

The Page and the Epistle

OPINIONS

OPINION: STUDENT CHALLENGES TO DRESS CODES AT THE ST. PAUL'S SCHOOLS

MAY 2, 2022 | NATALIE KIM | 28 COMMENTS

When you step into the hallways of The St. Paul's Schools, it's likely that the first thing you'll notice is the way students are dressed. Whether you are up the hill, where students have a dress code, or down the hill, where students wear a specified uniform, clothing is a key aspect of the schools' environments.

The St. Paul's Schools (TSPS) includes two different schools, St. Paul's School for Boys and St. Paul's School for Girls, which were [unified under a single board in July of 2018](#). However, the schools operate independently in some ways, which leads to clashes on things such as clothing. In the past few years, many students have expressed opposition to their school's dress code/uniform.

SP Dress Code

St. Paul's School for Boys (SP) has a dress code that requires collared shirts and neckties, but allows students to choose the color and style of these items. SP's dress code prohibits wearing earrings at school functions, such as chapel. It also requires students to cover visible tattoos. Acceptable bottoms include "khakis, corduroys or dress slacks," and skirts are banned at SP. The full dress code can be found [here](#).

"Seek truth" are the first words of the SP mission statement, which Collin Pachilis '24 can attest to. Collin, like several students at SP, criticizes the school's dress code. His objection is centered mainly on the belief that SP's dress code is non-inclusive of the identities of transgender and gender non-conforming people. Collin circulated a [petition](#) in December 2021 that outlined his concerns regarding SP's dress code. It currently has 234 signatures.

Against the administration at SP, Collin argued that earrings and skirts are key forms of self-expression, especially in a school that already limits one's dress. Collin also stated that despite the dress code allowing for slightly different styles of pants and shirts, the ban of skirts and earrings negates any attempt to accommodate variability. For example, transgender students at a traditionally boys' school should be able to express their identity through a skirt. SP cites "professionalism" in their justification for prohibiting skirts and other "trends in fashion," but Collin argued that this is hypocritical because students at

SPSG wear skirts as part of their uniform. Furthermore, even cisgender, straight males can wear skirts; they should not be limited to certain parts of the community.

Based on the administrative response, dress code change is unlikely at SP, especially this school year. Administration, including dean of students Mr. Kevin Benzing, defended the dress code, justifying the prohibition of skirts and earrings with the claim that the dress code had room for expression and flexibility. Dr. Edward Trusty, the head of school for SP, compared their school's dress code to other independent boys' schools across the country, suggesting that SP should and does look to other schools as a model. Dr. Trusty also likened the opposition from students to the dress code to families' opposition to the school's handling of the pandemic. He stated that there will always be backlash and varying forms of acceptance in the community and that his role is to do "what is best for the school," implying that keeping the current dress code is his belief of the school's best path.

SPSG Dress Code

Some students at St. Paul's School for Girls (SPSG) also object to the uniform, but for different reasons. A uniform gives specific clothing items that students must wear, which for SPSG upper school students are a polo shirt, khakis/a uniform skirt (based on the season), and one of three approved sweatshirts. Lately, an increasing number of students have been coming to school out of uniform (wearing sweatpants and out-of-uniform sweatshirts). Several have voiced opposition to the lack of sweatshirt variety allowed, and rules that many see as unjustified.

I interviewed Ms. Murray, the Dean of Students at SPSG, for her perspective on the uniform and students' resistance to it. Although she cannot speak for the entire administration, Ms. Murray has dealt with uniform challenges before and throughout the pandemic, both as an administrator and a teacher. She defined the uniform as something that unites students and allows them to focus academically. "Similarly to how sports teams wear the same uniform," said Ms. Murray, "a school uniform can build that sense of community." In the world of high school anxiety and stress, Ms. Murray says uniforms give students "one less thing to worry about": they eliminate, or at least drastically reduce, the common anxiety of being cool enough and having the "right" clothes.

Many students have advocated for the inclusion of additional sweatshirts into the uniform. However, from Ms. Murray's point of view, that is a slippery slope. She recognizes that many school teams and clubs have apparel, and to be fair to all would mean making them all a part of the uniform. For most sweatshirts, it's not that some are inappropriate or informal, but that allowing a wide variety of designs instead of the plainer uniform sweatshirts would detract from the purpose of the uniform.

