

The great uniform debate

Sex discrimination still rules in most schools - and the skirt v trousers debate is far more important than it looks.

Girls still face institutionalised gender discrimination in schools, and Children's Express reporter Nalina Eggert isn't prepared to skirt the issue any more.

Today, the battle of the sexes would appear to be over. Women have the vote, have the right to pursue a career whether, married or single, and have the right to equal pay. However, recent statistics suggest the gap between women's and men's pay is widening, not closing. Far from being over, the battle of the sexes is ongoing. Is it about to move in to the classroom?

Whilst female teachers are entitled to equal pay and can choose their outfits for work, most female children still spend about one third of their time wearing an old-fashioned, impractical garment that bears absolutely no relation to their needs. I refer to the skirt!

We need a practical outfit that performs the functions of a uniform. We need to be seen as belonging to a particular school without being necessarily marked out as easy prey for sexual attack. Far-fetched, you may think, but is it really? The way home on a dark night is worrying enough for teenage girls and their mothers without them being obvious targets.

My friends and I have valid reasons for wanting to change what we wear. I don't want to show off my legs every day. I want to be able to play basketball in the playground at break, or sit comfortably in the assembly hall. So why can't I choose to wear trousers? Because they say so?

The UN Convention for the Rights of the Child states that "children have the right to express and have their views given due weight according to their age and maturity in all matters that affect them." I am a young adult who contributes to my school, to my community and through my part-time work to National Insurance. Yet when I challenged the school's uniform policy, my questions went unanswered.

My school is failing to see that this is not the voice of one solitary, insignificant child. Eighty per cent of replies to a recent web survey on school uniforms asked the same questions as me. My case does have support. Neither can it be dismissed as a vanity issue. It is about equality. It is about safety. It is about human rights. Teachers wear trouser suits to work, then deny us the right. What does that teach children about our place in the world?

About the teamThis story was produced by Nalina Eggert, 16. A version of it was published in the [Irish Times](#).

2 comments

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GET RID OF THEM
ALISHA (age 10) from CLACTON, 30 December 1899 00:00
28
i would not dare were uniforms x
bob (age 14) from redkaaa, 30 December 1899 00:00

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