During 1965, Sr Mary Eugene, founding principal of the school, worked with the relevant authorities to determine the name of the school (she had to fight for the inclusion of ‘girls’ in the title), the school motto and the school uniform.

Uniforms for parish schools had been the same throughout Sydney for many years; navy blue serge box-pleated tunics, with blouses – usually white and often short sleeved in summer and long sleeved in winter, together with school ties, navy jumpers and sometimes blazers as well.

With the support of parents whom she consulted, Sr Mary Eugene arranged for a change that surprised and delighted the families. The new school was to have teal blue dresses for summer wear and a teal serge tunic with a beige blouse for winter, together with a teal jumper and jacket. Berets and gloves completed the ensembles and were to be worn to and from school, even in summer!

The local drapers store in Parramatta, Japour’s, arranged with a uniform factory for the production of the uniforms in a range of sizes at an affordable price and made them available for purchase from their shop. The Japour’s store was located at the northern end of Church Street, Parramatta (where the Riverside Theatre now stands).

As the Catherine McAuley uniform was different from the St Patrick’s uniform, the school where many of the students came from, in the early days the students were given the option to continue to wear the St Patrick’s uniform or to change over to the new Catherine McAuley one. For the first few years the school therefore had a mix of two different uniforms.

“I was fortunate to change to the new McAuley uniform upon leaving St Patrick’s. I thought it was the most attractive uniform I had ever seen. Even the students of OLMC were envious of our new uniform. I can recall very clearly that both the St Patrick’s uniform and the McAuley uniform were worn by students for perhaps two years and over that time fewer students were wearing the St Patrick’s uniform. I do recall Sr Anne requesting parents to consider buying the new uniform for their daughter(s) and perhaps that would have been in about 1967.”

Louise Pritchard (nee Montagna) Form 4 1968

“I think our uniforms were colourful and ahead of many others at the time. I loved wearing it.”

Victoria Kearney 1969 - 1972

Berets and gloves completed the ensembles and were to be worn to and from school, even in summer!
“It was a lively uniform and I remember going to Japours to get it which was so exciting”.  
Janie Gatt 1971 - 1974

“I loved the smell of Japours, it’s funny what you remember. To this day however I cannot wear that colour”.  
Cheryl Cullen (nee Hines) 1974 - 1977

“I don’t know how Mum afforded to keep us all in uniforms, saying that I had to wear the St Patrick’s winter uniform for my first year at Catherine McAuley. The Japour ladies were always laughing or smiling as they went about their business. They had all the uniforms for the many schools around and other great stuff as well.”  
Louise Northey

“Gloves and jackets were compulsory and not always appreciated parts of our school uniform. I do remember the berets worn early on and the uniform inspections – the length of the skirt was always something to be checked! I still love the teal blue colour.”  
Cathy Ford 1972 - 1975

“Our uniforms were never allowed to be above the knee”.  
Jenny Archer

“I do remember the berets worn early on and the uniform inspections - the length of the skirt was always something to be checked!”

“The early uniforms had a belt and a blousy top to the dress which made them easy to hitch up!”

Veronica Chilton

“Sr Barbara would have one of the other nuns drive her past Parramatta railway station and she would hang out the car window and yell at the girls to put their hats on. So embarrassing...”

Leni Harris

“I loved it. It was a bold new colour (teal blue) with check trim....very out there for its time.”

Cheryl Adams (nee Keighran) 1967 - 1970
“After four years of wearing it the novelty had well and truly worn off!”

Shirley Saines 1970 - 1973

“Playing at lunchtime our pinafores always got in the way”. (pictured above)

Denise Cohen (Todd) Class of 1967

“The check trim was the same fabric as the uniform for St Monica’s North Paramatta Primary”.

Cathy Moore

“The burgundy apron was a must wear on school grounds no excuses. And the hat had to be worn from your front door to school and back. Prefects issued on the spot fines.”

Peta Faucett

“Don’t forget wearing gloves...we were ladies!!”

Beverley Leake

“Gloves – summer and winter”.

Myree Hardaker Bellamy

“I liked the uniform. The colour was completely different to any other schools.”

Maggie Simmons

“The berets were worn with the winter uniform which was the tunic, beige shirt, tie, tie clip, cardigan, jacket, stockings and gloves. The summer uniform was the dress and a panama hat. I remember when we went on school excursions people would comment on our uniforms and how nice they were!”

Kerry Browne

“Skirts did become shorter but it wasn’t only that they were hitched. The uniforms where changed in 1972 to ‘A’ line with no belt and as we were all leaving that year and had all grown taller the skirts become shorter. It wasn’t practical to buy new uniforms.”

Veronica Chilton Class of 1972

“We did not like wearing stockings, gloves and hats and all the girls hitched up their uniform”.

