



# Cumnor House Communication Charter

## **Introduction**

It is widely recognised that the more involved parents are in their child's education, the better the pupil performs at school.

Students respond very well to parents participating in their schooling – whether that's just being aware of their progress and understanding their achievements, or whether it's when parents decide to take a more active role and become involved in the school itself.

Either way, greater parental engagement often motivates the child to do well. In order to establish and maintain this interest, there needs to be regular and reliable communication and sharing of information between the school and pupils' families.

Schools must create an effective partnership by providing an open and communicative environment with its wider community, forming a link between the classroom and the home, and the school and the family.

### **The Cumnor House Communication Charter**

Our Charter was produced to help form this strong link, in consultation between senior staff and a focus group of parents, representing a range of year groups across all sites.

This group looked at key aspects of communication, from day-to-day announcements to Parents' Evenings and Calendars.

Some of the initiatives discussed have already been implemented, and the production of this Charter will, we hope, manage expectations and offer useful tips to ensure that the home-school partnership that is so key to positive pupil outcomes is as strong and effective as possible.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of our communication but, in the meantime, I hope that you find our Charter helpful in your dealings with our school.

**Daniel Cummings**  
Headmaster  
Cumnor House Boys' School and Nursery

**Amanda McShane**  
Headmistress  
Cumnor House School for Girls

## Our Aim

To ensure that Cumnor House is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

## Our Principles

Cumnor House believes that:

- ✓ Families are a crucial influence on the education and development of our pupils and effective partnerships between home and school have a positive impact on pupils' learning
- ✓ It is important that parents have access to relevant information and that they receive our support, guidance and help in a timely and effective way
- ✓ It is important that parents are consulted and given opportunities to provide feedback to the school
- ✓ We strongly believe in respect and equal treatment for all persons regardless of their difference. We insist that this is applied in every aspect of our business and how everyone, including parents conducts themselves. ***This includes face to face communication, emailing, telephone calls and social media including 'WhatsApp'.***
- ✓ No member of staff who works for the school will be discriminated against, harassed or victimised because of their personal characteristics.

Cumnor House recognises:

- ✓ The important role played by parents, other adults, siblings and peers in supporting learning
- ✓ The importance of effective systems for facilitating communication to support the learning and wellbeing of our pupils

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values by keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school. The 'Wordle' on the front page of this Charter reflects the ways in which the very best lines of communication can be managed between school and home.

***'WhatsApp' is not a recognised communication tool used by Cumnor House.***

## What Makes Good Communication?

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that:

- ✓ information is transmitted
- ✓ understanding is developed and shared
- ✓ trust is built
- ✓ confidentiality respected
- ✓ co-ordinated action is taken

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish respectful, fair, open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner, a courtesy that staff will also expect in return.

Parents will be provided with various methods and points of contact, including the main point of contact, school reception. There is also a specific protocol for parents with concerns over academic or pastoral issues, as highlighted in the diagrams below:

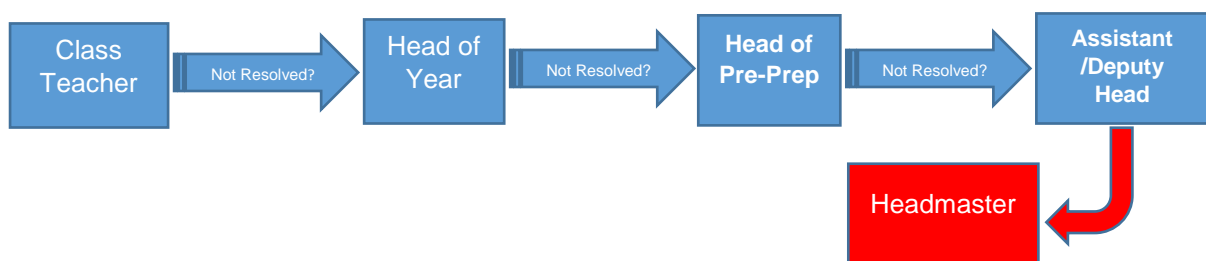
**Operations:** For issues relating to finance, transport or wraparound care (Breakfast and afterschool club.)



