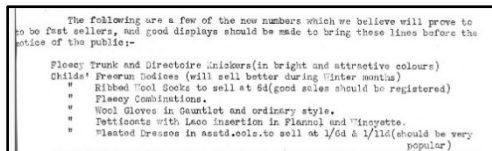


Kidswear and Schoolwear Timeline

From newborns to young adults: How M&S has dressed generations of kids



Weekly Bulletin, 1927

1926

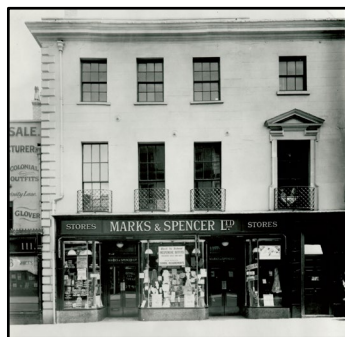
The 1920s saw the introduction of childrenswear. In 1927 we sold products including children's pleated dresses, ribbed wool socks and petticoats.



Schoolwear window display, 1930s

1927

In 1927, our schoolwear offer included 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, Cheltenham, 1930

1930

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

'Back to school - Inexpensive outfits - new ranges - school requirements'



Marks & Spencer Magazine, 1932

1932

St Michael childrenswear including pram sets and tweed knickers were advertised in our customer magazine.



Knitting pattern, 1930s



'Our Children's Frocks' window display, 1930s



Newspaper advert for Kirkcaldy store, 1938



Dress display, 1940s



Swing tag, 1950s

1930s

Our range of childrenswear expanded to include everything from winceyette pyjamas to tweed overcoats. Customers could also knit their own clothes using our knitting patterns – given away free with a purchase of wool.

Childrenswear was often promoted as part of our store window displays.

As our product ranges increased, our stores expanded. We opened new 'superstores', advertised with the slogan 'The Family Store'.

1940s

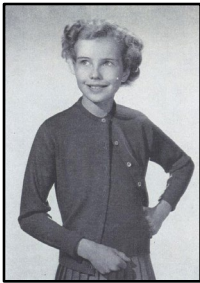
Children's clothes were rationed during the war. Children's clothes had lower coupon values than men's and women's clothing, as they would need new clothes more often as they grew.

1950s

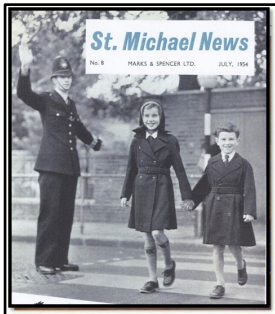
Swing tags highlighted our quality credentials. This corduroy boyswear was labelled as 'showerproof, fast colour and fully lined.'



Childrenswear, St Michael News,
February 1954



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



Back to School Special, St
Michael News, July 1954



Gaberdine raincoat, St
Michael News, July 1954

1954

In February, staff magazine St Michael News ran a childrenswear special. Our children's skirts had 2-inch hems, allowing them to be let down when needed. We standardized our buttons, to make replacing them easier.

1954

We began selling children's underwear with loose rather than sewn-in hem elastic, meaning it could be replaced more easily.

School cardigans were produced in high and low-neck versions in 'the four basic school colours; navy blue, brown, grey and green'.

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

1954

All our children's shoes were approved by the British Boot, Shoe and Allied Trades Research Association (SATRA). We worked closely with SATRA to improve children's footwear.

Options for school shoes included various types of soles with differing levels of flexibility.



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

1961

School uniform fabrics were tested for abrasion, shrinkage and washing. We said, "A St Michael garment is a tested garment".



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

1962

We made kids' gabardine raincoats extra hardwearing in 1962. They were made easier-fitting across the chest and shoulders.

The 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. Girls' gabardine coats could now be bought with a matching detachable hood.



