

M&S: Schoolwear

The History of Smart and Practical Schoolwear
 at Marks & Spencer

1927

In 1927 we sold school satchels, small attaché cases, exercise books, boys' cardigans, trousers, golf hose and ties which were particularly in demand as the new school term started.



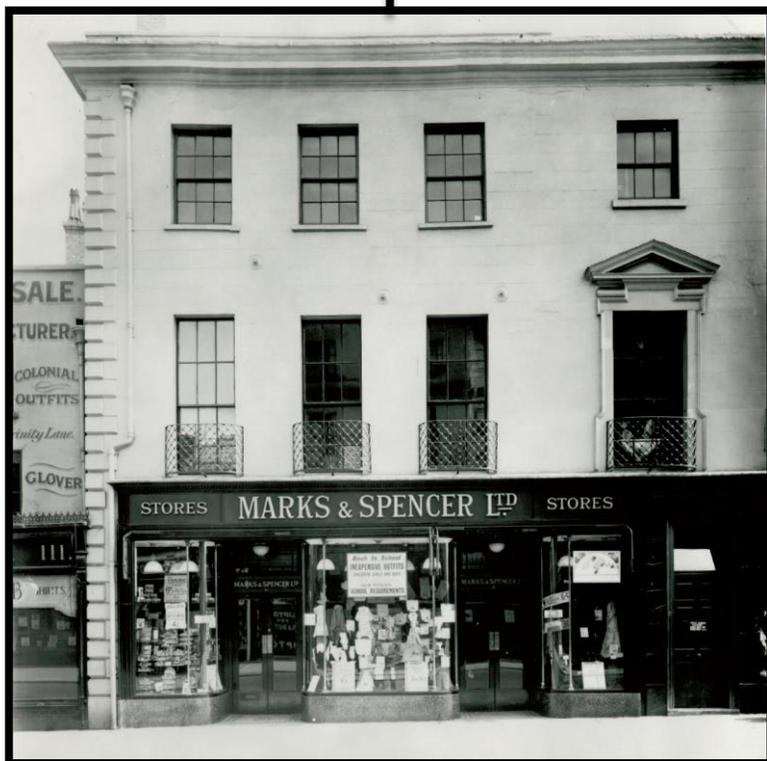
Schoolwear window display, 1930s

1930

This photograph shows Cheltenham store in 1930. Items of schoolwear are in the window with a sign which reads:

'Back to School INEXPENSIVE
 OUTFITS CHILDREN GIRLS AND BOYS

NEW RANGES
 SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS'



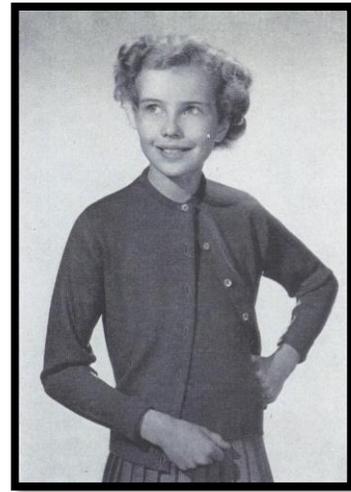
Schoolwear window display, Cheltenham, 1930

1954

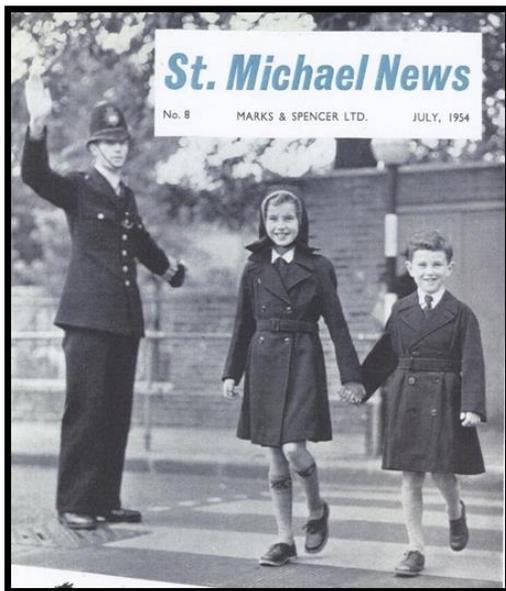
Cardigans

An example of the high-neck buttoning cardigans that were produced alongside a low-neck version in 'the four basic school colours; navy blue, brown, grey and green' to cater for school children across the country.

