IF THE SCHOOL HAS **ALREADY INTRODUCED MIXED SEX TOILETS,** YOU CAN PERSONALISE THE TEXT BELOW TO SEND TO YOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

[Insert Name]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert Recipient Name],

Recent press coverage of the Countess campaign against mixed sex toilets has alerted me to the potential risks to girls associated with shared facilities and I am now writing to express my concern and formally object to the mixed sex facilities at [insert name of school].  In the event that you have not seen the media attention, or are otherwise unaware, I have set out the issues below.  In addition to registering my concerns I would appreciate you providing me with details of both the risk assessment that was performed in respect of the introduction of mixed sex facilities and details of the decision not to avail of single sex exemption available under the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20).

Mixed sex toilets are not in the best interests of female students: In 2018 [UNESCO](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/single-sex-toilets-unesco-un-international-womens-day-period-a8244776.html) urged governments around the world to prioritise the provision of single sex toilets in schools, warning girls are missing out on lessons because of the lack of availability of single sex toilet facilities. Data from the [U.K.](https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/EVAW-Coalition-Schools-Guide.pdf) shows that girls are facing unprecedented levels of [sexual assault in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges) and that the risk of sexual assault to females rises exponentially in [mixed sex facilities](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unisex-changing-rooms-put-women-in-danger-8lwbp8kgk), whilst anecdotal evidence from teachers, parents and pupils illustrates that girls are risking [their health](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7542005/Girls-skipping-school-avoid-sharing-gender-neutral-toilets-boys.html) and [missing school](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/unisex-toilets-period-shaming-sexual-harassment-schools-girls-womens-voices-wales-a8784226.html) because of lack of access to single sex facilities.

Single sex toilets exist to ensure the privacy, safety and dignity of all students and are supported by the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20)which provides for the provision of different treatment on the basis of gender where ‘embarrassment or breach of privacy could reasonably be expected to happen on account of the presence of a person of another gender’.  I would urge you to avail of this exemption in respect of the provision of toilets.

Furthermore, I would draw your attention to the requirement for schools to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, which itself exists within the frame of Bunreacht na hÉireann with respect to the rights of both parents and pupils. The State, through the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has no legal standing or ability to administratively override the constitutionally protected and guaranteed rights of parents and students with respect to education, the family and, where applicable, selected school ethos. Safeguarding of children is child-centred and adult-led and schools have a legal obligation to each individual student within their care. Safeguarding is not a collectivist endeavour and legally, it must be upheld.

Whilst I understand that you may have acted in the understanding that you were following [government guidelines](https://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/Technical-Guidance-Documents/Current-Technical-Guidance/sdg-02-06-sanitary-facilities-april-2021-.pdf), I would draw your attention to the fact that these putative guidelines are incapable of being lawful for the reasons set out above.

Yours Sincerely,

[Insert Name]

IF THE SCHOOL IS **PROPOSING TO INTRODUCE MIXED SEX TOILETS,** YOU CAN PERSONALISE THE TEXT BELOW TO REGISTER YOUR OBJECTIONS WITH YOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

[Insert Name]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert Recipient Name],

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposal to introduce mixed sex toilets at [insert name of school] after the multiple impacts were highlighted by campaign group, The Countess.

Mixed sex toilets are not in the best interests of female students: In 2018, [UNESCO](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/single-sex-toilets-unesco-un-international-womens-day-period-a8244776.html) urged governments around the world to prioritise the provision of single sex toilets in schools, warning  that girls are missing out on lessons because of the lack of availability of single sex toilet facilities. Data from the [U.K.](https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/EVAW-Coalition-Schools-Guide.pdf)  shows that girls are facing unprecedented levels of [sexual assault in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges) and that the risk of sexual assault to females rises exponentially in [mixed sex facilities](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unisex-changing-rooms-put-women-in-danger-8lwbp8kgk), whilst anecdotal evidence from teachers, parents and pupils illustrates that girls are risking [their health](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7542005/Girls-skipping-school-avoid-sharing-gender-neutral-toilets-boys.html) and [missing school](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/unisex-toilets-period-shaming-sexual-harassment-schools-girls-womens-voices-wales-a8784226.html) because of lack of access to single sex facilities.

