



SSUNI Secondary Students'
Union of Northern Ireland

#UniformReform

The need for **class equality** in the classroom

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**SSUNI President and
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WHO ARE WE?

We were established in August 2020, corresponding with the algorithm crisis for A level students. Since then we have been active in representing around 40,000 members across Northern Ireland.

We provide student representation to governmental bodies, student working groups, produce publications and surveys, and lobby on behalf of all students in Northern Ireland.

Some of our work includes:

- **#TrustOurTeachers** campaign to achieve 2020 predicted grades
- **#CutTheContent** for 2021 examinations
- **#CancelExams** campaign for 2021 examinations
- Report on student mental health
- Publication on methods to enhance shared education
- Publication on effective student councils
- **#UniformReform** campaign on growing uniform costs



THE ISSUE

Including PE gear the Uniform Grant for secondary students fall under two brackets:

- **Under 15s - £73**
- **Over 15s - £78**

This does NOT cover the full amount of school uniforms in 2022!

According to figures from the Parent Engagement Group, the mandatory uniform in a school in County Antrim costs £337.15 including PE gear. This is for one of each item.

Families from:

- **low income households**
- **larger families**

Suffer the most.

OUR SURVEY

In 9 days, our student survey received 1,014 responses.

Key results relating to cost:

- **63%** believe their uniform list has **too many branded items**
- **60%** are very concerned or concerned about their family **affording their school uniform**
 - **45%** are very concerned or concerned about **being bullied** because their family can't afford all the items needed for school.
 - **54%** stated **purchasing their school uniform put financial pressure** on their family
 - However, **ONLY 26%** stated their family **received the uniform grant!**

STUDENT QUOTES

These were some of the written responses to our question asking whether students had been excluded from a school activity due to uniform:

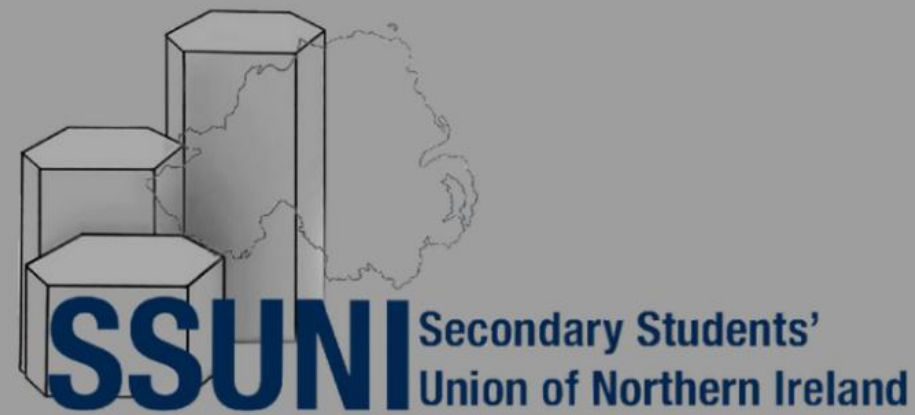
- 'PE. Couldn't afford the official one and wasn't allowed to wear anything else. Didn't do PE for 6 months'
- 'I couldn't afford proper school shoes and I wore trainers to school everyday but one day my T&D teacher told me I couldn't go to his class until I got proper school shoes. My English teacher had to buy me the shoes so I could go to class'
- 'I have had to sit out of P.E for not being able to afford the new P.E uniform right away and my school practically forced me to buy the new half zip so I could take part in P.E lessons last year even though it was my last compulsory year of P.E and I wouldn't wear the half zip outside of school as I go to an all girls school and it would out me as transgender'
- 'I was diagnosed with autism in 4th year. Now I realise my inability to wear a tie or have top button done was sensory related and not misbehaving.'

OUR SOLUTIONS

In August, we wrote to the Minister for Education expressing our concerns and calling for 3 actions to end growing uniform costs:

1. **An extension** to the uniform grant
2. **A cap** on school uniform prices
3. PE uniforms limited to accessible and affordable **'off the rack'** retailers
4. Statutory regulations opposed to departmental guidance

Young people are not removed from understanding economic hardship. Uniforms were intended to conceal class in education - they must not put families in further financial struggle.



Thank you for listening!

Feel free to contact equality@ssuni.org or
info@ssuni.org for further information or
comments

