



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**Cumnor House School for Girls**

**November 2022**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	Cumnor House School for Girls			
<b>DfE number</b>	306/6107			
<b>Address</b>	Cumnor House School for Girls 1 Woodcote Lane Purley Surrey CR8 3HB			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 668 0050			
<b>Email address</b>	admissions@cumnorhouse.com			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Amanda McShane			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cognita Schools Ltd			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	125			
	<b>EYFS</b>	24	<b>Pre-prep</b>	33
	<b>Prep</b>	68		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15 to 17 November 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Cumnor House School for Girls is an independent day school located within the Webb Estate conservation area of Purley, near Croydon. Founded in 1910, the school became the sister school for Cumnor House School for Boys in 2010 when it was acquired by Cognita Schools who oversee governance through a nominated general manager.
- 1.2 The school comprises two sections: pre-prep for pupils aged between four and seven years and prep for pupils aged between seven and eleven years.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection, the school has completely refurbished the main school building, the library and the Reception play area.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to prepare pupils for senior schools of their choosing through teaching in a nurturing and caring environment and by treating each pupil as an individual. It seeks for pupils to be their best selves by promoting a culture of listening, sharing, forgiving, being helpful, being kind, being truthful and treating others as you would like to be treated.

### About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a wide range of family backgrounds in the local area. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry is broadly average for those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils, none of whom require any extra support. Data used by the school have identified 24 pupils as being the most able in mathematics and English, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 12 other pupils because of their special talents in music, sport and drama.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' communication skills are outstanding, and they are excellent listeners from a very young age.
- Pupils' achievements are strongly underpinned by their highly-motivated and enthusiastic approach to learning.
- Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils demonstrate strong knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects and apply them effectively.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of diversity.
- Pupils are exceptionally respectful and caring towards each other.
- Pupils have excellent social skills and a strong sense of belonging.
- Pupils are reflective and self-assured and they are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils have a strong moral understanding, and are very respectful of their community and its rules.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils, especially the more able, to become more enquiring and evaluative learners, by consistently providing more opportunities for independent challenge, particularly in mathematics.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are highly motivated, inquisitive and well-rounded learners who work effectively in groups or individually. Pupils have an excellent work ethic and say that teachers help them understand that they can achieve well even in the subjects where they perceive themselves as being weaker. In an English lesson in Year 5, pupils writing a newspaper article



about the Titanic worked diligently without direct monitoring by the teacher. Remaining on task, they produced a significant amount of excellent work. All ideas are celebrated and tested, giving pupils confidence to try them out. Teaching encourages pupils to see the value of mistakes, using them as a springboard for growth and improvement. The culture of mutual respect between teachers and pupils contributes to very positive attitudes to learning; this relationship is the foundation of pupils' success and achievement. In their workbooks, pupils show great care in presentation and obvious pride in their work, with constructive feedback from teachers helping them to move forward in their learning. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive in the energy and drive they bring to lessons, responding to the high expectations that leaders, governance and staff have successfully embedded throughout the school.