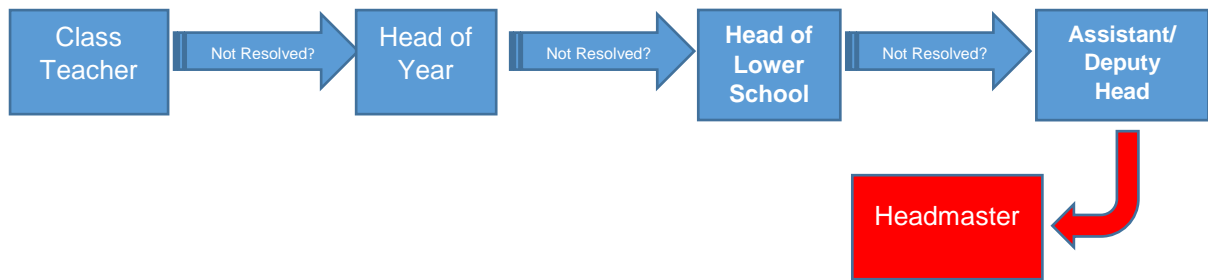
**Nursery (Aged 2 - 4 years):** For issues relating to academic or pastoral matters, speak to the ...



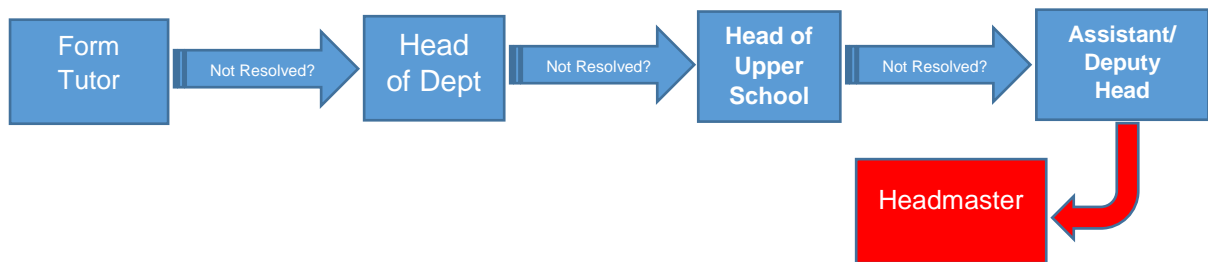
**Boys' Pre-Prep (Year R – Year 2):** For issues relating to academic or pastoral matters, speak to the ...



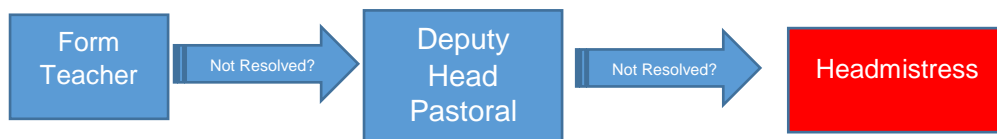
**Boys Lower School (Year 3 -Year 5):** For issues relating to academic or pastoral matters, speak to the ...



**Boys' Upper School (Year 6 – Year 8):** For issues relating to academic or pastoral matters, speak to the ...



**Girls' School (Year R – Year 6):** For issues relating to pastoral matters, speak to the ...



**Girls' School (Year R – Year 6):** For issues relating to academic matters, speak to the ...



Our charter is designed to provide open dialogue between parents and school, and for school to provide multiple contact and communication points with parents so that they can access all the information they require during the school week. By following the route map above, we will try to ensure that any matters are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible.

## The Communication Charter

In order to ensure that communication between school and home is as robust and supportive as possible, the following commitments should be made by staff, parents and pupils. When this partnership is at its best, all three parties will be engaged fully in the 'triangle of communication'.

