

**Attachment to President's Report
Correspondence Re Uniform Review**

From: **Steve Clarke**
Date: Tue, Sep 16, 2014 at 2:41 PM
Subject: Uniform committee proposals
To: "Furner, Stacey" , Karen Roberts

Dear Stacey and Karen (present members of the uniform committee)

I would like to request that the P&C receive a copy of the uniform proposal / options (if possible this week) so we can put the proposal / options up on the p&c noticeboard and website in advance of the meeting.

The P&C has received feedback from members including a written request from Carolyn Jury plus requests from half a dozen or so other parents wishing to view the uniform proposal / options in advance of the next meeting.

It's fair to say there's been wide interest in the proposals, and some parents are deciding whether to make arrangements to ensure they can attend the meeting based on what the proposals might be.

By receiving the proposal in advance, we can ensure a reasonably speedy discussion and decision at the meeting, as people will have time to digest and consider the options in advance and come to the meeting with a well-considered view (rather than risk members wanting to taking the proposal away to think about and defer to a following meeting!).

As there will be potentially divergent and strongly-held views one way or another, I plan to conduct this discussion quite formally, allowing each person to speak once to the discussion, and then put any options to a formal vote.

I think this would be the best way to ensure everyone feels they are fairly 'heard' and the outcome is fair.

It is my understanding uniform policy is a school decision so any vote of the P&C would of course not be binding on the school, but where there has been fair opportunity for input, the school could confidently take the result of such a vote as being indicative of parental opinion.

Thanks and regards

Steve

From School newsletter 18 Sep 2014:

Uniform Review

As our first P&C meeting has been postponed the planned uniform proposal will be postponed to a date to be confirmed. Please be advised that the school uniform colours will not be changing. Parents should note that informal discussions in the park and playground are not part of the P&C consultation process and this is not an appropriate forum for decision making or forceful lobbying.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Steve Clarke**

Date: Mon, Oct 27, 2014 at 3:46 PM

Subject: Proposal for non gendered uniforms

To: "Thompson, Dianne"

Hi Di and uniform committee

As I mentioned, following the discussion at the last P&C meeting, I've been asked by a group of parents to forward a proposal to the uniform committee to consider regarding removal of gender specific uniform options.

I've now received that proposal '**Uniforming the uniform**', which I've attached along with 2 reference documents - one an academic study '**Ritualised girling**', and the other, an article from the Guardian newspaper (link below)

The group of parents includes: Ruth Tetley, Pam Maddock, Fiona Day, Jackie and Adam Ullman, Ariane Blanch, David Curtis, Sunil and Trushna Raskar, Kate Wake, Sonom Paljor, Simrat Suri, and Christin Seufert

While I understand the uniform committee has prepared a proposal/ option involving possible removal of the skirt/ dress, the attached proposal may possibly go further by suggesting removal of all gender specific options including the 'skort' (an item of clothing I only became aware existed in recent weeks by the way!).

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/oct/21/lets-scrap-gender-divide-school-uniforms>

Thanks for accepting this proposal for consideration.

Regards

Steve

From School newsletter 29/10/2014:

Uniform Review

The school has processes to follow with guidelines set out by the Department of Education and Communities. The uniform review committee was elected and approved by our P&C Association last year. The uniform committee has followed the guidelines set out for the review of a school uniform very carefully.

Last year, when the process began, the community was surveyed. The committee very carefully analysed the results from the community in regards to a unisex uniform. The most important aspects of a new uniform, from the survey, were serviceability, practicality (which included comfort) and affordability.

The passion of individuals is acknowledged and considerable time was spent listening to viewpoints at the last P&C meeting. As it is the responsibility of the committee to inform the parent community there will be no other proposals being put forward other than the one from the uniform committee. It should be noted that there are a number of options within the uniform proposal and the uniform review committee will be asking parents to indicate their preferred choices and final decisions will be made from these responses.

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Correspondence to Uniform Committee

Date:6 Nov 2014 14:47:53 +1100

From:Steve Clarke

Hi Di

Thanks for getting the note out this morning about the P&C meeting next week. I'm very sorry if this is adding to your reading/ workload.

Regarding the 'Uniforming the Uniform' correspondence I forwarded to you last week for the uniform committee, I've received further feedback from some parents (below) I need to pass on to you for the committee. Also I've received notice of a motion to table the correspondence.

Thanks Steve

Dear uniform committee,

Thanks for your update in last week's newsletter which is understood to be a response to the "uniforming the uniform" proposal submitted by a group of parents to the uniform committee on the 27th October.

As you note, there are some parents who feel "passionately" but it is pleasing to note and hopefully reassuring for the school and uniform committee that the discussion / debate has been very friendly and those who have chosen t participate have done so positively and respectfully of other views.

A number of parents have commented that although they may not agree with the proposal they have appreciated and enjoyed the discussion which has got them thinking about the issue.

The work and time that the uniform committee have put into considering this issue is greatly appreciated.

You note in your response that a survey was distributed by the school around a year ago. The survey was certainly a good and appropriate first step. However, apart from the one survey it is felt that the level of parent consultation and opportunity for input from parents to the uniform committee has been very limited.

Although the exact wording is not recalled, there was a question related to unisex uniforms. However a number of parents commented that they did not understand the question or it was unclear / ambiguous. You mention in the newsletter that the survey found "serviceability, practicality, (which included comfort) and affordability" were the main concerns for parents.

However there was no specific question or prompt on the form asking about gender neutrality, equality or non discrimination, so no opportunity for parents to rate 'practicality' for example as a concern against 'gender equality'. There was also no background information, research, etc provided such as the information presented at the last p&c meeting for parents to consider, or to assist parents to make an informed decision.

A number of parents have indicated their views have changed, as often happens, with informed discussion of the issue which has occurred in recent weeks.

Therefore the survey cannot be taken as indicating the informed or current view of the school community on the uniform with regard to gender equality issues.

It was minuted that there were around 40 responses to this survey. The 'uniforming the uniform' proposal which was submitted to the uniform committee last week was supported by representatives of 9 families from the school community, representing around 10% of families at the school. This is a significant percentage of families who have made an unsolicited proposal expressing a view to the uniform committee that gender neutrality/ equality is a primary concern. Of course most families at the school did not know about the proposal and didn't have an opportunity to sign, so it is almost certain support for the proposal extends significantly beyond those who submitted it.

The department of education uniform policy which you referred to does also mention discrimination, including sex discrimination, direct and indirect as issues which should be considered. Although not everyone would agree that a non unisex uniform amounts to discrimination, there is an argument which has been made that it does lead to direct or indirect discrimination, which parents at least should have an opportunity to consider.

Of course if a proposal for a unisex uniform was put forward and an informed discussion occurred, it is recognised that the proposal may still not gain majority support. But at least then an informed decision of the school community having considered all views, will have been reached.

The proposal submitted to the committee of removing the skort as an option, was not intended to be seen as a 'rival' or separate proposal to the work of the uniform committee, was understood to be along the lines of proposals already being developed by the committee, so it was hoped that it could have been easily incorporated into the existing work by the committee (which is understood to propose the removal of dresses as options), by simply perhaps considering the possibility of allowing parents to have their say on one extra option of not removing the 'skort' so those who feel the uniform should be unisex and 'uniform' can say so.

Thanks for taking the time to consider the views in this email.