Teachers’ rights on clothing and dress standards in school

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Teachers’ responsibility

Teachers have a responsibility to wear clothing which is suitable to their duties and appropriate to their role as a teacher. Clothing should be clean, tidy and presentable. It is important to be mindful of dressing to suit the age and maturity of students.

It is also important to be aware of workplace health and safety requirements. For example, ITD, hospitality or agriculture teachers will wear appropriate footwear and personal protective equipment for specific lessons or when in kitchens and workshops etc.

The Union has confidence in the professional judgment of teachers to dress appropriately.

Standard of practice

The issue of personal appearance is addressed in the department’s Standard of Practice, which supports the Code of Conduct for the Queensland public service.

Personal presentation

“Each of us has a responsibility to conduct and present ourselves in a professional manner and treat co-workers, clients and members of the public with courtesy and respect. In addition, we have an obligation to ensure our own safety, health and welfare in the workplace. All officers are required to ensure their private conduct maintains the integrity of the public service.

Accordingly, as representatives of the department, it is essential we ensure that our personal appearance and presentation is professional.

As a general guide, the appearance and dress of departmental employees should be clean, tidy and appropriate to their duties and the people with whom they are dealing. Examples of inappropriate dress for DoE’s work environment include thongs, singlets, revealing clothing or clothing with offensive slogans.

Employees who wear a uniform or other apparel identifying them as an employee of the department must ensure that their uniform or apparel is clean, complete and in good order.

In addition, if an employee is wearing a departmental uniform, or is otherwise identifiable as a departmental employee while on duty, they are expected to avoid conduct which may adversely affect the image of the department.

Each of us also needs to ensure that in compliance with our duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, and the requirements of the Code, we do not wear clothing or footwear that could put our own workplace health and safety at risk.”

Tattoos and piercings

There is no departmental policy in relation to tattoos or piercings. Jewellery may be a hazard when undertaking some activities. Therefore a risk assessment/risk management approach would need to apply in such situations. It is important to check the relevant curriculum risk assessment documents to check for more specific guidelines or stipulations.

There is no requirement to cover a tattoo unless it is offensive or inappropriate.

Union’s view

The Union believes teachers should use their professional judgment to ensure their dress is satisfactory and appropriate to the circumstances at their particular school and for their role or teaching context, for example, climate and also the age and maturity of students and the curriculum or activity being taught or engaged in.

The Union believes it is inappropriate to prohibit the wearing of jeans, sports shoes, long shorts etc if these items of clothing are suitable for public wear. The Department of Education has informed the Union on many occasions that sports shoes may be worn by teachers.

If a principal has a concern with the clothing of a teacher, the matter should be discussed with the teacher.

For advice contact the Queensland Teachers’ Assist Desk, 1300 11 7823 or gtad@qtna.asn.au.