Single sex toilets exist to ensure the privacy, safety and dignity of all students and are supported by the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20) which provides for the provision of different treatment on the basis of gender where ‘embarrassment or breach of privacy could reasonably be expected to happen on account of the presence of a person of another gender’. I would urge you to avail of this exemption in respect of the provision of toilets.

Whilst I understand that you may feel you are following [government guidelines](https://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/Technical-Guidance-Documents/Current-Technical-Guidance/sdg-02-06-sanitary-facilities-april-2021-.pdf), I remind you these were issued without consultation with parents or students and without carrying out the necessary risk assessments. Further, the Department of Education has stated the decision is a matter for individual schools. [Insert name of school] has a duty of care to protect students.

Accordingly, I would be grateful if you could provide me with details of the risk assessment both in respect of i) the decision to introduce mixed sex toilet facilities and ii) the decision not to avail of the Equal Status Act exemption in respect of single sex provision.

Yours Sincerely,

[Insert Name]

THE GUIDANCE ADVISES SCHOOLS THAT ALL FUTURE CONSTRUCTION SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT IN THIS WAY. IT IS DESCRIBED AS BEST PRACTICE FOR BATHROOMS AND IS EXPLICITLY TIED TO ACCESS TO FUNDING.

**IF YOUR SCHOOL HAS NOT YET PROPOSED CHANGING THE TOILET PROVISION, YOU CAN PERSONALISE THE FOLLOWING TEXT TO TELL THE SCHOOL THAT YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH THE ROLL-OUT OF MIXED SEX TOILETS**.

[Insert Name]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert date]

[Insert Head Teacher / Principal’s name]

I write following recent media attention, to express my concern regarding the Department of Education’s [government guidelines](https://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/Technical-Guidance-Documents/Current-Technical-Guidance/sdg-02-06-sanitary-facilities-april-2021-.pdf) in relation to the use of mixed sex toilets in schools.  As campaign group The Countess has pointed out, single sex toilets exist to ensure the privacy, safety and dignity of all students. Accordingly I seek your assurances that no decisions will be made in relation to changes at [insert name of school] without proper consultation with parents and a full assessment of the associated risks along with consideration of the exemptions provided by the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20), which allows for the provision of different treatment on the basis of gender where ‘embarrassment or breach of privacy could reasonably be expected to happen on account of the presence of a person of another gender’.

Furthermore, I would draw your attention to the requirement for schools to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, which itself exists within the frame of Bunreacht na hÉireann, with respect to the rights of both parents and pupils.  The State, through the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has no legal standing or ability to administratively override the constitutionally protected and guaranteed rights of parents and students with respect to education, the family and, where applicable, selected school ethos. Safeguarding of children is child-centred and adult-led and schools have a legal obligation to each individual student within their care.

In the event [insert school name] does in fact have plans for building work that involves mixed sex toilet facilities, I would be grateful if you could provide me with details of the plans and the associated risk assessment along with your determination in relation to the decision not to apply the Equal Status Act exemption.

If no such plans currently exist I would like you to note my concerns that mixed sex toilets are not in the best interests of female students:  In 2018 [UNESCO](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/single-sex-toilets-unesco-un-international-womens-day-period-a8244776.html) urged governments around the world to prioritise the provision of single sex toilets in schools, warning as many as 1 in 10 girls are missing out on lessons because of the lack of availability of single sex toilet facilities. Data from the [U.K.](https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/EVAW-Coalition-Schools-Guide.pdf) shows that girls are facing unprecedented levels of [sexual assault in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges) and that the risk of sexual assault to females rises exponentially in [mixed sex facilities](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unisex-changing-rooms-put-women-in-danger-8lwbp8kgk), whilst anecdotal evidence from teachers, parents and pupils illustrates that girls are risking [their health](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7542005/Girls-skipping-school-avoid-sharing-gender-neutral-toilets-boys.html) and [missing school](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/unisex-toilets-period-shaming-sexual-harassment-schools-girls-womens-voices-wales-a8784226.html) because of lack of access to single sex facilities.