Moya McCreanor (nee Puckeridge) 1969 —1972

“We were lucky Sr Mary Eugene was insistent that we have a ‘teal and burgundy’ uniform. I’m sure the Australian fashion designer Prue Acton was involved.”

Vicki Baiada (nee Cremona) Class of 1968

School bags became available in 1971 at the request of students through the school council. The school newsletter at the time outlined the details: “School Bags - Maroon with the school crest in aqua print, are now available at school. Cost is $3.00.”
Bags can be used for carrying sports uniforms, art materials etc. They are not a substitute for cases or brief cases, as they are not strong enough”.

School Newsletter ‘Newsweek’ 12th October 1971

SCHOOL BERETS AND PANAMA HATS

“The new summer berets are being worn by First Form. Girls in other Forms who need a new hat should get another panama, so that the uniform will remain uniform. There are some hats available at reduced price, $2.00, at the bookstore, also some quite good ones in the uniform pool. In the event of panama hats not being available, girls must see the Principal about the berets… Hats, berets and gloves must be worn to and from school.

School Newsletter ‘Newsweek’, 9th February 1971

“I remember when we were allowed to change the panama hats for a summer weight beret. The challenge was to wear the beret as far back on your head as possible mostly secured with bobby pins.”

Kerrie Keighran

“I remember losing my beret on the train; well it ‘accidentally’ fell out the door. Fortunately the rail line staff returned it to school about a week or so later…minus the lining. Damn!”

Julie Tait Class of 1976

“I remember when we were allowed to change the panama hats for a summer weight beret. The challenge was to wear the beret as far back on your head as possible mostly secured with bobby pins.”

“I loved wearing my beret!”

Kathryn Hollier

“Summer berets are NOT worn with the winter uniform. Girls are to wear a felt beret with the serge uniform. The two berets should last a girl for the four years she is in high school.”

School Newsletter ‘Newsweek’, 1st June 1971

“I remember losing my first one out the train door…”

Trish McDonald
Sister Mary Barbara was the Miss Marple of the school. She taught Business Principles and Commerce among other subjects. Apart from this, or because of it, her self-appointed mission was to maintain the tone and standards of the school.

To her, the correct wearing of the school uniform (including gloves in those days) and the behaviour of the wearer went hand in hand.

To relieve the financial burden on parents, however, she ran a little business behind the scenes. Deals were done with students at the end of Year 10 and smart uniforms, dry-cleaned and pressed, became a godsend for some hard-pressed students/parents.

Students were fined for incorrect wearing of the school uniform. This part of the bookkeeping was private but there was no mistaking that the names of those who offended against the code by incorrect wearing of the uniform or the unbecoming behaviour of the wearer were recorded. These infringements would be dealt with later. Occasionally, a few minutes before the final bell of the day, Sr Barbara’s voice would come over the loudspeaker. Students waited with bated breath as each name was called. It was a moment of relief for some. For others it was a moment of anxiety or examination of conscience before the impending interview.
MEMORIES OF...
Uniform Inspections

“We had to line up for inspection of hats/berets, gloves, stockings and skirt length. One inch above the knee when kneeling.”
Judith Rodrigues

“We used to get lined up on the walkway and have Sr Barbara use a ruler to measure 2 inches above the knee. Some girls had the seams ripped and dropped by her if they were too short.”
Doris Bevan

“Six inches above the knee kneeling down is how I remember it but there was always a little hitching going on to make them shorter.”
Karyn Borg

“I was caught at Parramatta train station without my hat...Sr Barbara was there checking up on students.”
Leni Harris

“The Sisters would drive slowly down Darcy Road checking out who didn’t have their hats and gloves on.”
Nadine Koff

“I remember frantically shining my shoes on the back of my socks before a uniform inspection.”
Karen Brien

“I remember Sr Barbara chasing us through the corridors clapping her hands for a uniform inspection.”
Joyce McMahon

“Sr Barbara would pull down your tunic if it was too short, tears all round.”
Jenny Archer

“I remember being lined up in front of class and we had to kneel down and have the length of our skirt measured.”
Gael Halliburton

“Sr Barbara had her ruler and would measure skirt lengths. If you were short like me you got away with a shorter skirt.”
Monique van Alderen (nee Deiagher)

“I remember standing in the courtyard and having our hems measured. If I recall some of the older students did a protest and tacked on different material to their dresses!”
Angela Howarth

“I have fond memories of Sr Sophie and Sr Barbara and the ruler at assembly.”
Monique Arts

“All the uniforms passed the measuring test....they were just ‘hitched up’ away from the Sister’s eyes!”
Marlene Lennon

“Every so often the prefect would measure from our knee to thigh to see how short the uniform was and we girls would get in trouble for bending that little bit forward to make it look like the dress was long!”
Rita Frances