- 3.6 Pupils are excellent communicators. In discussions with inspectors, they confidently expressed their ideas and feelings and initiated purposeful conversations about their successes, activities and friendships. Older pupils articulate their ideas clearly and maturely. Pupils feel that because their opinions are listened to and valued, they owe the same respect for the values and opinions of others. Lesson observations clearly demonstrated that pupils are comfortable to ask questions of each other and of their teachers, and listen to each other with courtesy and maturity. In group discussions, pupils expressed their views clearly and concisely. Pupils are eager to contribute, and take turns respectfully, adding additional details to discussions when their peers need support. Pupils, including the very youngest, are encouraged to develop their reading skills to a high level. Children in Reception told inspectors how much they enjoyed choosing books and reading for enjoyment. From an early age, pupils develop excellent written communication skills, learning to write for a range of purposes. For example, pupils in Year 6 had written highly ambitious and emotive stories from the perspective of a refugee and had researched and created detailed and well-crafted reports on the blitz, whilst pupils in Year 5 had produced comprehensive and persuasive advertising brochures for the Titanic.
- 3.7 Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress from their starting points. In the EYFS, children entering with a broad range of ability make rapid progress, so that by the end of Reception almost all reach the expected levels of development for their age. Pupils of all abilities continue to make rapid progress. By the end of Year 6, nationally standardised test data show that attainment is well above average in relation to national age-related expectations. This was reflected by lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils are successful in gaining entry to senior schools with demanding entrance requirements, with a significant number winning scholarships. Their excellent progress owes much to effective assessment and tracking which result in targeted support when required. School leaders ensure that teaching and curriculum provision are well-matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school enables their child to make progress and that their child's individual educational needs are met effectively.
- 3.8 Pupils acquire high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of subjects. In the EYFS, children develop secure foundations to their literacy and numeracy skills through a range of well-planned, engaging activities. They demonstrate excellent retention of their learning and an eagerness to learn more, due to thorough monitoring and identification of next steps. In a lesson on digraphs, children in Reception demonstrated excellent levels of attainment, engagement and concentration, as they were actively involved in sounding out and choosing letters to build words. Appropriate challenge in many lessons enables pupils of all abilities to maximise their progress. Pupils produce high-quality work in their art, and their creative talents are nurtured and developed as they are introduced to different art styles and artists. Inspectors observed the excellent singing skills of pupils in the chamber choir as they maintained breath control and accurate pitch in a complex two-part arrangement. In an English lesson in Year 5, deeper-level questioning enabled all pupils to make rapid progress in their understanding and use of reported speech, and the more able pupils successfully expanded their vocabulary through sharing ideas with their peers. Teachers encourage the pupils, effectively using encouragement and praise and offering additional support when required. Pupils value the fact that their teachers are contactable on *Teams* for extra help, and they find the

*Requirement checklist* for each subject a useful tool to monitor their own progress. Pupils value teachers' helpful verbal and written feedback which helps them take the next steps in their learning. All pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers' feedback and marking helps them to improve and the overwhelming majority agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons. Inspection evidence confirms this.