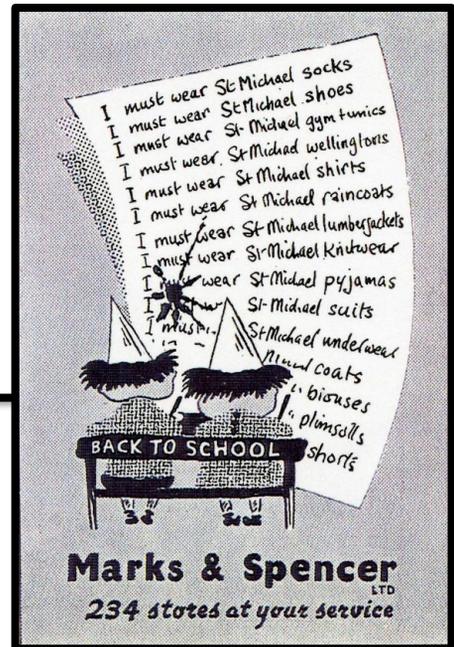
'These will be quite plain with no trimmings and fancy pieces; in fact, just what the teacher ordered...'



High-neck buttoning cardigan, St Michael News, July 1954



Back to School Special, St Michael News, July 1954

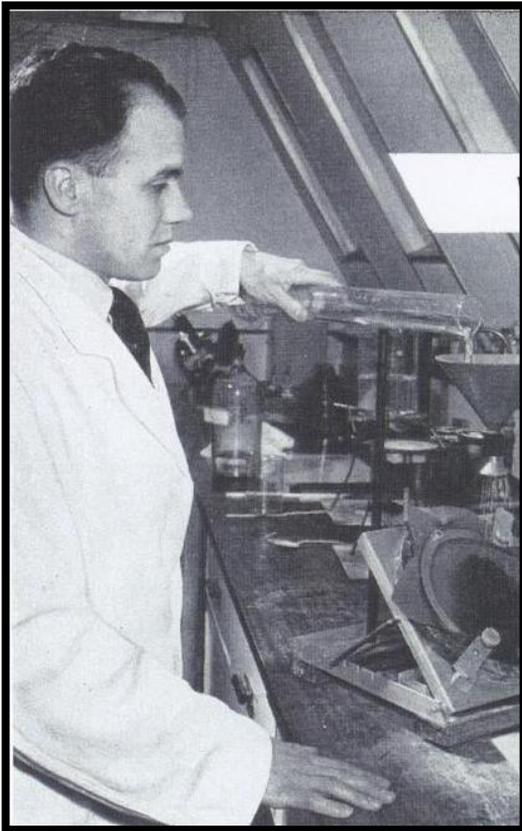


St Michael News, July 1954

School Shoes

'Of course the children go back to school in St Michael shoes. Selected stores will have entirely a new range; this new range comprises both the machine-sewn type of school shoe, with the inflexible sole, and the modern flexible type of shoe.'

All our children's shoes were SATRA approved- the British Boot, Shoe and Allied Trades Research Association, an organisation maintained by the shoe industry to conduct research into all aspects of shoe manufacture. Marks & Spencer worked in close co-operation with SATRA, especially aiming to improve children's footwear.



