June 28 2007

To: Steve Herbert

Response to the inquiry into school uniforms.

We, at Sherbourne Primary School, believe that it is important for our school to have a school uniform. It allows the children to have a sense of belonging and to take pride in their school identity. We also think that it acts as an equalizer, so that children are not judged for the clothes that they wear or criticized for not having the latest fashion.

We believe that each school has a right to make a decision about uniform, based on their school philosophy and the population that they cater for. We do not believe that it should be compulsory for schools to have a uniform, because each school should have the freedom to respond to the needs and values of their particular parent community.

We do not believe that a state uniform is necessary and would be concerned that this would take away from the sense of belonging to the school that children have by wearing their own school’s uniform. We would also be concerned that adoption of a state-wide school uniform would cause problems at interschool sports and other inter-school activities, as teachers, children and parents would have difficulty identifying each other and other school populations.

We do not feel, as a primary school, that we need to comment on secondary students, other than to reiterate that we support every school’s right to make decisions about school uniform policy for their own population.

In our school, the uniform policy is regularly restated in the school’s newsletter to remind parents of the importance of the uniform. It is enforced in a fairly relaxed manner so that compliance is not difficult or onerous. Staff contact the parents rather than a student if there are issues about a student’s non-compliance with the uniform policy. The most likely reason for such discussions would be in cases where safety issues arise, such as wearing unsafe footwear or dangly earrings that may get caught and cause injury.

We do not wish any families to undergo hardship in order to comply with the uniform policy. We make sure that parents can purchase items of clothing through a number of different outlets, rather than just the school’s uniform shop, and we offer good second-
family, rather than provide an exemption, we would provide the financial support in order for the children to wear the proper uniform. We do not believe it is in the best interests of the child if they stand out as different. We are, however, happy to grant exemptions for religious reasons, in appropriate circumstances.

We appreciate your interest and would be interested in the results of the survey.

This survey was completed by the Education Sub-Committee and approved by council, however, the opinions expressed may not represent every parent’s opinion at the school.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Maree Seymour
Convenor Education Sub Committee