

Loosening rigid school dress codes



Question Types

Tone and mood / multiple choice

1. "While the potential discomfort and health risks of keeping the windows open all day can be arguably justified as a coronavirus countermeasure, there doesn't seem to be any rationale for the 'no extra warm clothing' rule other than an unwillingness to rethink the pre-existing dress code, even while adding the open-windows-in-winter protocol."

Which word would you use to describe the tone of this comment?

- A. condoning B. critical C. ambivalent D. indifferent

Figurative language / multiple choice

2. "Rules that seem harmless can catch flak if they are enforced without regard to actual circumstances." Which of the following can be used to replace the underlined words?

1. attract strong criticism
2. catch attention
3. draw negative comments
4. run into staunch opposition

- A. 1 and 2
B. 1, 2 and 3
C. 2, 3 and 4
D. 1, 3 and 4

Inference / multiple choice

3. “Despite the move to loosen rules on uniforms and appearances, Japan is still known for having conservative school rules, some of which are considered extreme and unreasonable, and even resulted in litigation.”

Which of the following CANNOT be inferred from the above sentence?

- A. Japan is not rid of the image of being conservative with school rules.
- B. Japan’s school rules are viewed negatively.
- C. People think it has taken too long for Japan’s schools to relax their rules.
- D. Some school rules have led to legal action.

Higher order thinking / extended response

4. Requiring girls to wear skirts is most relevant to which issue – freedom of choice, freedom of expression, or gender equality? Explain your answer.

Mini Mock

Read the article and answer the questions:

1. Are the following statements True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG)?

- (i) Schools in Japan’s capital dropped five school rules on 1 April. _____
- (ii) The “two block” hairstyle is short on top and long on the back and sides. _____
- (iii) Tokyo schools now have to use clear language to define “typical of high school students”. _____
- (iv) Japan is now a vanguard of liberal school rules. _____
- (v) The girl in the hair-dye case is currently studying law in university. _____

2. The girl said three bad things happened to her when her school forced her to dye her hair. What were they?

3. What was the controversy regarding school uniforms cited in the article, which happened in Fukuoka City?

4. Name three points mentioned in the article cited in opposition to school uniforms.

5. Complete the sentences by filling the gaps. Use ONE WORD only from the article, in the form that is grammatically correct in the context of the sentence.

- (i) A student in Osaka was punished when she failed to dye her hair black as _____ her school ordered her to.
- (ii) Sometimes, rules that look to be _____ can hurt if they are enforced mindlessly.
- (iii) Opening classroom windows in winter was reasonable as a coronavirus _____.
- (iv) Yuto Kitamura praised the decision to ditch the five school rules as a “_____ step forward”.

Listening comprehension

Instruction: Take 30 seconds to study the task, then listen to the audio file of a news report and complete the task.

Task:

A total of (1) _____ rules on school uniforms, and student hairstyles and behaviours have been dropped in Tokyo's schools.

The change in rules followed a (2) _____ on over 240 schools.

Japan's enforcement of its conservative school rules has been criticised as being (3) _____ and to (4) _____.

5. What did the hair dye do to the 18-year-old girl who sued her school?

Fill in the circle(s) corresponding to the correct answer(s):

6. What other school rules are students in Japan campaigning to abolish?

- A. The rule to come to school on time
- B. The ban on students wearing make-up to school
- C. The rule that prohibits sleeping in class
- D. The rule against students using hair products.

A. B. C. D.

Audio file script:

The Tokyo Board of Education has decided to drop some of the more controversial rules about school uniforms and the appearances of students.

Five rules are being dropped. Among them is one that required students to wear straight, black hair to school.

Also being dropped are a rule that dictated the colour of students' underwear, and a ban on the "two block" hairstyle that has been popular recently in many countries, which is long on top and short at the back and sides.

The changes came into effect on 1 April – the day the new academic year in Japan starts. It affects nearly 200 schools in the Japanese capital.

The rule changes come in the wake of a survey conducted on 240 schools in Tokyo. In the survey, educators and students described the rules for a majority of the schools as being "outdated". Members of the school board welcomed the changes.

Japan is known for enforcing conservative school rules in ways that have been criticised as "inflexible" and even "defy common sense".

The hair colour rule, for example, raised national attention when a secondary school student sued her school for making her dye her naturally brown hair black frequently, even though the hair dye damaged her hair, and caused rashes on her scalp. She won the litigation and was awarded compensation.

Changes in school regulations have, in fact, been happening in other parts of Japan. Last year, all public secondary schools in a prefecture in western Japan abolished rules governing hairstyles, underwear colour and dating.

Local officials conceded that those rules were "relics" from a different age.

After campaigning by students, some schools have started to allow girls to wear trousers to schools. Others students are now asking that they be allowed to wear makeup and use hair products.