prevents the student from complying with a requirement of his or her ethnic or cultural background;
- where an aspect of the dress code prevents students with disabilities from being able to attend school or participate in school activities on the same terms as other students; and
- where the student has a particular health condition that requires a variation or departure from an aspect of the dress code.

The policy has been created in accordance with the Department of Training and Education, School Policy and Advisory Guide<sup>1</sup> which ensures that schools manage student dress codes appropriately and in compliance with obligations under human rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

The Ashwood Secondary College Uniform Policy was created and approved by the Ashwood Secondary College School Council. The Ashwood Secondary College School Council is comprised of parent and teacher representatives. The development of the Uniform Policy involved a thorough consultative process with students, parents and staff. It was developed with the intention of establishing standards at Ashwood Secondary College that would give all students the best possible options for success in the wider community.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Education and Training School Policy and Advisory Guide consolidates all relevant legislative, regulatory and policy information for government schools in Victoria. It has been developed to assist in the management, administration and operation of government schools in Victoria, and is the primary reference guide for such educational institutions.

Given this process of consultation, Ashwood Secondary College considers that its uniform policy does indeed accurately reflect the values of its school community.

Ashwood Secondary College considers that the successful implementation of the policy has a positive influence on the tone and temper of student behaviour, on the students' attitude to learning and on the development of a school culture based on respect, participation and excellence. The insistence on student compliance with regard to uniform expectations has had a positive effect on student self-belief, their pride in themselves and in their school.

### **Process of Seeking an Exemption from the Ashwood Secondary College Uniform / Dress Code Policy**

If a student (family) believes he/she should be exempted from school rules, there is a clear process for seeking an exemption from the uniform dress code policy. The student (family) may make a submission to School Council which will consider each case on its merits. Applications seeking an exemption must be in writing and addressed to the Executive Officer of the College Council, Brett Moore, the Principal. College Council will consider applications for exemption as part of General Business, near the end of each meeting. College Council meets at least twice each term. The decision to grant an exemption is the responsibility of College Council. The College is prepared to provide assistance to families who are preparing written submissions. Assistance will be provided after the family has expressed the need for assistance. Written submissions seeking exemption must be dated and signed by the student and a parent / guardian.

#### **Specific requirements for seeking a religious exemption:**

These requirements apply where a student (family) wishes to apply for an exemption on the basis that aspect of the dress code offends a religious belief held by the student and/or parents:

- Reference to the component of the Uniform Policy from which exemption is sought.
- Detailed explanation of the student's (family's) religious faith.
- Detailed description of the student's involvement with a local church group.
- Detailed description of the student's involvement in community work relating to their faith such as bible studies, youth group or charity work.
- Detailed explanation of why visibly wearing or not wearing an item is of religious significance and integral to the expression of the student's faith.

#### **Specific requirements for seeking an ethnic or cultural exemption:**

These requirements apply where a student (family) wishes to apply for an exemption on the basis that an aspect of the dress code prevents the student from complying with a requirement of his or her ethnic or cultural background:

- Reference to the component of the Uniform Policy from which exemption is sought.
- Detailed explanation of the student's (family's) ethnic or cultural background.
- Detailed description of the student's involvement ethnic or cultural practices and institutions.
- Detailed description of the student's involvement in community work relating to their ethnic or cultural background such as social work or charity work.
- Detailed explanation of why visibly wearing or not wearing an item is of importance and integral to the expression of the student's ethnic or cultural background.

#### **Specific requirements for seeking a disability exemption:**

All applications for exemption from the wearing of leather lace up school shoes need to be submitted to the school by Monday, Week 3 of the school year to enable the school council to review the application in a timely manner. This does not exclude parents from applying for exemptions at anytime during the school year should the need arise.

These requirements apply where an aspect of the dress code prevents students with disabilities from being able to attend school or participate in school activities on the same terms as other students:

- Reference to the component of the Uniform Policy from which exemption is sought.
- Detailed explanation of the relationship between the student's disability and the wearing of the particular element of uniform.
- Be accompanied by a current disability assessment and explanation by a relevant and qualified practitioner.

**Specific requirements for seeking a health / medical exemption:**

These requirements apply where a student (family) wishes to apply for an exemption on the basis that the student has a particular health condition that requires a variation or departure from an aspect of the dress code:

- Reference to the component of the Uniform Policy from which exemption is sought.
- Detailed explanation of the relationship between the student's health / medical condition and the wearing of the particular element of uniform.
- Be accompanied by a current medical certificate by a relevant and qualified health specialist in the area pertaining to the specified grounds for exemption, eg. school shoes – certificate by podiatrist

Written exemptions in the health / medical category must be submitted and approved annually (at the commencement of each academic year). When a submission is made for the second or subsequent year in the health/medical category a current medical certificate from the specialist only is required.

A uniform pass will be issued to the student in the period between the date of submission (of letter seeking an exemption) and the date at which College Council meets.

Council decisions will be communicated to families in writing by the Principal.