

5th March 2018

Dear Parent/Carer,

Uniform Consultation

I am writing to inform you of the outcome of the consultation on a new school uniform, and of the decisions taken by the Governing Body at their meeting on Monday 26th February 2018. Along with the Governors, I would like to thank you for your contributions to the consultation process

What did we consult on?

We considered a number of different options:

- Whether to keep a black blazer or change to a grey blazer
- Whether to adopt trousers from a specified supplier to reduce the huge variation in styles we have now
- Whether to adopt a pleated tartan skirt from a specified supplier to replace the existing skirt
- Whether to make a slip-over (sleeveless) pullover a compulsory part of the uniform (at least at certain colder times in the year)
- Whether to specify a school shirt (instead of the choice of blouse/shirt) and a clip-on tie to make it smarter

How did parents respond?

We received 76 written responses (having written to the parents/carers of the 734 students currently in Years 7-11). Of these, 30 broadly supported the proposals and 43 were broadly against. I have summarised below the most common responses:

Supportive

- The school needs an improved image and a new uniform will give the school's reputation and presence in the community a boost
- Both boys and girls should wear a tie – this will make the school more identifiable
- The current uniform is not "uniform"
- Preference for a grey blazer and new colour tie
- There may be less expensive blazers available than the current one

Shared Concerns

- Cost of the change (this was by far the biggest concern, common to many of the 43 responses)
- Clip-on ties – students should be made to tie their own ties
- Parents like to buy from the current supplier
- Girls unlikely to wear the new skirt
- Preference for a black blazer – looks smart
- Any change should be phased in

There were many more comments, both positive and negative, but these were the ones which appeared most often.

How did the students respond?

Mrs Rayson led a consultation exercise with students just before half-term. She took samples of uniform to a random group of Y7-9 classes and held an open drop-in one lunchtime for anyone else who wanted to take part. In all, 201 of the 734 students chose to take part in the consultation. The main findings of the student consultation were as follows:

- 104 students favoured the current blazer and 97 preferred grey
- Of the (124) girls who took part, 92 showed a strong preference for the graphite grey tartan skirt
- Of the ties presented, 109 students preferred a navy and silver stripe (27 chose the existing plain gold colour)

Best Value Exercise

We undertook a Best Value exercise to consider the price (and quality) of items from three suppliers. The table below gives indication of the prices quoted (these are for the smallest sizes – all the suppliers charged a little more for the bigger sizes).

Item	Parkins Current Uniform	Supplier 1 New uniform	Supplier 2 New uniform	Supplier 3 New uniform
Blazer with logo	£29.95	£27.95	£26.50	£23.99
Black boys trousers	£14.95	£14.95	£13.50	£12.99
Black girls trousers	£12.95	£14.95	£13.50	£12.99
Navy slipover	N/A (Jumper is £19.95)	£14.95	£13.00	£10.99
Tartan Skirt	£12.95 (plain black)	£17.95	£17.00	£17.99
Clip-on tie	£7.95 (normal tie)	£4.95	£7.00	£4.99

Note: Parkins (the current supplier) appears twice in the table and was one of the three suppliers quoting for the new uniform.

What did the Governors consider when they met?

The Governors were mindful of the reasons for the proposed change, as set out in the original letter to parents, namely that:

- As part of the drive to raise aspirations and pride in our school, we want a uniform that students can be proud of
- The current uniform is not “uniform” with many variations, and is time consuming to enforce
- The current uniform may not provide value for money for parents

They were also mindful of the issues raised by parents and were particularly sensitive to cost pressures. The Governing Body meeting lasted over two hours and all issues were considered. I hope that you will agree that the decision taken demonstrates that we have listened to all views and made appropriate adjustments to reflect the biggest concerns.

Outcome of the meeting and the decisions taken

- We will introduce a new school uniform and new school colours **but** will phase the changes in over a longer period of time (see the table below):

Current Year Group (2017/18)	September 2018	September 2019	September 2020
Year 6	New Uniform	New Uniform	New Uniform
Year 7	Existing Uniform	New Uniform	New Uniform
Year 8	Existing Uniform	New Uniform	New Uniform
Year 9	Existing Uniform	Existing Uniform	N/A
Year 10	Existing Uniform	N/A	N/A

- This phasing ensures that **all current students** have at least one more year to wear the current uniform
- Students in any year group can choose to adopt the new uniform earlier than planned if they wish to (if they are changing their uniform anyway)
- Following the best value exercise involving three suppliers, the Governors have decided that Michael Sehgal and Sons Ltd offered the **best value for parents and the best quality** of uniform (they are Supplier 3 in the first table above). Although based in Newcastle, the company will run pop-up shops at the school at particular times of year. They also offer on-line sales and a payment plan so that parents can stagger their payments over a number of months before taking delivery of the uniform.
- Michael Sehgal Ltd has its own factory on Tyneside so the clothes are locally produced and the company is able to respond quickly to changes in demand. They currently make and supply uniform to a wide range of schools in the North-East and are well used to catering for students of all ages and sizes.
- Parents replacing existing items of uniform should continue to use Parkins
- The PE kit will not change for any of the current year groups (and can be purchased at Parkins)

What will the new uniform be?

To be purchased from the new supplier, Michael Sehgal Ltd:

- A grey blazer (with newly designed logo)
- Newly designed navy and silver clip-on tie
- Black trousers with a small logo on or a graphite grey pleated tartan skirt
- A navy blue slip-over jumper (a number of parents expressed a preference for an alternative, so a long-sleeved navy jumper will be available too)

Whilst some parents stated a preference for a traditional tie, the consensus from Governors was that, if we are to make the uniform smarter and cut down the amount of time we spend dealing with uniform issues, a clip-on tie would be preferable (and cheaper).

To be worn by students but purchased anywhere:

- Short or long sleeve white school shirt
- Formal black shoes
- Black ankle socks if wearing trousers (those wearing the skirt must wear black tights or black or white ankle socks)

Although some individual items may cost parents slightly more (e.g. trousers from the specified supplier rather than from any supplier), Governors felt that the overall cost was lower. They also felt that specifying particular trousers would make the uniform more “uniform” and would remove the pressure on parents to buy more expensive “designer” trousers from fashion retailers.

Pictures of the new uniform will appear on our website in the coming weeks and mannequins will be displayed in Student Reception for students and visiting parents to view.

Finally

I would like to thank all of you for taking part in the consultation. I hope that you feel that we have addressed your major concerns, namely cost, by choosing to phase the uniform in over a longer period of time. I firmly believe that our new uniform will set us apart from other schools in the area and will support our drive towards higher standards in everything we do. For those wanting to change to the new uniform in September, we will provide more practical information about how to purchase it in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Byers
Headteacher