Early 1960s

Childrenswear was featured in cinema adverts as part of a wider advertising campaign designed to draw attention to easy-care and easy-wear 'wonder fabrics'. The childrenswear advert 'What is a Child?' stated 'a child comes in one hundred shapes and sizes, St Michael Orlon fits them all.'

'What is a Child?' cinema advert, c1965



Junior Miss in St Michael News, 1968



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



Terylene/worsted trousers and
girls' longline Orlon cardigan, St
Michael News, July 1973



Embroidered motifs in St Michael
News, April 1973

1960s-1970s

An emerging teen market resulted in ranges 'Junior Miss' and 'Young St Michael' and later 'Miss Michelle,' being established. These were completely separate ranges to childrenswear, 'designed to suit the tastes and figures of the in-betweens'.

1970

We circulated a children's clothing supplement for school and leisure, looking to the latest trends with 'a range of bright, colourful clothes in modern fabrics', with styles including pointed collars on shirts and flared trousers.

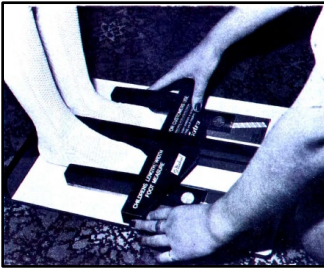
1973

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.

1973

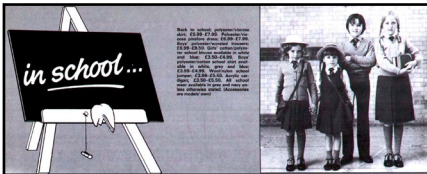
Embroidered motifs made without embroidery was our new scientific advance. The motifs were welded rather than stitched on and could be found on children's beachwear and girls' dresses.



Foot measure, St Michael News, November 1973

1973

In November, a new foot measure was introduced in children's footwear. The device was promoted as the 'only one of its kind in the world.'



Back to school feature, St Michael News, August 1980

1976

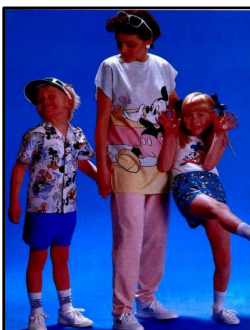
With an increased demand for simple schoolwear that could be bought at retailers like M&S (rather than outfitters for a specific school), we simplified our range but increased production.



St Michael News, November 1979

1979

Babywear became a separate department, with the range going up to 18 months. By Autumn, the range focused on playwear and sleepsuits in warmer materials like velour and towelling. Practicalities like machine washability became the prime focus.



Mickey Mouse garments, St Michael News, February 1987

1970s-1980s

Clothing and accessories with much loved children's characters were a firm favourite among youngsters. Characters such as Paddington Bear, Mickey Mouse and Winnie the Pooh began to appear across childrenswear and babywear.



Boy's tracksuit, 1984



St Michael News, March 1983



Children's nightwear display, 1980s



York Coppergate Store, April 1985



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

1980s

Sporty clothing was a major theme in kidswear ranges throughout the 1980s, including joggers and shell-suits, all in keeping with the fitness trend.

1983

Coordination was a key theme in Spring with mix 'n' match colours and fabrics specially selected so that tops and bottoms could team up together.

1984

We began to display childrenswear by age group instore.

1985

In April, we opened our first separate satellite store for kidswear in York with a 5,000 square foot store dedicated to childrenswear, toys, books and nursery furniture.

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.



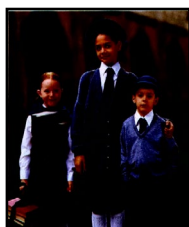
St Michael News, August 1986



St Michael News, September 1986



St Michael News, February 1987



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

1986

We launched a new look for older girls, with a 'fashion conscious' range of casual clothes. The range included skinny leggings, straight skirts, polo neck jumpers and sweatshirts. Older boyswear was also updated for the fashion conscious teen with key pieces such as styled knitwear, casual jackets and shirts.