"It gets into this place," says Ms. Murray, "of being, like, 'Oh my gosh, I have to buy all of these things to keep up with my classmates.'" By limiting the number of sweatshirts allowed, SPSG can both "reduce the stress" of students to buy more apparel and "make things more accessible" economically. Ms. Murray

also points out, "There's a difference between school attire and putting the school's name and brand out there in other fun ways." In other words, the school uniform is not meant to be inherently fashionable; the school store provides an opportunity to wear sweatshirts outside of school that are more expressive.

Ms. Murray acknowledges that lessened school spirit during the pandemic could be contributing to the reduced effort that students put into being in uniform. "I think it's feeling connected to the community that fuels school spirit," she says, and, of course, spirit in areas of everyone's lives has waned in the past two years. She attests that "people are tired as a whole," and thinks pandemic fatigue for both teachers and students has "contributed to why we're seeing what we're seeing," in terms of uniform. For teachers, giving out demerits (offenses that are entered into the school's system) is, understandably, not their main priority. Especially during Covid, "there are a lot of things on a teacher's mind in a day [other than just the uniform]," Ms. Murray states.

Students have had to adapt to many changes, including a hybrid mode last year, eating lunch in advisory when cases had risen, and social distancing. "What we're seeing," in terms of students being out of uniform, Ms. Murray says, "is not new...it's sort of more rampant, though." High school is a time in which many teens test boundaries, but the number of students out of uniform during the 20-21 and especially 21-22 school year is significantly higher than in pre-pandemic years.

However, Ms. Murray also maintains the idea that "following rules in general shows respect to the institution" of SPSG. It's not that most students purposefully disobey the dress code, she says, but that the connection between the students and the school has waned as we have all had to cope with the new normal. "As people, we just need to reset...standards around respect." After almost two years in the pandemic, a greater sense of respect is needed in our school and the larger world.

Regarding change, Ms. Murray states that it's "healthy [for students] to question things," and that she "[wants] students to be comfortable to be able to ask why" certain rules are in place. Rules have been changed in the past, such as the switch to tennis shoes a little less than a decade ago, and the inclusion of Spirit Fridays. Spirit Fridays allow students to wear any SPSG shirt and/or sweatshirt along with their regular uniform skirt or khakis. Although Spirit Fridays were emphasized by students more in the years directly following their creation, the administration's response is clear: they are willing to work with the student body and find a way that students can show their team/club pride while still respecting their school. "[The] bottom line," Ms. Murray noted, "is we believe in student voice at our school and would welcome your thoughts."

"I believe we will see this improve as we continue to get back to [our] normal life," Ms. Murray said, concerning the uniform, and this is the hope for many things that have suffered during the pandemic. As pandemic restrictions start to fade, Ms. Murray foresees students returning to being in perfect (or, at

least, near-perfect) uniform. When teachers, students, and administration have the capacity to make it a more central focus again, uniform adherence is expected to improve.

The two upper schools have very different approaches and, therefore, different student criticism of clothing. Opposition towards the SP dress code stems from a call for inclusivity, while opposition towards the SPSG uniform is centered around pandemic fatigue. Ultimately, the decision to wear a uniform or obey a dress code comes with attending The St. Paul's Schools. Students may differ on their feelings regarding clothing, but both the SP and SPSG administrations make it clear that dress is an integral part of students' success and identity. Regardless of your feelings on uniform/dress code, respect is an essential part of change. If we have learned anything from the pandemic, it is that we must have grace for each other in order to expect that same grace in return.



Image Source: SPSG's Instagram (@spsggators)

28 THOUGHTS ON “OPINION: STUDENT CHALLENGES TO DRESS CODES AT THE ST. PAUL’S SCHOOLS ”



Dr. Trusty

MAY 4, 2022 AT 8:23 AM

Thank you, Natalie, for the perspective regarding the dress codes and uniforms at SP and SPSG. I would like to add two points of clarification:

- 1) TSPS includes “two” upper schools but “three” schools, including the Pre and Lower School which also has a dress code/uniform. In some ways that foundation from our youngest learners influences what occurs at the respective middle and upper schools.
- 2) I recall sharing a few additional perspectives in the discussion. One of which was around personal opinions regarding dress code versus communal “norms.” Secondly, I recall stating that the school administration values the opinions of our students and will continue to review our dress code policies for future modifications/improvements. Those may not all be embraced and supported by students, but we do review these annually.

Thanks, again, for your perspective on this important topic.



Hairstyles

MAY 10, 2022 AT 5:19 AM

great points altogether, you simply gained a brand new reader. What would you recommend about your post that you made a few days ago? Any positive?



