

EGM 2018 – Uniform

For the purposes of my presentation, I would like to suggest that in our Christian school community, uniform can be a major distraction.

Don't get me wrong, uniform does matter. The fact we have decided as a community to have a uniform means that uniform matters. Uniform helps us identify with a team.

Because one of our foundational purposes is to promote a striving for excellence in our children's lives, we desire that children wear the uniform well and wear it with pride. And uniform matters when we make it needlessly complicated or impossibly impractical for you.

But our concern for uniform is disproportionate to its importance to our children's education. Uniform does not improve their academic performance; it doesn't make them more Christian. We can be sloppy or diligent with or without uniform - in spite of it.

Whether we have a uniform is inconsequential to our core business as a Christian school. But despite all this, it seems there is no greater controversy in school than uniform. When it comes to uniform, everybody has an opinion and nobody is afraid to voice it!

And I can actually understand that as a parent. We can't talk so fluently about pedagogy and summative assessment, differentiation and cross-curriculum priorities, Christian perspective and scaffolding. But uniform is something tangible we can all understand, and talk about!

So let's talk now about what has changed and is yet to change with uniform at Bayside. Firstly, the things that have changed and why...

1. Hip Pocket - requested an end to our relationship as uniform supplier.
2. Dobsons, a school uniform specialist supplier, have taken over our uniform retailing.
3. Shop hours have decreased but the location, at school where all our families come, is far more accessible to most. Online ordering and click + collect facilities are available. There will be extended opening hours during peak periods such as back to school.
4. Jacket and track pant fabrics/styles have changed at Dobsons' request. The current spray jacket can be worn until end of 2021 so you get fair wear out of them.
5. The second hand uniform shop has closed so as not to run in competition with Dobsons and to relieve our long-suffering parents of this responsibility.
6. Second hand uniform Facebook group - opened at parents' requests and is now successfully operating with 170 members. We acknowledge that it doesn't meet all our parents' needs - we are open to simple solutions - but it rightly puts parents in control of the sale of their own children's uniform rather than parent volunteers.

And now to the changes still to come and the big hook for my talk tonight – “trousers for girls?” We have been asked and we are exploring this option for girls in both the Primary and Secondary Schools, and also a Primary ‘skort’ for girls. We would be providing these as extra options for girls, not removing existing items of uniform.

We are not suggesting that boys and girls are the same, but acknowledging that our girls deserve the same freedom of movement and modesty in the playground as boys.

We would hope to make a final announcement on these additional options for girls within a couple weeks, with a hope to have stock available for back to school in 2019.

Tonight is about starting a conversation, with you our College parents, about such things. We invite your feedback about uniform, but please put it in its rightful place, in the right medium and right manner.