



Woodfield Primary School

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Friday 2nd November 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to further clarify the reasons behind the decision taken over school bags.

The decision to introduce a recommended 'school backpack' was made as a gesture to support families, in response to requests made by a number of parents. The school position, prior to my appointment, has always been to recommend a book bag or 'messenger style' bag, which would fit in the children's trays. The use of backpacks, whilst never explicitly stated, has always been discouraged as school does not have the storage capacity to accommodate this. In addition, the cost of fashion bags can be enormous for families and the impact on children whose families cannot afford a similar style of bag can be upsetting. Part of the underlying principles behind school uniform is to reduce the impact of peer pressure on children to have the latest trend and to therefore reduce the financial cost to families.

In previous years, when only a small number of children brought backpacks to school, the impact was negligible and so there was not a need to introduce an amendment to the uniform requirements. However, this year, and particularly in upper Key Stage 2, there has been a substantial increase in both the number and size of the backpacks being brought to school, leading to it causing a trip hazard in the corridor and the growing development of a fashion culture amongst the children. With Christmas approaching, we do not want this problem to escalate with more children potentially bringing new bags, hence the decision to introduce the change to the uniform policy now rather than later in the school year.

I fully understand, and agree with, the principle that parents wish to encourage their children to carry their own things, and so a backpack is far more practical than the school book bags which have previously been recommended. It is for this reason that we have liaised with the uniform suppliers in an attempt to find a suitable compromise – a backpack which is of a size which can be accommodated by school but also suit families' needs. We have also negotiated to try to keep costs low (and certainly substantially less than high street prices), and the suppliers have assured us that the embroidery of the school logo is included in the cost. The two backpack style bags are £8.50, from Slaters (£12.00 from Standish Sports), and school receives no financial income from this. To further support families, this academic year, we are offering the facility of ordering through school, so that parents do not need to make an additional trip to the warehouse. Rather than attempting to enforce the school position of 'book bags rather than backpacks', we felt this was a preferable compromise.

We fully appreciate that this is frustrating for families and disappointing for children who have purchased new bags in the summer, ready for this academic year, as well as representing an additional cost. As I have only been in post since September, and because the problem has only become apparent this term, we were unable to advise parents in summer. I can only offer our apologies for any upset that has been caused but do hope that families can appreciate that this decision has been made with the very best of intentions. We will remain as flexible as possible whilst children's existing backpacks are phased out and ask that as many families as possible support us as we work together in the best interests of the children and the school.

With many thanks for your continued cooperation,

Miss A Prior
Headteacher

