

Catholic Schools' Trustee Service

St Mary's University College

191 Falls Road

Belfast

BT126FE

Tel: 02890268368



30th June 2026

CSTS Response to the Consultation on the School Uniform (trousers) Bill.

Firstly, can I note that due to timing it has not been possible to bring this consultation to the relevant Committee/ CSTS Board. As such this response is limited to an Officer response.

CSTS responded to the consultation in relation to the substantive Uniform Bill which was brought forward by the Minister last year. Much of what was included in the bill was welcomed as a positive development – working towards uniforms which were comfortable, cost-effective and practical. In particular, CSTS welcomed the engagement required with parents and young people in the development of school uniform policy.

CSTS in that response proposed that there would be a clear formal review of the impact of that legislation on school uniforms following a period of implementation.

CSTS has little evidence as to how this bill impacted on school uniforms in practice however, anecdotal evidence suggests that, in at least some cases, this resulted in a broadening of access to trousers for female students. There is merit in assessing the impact of this legislation prior to making further legislative change.

In relation to the specific issue of trousers this appears to be a matter of comfort for some young people and all young people should have access to a uniform which provides them

with an appropriate level of comfort. For others, this is a matter of equality which also needs to be considered.

In relation to the second element of the Bill dealing with clothing for recreational, sporting and outdoor activities.

CSTS understands the rationale for the proposal but the terminology proposed “wear trousers, shorts, or other leg coveringsas appropriate for that activity” is open to a wide variety of interpretation. CSTS would suggest that the language is simplified to reduce debate on its meaning – though this may be something that can be clarified within any DE guidance issued subject to the Bill passing. CSTS would also highlight that issues may arise where specific sports require specific clothing e.g. how would this address the issue of schools having to adhere to specific sport requirements for competitions?

CSTS is aware that schools are currently working towards the implementation of the substantive Uniform Bill – including the need to negotiate with providers who, in some cases, have significant lead in times and with whom contractual arrangements are already in place. Any change should therefore have an appropriate lead in time to minimise any issues which could arise.