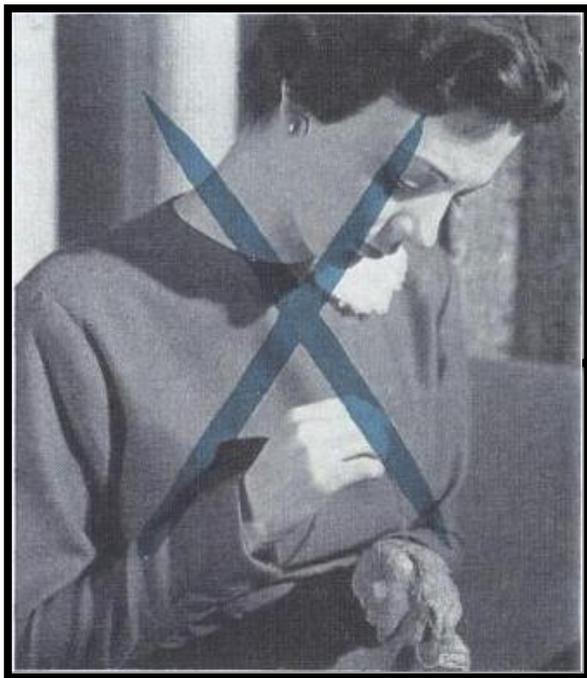
Quality testing of gabardine uniform fabric,
St Michael News, July 1954

Quality Testing

Fabrics used in M&S uniforms were tested for quality and to check that they were fit for purpose. This photograph shows a laboratory technician conducting a water-resistance test on a sample of fabric.



Gabardine raincoat, St Michael News,
July 1954



'Lots of stocks of socks', St Michael News, July 1954

Hardwearing Fabrics

Socks reinforced with nylon at the heel were introduced. This image demonstrates our aim to make life easier for parents and reduce the amount of repairs needed to their children's socks.

1961

'The test is in the testing'

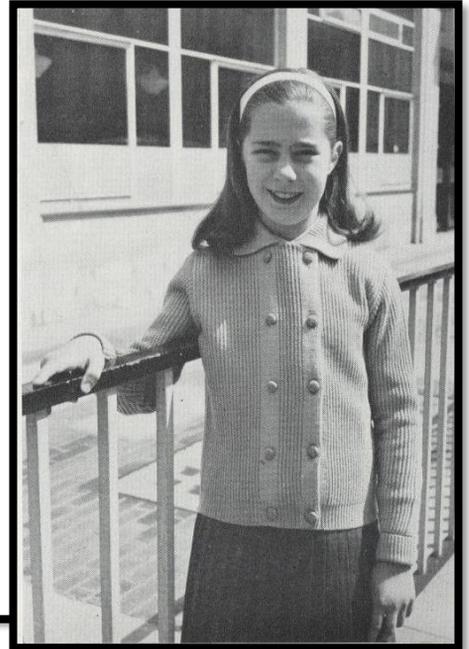
Linings and buttons, as well as the fabric of garments were tested in Marks & Spencer laboratories.

Tests were done on the fabric and component parts of the clothing such as abrasion, shrinkage and washing tests.

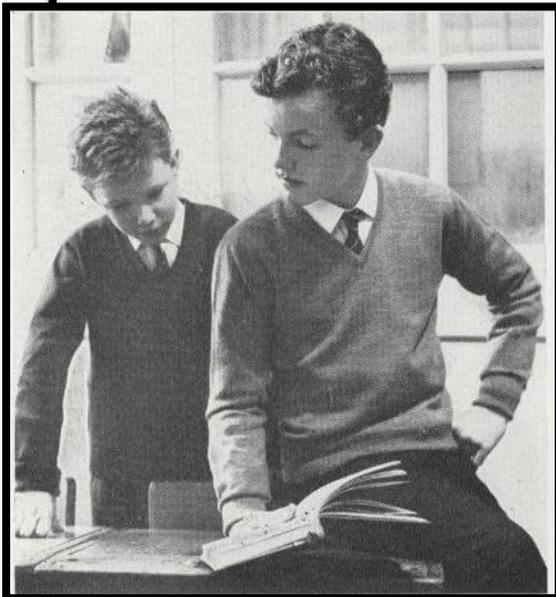


Girls' pinafores, School Clothes supplement, St Michael News, 1961

'A St Michael garment is a tested garment'



Girls Chunky Wool Cardigan, School Clothes supplement, St Michael News, 1961



Wool and nylon pullovers, School Clothes supplement, St Michael News, 1961

'Why St Michael school clothes are more likely to be well fitting than any other'.