- 3.9 Pupils have a secure knowledge of mathematical concepts, successfully applying their knowledge to a range of problem-solving opportunities. In lessons observed, different year groups showed growing mastery of the mathematical topics they had learnt, ranging from competence in using different bonds to make 10 in Reception to quickly grasping the mechanics behind the sum of the interior angles of polygons in Year 6. Pupils confidently use their numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, in a drama class, pupils in Year 3 and 4 employed their numeracy skills successfully to calculate the number of beats per bar while practising songs for the Christmas concert. In a food technology lesson, pupils in Year 3 used their knowledge of fractions when measuring out ingredients. In an art lesson, pupils in Year 5 successfully used ratios to correctly construct scale models of their peers.
- 3.10 As they progress through the school, pupils become highly competent in using and applying information and communication technology (ICT) in many areas of learning, including for research and online presentations. These strong skills develop in part because pupils have ready access to ICT equipment, a result of the commitment of the proprietor's investment in providing personal laptops for all pupils from Year 3 upwards. Pupils confidently use online visual programming and coding tools. In a music lesson, pupils used their well-developed skills to access an online music tool to create music for advertisements using their laptops. Pupils in Year 5 were observed confidently interacting with their Mandarin teacher during an online lesson.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve success in a range of activities outside the formal curriculum and speak proudly about their success in a variety of sports in local and national competitions. A number of pupils represent the Surrey Under-12 cricket squad; pupils have achieved silver medals in the English school cross-country finals and the school finished fourth in the national swimming finals. Pupils gain significant recognition in Independent Schools Association (ISA) events, and several have received awards in regional and national art competitions. Pupils are confident performers. In a concert held for parents during the inspection, pupils played a variety of instruments and sang to a high standard. Pupils are highly successful in music, speech and drama examinations with some reaching grade 8 standard in music. Choristers perform frequently outside school and have travelled across Europe to perform at Disneyland.
- 3.12 Pupils use information from a wide range of sources and develop emotional intelligence and the ability to discuss, debate and reflect with clarity. Pupils' work shows that they successfully acquire a range of study skills, for example analysing unseen text in English or drawing conclusions from data in science. Lesson observations indicate that pupils are keen to question the concepts they learn rather than taking them at face value. Pupils are not afraid to ask questions or take risks because they know that making mistakes is a vital way to learn and make progress. For example, in a science lesson, pupils in Year 4 showed excellent ability in hypothesising about the properties of gases, liquids and solids after analysing balloons in the three different states. Not all of their ideas were correct but through collaborative discussion pupils began to gain a deeper understanding of the different properties, realising, for example, that not all solids are hard. In an English lesson, pupils were effectively challenged to employ deeper-level thinking to analyse their own and others' work, suggesting improvements to engage the reader instantly. They made rapid progress using correct literary terms such as rhetorical questions and hyperbole. In most lessons observed teaching created opportunities for higher-order thinking, challenging pupils to evaluate and reflect upon information provided to predict outcomes and solve complex problems. However, in some lessons, progress was not as rapid because opportunities for independent exploration were not fully exploited.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are resilient and reflective learners, developing a deep self-understanding which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. In discussions and informal conversations, pupils were objective about their strengths and discussed with insight what they needed to do to improve. Pupils have excellent levels of perseverance and are confident in their acceptance of challenges. In the EYFS, children show strong self-confidence in their activities and play, responding positively to warm and encouraging interactions with their teachers. Older pupils' work shows that they reflect effectively on their performance, using the success criteria for a task alongside teachers' supportive comments. Pupils use failure as a learning tool to push themselves outside their comfort zone. Senior leaders are highly effective in creating the space and the time for pupils to develop excellent personal skills and self-awareness through the curriculum. Responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents overwhelmingly agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils are confident decision makers. They take an active part in their school pupil leadership team (PLT) which provides opportunities for pupils representing all forms to meet and make decisions about school life. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how the decisions they make affect their own success and wellbeing because they are given many opportunities to take on leadership opportunities and to make decisions for themselves and for their peers. Pupils gave examples of how they are able to decide on the different school charities for which they raise money and were keen to point out that the PLT meet weekly, that they are listened to and that decisions are made on their recommendations, such as choosing how to celebrate the Queen's jubilee or the design for anti-bullying badges.
- 3.16 Pupils' spiritual awareness is strong, enhanced by the many meaningful opportunities provided by the curriculum, for personal reflection and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. In interviews, pupils were thoughtful and deeply respectful of other viewpoints and beliefs. The school is a diverse, multicultural, multi-faith community and there is a strong culture of mutual respect and tolerance for others' faiths, feelings and values. Pupils explained that they enjoyed finding out more about different religions in their religious education (RE) lessons and when visitors representing different faiths were invited into school to talk about their beliefs and philosophies. Pupils in Year 3 explained to inspectors how much they valued the beauty of nature, and in a Year 1 lesson pupils discussed and compared with great thoughtfulness how their different religions explained the creation story. In the same lesson, pupils discussed with their partner things they might pray for, for instance that an angel would look after their pet or that their grandmother would be looked after in heaven. Trips to places of worship allow pupils to learn about and compare and contrast ideologies. For example, pupils in Year 5 spoke excitedly about their upcoming trip to a Gurudwara as part of the topic on Sikhism. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in art, music and the performing arts and it is clear that pupils' spiritual understanding is enhanced by these activities.
- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to be fair and respectful to others, thus fulfilling the school's stated aims. The 'Cumnor Way' is the expression of the school's values, based on courage, compassion, endeavour, integrity and belief and pupils follow this code extremely well. In interviews, all pupils showed that they respect one another, despite not always having the same opinions. During break and lunchtime, pupils of all ages were observed interacting with kindness and respect. Older pupils set an excellent example to younger children. In all lessons observed pupils showed high levels of self-discipline, and behaviour was consistently exemplary. Pupils are calm and attentive, which results in a productive learning environment inside and outside the classroom. Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong, and around the school they are extremely polite and well-mannered. In interviews, pupils were keen to point out that there is no bullying at the school, and through observation and discussion with staff it is apparent that the older pupils do an excellent job in nurturing and supporting the younger ones. For example, at break times, older pupils were frequently seen playing with the Reception and Year 1 pupils and the school rabbit monitors were