Lemuel

MAY 20, 2022 AT 6:04 AM

That’s very good point



Casimira

MAY 21, 2022 AT 9:24 AM

That’s an awesome point



Ward

MAY 23, 2022 AT 12:01 AM

Wonderful views on that!

**Quyen**

MAY 25, 2022 AT 3:32 AM

Why is it I always really feel like you do?

**Tangela**

JUNE 2, 2022 AT 9:17 AM

Good day! Would you mind if I share your blog with my zynga group?
There's a lot of folks that I think would really appreciate your content.
Please let me know. Thanks

**Ava**

JUNE 5, 2022 AT 8:03 AM

For latest information you have to go to see world-wide-web
and on internet I found this website as a finest web page for latest updates.

**Edmundo Rodick**

JUNE 17, 2022 AT 10:46 PM

We're a group of volunteers and starting a new scheme in our community. Your web site provided us
with valuable information to work on. You have done an impressive job and our entire community
will be thankful to you.

**zorivareworilon**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:44 AM

Sweet web site, super layout, real clean and apply friendly.

**Tracee**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 1:10 PM

I read this post completely about the resemblance of hottest and previous technologies, it's amazing
article.

**Michele**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 2:01 PM

I blog quite often and I truly appreciate your information. Your article has truly peaked my interest. I'm going to bookmark your blog and keep checking for new details about once per week. I opted in for your RSS feed too.

**Bill**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 4:45 PM

Wow, wonderful blog format! How lengthy have you been blogging for? you made blogging glance easy. The full glance of your web site is fantastic, let alone the content material!

**Eloise**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 5:42 PM

I am in fact delighted to read this blog posts which carries plenty of helpful data, thanks for providing these kinds of information.

**Soila**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:30 PM

I am sure this piece of writing has touched all the internet viewers, its really really good article on building up new webpage.

**Kara**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 6:45 PM

Hiya! Quick question that's totally off topic. Do you know how to make your site mobile friendly?

My web site looks weird when viewing from my iphone4.

I'm trying to find a theme or plugin that might be able to resolve this issue.

If you have any suggestions, please share. Thank you!

**Reginald**

JULY 1, 2022 AT 7:32 PM

Hello there! I could have sworn I've visited your blog before but after going through a few of the articles I realized it's new to me.

Anyways, I'm certainly delighted I came across it and I'll be bookmarking it and checking back frequently!



Meredith

JULY 1, 2022 AT 7:44 PM

I was wondering if you ever considered changing the page layout of your site? Its very well written; I love what youve got to say. But maybe you could a little more in the way of content so people could connect with it better. Youve got an awful lot of text for only having one or two images. Maybe you could space it out better?



Percy

JULY 1, 2022 AT 8:00 PM

I really like your blog.. very nice colors & theme. Did you design this website yourself or did you hire someone to do it for you? Plz reply as I'm looking to construct my own blog and would like to find out where u got this from. appreciate it



Corine

JULY 1, 2022 AT 8:03 PM

If you want to increase your experience just keep visiting this web site and be updated with the latest news posted here.



sites.google.com

JULY 5, 2022 AT 9:26 AM

Your way of explaining everything in this article is truly pleasant, every one be able to without difficulty know it, Thanks a lot.



iphone 13 pro case

JULY 27, 2022 AT 6:17 AM

Really enjoyed this blog. Really thank you! Much obliged.



balance of nature

AUGUST 5, 2022 AT 7:28 PM

Great goods from you, man. I have understand your stuff previous to and you're just too great. I really like what you've acquired here, really like what you are stating and the way in which you say it. You make it entertaining and you still take care of to keep it smart. I can not wait to read far more from you. This is really a great web site.



22ymad

AUGUST 10, 2022 AT 8:48 PM

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**샌즈카지노**

AUGUST 15, 2022 AT 3:08 PM

I truly appreciate this article post. Really thank you! Much obliged.

**cryptocurrency to buy**

SEPTEMBER 11, 2022 AT 4:09 PM

I was curious if you ever thought of changing the structure of your site? Its very well written; I love what youve got to say. But maybe you could a little more in the way of content so people could connect with it better. Youve got an awful lot of text for only having one or two pictures. Maybe you could space it out better?

**www.delightreview.com/**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2022 AT 5:26 AM

Very good article post. Awesome.

**Send money to Nigeria**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2022 AT 6:29 AM

Appreciate you sharing, great article. Much thanks again. Want more.