



Executive Headteacher: Mrs L. A. Gwinnett

Ref: 1875 LGW/MB

Dear Parents,

9th July 2019

Response to new uniform queries

Thank you for the overwhelming number of parents who have given us positive feedback about our uniform changes. Even where a concern or objection has been raised, this has been done in the majority of cases with an incredibly polite and respectful tone. Our relationships with our families are vital and we very much appreciate the dialogue and the time taken by the small number of parents who have contacted us to raise concerns.

We are very aware that there was never going to be an outcome that would please everybody, hence the long process of coming to a final decision. Unfortunately, this is another long read, but please take the time to read it through. In a few of the responses we received, the issues raised had already been addressed in the original letter.

I have summarised the concerns raised into section headers for those parents who only had a specific question. Hopefully this will help you to skim to the specific question you may have raised.

Concern about appropriate stock only being available from 1st August and travel to Southport

The issues around our stock were the most common concern raised and the arrangements and explanations below cover the questions raised:

- **Measuring event** – Whittakers have agreed to come into school to do a measuring day during the last week of term. This will be an after school event. Whittakers will come into school on **Wednesday 17 July from 3:30pm until 6:00pm**. A number of staff from Whittakers would attend bringing with them sample sizes of all uniform. Parents would be invited with their child to try on/measure uniform and given a log of their child's size so that they can order the correct size on line. Although there will not be the facility to order or purchase uniform on that night you would at least know which size to order when the online window opens.
- **Uniform for students who are not a standard size** – in our experience there are usually a very small number of students who cannot be accommodated with standard sizes, and this has been planned for. The measuring event (above) would be ideal for establishing this, assuming you haven't already been across to Whittakers for a fitting to establish this. We have agreed with Whittakers that, for those where this is a genuine issue, they will arrange for alterations to be done and will invoice the school with the cost.
- **Traveling to Southport issue** - Whittakers have advised they can do a **'sale day' at school** but this will be on a Sunday. There will be items available to buy plus uniforms to try on for size if they need to order. The first date available will be **Sunday 28th July, 11am**. There will be items available to buy plus uniforms to try on for size if they wish to order online (there is a small delivery cost for home





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delivery). They would aim to bring 10+ staff members, it would be in the school hall but they have portable changing facilities. Parents will be able to pay with cash or by card. If any items aren't available (which hopefully wouldn't be the case) they can order and delivery to school would be free of charge.

- **Trouser length** – our apologies for not establishing this sooner, trousers are available in 3 different lengths short, regular and long length
- **Cost** – In coming to the conclusion to use Whittakers as our supplier, cost and value for money were the overriding concern. In addition to this, Whittakers have advised they always have offers on, although some are only available in store.
- **Stock quantities** – if parents go to the shop to try on items and they are not available at that time, rather than them having to go back to the shop they can be ordered and paid for then delivered to school for the INSET days in September free of charge for parents to collect.

Additional points relating to Whittakers:

- Items can be ordered in the shop before they are in stock anytime from now, therefore taking advantage of offers that are currently on. There is a set of uniform for sizing at the shop. If stock is not available they can be delivered to school free of charge for collection on the Inset day Monday 2nd September
- Items can be ordered online or over the phone to the shop and be delivered to school free of charge for collection on the Inset day Monday 2nd September. This can be done by placing the order via the Whittakers website and click the “free delivery to school” option
- Items can be ordered online or over the phone anytime during the academic year and be delivered to school free of charge – items will be dropped at school once per month for collection. Again this can be done by placing the order via Whittakers website and click the “free delivery to school” option

One last point regarding **Whittakers being our sole supplier**. At the point of inviting to tender in this process the supplier that has been mentioned as closer and more accessible, were not in a position to put an offer in. Of those that did, Whittakers were the best price and the most flexible. We will of course ensure, year on year, that the supplier we use continues to provide the best value for money and we will actively pursue this as good and expected practice.

Branded Trousers and Skirts

The next most commonly raised issue was the issue of branded trousers and skirts. As stated in our original letter, this is all about standardising the uniform.





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Many stockists, including Marks & Spencer, do not sell school skirts long enough for our requirements and they are increasingly selling drainpipe/skinny trousers, which are fashion items and not appropriate for school. **Branded items remove any doubt about suitability for school**, as long as the right length skirt is purchased.