Our first range of children's ski-wear including all-in-one suits, a jacket with zip out sleeves and salopettes also launched. Matching accessories included boots, hats, goggles and coordinating knitwear.

1987

We started to stock schoolwear in store all year round to meet the demand from customers wanting to replace basic ranges throughout the year.

We launched our first ever washable garments with holograms produced using laser light. Designs included animals and space scenes. M&S's Senior Technologist described it as a 'fashion first'.

1989

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



St Michael News, May 1989

1989

As part of our Summer range we included machine washable canvas pumps in both toddler and older ranges.



New range of schoolwear, April 1990

1990

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

Our school trousers had deep hems, making them easy to let down – and we even included fabric repair patches with them.



St Michael News, September 1991

1991

To optimize comfort and fit, selectors and technologists conducted fitting sessions with school children. Kids also trialled the garments to make sure they were comfortable, before they went into production.



St Michael News, July/August 1992

1992

We introduced 100% cotton nightwear with a special flame retardant finish that makes it safe and comfortable.

We also introduced four 'teen bras' which offer light support in sizes 30AA to 36B.



St Michael News, August 1994

1994

The nineties showed a trend towards a casual layered look with relaxed-fitting separates that could be layered together. M&S responded so that children could be on trend with double denim and loose-fitting shirts.



Girls' Shoes, August 1996

1996

We now offered a wide range of high quality, value for money children's footwear, including 'pre-walkers' and shoes for those all important first steps. Including F and G widths.

We also introduced a measuring electronic gauge to measure the child's foot size and width, to help parents choose a correctly fitting shoe for their child.



St Michael News, December 1997

1997

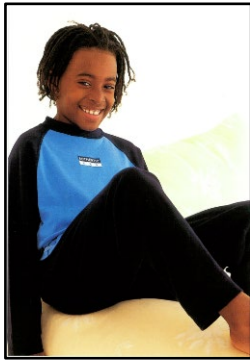
In preparation for the 1998 World Cup, we launched football kits promoted with England player Les Ferdinand, just in time for Christmas.



Marketing for Petit Bebe, 1998

1998

We launched Petit Bebe in Babywear, including daywear and sleepwear in blue, pink and white. An extended range of christening wear including rompers and dresses was added.



Press Release, July 1999

1999

A revolutionary new range using Chitopoly fabric was introduced for children with skin complaints. It was developed with the National Eczema Society and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

The fabric used antibacterial yarn and flat seams with super soft threads, it was designed to minimise irritation and to ensure comfort.



T-shirt from the DB07 range, 2002

2002

David Beckham worked with M&S to create the 'DB07' range, named after the '7' shirt he famously wore for Manchester United and England.



Schoolwear range, On Your Marks, August 2002

2002

Independent research found that our schoolwear stayed looking newer longer than our competitors' products. 9 out of 10 people also preferred the cut of our shirts and blouses.



Bras from the Angel range, 2014

2003

In March, we launched 'Angel', our first bra range for youngsters to sit inside our Lingerie department. Designed to be 'fashionable, fun and functional with non wired bras and knickers' this range included everyday, sports and multiway lines.



Baby Halloween costume marketing, October 2006



Long-sleeved t-shirt, 2006



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



Babywear, M&S website, 2020

2005

We introduced a larger range of Halloween costumes. Babywear was also included with little devils and tiny pumpkins.

2006

We became the first major UK retailer to sell organic Fairtrade cotton clothing, including childrenswear, as sustainability became a top priority in the way our business functions.

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.

2007

We launched kids' clothing exclusively designed for our customers in the Middle East for Ramadan and Eid celebrations. This was followed up in our UK stores.



Child's shirt and jacket, 2010

2007

'Autograph' for children was introduced, including occasionwear and smart-casual clothing. Kids outfits were also added to the Bridalwear range, alongside clothing for First Holy Communions.

In the same year we also linked kids and adults ranges by introducing fashionable 'Mini Me' outfits with carefully chosen details and trends, appropriate for the age group.