M&S improved sizing by using the measurements of a representative selection of children to determine a relationship between size and age.



1962

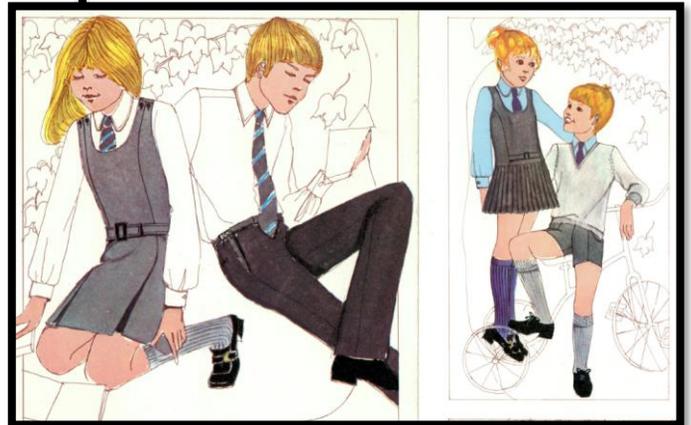
M&S made gabardine raincoats extra hardwearing in 1962. They were made easier-fitting across the chest and shoulders.

The gabardine coats were given bigger pockets, stronger belt loops, a special finish to the hem which stopped it getting shiny when it was pressed, and a stronger hanger loop at the neck.

Boys' and girls' all-wool gabardines, St Michael News, December 1962

1970

We looked to the latest trends in schoolwear with 'a range of bright, colourful clothes in modern fabrics. Wash them by hand or leave it to the machine, all that's needed is a quick dash with the iron and they'll come up good as new time and time again'.



'For Leisure and Lessons', HO/3/1/4/3/8, 1970



Boy's flared Terylene/worsted trousers and girls' longline Orlon cardigan, St Michael News, Jul 1973

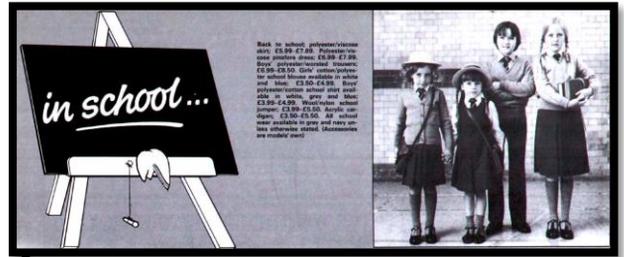
1973

To make children's clothes and schoolwear stay looking smart for longer, we further improved their construction.

M&S uniforms used very hard-wearing materials, strong seams that wouldn't split easily, stay-put buttons, non-rusting buckles and slides and permanent pleats

1976

With an increased demand for simple schoolwear that could be bought at retailers like M&S (rather than outfitters for a specific school), we simplified our range but increased production.



Back to school feature, St Michael News, Aug 1980

1986

A new, more modern school wear range launched 'brighter, more fashionable clothes for school' which was intended to suit the 'preppie look'.

A girls' sports pack was also made available which included shorts, a sports shirt, netball skirt and jogging suit in navy, bright blue and white.