More importantly, as stated in our original letter, we wanted to make sure that **all students had the same quality of clothing** so that nobody stood out as wearing 'cheaper' or inferior quality clothing. By ensuring that the uniform was in fact truly 'uniform' we address this issue. We are aware that these are more expensive than off the shelf alternatives, but our reasons for this are clearly stated with the best of intentions.

We have already made clear that **any family who feels they cannot afford the uniform need only contact us for support in meeting or covering the cost**. Some families have already contacted us and we will not quibble if help is asked for; so please don't hesitate.

Some have made the point that the emblem on the trousers isn't even visible. To be fair, this is not the point of the emblem, which is simply a means of identifying our uniform. We are aware that the cost of adding the emblem is £1. If there are parents who genuinely object to this, then we have no hesitation in reimbursing this to you. Simply write in with proof of purchase of the number of trousers or skirts bought.

Waste of good uniform

We absolutely take the point on this. Many parents have written in to say that they would always be buying new uniform in September and we know that for many this is the case. Nonetheless, some families may have bought trousers, skirts etc later in the year to replace worn items. It is the case that for any school that decides to change its uniform, there will always be this issue. **We are happy to collect all items that are still of good enough quality and arrange to have these delivered to charities**. For branded items we will contact charities that we know will be happy to receive them and arrange delivery. If this is the case, then please bring the quality, surplus items to the school reception in September.

Phasing in of new uniform

One or two parents have written in to ask why the new uniform can't be phased in over time.

We are doing this with the PE kit, with only Year 7 required to purchase the new PE kit, as this is a much less visible contrast and confined to PE lessons.

The difficulty with phasing in the general uniform is that some will buy the new uniform regardless, which will once again leave us with the issue that some of the students in the old uniform will be in this position due to cost or parental objection, both of which can be embarrassing for the student.* This is something we want to avoid and therefore a clean sweep, with the offer of payment for those who can't afford it gets the transition over and done with and the new uniform becomes old news.



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Linked to this, some have also mentioned being disadvantaged by the opportunity to 'hand me down' to younger siblings. Again, if this causes financial difficulty please don't hesitate to contact us.

Year 11 New Uniform

Two parents have raised the issue of Year 11 students buying a full new uniform that will only be needed September – June (9 months).

We did consider phasing this in but the same issues would have been the case as outlined immediately above, in particular the highlighted section followed by the *

We also considered simply allowing Year 11 to retain the 'old' uniform, but the problem with this was that there wouldn't be any of the old stock available (as this has been discontinued) if their blazer (for example) was too small, worn or damaged and they would need to buy new anyway.

The issue of the cost of the new blazer is covered largely by the £30 subsidy. Regarding the trousers/skirts; we have gone back to our Trustees and we have now agreed that **any parents of Year 11 students who genuinely feel that their son/daughter won't get the full wear out of new trousers/skirts can apply for the cost of two of these items by simply writing into Mr Berry.** We will pass these names on to Whittakers and they will invoice us. These items must then be returned at the end of the year to add to our stock in school for replacing lost property or new starters etc.

Just one final note. The majority of the students involved in the consultation were Year 10 students, who will be Year 11 next year, and who were excited about a new uniform in their final year.

The Consultation Process

A small number of parents have raised the point that they didn't feel the consultation process was clear enough or widely representative. On this point, a letter was sent to all our parents via the channels we have to communicate with you to invite parents to be involved. In order to make it a manageable group size to enable detailed discussion, a sample of those parents who volunteered were invited to attend, ensuring all year groups were represented.

We did acknowledge that not all parents would be able to attend the consultation group meetings, as they were at a time which would be reasonable at the end of the working day for our staff. We did make it clear however, that any comments that parents wanted to have taken into consideration would be forwarded to the consultation group, which was the case.





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Providing the whole uniform for free

One or two parents have asked why the whole uniform couldn't be purchased by school as this is what happens in another school in West Lancashire. This is largely because we do not have anywhere near the same level of Pupil Premium additional funding.

I am sure that as parents you would expect and plan for outlay for uniform on an annual basis. We accept this year will be different. The subsidy is to go some way to supporting the purchase, particularly of blazers, in a year when you may not have needed this major item. Once again we would say, no family should be left significantly in need when there is additional cost not budgeted for. If this applies to your family, then please do not hesitate to contact the school. Your situation will be discussed sensitively and confidentially.

Many thanks to all our parents who fed back to us on this, whether it was messages of support or the raising of concerns. Our partnership is essential in supporting the children we share.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Gwinnett

Executive Head

Mr Berry

Head of School



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