School uniform made of recycled plastic bottles, June 2007 and June 2009

2007

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

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.

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.



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



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

2008

For ages 3 to 8 years, M&S developed the 'elasticuff'. 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.



125 range, Your M&S
Magazine, 2009

2009

We began to use the term 'kidswear' instead of 'childrenswear.'

As part of our 125-year anniversary celebrations we created a special range of kidswear to mark the occasion.



Your M&S Magazine, 2009

2009

We created the 'Living the Dream' boyswear range, in collaboration with the McLaren F1 team. The range focused on hoodies and cargo trousers and featured the personal logos of Lewis Hamilton and Heikki Kovalainen.



Your M&S, Sep 2010

2010

We launched 'Limited Collection' for older boys and girls with the range designed to be fashionable and on trend with an age range up to 16 years. The marketing campaign included a photoshoot with the fashion photographer Rankin.



Zandra Rhodes dress, 2010

2010

Following on from a successful collection of M&S womenswear, the designer Zandra Rhodes created a range of girls' wear for M&S, all inspired by her extensive print archive.



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.



Schoolwear innovations, Your M&S, July 2012

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.



Adjust-a-hem trousers, 2014

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!



Easy Dressing marketing, 2016



Easy Dressing, M&S Website, 2018

2016

Summer 2016 saw the launch of 'Easy Dressing,' an M&S first. A range specifically designed for children living with conditions such as hip dysplasia & autism, with clothing specially adapted with hidden labels, easy to open fastenings, slits to aid the use of a feeding tube and the use of super-soft materials making comfort the key priority. Originally launched as schoolwear, by 2018 we had expanded the range to include daywear.

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.



Socks and playsuit, 2016

2016

We launched augmented-reality T-shirts where designs came to life with the help of a smartphone app. These T-shirts didn't just move but leapt out at the audience.



M&S Website, April 2016



Stainaway technology,
2017



Sustainable swimwear,
M&S website, 2019



Baby vests, M&S website, June 2020

2017

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.

2019

We launched sustainable kid's swimwear which used fabric made using recycled plastic bottles and also featured our SunSafe technology with a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) of 50+ and Chlorine Resist technology.

2019-20

We launched our Dreamskin® range, which was specially developed to help ease dry, sensitive and irritated skin. The garments had supersoft flat seams and printed care instructions for sensitive baby skin. With integral scratch mitts across all sizes, and nickel free popper fastening for easy dressing, the range was designed for comfort with responsibly sourced cotton and was validated by the British Skin Foundation.



Window display, 2020

2020

We shifted the focus of our kidswear, looking to everyday style over occasionwear. We also made our 3-for-2 casualwear offer year-round and adjusted the age breaks in kidswear to clearly split product into baby (0-3 years), younger (2 – 7 years) and older (6 – 16 years).



Kids coat label, 2021

2021

Our Back-to-School offer was the most sustainable yet. The entire range was created to pass the “hand-me-down” test, including coats that have space for three names in the label so a 2021 purchase can be used by siblings or friends in years to come.



Smiggle backpack, M&S Website, 2022

2020

As part of the introduction of guest brands across M&S, we added kids' brands like Original Penguin, Frugi and Smiggle to our kids' offering.



Parent Hood marketing, 2024

2024

We launched 'The Parent Hood', our baby club. Exclusive to Sparks, members are offered 10% off babygrows for a whole 12 months, plus weekly parent and baby meetups and other tailored offers.



YoungMinds Young Designer competition, 2025

2025

We launched the Young Designer Competition in collaboration with the charity Young Minds. Open to 5-16 year olds, the winning design would become part of our Hello Yellow kidswear collection.



Percy clothing, 2026

2026

We launched our first Percy Pig clothing collection. Following the success of our Percy printed PJs in recent years, the 2026 collection included oversized hoodies, comfy tees and cosy cardigans.