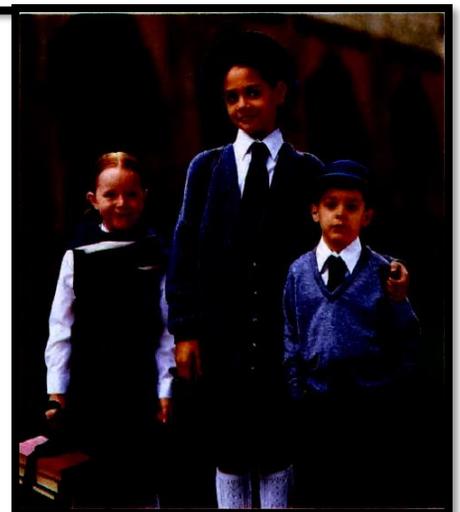
White sports shirt and navy netball skirt, St Michael News, Jul 1986

1987

Schoolwear was stocked in store all year round to meet the demand from customers wanting to replace basic ranges throughout the year.

1989

A new easy care schoolwear range launched which was designed to allow maximum 'washability' and minimum ironing. Skirts in black, navy and grey and a pinafore in grey and navy were made available in a newly developed extra durable fabric.



New easy care schoolwear ranges, St Michael News, Jul 1989

1990

Comfort and durability were the key aims for the 1990 school wear range. High quality fabrics were used to make sure that uniforms did not lose the smart first-day-of-term look. Items were machine washable and easy-iron.

Fabric repair patches were also included with trousers and their deep hems made them more convenient to let down. The blazer for boys and girls was also made machine washable.

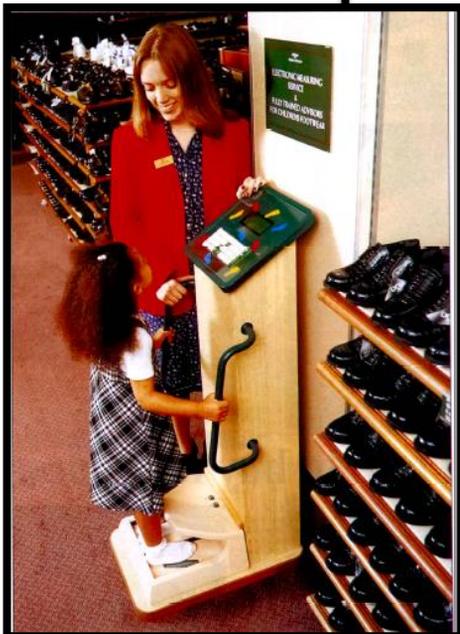


New range of schoolwear, April 1990

1991

Hard work went into children's clothing to achieve optimum comfort and fit.

Before any garments went into production, selectors and technologists conducted lots of fitting sessions with school children and trials wearing the clothes to make sure they were comfortable to wear before they were made for store.



Electronic foot gauge, St Michael News, 1996

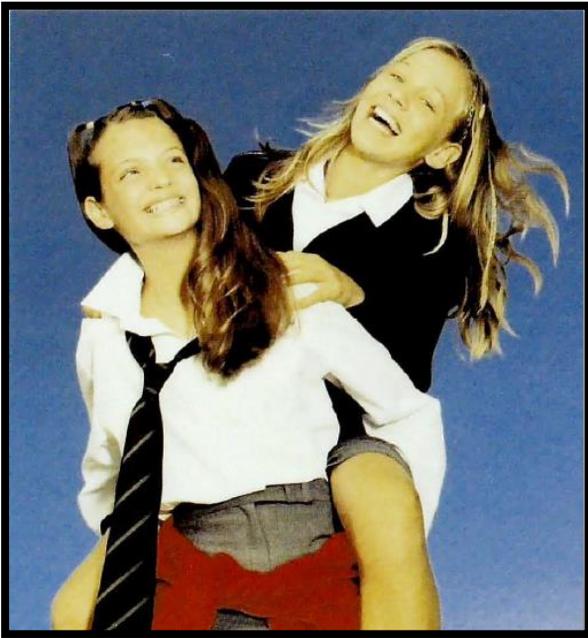
1996

To measure children's feet, a unique electronic foot gauge was brought into stores to ensure that school shoes bought from M&S would be well fitting.

