



7th October 2019

Dear Parents / Carers,

Proposals to Change the School Uniform

I am writing to advise you that the school is consulting on important proposals to possibly change the school uniform from September 2020.

Why do we have a school uniform?

Our school uniform plays an important part in communicating our school ethos and expectations. Wearing a uniform is a badge of pride. It helps build a sense of community within our school. It gives students a sense of belonging and creates an identity for our school in the community. Wearing the school uniform correctly demonstrates a student's respect for their school and for others, and contributes towards good school discipline. It teaches students to take pride in their appearance.

What is wrong with the current uniform, why the change?

Currently there are significant inconsistencies in the trousers and skirts that are worn and in part is due to a wide range of commercially available black trousers and skirts. Many of these are considered 'fashionable' and are not appropriate for school because the skirt is too short, or the fit is too tight, or a designer label shows a disparity between those that can afford items, and those that cannot. The continuum of styles means it is very difficult for staff, parents and students to understand and agree what does, and does not meet school expectations. Some teaching staff and students have commented that they feel uncomfortable in challenging, or being challenged over, inappropriate uniform. The existing colour is not distinctive from other uniforms in the locality. The proposals under consultation can help create a distinctive identity from that of other schools and help promote pride within the school.

How might proposed uniform changes promote positive relationships?

Introducing a change to the uniform with consistency to the trousers and skirts worn eliminates the potential conflict arising over suitability. This allows teachers and students to concentrate on what is important - teaching and learning.

Is the school making money from the new uniform?

Categorically, the school will not profit or receive any source of income in any way from any change in uniform that may be introduced.

The school has met with a number of providers to discuss possible changes to the uniform. These providers have supplied examples of what these changes could include, and these have been made available to our stakeholders for comment.

Alongside consideration on any proposed uniform change, there must be consideration made as to how any change is introduced, for example, it is likely that changes will be 'phased' in over time.

It is essential that the school also looks at the affordability of any change for parents. We have provided indicative prices for the proposals outlined and these prices do not necessarily reflect the actual price parents may be charged. The school will work closely with suppliers to ensure best value is obtained. The school can subsidise the purchase of any new uniform up to 75% of the cost, depending on parental circumstances. We are also exploring what financial support may be available for all other parents to support any possible uniform changes.

We value constructive feedback on our proposals and consultation is open until 4th November 2019. Please email: newuniform@marshlandhigh.co.uk. The school will reflect on all consultation feedback received in the decision making process, and will also consider at this time whether further consultation would be helpful.

We are aware that there is discussion on social media regarding these proposals. Whilst the school acknowledges and encourages considered and reasonable debate taking place, some contributions to social media have been unkind and not constructive. Parents are respectfully asked to model responsible behaviour on social media as part of this consultation.

I will write to you again after the consultation closes, allowing sufficient time to reflect on the feedback received. In the meantime, additional information has been provided on the attached Question and Answer Sheet.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Jansen', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr C Jansen
Headteacher

Marshland High School Uniform Consultation – Questions and Answers

Does wearing a uniform help reduce bullying?

A uniform prevents students from having to worry about peer pressure and what clothing they should wear, thereby reducing the incidence of bullying. When everyone wears the same clothes it acts as a social leveller, with students wearing the same uniform, no matter their family background or income. The school environment becomes less competitive. We can focus on teaching and learning.

What other feedback has the school received about the current uniform?

Students and parents have commented that they feel the standard of our school uniform looks inferior to those worn by students at other local schools. Some students have requested a change to uniform to help them feel equitable in appearance to students at other schools.

How is the school consulting with stakeholders over proposed uniform changes?

The school is consulting widely. This started in the last academic year. We shared possible uniform changes with our Parents Forum group, consisting of parents with children in every year group. Our prospective Year 5 and Year 6 parents had an opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposals at the end of last term. Staff at the school have been consulted. We have also shared proposals and sought feedback from the Governing Body and the West Norfolk Academies Trust. In September we shared the proposed changes at our Open Evening for the September 2020 intake, and invited feedback. We have opened up consultation to parents across the school with initial views collated via our dedicated email: newuniform@marshlandhigh.co.uk

Consultation with students is starting via School Council and Form Tutor representatives. We have placed proposals for changes to the uniform on our website to support the consultation. The school will continue to reflect on feedback provided by stakeholders in assessing whether any further consultation opportunities would be helpful.

If there is a change to school uniform, what assistance is available to support families in purchasing the new uniform?

The school is able to provide a financial contribution up to 75% of the cost towards purchasing the new uniform for those families that need assistance. The contribution would depend on their circumstances. Requests would be made in writing to the Finance Office at the school. All such requests would be dealt with sensitively and in confidence.

What is the legal position / legislation on school uniform?

There is no legislation in place; there is DfE guidance and the expectation that schools 'take full account' of that guidance, which our school has followed. School Trusts and/or Governing Bodies decide a school's uniform policy.