

'No extreme hairstyles' – But what counts as extreme?

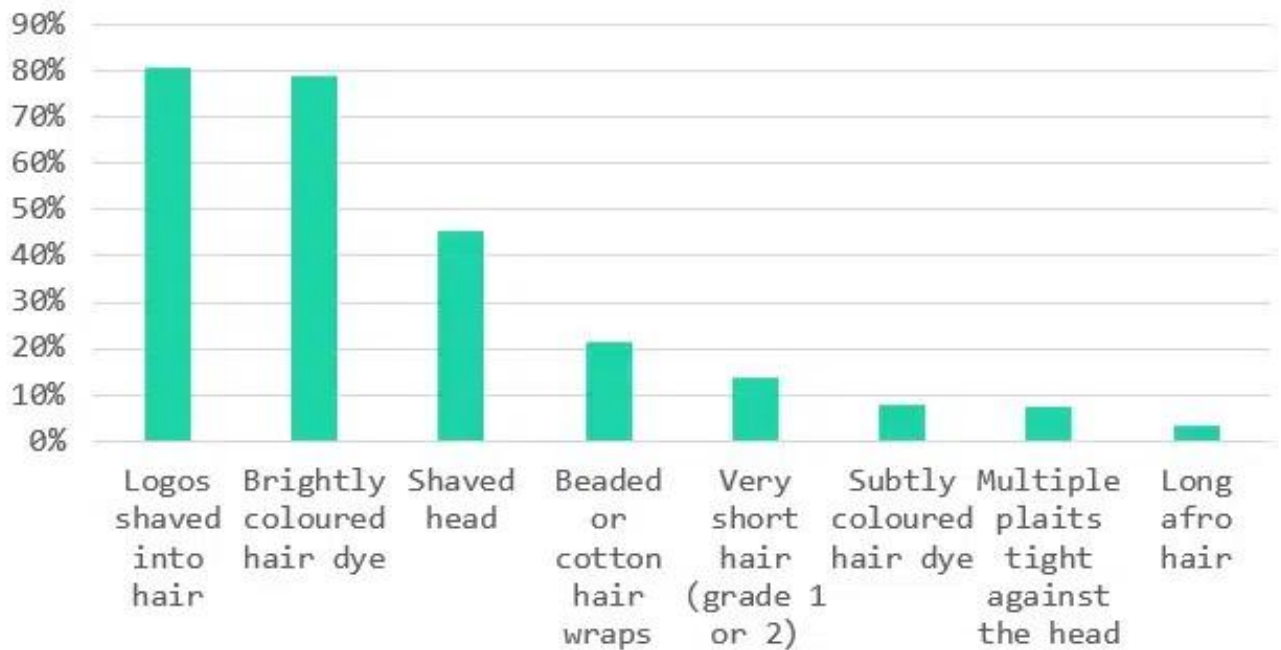
One of the most baffling lines in most school uniform policies is the explanation of what counts as acceptable versus 'extreme' hair. If you track newspaper articles related to school uniforms, (what do you mean it's just me?), you'll soon learn these rules not only trip-up many families, but they are also angry when they do. Many a local newspaper has delighted in a picture of an angry mum whose child recently got a beaded hair wrap while on holiday but found, upon return, the school demanding it must go.

Hence, we decided to ask, what counts as 'extreme' hair? After all, one man's extreme hair is another's non-threatening fashion statement.

We created the list of 'extreme' hairstyles based on actual news stories collected over the past year. (Ok, I'll admit I do actually collect school uniform stories via a google news alert. Now and then I go through and read them, sticking the best ones into an Evernote file. In less than 18 months of doing this I've already collected over 177 stories). For example, there's the story of a child [left in tears on her birthday](#) over a wrap in her hair. Or one banned from school after [shaving her head for charity](#). Or, my absolute favourite, the girl whose natural waves put her at risk of breaking the school's "[no more than 25 curls](#)" rule. All such stories should be taken with a pinch of salt: miscommunication is sometimes the culprit. But it's also true that most schools have some form of 'no extreme hairstyles' policy.

So what did teachers think?

Is this an 'extreme' hairstyle?



Bright hair dye and shaved logos were almost universally considered extreme. Which might explain why one girl was banned from school ["for being too ginger"](#). [Spoiler: her hair is dyed fire engine red]. It's noticeable that subtle-coloured hair dye is rarely labelled as 'extreme' by teachers (less than 10%). This suggests it's not so much the act of dying hair which is considered extreme but the bright colour. Yet, children can naturally have bright red or bright white hair. Would teachers think of those as 'extreme'? Shaved heads were less controversial than newspaper stories might have you believe - though still around half of the teachers considered them extreme. Respondents seldomly labelled the two hairstyles most associated with afro-textured hair as extreme. This is good news as schools can be slapped with a lawsuit if believing otherwise. In 2011, a school in north London was [told by a judge](#) that its policy of a "short back and sides" amounted to "indirect racial discrimination" when it would not allow the wearing of cornrows (a form of close braiding) for boys with afro-textured hair. Even last year, however, another school found itself [making headlines](#) for asking a pupil to remove her multiple-plaits.

So what?

Given the amount of media and legal attention on this matter, it's worth schools knowing what is typically considered 'extreme' elsewhere so decisions can have context. In the end, the matter has to be up to individual discretion. But here's hoping this information might help save you from my angry news story file! ** Enjoyed this post and want to join our Teacher Tapp panel? Sign up via the [iPhone App Store](#) or the [Android App Store](#). You can also check out more at www.teachertapp.com