

Children's footwear brand, Start-Rite Shoes, reveals new brand identity and product designs

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Start-Rite Shoes has helped children explore in comfort and confidence for 226 years. We're proud of our specialism and proud of our heritage. And we have spent the past year challenging ourselves to go even deeper - in our understanding of children's growing feet, in our insight into how they live and move today.

The result is a new brand and product strategy anchored in the belief that the best children's shoes should help them move freely. We're here to remove worry for parents and remove barriers for children.

With shoes designed around the latest thinking in children's foot health. With shoes designed around specific needs rather than one-size-fits-all. With shoes that will endure whatever children put them through.

Research has reinforced with us how vital freedom and discovery are for children's learning and development. It has also shown how this freedom can be compromised by today's non-stop, hyperorganised lifestyles – and by parents' constant juggling act as they manage time, resource and the needs of multiple children.

The new positioning is designed to place the child centre stage – driving new areas of product development based on how children move today. And underpinning a warmer, more dynamic personality for the brand.

Start-Rite Shoes CEO, Ian Watson, said: "While our heritage will always be vital to who we are, it's my job to focus the business around the needs of families today and where we can help them go tomorrow. To do this we need to be in constant dialogue with parents, children and our retail partners. And to be constantly challenging, refining and innovating at a product level."

We worked with one of the country's top design consultants to bring the positioning to life in a way that drives reappraisal while remaining sensitive to the power of our specialism and heritage. Central to this were the iconic Start-Rite twins – part of our brand for over 80 years. By re-drawing them to look like children rather than dolls, and freeing them from their constraints within the logo, we have created a sense of adventure and discovery that returns to the spirit of the original 1930s illustrations.

Ian said: "We have radically modernised the brand while in fact returning it much closer to its original pioneering routes. Start-Rite today is known as a relatively conservative brand – the reality is that in the 1940s we were the brand that challenged perceived wisdom about children's footwear. We carried out the country's first nationwide survey of children's feet. And we fundamentally changed the way children's shoes are made. Our new identity returns this sense of pioneering spirit to the brand and hints at the pioneering spirit we aim to support in the children who wear our shoes."

From a product perspective, the new positioning has embedded a deeper focus on the diverse ways children

move. Our product design has always been driven by the changing needs of growing feet. Now our designs are also responsive to the varied personalities and activities of different children. So not only do we work with a team of experts in biomechanics, physiology and podiatry, we spend a lot of our time observing the ways children move.

Start-Rite Shoes, Head of Design, Claire Russell, said: “We’re here to create shoes that don’t just fit the foot but fit the child. Giving parents total confidence. Giving children footwear that meets their specific needs – be it the go-everywhere chameleon shoe, the survive-anything active shoe, or the feel-special smart shoe. It’s our years of experience and depth of specialism that enable us to identify and address these needs in a way that – we believe – is unique.”

For AW18 and moving forward, our products are defined not just by life stage but by usage:

Our iconic Classics range combines timeless styling with the latest thinking in children’s foot health and our unwavering focus on comfort.

Our Kicks range has versatility and ease at its core – designed to transition seamlessly from party to park, classroom to playground.

Our Pioneers range is our most advanced yet – with our expert blend of smart materials, intelligent protection and sports-inspired styling.

Our relaunch will be supported by an extensive communications campaign in 2018, built around the central idea ‘Keep Exploring.’ The print and digital campaign is designed to demonstrate the insight, expertise and craftsmanship that go into every Start-Rite shoe – and to set it in the context of real children moving freely.

Ian said “We’ve spent 18 months transforming the brand from the inside out – now we need to show the world how we’ve changed.”

#KeepExploring with #StartRite

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