

## Covid-19 Parent/Carer Bulletin - June 2020

We hope that, as you are reading this, you and your families are safe and well. The last couple of months has been a surreal experience for all of us and we're sure that there are many challenges still to be faced. We understand that there is enormous uncertainty around many things associated with this pandemic, but one that directly affects the service we offer to you is the re-opening of schools and the possible return to schools of your children. We recognise that many of you may be concerned as to whether we will have stocks of your school's uniform, how you go about purchasing it and what will be happening regarding our store at Great Baddow.

This bulletin aims to answer some, if not all, of your questions and to re-assure you that we are doing everything possible to make the purchasing of uniform as easy, convenient and stress-free as possible.

Our primary objective is to enable you to plan, prepare and purchase all the items of uniform you need whilst ensuring the safety of you, your children, and our staff.

### Stock

All of our orders for this Summer were placed at the end of last year. The latest information from our suppliers suggests that the vast majority of our orders are already on their way to us. However, whilst we are not aware of any major delays, there may still be some, particularly where the countries in which the garments are manufactured have been in lock down. As always, we will endeavour to keep our schools informed of any delays as soon as we receive notification so that they can pass on the information to you.

As with our detailed planning every year, our orders have been based on extensive modelling of likely demand based on previous years' purchases and include a considerable contingency factor. However, it is impossible to predict with absolute accuracy and, inevitably, there will be some items where demand outstrips our predictions and we may encounter some shortfalls. Therefore, we would urge you to...

***Purchase your Uniform Online  
Early***

This will help us to spot any potential shortfalls and take appropriate action to mitigate the risk of running out of stock. You should note, though, that this year may present a greater challenge than previous years in getting timely replenishments.

### Planning & Preparing

You will have received from your school the latest uniform price list which will serve as a prompt for the items you will need to purchase. We have also included a parent checklist which you can print out and use to note the quantities and sizes required.

***For parents and/or carers of students remaining at a school for which you have previously purchased uniform***

***Purchase your Uniform Online  
(where you can)***

We would strongly urge you to purchase any required items of uniform online at [www.schoolwearplus.com](http://www.schoolwearplus.com). Choosing sizes should be relatively easy as it is most likely that you will need either the same size or the next size up. You can note the sizes required on the checklist and place your order online.

### ***For parents and/or carers of students joining a new school***

Unfortunately, due to the significant restrictions of social distancing, it will not be possible this year to hold the in-school sizing events we have undertaken in previous years to help you ascertain the sizes of garments required for your children. We appreciate that determining the sizes required may be difficult as you are unlikely to have come across those particular garments before, which may cause some anxiety when trying to work out which sizes you need. To help you to do this, we can offer the following:

***In-store  
Sizing Appointments***

We are implementing an appointment system at our store in Great Baddow, which will be ***available only to parents and/or carers of students who are joining a new school***. For full details of this service, please see below under “Purchasing”

***Sizing Guides***

We recognise that not everyone will wish to book an appointment and may prefer to purchase your uniform, based on measuring your child. To view the sizing guidelines on our web site, follow this link: <https://www.schoolwearplus.com/size-guide>

For parents who do not have a suitable tape measure at home, you can download a printable one at: <https://www.davidluke.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Tape-measure.pdf>

## **Purchasing**

Due to the potential risks associated with visiting the store at The Bringy Centre, Great Baddow, we would strongly encourage our customers to...

***Purchase your Uniform Online  
(where you can)***

We are working on a new improved web site which we hope will go live in the next few weeks. Our current website is still fully functional.

As we are sure you will appreciate, the lock down has affected our planning for this year's Back-to-School (BTS) and the ongoing crisis will impact on our ability to service our customers throughout BTS. We usually encounter a huge peak in customers, both in-store and online, in the latter part of August / early September. However, this year we will be forced to adopt a completely different mode of operation and, therefore, we would ask you to:

***Buy your Uniform Earlier than  
Usual***

This will help us to flatten the curve and spread the number of customers/sales throughout BTS.

Subject to Government approval, we are currently planning to re-open our doors on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June**. To ensure maximum safety for our customers and staff, we will be adopting a strict adherence to social distancing within and around the store. Therefore, we will be limiting our in-store services to:

***Pre-booked Appointments  
(new starters only)***

***Click & Collect***

Any other customers attempting to visit the store without an appointment will be politely turned away.