School will:	Parents will:	Pupils will:
✓ Send out a <b>termly calendar</b> prior to the start of term via Parentmail and PDF copy	✓ Highlight those events that relate to their child (ren)	✓ Look ahead each week to see which events relate to them
✓ Send out a weekly <b>Cumnor House Weekly Digest-</b> newsletter (Wednesday)	✓ Read the newsletters within 48 hours of receipt	✓ Read those items that relate to them & look at the week ahead with parents
✓ Publish team sheets & match info on <a href="http://www.cumnorhousesport.com">http://www.cumnorhousesport.com</a> <a href="http://www.cumnorgirlssport.com">http://www.cumnorgirlssport.com</a> 72 hours before fixtures	✓ Check <a href="http://www.cumnorhousesport.com">http://www.cumnorhousesport.com</a> <a href="http://www.cumnorgirlssport.com">http://www.cumnorgirlssport.com</a> 48 hours before fixtures for up to date info	✓ Confirm details with parents & discuss with the coach if questions arise
✓ Code <b>Parentmail</b> messages with Yr Group & INFO or ACTION to assist parents	✓ Read <b>Parentmail</b> messages that relate to their child	✓ Discuss any relevant items with parents and, if necessary, staff
✓ Set clear targets for pupils at <b>Parents' Evenings</b> ✓ Autumn and Spring Term	✓ Use Parentmail to book and attend Parents meetings – discuss targets with children	✓ Acknowledge the targets set & work hard to achieve them
✓ <b>Reporting:</b> Send effort grade reports in the Autumn and Spring terms and a full subject report in the Summer term	✓ Read reports carefully and discuss targets with your children	✓ Discuss targets with parents and work hard to achieve them
✓ <b>Mark homework</b> in a timely manner, ideally within 48 hours. Homework will be clearly explained and differentiated to children's needs.	✓ Look at books periodically once homework tasks have been completed. ✓ Discuss homework and show and interest in home learning.	✓ Record homework in diaries (KS2/3) and ask for clarification if unsure of task. ✓ Complete homework tasks carefully & thoroughly
✓ Respond promptly to <b>E-mails &amp; phone calls</b> from parents, ideally within 48 hours	✓ Re-read E-mails carefully before pressing 'send', never sending a message in anger	
✓ School to Issue <b>Voice of the Parent Survey</b> annually	✓ Participate, be honest & open & reply with key opinions & comments, avoiding the day to day minutiae	
✓ School to use <b>Facebook &amp; Twitter</b> for news bites and comms channels to advise on upcoming events & share pictures & results of what has occurred.	✓ Like us on Facebook & follow us on Twitter, & separate Sports & Cumnor House feeds	

## A-Z of School Communication, with top tips for success

### Calendar

The termly calendar is a PDF diary, sent to parents via Parentmail prior to the start of term, thus allowing for planning for the coming three months. The Calendar contains useful information, such as key contact details and term dates, as well as details of the coming term (including fixtures, trips and visits, Parents' Evenings etc). The Calendar is organised into weeks in order to make it easier to reference. Please note that the Calendar is produced half a term in advance due to publication timescales and, as such, is occasionally subject to change. Any such changes will always be advised in the weekly newsletters and via Parentmail.



**Use different coloured highlighter pens to mark out the events that relate to your child/ren**

### Parent Association & Class Reps

The Cumnor House School Parents' Association (Boys and Girls) (CHSPA) organise social events to encourage the involvement of families in the life of the school. Fundraising goes towards equipment and activities for the pupils of Cumnor House School. They support school events by helping at concerts, drama productions, sporting events, open mornings and seasonal celebrations.

Each class has a Class Rep, who is a point of contact for their class to promote parent interaction and organise small social events so that the parents of the class can keep in touch. The Class Reps help the CHSPA promote events and recruit a class team of helpers. If you are interested in being a rep, please contact the school office and your details will be passed on to the correct person.

### E-mail

E-mails can be a useful way of communicating quickly between school and home. However, when used incorrectly, it can also be a barrier to developing effective partnerships. These 5 do's and don'ts will hopefully help you to use E-mails effectively:

- ✓ **Try and respond to an E-mail within 48 hours of receipt**, even if it is to send a holding response. This will show the sender that you are dealing with their query
- ✓ **Be concise and to the point**. Do not make an E-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an E-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long E-mail can be very discouraging to read
- ✓ **Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions**. An E-mail reply must answer all questions, while pre-empting further questions – if you do not answer all the questions in the original E-mail, you will receive further E-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and the other person's time but also cause considerable frustration. Moreover, if you are able to pre-empt relevant questions, people will be grateful and impressed with your efficient and thoughtful responses
- ✓ **Do not use CAPITALS for an entire E-mail**. IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. At the very most, capitals can be used to emphasize one word, but more than that is inappropriate

- ✓ **Read the E-mail before you send it.** A lot of people don't bother to read an E-mail before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in E-mails. Apart from this, reading your E-mail through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings. Before pressing send, think about how the message will "feel" for your recipient – it is very easy for E-mail messages to be misinterpreted because of incorrect tone. If you are writing an E-mail in anger, it is often sensible to sleep on it and revisit your message the following day to see if you still feel the same way before pressing 'send'
- ✓ Please remember an email can often be read in a very different way to how it might be meant, so where possible for difficult conversations a face to face meeting is advised.
- ✓ Staff are encouraged to check emails between the hours of 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday, when they are not teaching. Please do allow staff time to respond within these hours and do not be disappointed if you do not receive a reply instantly.

