

How to report schools that don't follow school uniform guidelines

The Commission continues to monitor schools' adherence to school uniform guidelines with regards to agreements with retailers and suppliers. Any school, retailer and supplier which does not follow these must be reported to the Commission.

This can be done by completing a Form CC1, which is available on the Commission's website – www.compcom.co.za.

For further details 012 394 3200,
Email ccsa@compcom.co.za



SCHOOL UNIFORM GUIDELINES



T: 012 394 3200

SMS/WhatsApp: 084 743 0000

F: 012 394 0166

E: ccsa@compcom.co.za

W: www.compcom.co.za

The DTI Campus, Mulayo (Block C)
77 Meintjies Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria

Private Bag x23, Lynnwood Ridge
0040, South Africa

BACKGROUND

Since 2010 the Commission has been inundated with complaints from parents who are forced by schools to buy school uniform from exclusively selected suppliers. There has been a widespread practice by many schools who sign exclusive supply agreements with specific pre-selected suppliers of school uniform.

These agreements are entered without any transparent competitive bidding processes as a result they substantially prevent and lessen competition. The parents, as a result, are forced to pay higher prices. The Commission subsequently initiated an investigation against various schools and suppliers of school uniform.



THE ROLE OF THE COMPETITION COMMISSION

The Commission is an investigative body with a range of functions in terms of Section 21 of the Competition Act. These include investigating anti-competitive conduct, such as price fixing and abuse of dominance, monitoring competition levels and market transparency in the economy, and playing an advocacy role to address obstacle to fair competition.

The Competition Act prohibits companies from concluding agreements that may prevent or lessen competition as they lead to higher prices, low quality and lack of choice. In many instances these agreements are open-ended, and some companies have had the sole rights for decades.

IMPORTANCE OF COMPETITION

Competition between suppliers of school uniform is important because it benefits both parents (consumers) and other businesses. Competition allows new businesses to enter the market, it encourages firms to offer lower prices and better-quality products. This contributes to economic growth by creating, amongst other things, jobs and increasing consumer choice.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

The Commission embarked on an extensive advocacy and awareness drive against anti-competitive behaviour in the procurement of school uniform. It engaged key stakeholders in the basic education sector as part of this process. These included, amongst many others, the governing body associations and the Department of Basic Education.

The Commission assisted the department in drafting a circular on school uniform guidelines. Subsequently, the guidelines were adopted by various school groups and governing bodies as a set of rules to regulate procurement of school uniform. Many schools immediately started to implement the guidelines and identified items like school ties, blazers, caps etc as part of limited exclusive clothing.

Schools must comply with the following guidelines

1. School uniform should be as generic as possible such that it is obtainable from many suppliers.
2. Schools should preferably appoint more than one supplier in order to give parents more options.
3. Exclusivity should be limited to items that the school regards as necessary to get from preselected suppliers.
4. Exclusive agreements concluded with suppliers should be of limited duration, between 3 to 5 years. When appointing exclusive suppliers, schools should follow a competitive bidding process.

