

La Rentrée - Back to School

September in France is famous for « la rentrée » (in English we say Back to School) . All the shops are full of school supplies, (many of these items are provided by schools in the UK) .In fact, September is “Rentrée” madness in France!

But “la Rentrée” in France is not just about going back to school, it’s also the period when almost everyone in France comes back from their holidays and secondary residences to return to their homes. It’s also a return to work for all the major public Institutions including the Government and new books and films are released. It corresponds to a period when many companies start up again after the long month of holiday in August.

Less so in Britain First of all, state schools in the UK have a much shorter Summer holiday, Schools generally finish around 22nd July and start again on 1st September, so just 6 to 7 weeks holiday instead of 10 in France. Most businesses in England are very flexible for their Holidays dates and generally don’t close in August and unlike in France, the British take staggered holidays from May to September.

Whereas in France almost all yearly activities come to a halt in July and August in the UK, it’s not unusual for activities to continue right through the Summer period.

So “Back to school” in the UK is a much quieter affair. However, there is one added complication to the return to class in the UK, parents must equip their children with the correct school uniform for their child’s particular school. Whether it’s just to buy the next size up as their child grows or because their child has changed to a new school buying a new school uniform is one of the chores of the “Back to School” period.

School Uniforms vary a great deal depending on the size and status of the school. Nowadays, the uniform required for the local state schools have become a more casual affair.



Normally children are required to wear a simple skirt or pair of trousers of a chosen school colour ; for example above : grey with dark blue jumper and blue polo shirt (colours vary from school to school). In state schools the uniform is generally very simple to keep the cost low for everyone and these simple items of clothing can be bought in various local shops. However, in the more exclusive private schools the school uniform can be very elaborate and extensive with many imposed elements. It always consists of a blazer (complete with school badge, a school tie, a cap or a boater (straw hat) and jumper, skirt and trousers which can only be bought at a particular shop which stocks that particular school uniform. In that case the cost of the complete school uniform can easily be above £1000per child! Some historic private schools have maintained their traditional school uniforms as a tribute to their history and status.

There is a long running debate about whether it is desirable or democratic to impose the wearing of school uniforms. Many say on the positive side that it creates school unity and pride, provides a democratic standard for poor and rich alike and certainly cuts down on time choosing what to wear in the morning! On the negative side, others say it is an unnecessary expense to impose on families, especially large families needing to pay for several uniforms and an old-fashioned symbol of a colonial past. But like it or loathe it the majority of schools in the UK still have a school uniform.



The new ADSB school Uniform!! The beautiful green and yellow representing Provence.



1) At Christ's Hospital in England the uniform has hardly changed since the 16th century. It is claimed to be the oldest traditional uniform still in existence. The uniform is blue and yellow with long, bright, yellow socks, traditional pantaloons and robes.

2) World-famous English school, Eton College is known for its longstanding traditions and the uniform, 'Eton Dress' is no exception. It consists as it has done for centuries of a black tailcoat and waistcoat, white collar and pinstriped trousers.

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En France, l'apparition des mots « la rentrée » dans les magasins sonne la fin des vacances d'été. Les écoles ont été fermées pendant dix semaines et beaucoup d'entreprises ont organisé leurs vacances pendant cette période.

Au Royaume-Uni, cela se passe différemment. Les vacances d'été pour les écoles sont beaucoup plus courtes, du 22 Juillet au 1^{er} Septembre environ, à peu près 6 à 7 semaines. Pour les entreprises aussi, les dates aussi sont plus flexibles. Les vacances s'étalent de mai à septembre. Donc, la « rentrée » au Royaume-Uni est un événement beaucoup plus calme. Par contre, les élèves dans les écoles doivent porter un uniforme. Dans les écoles d'état, ce qui est demandé est assez simple : une jupe ou un pantalon d'une couleur choisie par l'école, un polo et un pull. Pas de couleurs extravagantes, plutôt bleu foncé ou gris. En ce qui concerne les écoles d'état ces vêtements se trouvent dans les magasins locaux. Par contre, dans certaines écoles privées les exigences peuvent être beaucoup plus grandes : un blazer avec l'insigne de l'école, cravate, casquette ou canotier, jupe ou pantalon qu'on ne peut trouver que dans certains magasins attirés. Le prix de l'uniforme demandé peut s'élever jusqu'à £1000. Ces écoles privées veulent ainsi maintenir leur statut et leurs traditions.

Il y a un débat récurrent sur le maintien ou non des uniformes dans les écoles. Ceux qui y sont favorables disent que cela donne une certaine unité à l'école et atténue les différences entre les riches et les pauvres par rapport à la tenue vestimentaire. Ceux qui y sont opposés disent que c'est une dépense supplémentaire inutile imposée aux familles.

Sue and Georges BOUTIER

Photos !!

1. Le nouvel uniforme de l'ADSB !!! Le beau vert et jaune de Provence !

Photos

1. Au Christ's Hospital School – un uniforme qui n'a pratiquement pas changé depuis le 16^{ème} siècle.
2. Au collège d'Eton, mondialement connu, un uniforme qui remonte aussi à plusieurs siècles. Il comprend un manteau noir, un gilet, une chemise à col blanc et un pantalon à rayures.