2002

Easy care fabrics, non-scuff leather shoes and up-to-date styling were introduced. Uniform was also given hidden extras, for example pockets for mobile phones.

Independent research found that 8 out of 10 people said our schoolwear stayed looking newer after multiple washes than uniform of competitors. 9 out of 10 people also preferred the cut of our shirts and blouses.



Schoolwear range, On Your Marks, August 2002

2007

In 2007 innovative non-iron shirts were made even more easy to care for with improved shirt stitching, reinforced seams and a high-performance stain-repellent finish called Stainaway™.

100% cotton blouses were made with Fairtrade cotton at no cost increase from the previous version.



Non-iron skirt with Stainaway™, On Your Marks, June 2002

2007



School trousers made of recycled plastic bottles,
June 2007

The use of recycled material in M&S clothing helps to reduce the company's carbon footprint and reduce the amount of packaging going to landfill, as part of Plan A – our eco and ethical programme launched in 2007.

School uniform made from recycled plastic bottles was launched. The bottles were chopped, melted and turned into yarn before being made into cloth.

Skirts, trousers and fleeces made from 100% recycled bottles were available from £7 each in 20 stores.



Blazer made from recycled plastic bottles,
June 2009

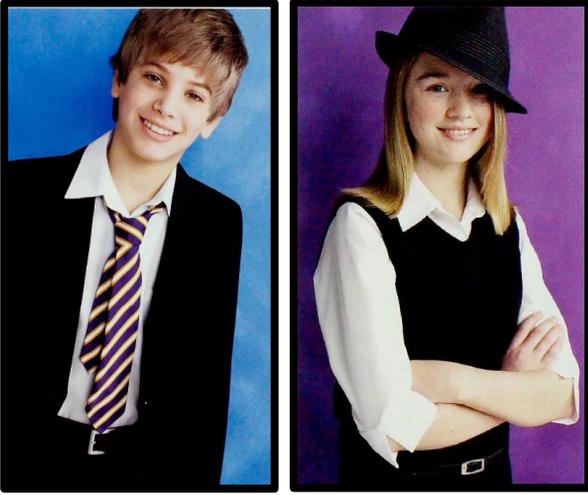
 We made this school skirt from used plastic bottles

Last year we turned over 37 million used bottles into something more useful. From duvets and umbrellas to school blazers and skirts. This isn't at the expense of fashion because, as we know, life's a catwalk, even in the playground.



Recycled plastic bottles school blazer and skirt, M&S.com

2008



Recycled senior blazer and Schoolwear Boutique fashion blouse, tank top and belted pencil skirt, Your M&S, June 2008

The new Schoolwear Boutique range offered a fashion-led collection for teenage girls, including cap-sleeve blouses and trousers and skirts with fashion belts.

Also on offer were school blazers made from recycled plastic bottles, with a second version made to be compatible with an iPod.

For ages 3 to 8 years, M&S developed the 'elasicuff'. These stretchy elasticated cuffs made long-sleeved shirts easier for younger children.

We also introduced water-repellent, breathable Stormwear™ fabric technology on all boys' and selected girls' trousers.



Younger kids' schoolwear, Your M&S, June 2008



HO/3/1/4/5/3/22 Schoolwear catalogue, 2013

2010

We continued to focus on practical stylish clothing with unbeatable value – with cotton jumpers starting at £2. We also introduced SkinKind technology to protect sensitive skin and were the only retailer to offer trousers with a permanent pleat.

2012

We set up a new scheme, 'Your School Uniform', which allows schools to partner with M&S to set up their own bespoke uniform shop online. Schools receive 5% of sales as cashback.

Uniforms now included Stainaway™ shirts for easy stain removal and special durable sole shoes

Why our school uniforms are great news for grown-ups, too!