Yours Sincerely,

[Insert Name]

YOU CAN USE THE TEXT BELOW TO INFORM YOUR TD OF YOUR VIEWS ON THIS MATTER. PLEASE ALSO CC NORMA FOLEY, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, AT [NORMA.FOLEY@OIREACHTAS.IE](mailto:norma.foley@oireachtas.ie), TO LODGE YOUR OBJECTION AT A DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL

[Insert Name]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert Address]

[Insert date]

[Insert TD’s name]

Dear [you can find details of your TD here: [TDs & Senators – Houses of the Oireachtas](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/) or [Who is my TD?](https://www.whoismytd.com/)]

As a resident of your constituency, [with a son/daughter/children in XXX school] I write following recent media by the campaign group The Countess highlighting the issues. I want to express my concern regarding the Department of Education School Design [Guide for Sanitary Facilities](https://www.education.ie/en/School-Design/Technical-Guidance-Documents/Current-Technical-Guidance/sdg-02-06-sanitary-facilities-april-2021-.pdf) (SDG 02-06) in relation to the use of mixed sex toilets in new-build schools and retrofitting older schools, which advises a “best practice” of utilising mixed sex facilities, comprising of male and female cubicles opening into a communal sink area.

Mixed sex toilets are not in the best interests of female students: In 2018 [UNESCO](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/single-sex-toilets-unesco-un-international-womens-day-period-a8244776.html) urged governments around the world to prioritise the provision of single sex toilets in schools, warning as many as 1 in 10 girls are missing out on lessons because of the lack of availability of single sex toilet facilities. Data from the [U.K.](https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/EVAW-Coalition-Schools-Guide.pdf) shows that girls are facing unprecedented levels of [sexual assault in schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges) and that the risk of sexual assault to females rises exponentially in [mixed sex facilities](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unisex-changing-rooms-put-women-in-danger-8lwbp8kgk), whilst anecdotal evidence from teachers, parents and pupils illustrates that girls are risking [their health](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7542005/Girls-skipping-school-avoid-sharing-gender-neutral-toilets-boys.html) and [missing school](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/unisex-toilets-period-shaming-sexual-harassment-schools-girls-womens-voices-wales-a8784226.html) because of lack of access to single sex facilities.

Single sex toilets exist ensure the privacy, safety and dignity of all students and supported by the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20) which provides for the provision of different treatment on the basis of gender where ‘embarrassment or breach of privacy could reasonably be expected to happen on account of the presence of a person of another gender’.

It appears that this guidance has been introduced without having considered the specific needs of female students; without having carried out an appropriate assessment of the risks to girls and without having considered the appropriate application of the [Equal Status Act [2000]](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/print#sec20).

Furthermore, I would draw your attention to the requirement for schools to comply with the provisions of the [Education Act, 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/html), which itself exists within the frame of Bunreacht na hÉireann with respect to the rights of both parents and pupils.  The State, through the Department of Education and Skills (DES), has no legal standing or ability to administratively override the constitutionally protected and guaranteed rights of parents and students with respect to education, the family and, where applicable, selected school ethos. Safeguarding of children is child-centred and adult-led and schools have a legal obligation to each individual student within their care. Safeguarding is not a collectivist endeavour and legally, it cannot be abrogated.

I would invite you to raise this serious safeguarding matter with your colleagues in the Department of Education as a matter of urgency and I seek your assurance that you will fight for the protection of girls in Ireland and ensure that the Government’s duty of care to girls in Ireland is upheld.

Yours Sincerely,

[Insert Name]