Necessitous Clothing Allowance Policy

Loving God - Serving others - Flourishing together

RESPECT – ASPIRE – REJOICE

Ratified by FGB:	17 September 2026
Next review due by:	September 2029

"Encourage one another and build each other up."

1THESSALONIANS5:11

Purpose, Vision and Values

At St Mark's we believe that Loving God and Serving others means ensuring every pupil can participate fully in school life. Our Necessitous Clothing Allowance puts that belief into practice by quietly removing financial barriers to essential uniform and kit so that pupils can flourish together, feel included and take part without stigma. Our guiding, underpinning Bible quote is "Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11) — this scheme is one practical way we serve families and encourage every child to thrive.

Scope

- Applies to all pupils on roll at St Mark's.
- Covers essential school clothing and footwear required for attendance and curriculum participation (uniform, coats, shoes, PE kit, waterproofs and curriculum-required items).

1. **Eligibility**

1.1 Automatic entitlement (no separate application required)

- Pupils recorded as eligible for targeted Free School Meals (FSM) under BCP criteria: households receiving one or more of the following — Universal Credit (household earnings under £7,400 pa), support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or the guarantee element of Pension Credit. These pupils are automatically eligible for the Necessitous Clothing Allowance. (BCP FSM criteria).
- Looked-after children (LAC) and pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are automatically eligible.

1.2 Expanded tier consideration (discretionary)

- Pupils whose families meet BCP's expanded FSM criteria (households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings above £7,400 pa) may be considered for one-off or limited support where need is demonstrated (for example, replacement of a safety-critical item). Awards for this group are discretionary and prioritised by urgency and impact on attendance/participation.

1.3 No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

- Families with NRPF who meet BCP's published NRPF income/capital evidence should be treated as eligible under the targeted tier for the purpose of clothing support. Evidence requirements for NRPF cases follow BCP guidance.

1.4 Discretionary crisis awards

- Short-term emergency support where families face an acute crisis (fire, flood, sudden unemployment, fleeing domestic abuse, homelessness) and lack clothing would prevent school attendance. These awards may be made on minimal evidence to avoid delay; safeguarding concerns must be referred to the DSL immediately.

2. Evidence and verification

- Use existing school records to confirm automatic categories (FSM/LAC/EHCP) — no extra paperwork required.
- For means-tested applicants: accept one of the following, dated within the last 6 months where possible — benefit award letter, Universal Credit statement, recent payslip(s), HMRC tax credit letter, or bank statement showing benefit payment. For NRPF, accept Home Office/LA Section 4 letter, ASPEN card or other BCP-accepted documentation.

- Where documentary evidence cannot be provided promptly in a crisis, accept a parent/carer self-declaration and arrange verification afterwards.

3. What the allowance covers and limits

- Awards are for essentials only: uniform items required by the school, a warm coat, robust shoes, PE kit required for curriculum participation and basic outdoor learning waterproofs. Do not routinely fund branded items, accessories not required by policy, or repairs to non-school clothing.
- Award bands:
    - Emergency award: up to £30 (same day/48 hours)
    - Annual cap for standard entitlement (where required): up to £40 per academic year
- Frequency: one standard award per pupil per academic year. Additional awards only for clear, evidenced need (e.g. growth, medical reason, safeguarding crisis).
- Payment mechanism: voucher for designated uniform suppliers (including S&PA Pre-loved Uniform Shop), direct purchase by school, or discreet collection of pre-purchased items.

4. Application and decision process

- Application routes: short paper form available from the school office, or an online form. Staff may complete a referral on behalf of families in cases of vulnerability.
- Decision makers: Business Manager (primary), with oversight from Deputy Headteacher. A small panel (Business Manager, DHT, Headteacher) will consider complex or higher-value requests. Maintain strict confidentiality.
- Timescales: routine decisions within 5 working days; emergency decisions within 48 hours (same day action where attendance is at immediate risk).
- Record keeping: record applications, evidence, decision rationale and value in the school's secure system. Provide anonymised summary (numbers supported; total spend; brief impact note) to Governors annually.

5. Dignity, confidentiality and distribution

- Offer discreet collection and distribution methods (unbranded packaging, vouchers sent by email/SMS, collection at reception).
- Train front-line staff to handle enquiries sensitively and avoid public discussion of awardees.
- Where possible supply items to pupils in school directly so they can participate immediately in PE or outdoor learning.

6. **Prioritisation**

   If funding is limited, prioritise in this order:

    1. Requests that, left unmet, would cause non-attendance or curriculum exclusion (e.g. no PE kit preventing participation).
    2. Pupils in automatic eligible categories (targeted FSM, LAC, EHCP).
    3. Crisis referrals and NRPF cases demonstrating immediate need.
    4. Expanded FSM families where there is demonstrated short-term need.

7. Safeguarding and referrals

- Any application that raises safeguarding concerns or suggests family crisis must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and recorded in line with school safeguarding procedures. Do not delay a safeguarding referral because of an application process.

8. **Appeals and complaints**

- Parents/carers may appeal one internal decision to the Headteacher within 10 working days. The Headteacher's decision is final. Record the appeal and outcome. Complaints about process should follow the school's published complaints policy.

9. **Monitoring and review**

- The Headteacher and Business Manager will review the scheme annually and report anonymised data to the Resources Committee: number of awards, total spend, average award, distribution by year group, SEND, FSM, EAL and impact indicators (attendance, participation). Adjust award bands and eligibility if local costs or BCP thresholds change.

10. **Communication**

- Publish a one-page summary on the school website and include a short note in new-starter packs and newsletters. Emphasise confidentiality, simplicity and the school's commitment to supporting families. Provide translation support where required.

Appendix A — Quick application checklist

- Child's name, year group and URN.
- Category (automatic FSM/LAC/EHCP / expanded FSM / NRPF / crisis).
- Brief reason and item(s) requested with estimated value.
- Evidence attached (tick list).
- Preferred method of award (voucher / school purchase / collection).
- Parent/carer signature and date.

Sources

- BCP Council — Free school meals guidance (BCP Council).