- STAY NEW™ KNITWEAR**
- DURABLE SOLE SHOES**
- STAINAWAY™ SHIRTS**
Spills and splashes
- SUPERCREASE™ TROUSERS**
- STORMWEAR+™**
Resistant to water

Schoolwear innovations, Your M&S, Jul 2012

2014

Always thinking about the little details, we introduced Adjust-a-Hem to trousers and blazers, which gives an extra 3cm room for growth – simply unpick the stitching on the inside hem, let down and iron out the crease!



Keep kids in their trousers for longer with our Adjust-a-hem Technology. Just undo the hem, remove the stitching and press.

Adjust-a-Hem (ACC-14-082),
2014



Easy Dressing Ultimate Non-Iron Short Sleeve Shirt

Easy Dressing Triple Action Stormwear Trousers

2016

This year we launched our Easy Dressing range, designed with the National Autistic Society.

The range is specially designed for children with sensory issues or those who just need a little extra help when dressing. We've removed scratchy labels and fastenings, and introduced pull-up trousers and skirts up to age 16. In 2018, we expanded Easy Dressing into a whole range of daywear.

2016



Girls' Pure Cotton Gingham Playsuit, 2016

The cotton girls' playsuit was launched, a modern take on the traditional gingham summer school dress.

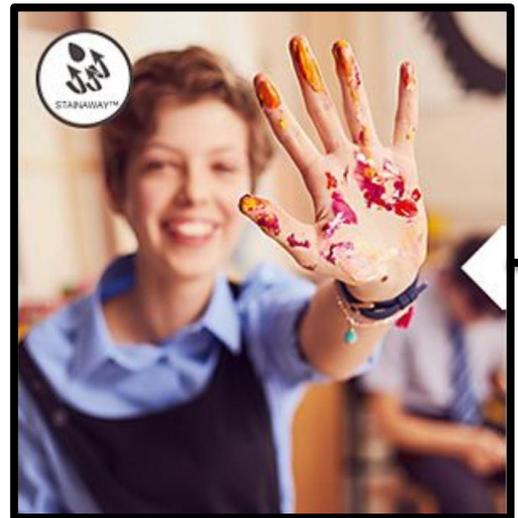
Frilly school socks were introduced with with Freshfeet™ technology to combat the bacteria that cause odours and keeps feet fresh.



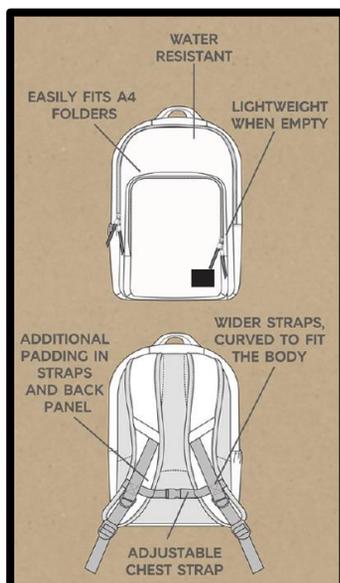
Freshfeet™ Cotton Rich Frilled Broderie Socks, 2016

2017

As well as developing innovations like Stain Resistant™, StayNEW™ and Stain & Weatherproof™, we also use environmentally friendly materials and methods. For the first time ever, we developed our stain-resistant clothing without using any perfluorocarbons (PCs) which are recognised as a key contributor to climate change.



Stainaway technology, 2017



Ultimate Backpack, m&s.com, 2018

2018

We introduced the Ultimate Backpack. Working with Backcare, we developed new backpacks with added padding in the straps and across the back, as well as an adjustable chest strap to help spread the load.

Lightweight when empty, this kids' bag is water resistant and easily fits A4 folders and also has reflective tabs to keep them safe and seen.



The Wild Ones back to school campaign, [m&s.com](https://www.m&s.com)

2019

A tougher breed of uniform for a tougher breed of kid – our school kit has been designed to let kids be kids and still look smart, day after day.

The fabric for all our trousers, shorts, skirts, pinafores and culottes is super resilient. It has a water-repellent, stain-resistant finish, it's crease resistant with permanent pleats (which means no ironing): and it's all made using a super-strong weave.