### **In-store (Pre-booked Appointments)**

As mentioned above, we are implementing an appointment system which will be **available only to parents and/or carers of students who are joining a new school**. To minimise personal contact, ensure adequate social distancing and maximise safety, the following rules will be applied:

- 1) Appointments must be booked in advance via our online booking system. When our new web site goes live, you will be able to book an appointment there. In the meantime, appointments can be booked by typing **schoolwear-plus.appointedd.com** into your browser.
- 2) The number of simultaneous appointments will be driven by a combination of the physical limitations of allocating designated safe areas within the store and the availability of qualified staff. Please note that the changing rooms have been temporarily removed to maximise the space available for appointments and some sales staff will have to be re-assigned to deal with the inevitable increase in online orders.
- 3) The duration of each appointment will reflect the type of school and the complexity of the uniform.
- 4) For each appointment, we will allow only a single parent or carer to accompany the student being fitted. You will be allocated a member of staff who will advise you, whilst remaining at a safe distance, how to size your child. The member of staff will not be permitted to have any physical contact with parents, carers or students.
- 5) Students will not be permitted to try on garments in the store. Garments can be tried on once you return home. Incorrectly sized garments can be exchanged in accordance with our extended returns policy (see below).
- 6) Once the required sizes and quantities are determined, the member of staff will take you to their designated till to process your purchase (or, in the case that stocks of some items are not available, to take order details). We will be accepting only card payments (contactless where possible) and no cash transactions will be permitted.
- 7) Due to designating safe areas within the store, there will be a finite number of appointments that can be accommodated between the commencement of the service and the start of the September school term. Therefore, appointment bookings will be strictly on a **first-come-first-served** basis.

### **Online Shopping**

Our online shop has remained open since we entered lock down but we have been unable to process any orders due to all staff being furloughed.

We re-commenced the processing of online orders on **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June**. All existing orders in the system are being processed and fulfilled (subject to stocks being in) strictly in the sequence that the orders were placed.

As usual, online customers can select their preferred delivery option, as follows:

**Click & Collect** - We will have a dedicated collection point at our store in Great Baddow. When you come to collect your order, you should come alone and you should note that we will be restricting entry to one customer at a time. **Collections from store will not be available until we re-open on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

**Home Delivery** - Whilst we would love to offer free home delivery on all online orders, the ever-increasing costs of courier services means it would not be economically viable to do so. You may not realise that we already subsidise this service as the charges we make do not cover the cost of providing the premier service from our partner courier, DPD Local. Therefore, we will continue to make a small charge for home delivery. Although we have just received our annual increase in costs, we have decided not to pass any increase on to our customers for the foreseeable future. Indeed, we have decided to simplify our carriage charges and we have removed the £9.50 charge for non-local deliveries, leaving a single carriage charge of £5.50 for all home delivery orders. You should note that due to the massively increased workload of our couriers, deliveries may take longer than usual. We would appreciate your patience in this matter.

**School Delivery** - We have been liaising with our schools to explore whether it would be feasible to introduce regular delivery of parents' online orders to school. Given the severe restrictions that schools will be operating under for the next few months, unfortunately, this will not be possible for many of our schools. However, some have told us that they can accommodate this facility. Please check the delivery options at the checkout stage to see if your school is listed for school delivery. You should check with your individual schools as to their opening times and the arrangements for collecting your orders. Please note that once we've got through this pandemic and we return to something approaching normality, we will review with our schools whether this is something they wish to continue.

## Store Opening Hours

As some of you may know, we have some members of staff that will be shielding at home beyond our re-opening date and, although we have additional temporary staff joining us throughout BTS, our resources will be severely stretched.

We have looked at the likely volumes of appointment bookings and collections from store and we believe that we have the capacity to meet the demand without changing our opening times of Tuesday to Friday, 9.30 to 17.00 and Saturday, 10.00 to 17.00.

We will be monitoring this closely and may well make adjustments as we proceed through BTS, for instance extending our operating hours, adding or reducing appointment slots, etc.

## Telephones

Due to prioritising serving our customers, and the increased pressure on our staff, it will not be possible to deal with telephone enquiries throughout the day. We would request that you email any queries you may have to [customerservices@schoolwearplus.com](mailto:customerservices@schoolwearplus.com). Please note that we will try to respond to email queries within 72 hours but please bear with us if you haven't heard back from us. Your patience this year is much appreciated.

## Returns

Many parents have told us that they shop late because they are concerned about their children growing over the holidays. Every year, we extend our exchange period where items of uniform purchased early for September can be returned or exchanged right up to the last day of the Summer holidays. This year, to encourage you to purchase items as early as possible, we will be introducing this policy **with immediate effect** and we will also be extending the end date to the **end of September**. Therefore, anything you purchase now can be exchanged before your child returns to school, subject to our standard returns criteria (un-worn, un-named, with labels intact and in a saleable condition).

## Embroidery Services

Embroidery services purchased online together with the uniform items to be embroidered will be processed as part of the order and will be dispatched when completed. To safeguard our staff, we will not be able to accept any requests for embroidery services that are not placed at the same time as an online order, or for embroidery to be applied to customers' own goods, e.g. subsequently adding initials to bags, etc.

## Conclusion

We trust that you will understand the reasons for us taking the above difficult decisions. We are all in uncharted territory with this dreadful Covid19 pandemic and we ask you to support us by embracing this new mode of operation. We believe that, with your help, we will still be able to serve our schools, parents and students in an efficient and safe manner throughout BTS and the coming months.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and we hope everyone stays safe.

Best wishes

*Schoolwear Plus*