observed gently explaining to Reception children how to handle the pets carefully and correctly during a lunch break.

- 3.18 Collaborative skills are excellent and intrinsic to the school's approach to learning, resulting in pupils having excellent social awareness. Consequently, the school has a very caring, considerate and inclusive atmosphere, characterised by pupils working well together to problem-solve and achieve common goals. All pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are 'buddies' to the younger pupils, and throughout the school year, the buddies meet with their mentees to support and interact with them, for instance in 'buddy' reading sessions. In ICT, pupils successfully work in groups to complete projects. Year 5 pupils gave an example of creating a video on the humorous out-takes during the making of a film. Pupils are keen to learn collaboratively, showing high levels of compassion, understanding and respect for other pupils' views and abilities. For example, in a Year 6 art lesson pupils spent much of the time working quietly and diligently on their own still life drawings, but when given the opportunity to move around the class to look at other pupils' work, they did so with enthusiasm and a desire not only to learn from their peers, but also to offer their views on the other drawings in a supportive and non-threatening way. Responding to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Pupils naturally respect and care for each other. They relish taking responsibility for others, and leadership roles, such as house captains and anti-bullying and digital ambassadors allow them to contribute positively to the wider life of the school. The school actively supports a number of local and national charities. Pupils with a variety of responsibilities and leadership roles, meet together to discuss, arrange and ultimately run a variety of charitable events all of which are chosen by the pupils. The pupils are currently raising money for the *Shooting Star* charity and they also talked about helping out at and donating to a local food hub project, especially recently for Harvest Festival.
- 3.19 Pupils' understanding of staying safe is excellent. In interviews, they clearly demonstrated their understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise in maintaining a balanced lifestyle. In food technology lessons, pupils clearly demonstrated their knowledge about the benefits of different food groups. In discussion with pupils in Year 5 and 6, they all knew who the safeguarding team were and the responsibilities they held. Pupils clearly explained the steps they take to stay safe online, saying lessons and discussions about online safety had deepened their understanding significantly. Pupils recognise that mental health is vital in ensuring wellbeing and appreciate the insights afforded by a recent wellbeing day. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 explained how they had had training on how to keep safe when travelling on the underground and buses, commenting that it was a useful life skill.
- 3.20 Pupils demonstrate a keen awareness of diversity and cultural understanding. Pupils respect and value the diversity within school and the wider community. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme develops a broad awareness of different religions, cultures and traditions, and pupils learn to be considerate and to appreciate differences. Pupils talked positively about how they develop an understanding of each other's cultures in assemblies. In an RE lesson, pupils in Year 4 enthusiastically designed meals for a Jewish friend, showing and developing their understanding of Jewish food laws and technical terms such as *kosher*. The open and friendly ethos promoted by proprietors and senior leaders supports this and underpins the highly positive relationships between all members of the school. Pupils reported in interviews that everyone feels valued in the school community. Diversity is promoted throughout the year in events such as 'Black History Month' and an annual multi-cultural day. Almost all parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of respect and tolerance of other people.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a representative of the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires and examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Loraine Cavanagh	Reporting inspector
Ms Sophie Green	Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mr Adrian Hallworth	Team inspector (Principal, HMC school)