# Fraser Group announces closures for Flannels Junior stores amid high street turbulence



In a significant shift within the UK retail landscape, Fraser Group has announced the impending closure of several stores under its Flannels Junior brand. The closures will see the termination of operations at the Bluewater, Westfield Stratford, and Westfield White City locations, with only the 223 Ingram Street store in Glasgow remaining operational. These closures have resulted in redundancies for the staff at these sites. The decision follows Fraser Group's acquisition of Base Childrenswear from JD Sports in December 2022 for £47.5 million, after which a rebranding to Flannels Junior was implemented in 2023.

The announcement of these closures is emblematic of the broader challenges faced by the UK high street. In recent months, several well-known retailers, including Morphe, New Look, and Monki, along with multiple stores from Sainsbury's, WHSmith, Boots, and Tesco, have either shut down locations or reduced staff levels. The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has warned that the looming increase in National Insurance contributions and the National Living Wage could lead to the loss of up to 160,000 part-time jobs over the next three years. The BRC's Chief Executive, Helen Dickinson, highlighted the potential impact on younger workers, stating, "Retail is a key source of employment right across the economy."

In a contrasting development within the retail sphere, Jolly's department store in Bath, which abruptly closed in December, is set to reopen after undergoing significant refurbishment. The store, which has been a staple of the Bath high street for over 200 years, was caught unaware by its closure, impacting approximately 100 staff, many of whom had long tenures. Morleys, a London-based chain of department stores, has committed to taking over the site, promising to maintain the Jolly's name and the traditional department store model.

Allan Winstanley, the chief executive of Morleys, expressed a dedication to preserving the store's unique character while creating an exceptional shopping experience for the local community. General manager Jess Merritt-Johns, who has been re-hired for the transition, shared her enthusiasm for the reopening and remarked, "The people of Bath are very emotionally invested in the store and protective of it."

The closure and subsequent reopening of Jolly's mark a rare moment of positivity amidst a period of instability for the UK high street, particularly for department stores which have faced numerous challenges in adapting to modern retail demands. The revitalisation efforts at Jolly’s highlight a commitment to maintaining traditional customer service values in an evolving marketplace.

The situation surrounding the high street retail environment underscores the broader economic challenges, including rising operating costs and shifting consumer behaviours. As retailers navigate this turbulent landscape, some have opted for expansion, with brands such as Mango and Abercrombie and Fitch announcing new store openings, bringing a mix of optimism and caution to the high street's future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/03/frasers-kids-administration/> - This URL supports the claim about Frasers Group's decision to close several stores under its Flannels Junior brand, following the acquisition of Base Childrenswear from JD Sports.
* <https://www.britishretailconsortium.org/> - This URL provides information on the British Retail Consortium (BRC), which has warned about potential job losses due to increases in National Insurance contributions and the National Living Wage.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-64844035> - This URL could provide general information on the challenges faced by the UK high street, including store closures and staff redundancies.
* <https://www.bathchronicle.co.uk/news/bath-news/jollys-department-store-bath-reopening-8576344> - This URL supports the claim about Jolly's department store in Bath reopening after its abrupt closure, with Morleys taking over the site.
* <https://www.morleys.co.uk/> - This URL provides information on Morleys, the London-based chain of department stores that has committed to preserving Jolly's unique character.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/mar/17/uk-retailers-face-tough-year-ahead> - This URL could provide additional context on the broader economic challenges faced by UK retailers, including rising costs and shifting consumer behaviors.