# Claire Sugden amends Northern Ireland school uniform bill to combat upskirting and cap costs



Independent MLA Claire Sugden has introduced an important amendment to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill currently advancing through Northern Ireland's Assembly. This legislative effort, driven by growing concerns over the practice of 'upskirting', underscores the need to address both the affordability of school uniforms and the rights and dignity of students. The proposed change aims not only to set ethical standards for uniform policies but also to ensure they remain economically accessible for families across the region.

Introduced by Education Minister Paul Givan in February, the School Uniforms Bill seeks to create comprehensive guidelines that would help schools formulate uniform policies. This initiative reflects an increasing awareness of the financial burdens faced by parents who often struggle to afford the costs associated with dressing multiple children for school. Sugden has vocalised the critical need for a legislative cap on these expenses, arguing that as uniform prices continue to rise, families with multiple children are disproportionately affected.

The bill's provisions are designed to foster transparency and consultation. Schools will be required to engage with parents and students, articulate the rationale behind uniform costs, and provide a variety of suppliers from which families can choose. Furthermore, the legislation opens pathways for eligible pupils in independent schools to access financial assistance through clothing allowances administered by the Education Authority. This inclusivity is particularly noteworthy as it aims to alleviate the financial strain that many families endure when faced with the prospect of acquiring expensive uniforms.

In light of the recent amendment addressing upskirting, Sugden noted the necessity for schools to adopt respectful measures that protect the dignity of all students. This concern reflects broader societal issues regarding privacy and consent, suggesting that educational environments must prioritise the safety and wellbeing of their pupils.

Education Minister Givan has championed this legislation as a pivotal step towards a more equitable education system. By ensuring that uniform policies are not only affordable but also compassionate, the bill aims to create a fairer atmosphere for all students, allowing them to focus on their education without the added stress of financial constraints or personal violations.

As this bill progresses through the Assembly, it represents a significant moment for Northern Ireland, illustrating a commitment to not only the economic realities of school attire but also to the fundamental rights of students. As Sugden's amendment takes shape, stakeholders will be watching closely to see how it bolsters the overarching goal of creating a respectful and inclusive educational environment.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html), [[2]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html), [[3]](https://www.northernirelandworld.com/education/school-uniform-costs-should-be-legislated-says-mla-sugden-3352199), [[4]](https://www.loveballymena.online/post/paul-givan-introduces-school-uniforms-bill-ensuring-affordability-is-at-the-centre-of-school-policies)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/northern-ireland-assembly-bill-schools-rebecca-black-b2700361.html), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/schools-department-of-education-b1211944.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html), [[3]](https://www.northernirelandworld.com/education/school-uniform-costs-should-be-legislated-says-mla-sugden-3352199), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/schools-department-of-education-b1211944.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html), [[4]](https://www.loveballymena.online/post/paul-givan-introduces-school-uniforms-bill-ensuring-affordability-is-at-the-centre-of-school-policies), [[7]](https://www.newsletter.co.uk/lifestyle/money/dup-minister-paul-givan-launches-new-stormont-bill-aimed-at-making-school-uniforms-more-affordable-4997386)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/politics/concerns-over-upskirting-prompt-amendment-to-stormont-bill-on-school-uniform/a276551599.html> - Independent MLA Claire Sugden has proposed an amendment to the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill, aiming to address concerns over 'upskirting'. The bill, introduced by Education Minister Paul Givan in February, seeks to provide guidance to schools on uniform policies. The amendment reflects ongoing efforts to ensure that school uniform policies are both affordable and respectful of students' rights.
3. <https://www.northernirelandworld.com/education/school-uniform-costs-should-be-legislated-says-mla-sugden-3352199> - East Londonderry MLA Claire Sugden has advocated for legislation to cap school uniform costs, highlighting the financial strain on families, especially those with multiple children. She emphasised that rising uniform prices are a significant issue in Northern Ireland, particularly for families with multiple children in different schools, and called for a ceiling price to ensure every child can attend school in the prescribed uniform.
4. <https://www.loveballymena.online/post/paul-givan-introduces-school-uniforms-bill-ensuring-affordability-is-at-the-centre-of-school-policies> - Education Minister Paul Givan has introduced the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill, aiming to make school uniforms more affordable. The bill requires the Department of Education to provide guidelines for schools, ensuring uniform policies are transparent and affordable. Schools must consult with parents and pupils, publish the rationale and cost of uniforms, and offer a range of suppliers. The bill also considers the possibility of introducing a price cap on uniforms in the future.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/northern-ireland-assembly-bill-schools-rebecca-black-b2700361.html> - A new Stormont Bill, introduced by Education Minister Paul Givan, aims to make school uniforms more affordable. The bill mandates the Department of Education to create guidelines for schools, addressing unfair costs related to uniform requirements. It also opens access to the clothing allowance administered by the Education Authority to pupils in independent schools. Schools are required to consult with parents and pupils, publish the rationale and cost of uniforms, and offer a range of suppliers. The bill includes the potential for a price cap on uniforms in the future.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/schools-department-of-education-b1211944.html> - Education Minister Paul Givan has introduced a new Stormont Bill aimed at making school uniforms more affordable. The bill requires the Department of Education to provide guidelines for schools, ensuring uniform policies are transparent and affordable. Schools must consult with parents and pupils, publish the rationale and cost of uniforms, and offer a range of suppliers. The bill also includes the potential for a price cap on uniforms in the future.
7. <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/lifestyle/money/dup-minister-paul-givan-launches-new-stormont-bill-aimed-at-making-school-uniforms-more-affordable-4997386> - DUP Minister Paul Givan has launched a new Stormont bill aimed at making school uniforms more affordable. The bill requires the Department of Education to provide guidelines for schools, ensuring uniform policies are transparent and affordable. Schools must consult with parents and pupils, publish the rationale and cost of uniforms, and offer a range of suppliers. The bill also includes the potential for a price cap on uniforms in the future.