## Homework

Assigning homework serves various educational needs. It serves as an intellectual discipline, establishes study habits, eases time constraints on the amount of curricular material that can be covered in class, and supplements and reinforces work done in school. In addition, it fosters student initiative (assignments provide some youngsters with their first chance to manage time and meet deadlines), brings home and school closer together and encourages a love of learning.

Teachers assign homework for many reasons: it can help children review and practice what they've learned; get ready for the next day's class; learn to use resources, such as libraries and reference materials; and explore subjects more fully than time permits in the classroom. Homework can also help children develop good habits and attitudes.

Homework is meant to be a positive experience and to encourage children to learn. Assignments should not be used as punishment. Parents should encourage children to work independently on homework and check homework has been completed. Children should not feel upset or frustrated by homework and if this occurs, parents are encouraged to use judgement to cease homework and feedback to teachers. Teachers will support with difficulties that may occur regarding homework. Children should record their homework in the allotted diary, which should be signed regularly by parents.



1. **Build 'homework time' into your evening routine; as a part of everyday life, it will become a habit rather than a daunting event**
2. **Try to ensure your child has eaten beforehand, as low sugar levels lead to irritability and difficulty concentrating.**



## Newsletters

**Cumnor House Weekly Digest:** sent at approximately 4pm on Wednesdays during term time, containing a short message from the Heads and weekly updates. A more detailed version of the newsletter is collated and sent on a half termly basis.

## Parents' Evenings – see *final page for specific tips*

Parents' Evenings are those 'formal' times in the year, usually in the Autumn and Spring Terms, when you get the opportunity to discuss your child's progress with the Class or Subject Teacher. Time is at a premium, so it is vital that it is maximised. In essence, you should feel confident that the following questions will have been addressed during the allotted time:

1. How is my child faring generally and, where appropriate, is s/he performing at the top/middle/bottom of the Year group?
2. What are his/her key strengths and areas for development?
- 3. Most importantly, what can we do together to help him/her improve in those areas? What are your child's next steps?**

Don't look on the identification of weaknesses as a cause for being defensive. Children come to school to learn and improve and the best schools embrace this and create pathways for children to achieve their potential. Parents' Evenings can be a focal point for achieving this when managed effectively.

## Reading Records & Pupil Diaries

The Reading Records & Pupil Diaries are used as a key vehicle for communication between parents and the school.



**Check and sign the Reading Record regularly**

## Parentmail

The school subscribes to the **Parentmail** service, which allows us to E-mail letters to parents, as well as, in the case of an emergency to send out text messages for reminders and last-minute changes. We urge parents to provide us with a valid E-mail address and to sign up to Parentmail service. A Parentmail App is also available for both Android and Apple phones.

Club bookings and Parent Evening bookings will now be made using the Parentmail service.

Where it is not possible to use E-mail, most written correspondence is passed on to families by the children, so it is important that the school bags are checked on a daily basis. Any other correspondence will be forwarded through the Royal Mail postage service.



**Ensure that the school has an up-to-date E-mails address for anyone who wishes to receive the newsletters**

## Selection for Fixtures & Team Sheets



Cumnor House Schools use:

<http://www.cumnorhousesport.com> and <http://www.cumnorgirlssport.com>

for communicating team selection, fixture lists, directions to matches etc. This is the first port of call for anything match related. All fixtures are in the calendar (both printed version and on the website). Please check the sports websites regularly for last minute changes.

- ✓ Team sheets should, whenever possible, be posted 72 hours before the fixture is scheduled to take place
- ✓ It is a school policy that, if a pupil is selected to play for the school, s/he should honour that selection **and school matches take precedence over other out-of-school sports activities**
- ✓ In exceptional circumstances, it is possible that a pupil may be unavailable for selection. As the Calendar is issued to parents by the start of term, it is expected that parents will inform the Sports Department in writing, at least 2 weeks prior to the fixture date.

- ✓ Selection for school teams is done on the basis of merit. Teams are not fixed but fluid, and Sports Department staff can rotate pupils up or down during the season according to their standard of play, attitude, and commitment in future fixtures
- ✓ If you feel that your child has not been selected for the correct team, please encourage him/her to play his/her very best in the team for which s/he has been selected in order to demonstrate his/her ability, attitude and commitment
- ✓ At the start of every term, the School will run some form of trials for each Year Group. However, for certain sports, such as pre-season nets and some squads, this is sometimes not possible due to pre-season training
- ✓ If pupils are moved to a lower team, every effort will be made to explain clearly to the pupil on what basis the change has been made and what areas s/he needs to work on to regain promotion
- ✓ Please provide written permission for sporting fixtures when required. (Girls.)

