



May 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian

Further to my last letter sent on 30 April, I am writing to give you further details about the school uniform for September 2018. Hopefully this letter, and the attached fact sheet, will answer any queries you have and will explain in more detail our rationale for introducing this change.

We have always believed strongly that having a school uniform avoids competitive dressing and helps to set the tone of the school. We do encourage our students to be individual in many ways but we want them to be dressed appropriately for their studies and we remind them often that uniform is a key aspect of creating a purposeful learning environment to allow students to work and realise their full potential. It is about having the highest standards and expectations, not just in how they look, but also in their attitude, behaviour, attendance and work ethic. Our uniform is an essential part of our identity. It helps to project the best possible image of the school, reinforcing good behaviour, and supporting higher educational attainment in the classroom. We feel strongly that we should be spending our time in school working with our students to maximise their achievement and progress rather than spending hours every week dealing with uniform issues.

As we explained in the last letter, we spent some considerable time in September focussing on uniform expectations which had been made clear to students and parents prior to the start of the year. Unfortunately, despite our efforts to make our expectations clear to students and parents, significant numbers of students came to school in September not wearing acceptable uniform. Many students spent time in isolation as a result and the situation was challenging and stressful for everyone – students, parents and staff. We have continued to work hard as a school to make our expectations clear, and whilst there have been improvements, as we enter the final term of the year there are still problems and inconsistencies. Not only does this create a negative impression of the school to students, staff, visitors and the local community, it also makes it more difficult for parents to consistently support the school's uniform requirements.

**In order to avoid any confusion about what is acceptable and to make it easier for all students, staff and parents to concentrate on learning, we are asking parents to purchase trousers and skirts from Emblematic only. They will be bespoke for our school and will be branded with the school badge. This will apply to all year groups from September 2018.**

This means that the school sweater and tie, trousers, skirts and PE polo shirt and sweatshirt must be purchased from our uniform supplier, Emblematic. School trousers and skirts are available for purchase and collection from Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May. In fact, several parents have already visited the shop to see the new additional uniform clothing and some have already placed orders for collection.

The price list is now available on the school website and through the Emblematic website. The Emblematic website has a printable order form. You can order uniform either by visiting the shop at Longbenton, or placing orders online, which will be delivered to your home address. The shop will also be open on Saturdays (10am to 4pm) from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Emblematic will be in school on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> July (from 9am to 7pm) for the Year 6 parent one to one meetings if parents want to come in to ask them any questions.

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Several parents have asked about whether Emblematic will have a sufficient range of sizes. Emblematic have confirmed that this will be the case and they will work with parents where their son/daughter may need different length or waist sizes. Emblematic is also a supplier of workwear for businesses, meaning they have access to a number of suppliers from school ages to adults. If your child may be in need of a non-standard size, please contact the shop soon and start discussions about your requirements so that purchases can be sourced sooner rather than later.

Emblematic does not offer an alteration service. However, as you know, there are many local businesses that do so. What Emblematic will do is source the particular size in trousers and skirts for your son or daughter. The approved trousers are slim fit and are the same trousers provided for other high schools within our area. Emblematic has a list of all high schools they supply to and you can access this information on their website. Many other schools locally now ask parents to buy trousers or skirts from one supplier. Indeed, many other schools also have a blazer as an additional item of uniform, which increases the cost for parents. We are not proposing to introduce a blazer.

Some parents have raised the cost of the trousers and skirts as an issue since some other retailers offer school trousers and skirts at cheaper prices. Unfortunately, this comes back to the fact that standards of uniform have slipped as the year has gone on and we have decided to ask students to wear only the approved style of trousers and skirts, as supplied by Emblematic. We have been saying to parents and students alike that this may be the case in every letter we have sent regarding uniform for the last two years or more. Too many of our students are currently wearing trousers and skirts not appropriate for school so we have decided to introduce this for September 2018. We hope that writing to you last week gives parents four months' notice to ensure that all students are wearing the correct trousers and skirts for the start of the new school year. We do appreciate that there is an increased cost for parents in the short term but some of our parents have asked us to do this for some time so that they do not have to have difficult conversations with their children regarding what is acceptable uniform. We hope that it will eradicate conflict at home as well as school and hope that in the long-term there will not be too large an extra cost for families; if there is any additional cost, we hope that parents will see the benefit for the reasons mentioned above.

We have used Emblematic for our uniform for many years now and I can categorically confirm that there is no financial incentive or commission for the school whatsoever in using this company. Parents have bought jumpers, ties, PE polo shirts and PE sweatshirts from Emblematic, as well as other non-branded items, so we are now asking Emblematic to supply trousers and skirts for all students. The trousers and black skirt will have the school logo on so it is easy to identify that they are the correct items of uniform. For this reason, I am afraid that we are unable to provide logos to sew on to other trousers or skirts.

We hope that you agree that four months is sufficient notice to ensure that everyone understands the changes. We have discussed the issues we have been having with our Governors on several occasions over the last two or three years, proposed this as a possible way forward with our Parent Forum earlier this year, discussed it at our Parent Forum again this week and we have talked to some of our students in small groups before coming to a final decision. Students have had assemblies last week and will be reminded regularly by their tutors and through assemblies for the rest of the year, of the changes needed for September.

All of this is being done so that we can reduce, and eventually eliminate, the time that is currently wasted on a daily basis dealing with incorrect and inappropriate clothing. We want to be spending our time in school working with our students to maximise their achievement and progress.

Yours faithfully



**Ian D Wilkinson**  
**Headteacher**