

In the Spotlight: Non-Uniform Days

By Carol McCahon, S6

Mr McGovern: "They actually cause more problems than they solve."

NOTRE Dame's head teacher revealed that non-uniform days may become a thing of the past.

Mr McGovern was responding after Pupil Council representatives fed back to the Head Teacher that pupils wanted MORE non-uniform days.

Mr McGovern voiced concerns over shocking studies which reveal some pupils from deprived families actually feel unable to come to school on non-uniform days for fear of being judged by their clothing. Meanwhile, many pupils who do attend may put more effort into their appearance than their school work on these days.

Mr McGovern said: "A large number of young people take the day off because they don't have the latest clothes. We often hear of pupils going to their parents and asking if they can have something new to wear on that day."

The Notre Dame Head sees this as a clear problem for families and for pupils who don't have the latest fashions and could end up being bullied. He explains that his concerns over non-uniform days stem from the unreasonable financial pressure they place on some of Notre Dame's families.

"Some people take advantage of the circumstances and the attendance will take a significant drop on that day because some people just don't want to join in," said Mr McGovern.

Notre Dame's Head concluded: "Although the question of non-uniform days keeps being raised, they actually cause more problems than they solve. Although they raise money, I would rather raise less money if it meant that pupils were coming into school."

Principal Teacher of English, Mr McDonald, said: "Quite often on a non-uniform day there is a drop in attendance and that can be that some pupils perhaps don't have the same label of clothing as their peers. They maybe feel embarrassed by what they wear to a non-uniform day. Some will actually just stay off school because of it."

Asked whether he thinks pupils put in less effort on a these days, Mr McDonald said: "There is a general downturn on pupils expectations and effort levels. In our culture, where there is a strong sense of uniform at all times, it makes non-uniform days particularly special."

We now turn to our pupils for their views.

Sixth Year, Kayleigh O'Neill, 17, could live without non-uniform days. She said: "I don't like them; I find them stressful and end up spending the whole night before it worrying about what to wear. I also worry about how people will judge me based on what I'm wearing."

Fellow Sixth year pupil, Amy Doak, 17, disagreed. She said: "I really like non-uniform days. I prefer being able to wear my own clothes on week days rather than my uniform because I feel more comfortable. Although, I do understand that some people don't like these days because they can't afford clothes for non-uniform days."