

April 2019

Dear parents and carers

When, back in September 2017, we changed the uniform policy so that girls choosing to wear skirts had to wear tights as well, we promised to keep the new policy under careful review.

Overall, the new policy has worked very well; there can be no doubt that students look a great deal smarter as a result of the change and most of the concerns that were raised initially have not proved to be significant issues in practice.

Throughout this time, we have kept up a dialogue with students – both informally in day-to-day conversations and more formally as part of our regular student voice activities. The most recent student voice activity took place on Friday, with governors and members of the senior leadership team sitting down for focus group discussions with a total of well over 100 students during the day.

As a result of all this feedback from students, we have decided to make a further change to the policy. From now on, girls will again be able to wear their skirts with black, knee length socks in half-term 6 only (i.e. the half-term after the May holiday) if they so choose. For the rest of the school year, the policy of tights with skirts will remain in place.

The reason for the change is simply that a significant minority of girls have told us that they really do find tights too uncomfortable on the hottest days. At the same time, we are persuaded that it is unreasonable to buy a pair of trousers for what is usually only a relatively small number of very hot days in each summer term – especially given that many will have grown out of these trousers by the following summer.

As you will remember, we did allow students to wear PE kit during the heatwave last summer. Most people seemed to think that this worked very well and we were tempted to stick with this approach. However, the problem is that such prolonged exceptionally hot spells do not usually come in neat 'blocks' and we are likely to have weeks in most summers where the conditions hover somewhere near that where we might consider allowing PE kit. In such cases, there will inevitably be a lot of distracting discussion, and potential confusion, about uniform policy from day to day. Given that the vast majority of hot days obviously fall in June and July, we feel it is most sensible to relax the uniform policy for the whole of these months so that there is maximum clarity for everyone.

There are bound to be a few hotter days at other points in the year, but these will be rare and our original position remains in these cases: girls who are especially susceptible to the heat and/or who really don't like tights are advised to invest in a pair of plain black trousers.

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We should also point out that, in the light of this change in policy, we consider that it would be especially unreasonable of students or parents to complain when they are asked to replace skirts that have become too short. The absence of tights will make short skirts more noticeable in the summer and pastoral staff will, as ever, be working hard to maintain high standards of dress.

We understand that not everybody will agree with this amended version of the policy (and that those who disagree will also disagree amongst themselves over what the precise policy should be!) However, we trust that most people will see this as a sensible compromise between ensuring our students look as smart as possible for most of the year whilst also allowing more comfort in the hottest months without the policy becoming too confused or complicated.

I'd like to finish by commending the girls who have convinced us that it is right to make this compromise. As is typical of our brilliant students, the vast majority of them have approached this in precisely the right manner – they were willing to try the new policy with an open mind, have continued to follow all school rules consistently and have expressed their views as part of reasoned discussions where they have shown plenty of respect for the opposing view. If we ever needed it, the day spent engaged in the student voice activity on Friday certainly provided a reminder of what a tremendous privilege it is to be able to work with the young people of Lymm High School.

Yours faithfully

Gwyn Williams
Headteacher