Transition to Always Active Uniform: A Case Study

St Peter's CofE Academy

School Context

St Peter's Church of England Academy is a **large, co-educational secondary school** in Stoke-on-Trent. The school serves a large local population of children from socioeconomically deprived communities and has an **above average proportion of students eligible for Free School Meals** (46.3%). Just under half (47.4%) of students speak a first language other than English and 58.9% of students are from Ethnically Diverse Communities.

At First: PE Kit on PE Days

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school introduced a policy of "PE Kit on PE days", where students could **wear their school PE kit all day on days they had PE**, rather than bringing it in separately to change into from their school uniform. This was originally introduced to remove the need for changing and the close contact environment that changing would have required.

What was the impact?

Immediately, the school noticed benefits of this policy change as it meant that it **removed the problem of students forgetting PE kit** on PE days, as well as **removing the need for changing for students who did not like this**. In particular, the policy change **benefitted a lot of girls** who saw changing in front of others as a barrier to them engaging in PE.

The PE kit on PE days policy was continued for approximately two years beyond the COVID-19 period, as a joint decision between the Senior Leadership Team and in response to pupil voice feedback, which highlighted improved comfort as a key benefit. During this time, it increased participation and engagement in PE lessons and reduced total uniform costs for families, particularly those in areas of deprivation. It also provided more flexible sportswear that better supported pupils through the physical and developmental changes of adolescence. In addition, the improved comfort contributed to higher attendance, which is now above the national average and within the top three in the local area.

Next: An Always Active Uniform

Following the positive impact this change in policy had brought about, the school decided to return to a single uniform policy that all students wore all day every day (including in PE). This uniform was an **'Always Active Uniform'**; a flexible, comfortable school uniform including active footwear designed to support spontaneous movement and daily activity throughout the school day.



To ensure inclusivity, the school made sure that a **wide range of clothing options** were available for students to choose from. For example, as well as a polo shirt, students can choose from tracksuit bottoms, leggings or shorts and students also have the option of a hoody, ¼ zip top and jacket (see image). Students are also required to wear trainers which can be white, black, navy blue or grey with minimal other colours*.

Students are required to wear the school branded polo shirt (with optional, additional school branded hoody, quarter zip and jacket). Students are also required to wear either school branded leggings or shorts or non-branded, plain navy shorts or leggings*.

What was the impact?

The school's **participation rates in PE have increased** substantially compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic and the Head of PE believes much of this is due to the uniform change. The change has also **increased the lesson time during PE**.

Adaptations to enabling the policy

During bad weather, PE lessons do take place inside in order to avoid students' kit getting wet or dirty. Importantly, the Head of PE does not believe that this has hindered them being able to deliver the curriculum as planned, **rather they adapt to the weather conditions accordingly**. The school also has a 3G Pitch facility and acknowledges that outdoor PE lessons would be more problematic for the uniform policy if they did not have this and had to use grass pitches during the winter. In addition, students are sometimes asked to **bring a change of clothes** to ensure they don't remain in wet/muddy uniform for the remainder of the school day following PE.

Top Tips from St Peter's CofE Academy

- **Start with a clear purpose**: Position the change around improving readiness to learn, comfort, movement and wellbeing — not simply removing uniform.
- **Define the PE-style uniform:** Set clear expectations on colours, branding, logos and footwear to maintain consistency and equality.
- **Keep costs low:** Use affordable suppliers, durable fabrics and limit compulsory branded items in line with national guidance.
- **Maintain standards:** Keep clear expectations around dress, appearance and behaviour to protect school culture and discipline.
- **Secure staff buy-in:** Involve staff early, pilot the approach and review feedback before wider rollout.
- **Include student voice:** Engage students in design choices to build ownership and improve acceptance.

*See St Peter's CofE's uniform webpage here for further information