Parentmail will advise if a match is going to be late back due to issues with traffic. Please ensure you have downloaded the Parentmail app as such late communication will be sent via the app or text message, rather than by E-mail.



1. Click [here](#) for instructions on how to download the Schoolssports mobile app to your device
2. Use this to find out meet, start & finish times, as well as directions

## Social Media



and activities.

Facebook and Twitter are popular channels of communication that Cumnor House uses to advise on upcoming events, and to report on events of interest, direct to parents' phones. Cumnor House Girls and Boys each have their own useful separate Twitter feeds that they use to cover matches, tournaments



**Follow Cumnor House on Twitter and like us on Facebook to keep track of important information, events and reminders**

## Sporting Information

Uniform and kit lists are provided each year via the school website and in the Parent Information Handbooks. Items are denoted as 'Essential' and 'Optional', with the main aim being to ensure that Cumnor House pupils are as smart as possible in all that they undertake at school matches both on and off site.

Match teas are also considered a very important part of the match experience; therefore, it is expected that all pupils remain behind after a fixture to host or be hosted. When matches are at Cumnor House, pupils will be escorted to the Dining Hall, while parents enjoy their tea. Upon completion, parents will be instructed from where to collect their child(ren).

## Telephone Calls

Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for pupil injury or pupil incident. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed. Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message (ascending order as before) or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible. All phone calls made by parents to the school should go through the main school switchboard.

### First Day Calling

Parents must notify the school by 9am on the day of absence, if their child is going to be absent for any reason. 'First Day Calling' will take place when a child is absent from school. As a school it is our duty of care to ensure children attend school. When a child is absent from school we will make every effort to ascertain the reason for absence. If this information cannot be obtained on first day of absence, social services may be notified to avoid any undue risk to a child that has not made it to school.



**Ensure that the school has phone numbers for you and any other relevant contacts**

## Voice of the Parent Survey

As a Cognita school, we undertake an annual parent survey (Voice of the Parent) to capture parent opinion and views on all aspects of our school. By parents sharing their views and opinions, across all areas of school such as catering, transport, admissions process, extra-curricular facilities, we can set further improvements in motion. In fact, this Communications Charter was borne out of one such survey.

In the spirit of the Cumnor House Communication Charter, we prefer people to be candid and open with us about their responses. If there is a specific individual academic or pastoral concern we would prefer that you follow the protocol for resolving this.

## Parents' Evening Tips



The following 7 tips are from John Coe, a former primary school head teacher and chair of the National Association for Primary Education and should help you to make the most of Parents' Evenings in order to support your child:

1. **Arrange childcare:** Parents' evening is a rare opportunity to have a frank discussion about your child's progress, and those conversations are easier without a little eavesdropper hovering nearby. Having your child with you can be distracting and get in the way of an honest dialogue between you and the teacher, so avoid taking them if possible
2. **Talk to your child:** Before parents' evening, ask your child if there's anything they want you to mention. It's important that school and home work together, so if your child has concerns about something that's happening at school, their teacher should know about it
3. **Make notes in advance:** If your mind goes blank as soon as you enter the classroom, jot down any specific questions you want to ask. Making notes about the things you want to discuss will refresh your memory, but keep it brief, sticking to two or three key points
4. **Get up to date with their work:** If you receive a school report or have an opportunity to look at your child's work, go through it thoroughly and make a note of anything that concerns you, or that you're particularly pleased with. This will provide the foundation for a two-way conversation, rather than expecting the teacher to talk at you
5. **Focus on your child:** Parents' evening is not the place to discuss policies. If you have issues with the school's approach to homework or other school matter that are not directly related to the subject, direct them to the appropriate Heads of Year or School at a later date.
6. **Don't store up big issues:** Whether your child is struggling with maths or having friendship problems, make sure you raise any major issues with your child's teacher as they arise, rather than waiting until your consultation. Teachers prefer to know about problems sooner rather than later, so they can start to address them. Likewise, teachers should inform parents about issues as they happen, so there are no nasty surprises at parents' evening
7. **Remember it's a partnership:** Having an audience with your child's teacher can feel intimidating, but many teachers, particularly young and newly qualified ones, also get butterflies before parent-teacher consultations. Remember that you and the teacher are a partnership. If you can have regular contact with the teacher and keep the same goals in mind, then ultimately your consultation should strengthen the relationship between you – and that can only benefit your child