# Essex school bans skirts to enforce gender-neutral uniform amid parental backlash



A school in Essex has stirred controversy by banning skirts as part of a drive towards a more inclusive, gender-neutral uniform policy. Honywood School, led by headteacher James Saunders, will implement the change from September, articulating that students will no longer be permitted to wear skirts—one of the two garment options previously available alongside trousers. This decision has incited significant backlash from parents, who have branded it a form of "group punishment" and described it as "crazy," particularly for students who have already purchased skirts adorned with the school's branding.

The impetus for this uniform overhaul appears rooted in operational challenges faced by the school. In a letter shared with the Colchester Gazette, Saunders noted that issues had arisen from students wearing skirts incorrectly, stating, "Over time, we have unfortunately experienced persistent issues with school skirts being worn incorrectly." The school hopes that by removing skirts from the uniform policy, it can redirect focus onto learning and alleviate compliance-related tensions within the student body.

In place of skirts, students will have the choice of black trousers or stylish black, knee-length tailored shorts. Proponents of the new policy argue that these offerings not only create more gender-neutral options but also aim to ease the financial burden on families, as the uniform becomes simpler and potentially cheaper to maintain. Some parents, however, are unconvinced. One parent expressed her disappointment anonymously, saying, “They are rolling it out as a gender-neutral initiative but it's not really; they are trying to do group punishment." She emphasized the importance of appropriate skirt wear and shared concerns that the policy would unduly affect her child, who had already invested in the school-branded uniform.

This development follows a national trend observed in educational institutions seeking to modernise their uniform policies. Similar decisions have been made by other schools across the UK. For instance, Priory School in Lewes has implemented a uniform change to ban skirts altogether in favour of trousers, addressing issues related not only to the equity of gender representation but also to concerns regarding the appropriateness of skirt length. Tony Smith, the headteacher at Priory, explained that this policy revision was a response to discussions among parents, students, and staff, all aimed at fostering a more inclusive environment for transgender students.

Another case is that of Tiverton High School in Devon, which has similarly opted to ban skirts. Headteacher Sammy Crook noted that this change was driven by consistent problems with students wearing skirts shorter than school guidelines allowed. While skirts are still permitted for physical education activities, the overarching aim is to standardise student attire and mitigate disputes related to uniform adherence.

As Honywood School prepares to roll out its new uniform regulations amidst vocal parental dissent, the broader context underscores a growing discourse around gender inclusivity in school policies. Many parents and community members have taken to social media to express their opinions, with various views emerging. Some have argued that the ban on skirts may amount to discrimination against female students, while others have welcomed it as a necessary step toward accountability and discipline in uniform compliance.

In a public statement addressing the reactions, Saunders asserted that the decision to ban skirts is not contentious but rather aligns with uniform models employed by many schools. He has committed to engaging parents in dialogue regarding the implementation of these changes, recognising the importance of community input in navigating such significant transitions.

While Honywood School's policy may initially appear draconian to some, it is not an isolated case but part of a larger shift in how schools across the UK are approaching gender inclusivity and uniform standards in increasingly diverse classrooms.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14777071/parents-fury-school-ban-skirts-gender-neutral-options.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.essexlive.news/news/uk-world-news/secondary-school-bans-skirts-move-7194124)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14777071/parents-fury-school-ban-skirts-gender-neutral-options.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://news.sky.com/story/school-bans-girls-from-wearing-skirts-as-it-brings-in-gender-neutral-uniform-11023265), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/school-bans-skirts-make-uniform-gender-neutral-transgender-students/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.essexlive.news/news/uk-world-news/secondary-school-bans-skirts-move-7194124), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/06/secondary-school-makes-uniform-gender-neutral)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://news.sky.com/story/school-bans-girls-from-wearing-skirts-as-it-brings-in-gender-neutral-uniform-11023265), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-41178571)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14777071/parents-fury-school-ban-skirts-gender-neutral-options.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/school-bans-skirts-make-uniform-gender-neutral-transgender-students/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14777071/parents-fury-school-ban-skirts-gender-neutral-options.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://news.sky.com/story/school-bans-girls-from-wearing-skirts-as-it-brings-in-gender-neutral-uniform-11023265> - Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex, has implemented a policy banning girls from wearing skirts to promote a gender-neutral uniform. The decision aims to address issues of inequality and decency, particularly concerning the length of skirts. The new uniform consists of grey trousers, white shirts, navy jumpers, and blue and silver ties. Headteacher Tony Smith stated that the change was in response to concerns raised by parents, students, and staff, and to accommodate the increasing number of transgender students. ([news.sky.com](https://news.sky.com/story/school-bans-girls-from-wearing-skirts-as-it-brings-in-gender-neutral-uniform-11023265?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.essexlive.news/news/uk-world-news/secondary-school-bans-skirts-move-7194124> - Tiverton High School in Devon has announced a ban on skirts as part of a move towards a more gender-neutral uniform policy. The decision follows persistent issues with students wearing skirts shorter than permitted. From September, all students will be required to wear trousers, with skirts still permitted for PE sessions. Headteacher Sammy Crook explained that the change aims to standardise student attire and address concerns over skirt length. ([essexlive.news](https://www.essexlive.news/news/uk-world-news/secondary-school-bans-skirts-move-7194124?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/school-bans-skirts-make-uniform-gender-neutral-transgender-students/> - Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex, has banned girls from wearing skirts to accommodate transgender pupils and address complaints about the 'decency' of short skirts. The new uniform policy requires all new Year 7 students to wear trousers. Headmaster Tony Smith stated that the change was in response to pupils questioning gender-specific uniforms and to support the increasing number of transgender students. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/school-bans-skirts-make-uniform-gender-neutral-transgender-students/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/06/secondary-school-makes-uniform-gender-neutral> - Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex, has implemented a gender-neutral uniform policy by requiring girls to wear trousers instead of skirts. The decision aims to address issues of inequality and decency, particularly concerning the length of skirts. The new uniform consists of grey trousers, white shirts, navy jumpers, and blue and silver ties. Headteacher Tony Smith explained that the change was in response to concerns raised by parents, students, and staff, and to accommodate the increasing number of transgender students. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/sep/06/secondary-school-makes-uniform-gender-neutral?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-41178571> - Priory School in Lewes, East Sussex, has adopted a gender-neutral uniform policy by prohibiting new students from wearing skirts. The decision follows concerns over the length of skirts and aims to cater to transgender pupils. Starting this autumn term, all new students must wear trousers, while returning students have the option to wear either trousers or skirts. Headteacher Tony Smith stated that the move addresses 'inequality and decency'. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-41178571?utm_source=openai))