



White Rock
Christian Academy

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Important Message Regarding Uniform Changes from the Board of Directors

Dear fellow community members,

The Board of Directors has approved revisions to the Uniform Policy, which was first passed by the board on June 13, 2019 and has since been in the process of gradual implementation. As some of these revisions involve significant changes, the board felt it was important to address the community directly to explain our rationale.

The role of the board is to act on behalf of the WRCA society to ensure that our school achieves its core purpose *“to inspire and cultivate citizens of Godly character who transform their world for Christ”* as effectively as possible. We develop policy reflective of this purpose and our core values. Every policy we develop is crafted with this intent, including the uniform policy.

The purpose of the June 13, 2019 policy was to clarify and codify the uniform at the board level, when previously uniform decisions were made by teams of administrators and community members. Years of operating in the former manner had resulted in widespread confusion and a uniform that was disjointed at best. Initially the board sought to minimize disruption associated with change by making only minor uniform adjustments and simplifications. However, in the months of implementation since the policy was approved, it became clear that there were persistent serious problems that the existing policy did not fully address. These issues included cost, supply availability, functionality and student compliance.

The board does not make changes for changes' sake. Rather, we weigh the cost and disruption of change against the potential benefit to our community for achieving our mission, through our core values. After undertaking a comprehensive analysis and considering numerous options, a policy revision was developed that addresses the ongoing issues and maximizes harmony with our core values. The resultant revision includes a number of major changes, but it is our expectation that the resultant uniform is better suited to our school in every way, and will eliminate the need for future changes for many years to come.

A link to the newly approved Jan 10, 2019 policy is available HERE:

<https://wrca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/POLICY-1208-Uniforms-Updated-2020-Jan-10.pdf>

Wherever possible, we have tried to make compliance with uniform policy easier, not harder. We recognize that it is impossible to expect uniform compliance from parents and students if the necessary items are not readily available. To address this problem, we have opted to partner with suppliers able to provide uniform items predictably, conveniently and quickly. We have also eliminated some items that were particularly difficult to procure.

Similarly, it is difficult to demand parents purchase items from a specific supplier if they find comparable, less expensive items from other sources. Unfortunately, this custom results in significant colour and style mismatching (male student pants and female student socks being notable examples). We have determined that the best solution is to replace some of the most common and expensive uniform pieces with more generic items available from a bulk supplier (for example, Marks and Spencer). Shifting away from the more traditional female uniform pieces and having a very inexpensive bulk supplier for pants, shorts and skirts greatly reduces costs for all families, and makes it reasonable for the school to demand compliance with specific items from specific sources, and the timely purchase of suitable replacements (for example, when shirts are significantly damaged, or skirts or pants become unacceptably short).

While addressing cost and availability issues is important, it must be emphasized that the goal of the board is not and should not be merely to provide the least expensive and most easily supplied uniform. Rather, it is to select a uniform that reflects our core values without ignoring practical considerations. A full discussion of how the uniform design relates to our core values can be found in the policy itself. In brief, the uniform is intended to display a shared community identity, be practical for a wide range of educational purposes, and convey both a sense of simplicity, humility and excellence.

The uniform revision eliminates some of the more traditional items, which could potentially diminish a sense of community identity. To maintain a sense of character, tradition and excellence we have decided to reintroduce a school tie for our senior school students as the most readily visible uniform item distinguishing our uniform from that of other schools. A tie has the advantage of being unique to our school, relatively inexpensive, suitable for formal or professional environments, and can be worn by students of either gender.

We recognize that with any change comes some amount of redundancy, or waste, as newly purchased or otherwise seemingly usable items are no longer in compliance with policy. This outcome is inevitable when a change to a uniform is made, and we appreciate that it has the potential to be an additional financial burden to families. We have attempted to address this issue in three ways. First, the community was notified on December 6th, 2019 to cease purchasing additional uniform items from our previous suppliers, in part to restrict the purchase of items that will only be usable for the rest of this academic year. Second, we have limited new items to a small number of low cost items, and removed numerous high cost items, in some cases reducing the total cost of a complete uniform by greater than 50%. Third, we are permitting early compliance with the revised policy, i.e. students will be able to purchase and wear the new revised uniform effective immediately, for everything except formal uniform events. In this way, for the rest of the 2019-20 academic year, no items that are not compliant with the revised policy need to be purchased. ***However, full compliance with the new policy, including the purchase of most uniform items (including grey pants and skirts) from approved suppliers only, will be expected commencing September 2020.***

We ask that parents be leaders in facilitating compliance with the revised policy ***in its entirety***. When parents do not provide correct uniform items, or do not demand full compliance from their children, they may inadvertently send a negative educational message to their children. Parents indicate to them that it is okay to follow some, but not all instructions from teachers, or perhaps that it is okay to skirt inconvenient rules or exploit grey areas for reasons of personal preference or as an act of intentional

passive defiance. All such attitudes are antithetical to the character that we are seeking to develop in our children. Please, be our allies; the uniform itself is a tool of education and our shared mission.

The board appreciates that for some families yet another change will be an unwelcome nuisance, or worse, a burdensome imposition. Inasmuch as we have been able to limit disturbance without sacrificing long term stability and benefit to our community and mission, we have endeavoured to do so. There are no perfect uniforms, nor are there many occasions when change is effortless or uncontroversial. Please remember that we, like you, are parents and community members, and that we are doing our best to represent the best interests of our community as a whole.

Sincerely, White Rock Christian Academy Board of Directors