



Candidate Information

CUMNOR HOUSE SUSSEX

THE SCHOOL

Cumnor House Sussex is a leading independent prep school offering day and flexi-boarding to 350 girls and boys aged between 2 and 13. We are a traditional but forward-thinking family school, with an ethos built on Christian values, creating a safe and unhurried childhood for active and ambitious children. The School provides every aspect of a broad and excellent education within beautiful country surroundings, which are approximately 30 miles from London and 20 miles north of Brighton.

Founded over 90 years ago in Croydon, the school moved in 1948 to a country house and 65-acre estate in the heart of the Ashdown Forest, Mid-Sussex. It now comprises a thriving Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep, with a variety of boarding options offered in the last two years. A charitable educational trust was established in 1988, and members of the Governing Body are trustees and directors of the company limited by guarantee.

Within the maize of different buildings and classrooms that make up the school, Cumnor now has some of the best and most attractive facilities to be found in prep schools in the South/South East. Extensive investment of c. £4m, in the last five to ten years, has provided Cumnor with exceptional facilities, both academic and sporting. These include a superb Nursery (recently doubled in size), 400-seat Theatre, Science Centre (three laboratories with prep-room), Dance studio, Library, fully-equipped DT studio, full-sized all-weather pitch, 9-hole golf course, 25m indoor pool and refurbished outdoor pool, 35 acres of playing fields and numerous tennis courts, and a Forest School. Cumnor has also vastly extended its dining room, and included a 'Bistro' area in which parents and staff can meet informally. Laptops are in use by Year 7 and 8 pupils currently, and are being extended to all years over the coming months.

Much of the development outlined in the 'Cumnor 2020 Strategy', details of which can be found on the school website at: <https://cumnor.co.uk/development/> was completed ahead of schedule, and the school continues to develop key parts of its strategy for the next five years, under the new Headmaster, Fergus Llewellyn, who joined the school in August 2020.

Cumnor's guiding tenet lies in the belief that:

"Happiness and security for a child, as a result of being known and being nurtured as opposed to being a school pupil who is tested and stressed and measured with relentless frequency, is paramount. One of the many advantages of carrying children through to 13+ is the ability to stretch childhood across a slightly extended canvas. There can be some time to

spare, some time to experiment, some time indeed to stand and stare, before exams increase the work load between 11 and 13.”

The success of this commitment is clearly evidenced in the confident and well-rounded children who leave the school at the end of Year 8, ready for the next stage of their educational journey, whilst having achieved impressive results to a range of the top national and local senior schools and colleges across the country. These include: Ardingly, Bedales, Bede’s, Benenden, Brighton, Bryanston, Charterhouse, Cranbrook, Cranleigh, Downe House, Eastbourne, Eton, Harrow, Heathfield, Hurstpierpoint, King’s Canterbury, Marlborough, Mayfield, Millfield, Oundle, Radley, Roedean, Sevenoaks, St Mary’s Ascot, Stowe, The Oratory, Tonbridge, Tring, Wellington, Winchester, Worth, and Wycombe Abbey.

This year, the Year 8 cohort were honoured with 36 Awards and Scholarships across Academic, All-Rounder, Art, Design Technology, Drama, Music and Sport; and 100% success rate was achieved in passing Common Entrance to their first choice of senior school.

The school continues to adapt to the challenge of 11+ Pre-Tests. At the 11+ Pre-Test point, the school had a success rate of over 87% of pupils gaining a place at their first choice of school, impressive for a non-selective prep school.

We are also committed to sharing the benefits that Cumnor offers through the Cumnor Foundation, providing 100% means-tested scholarships to children whose families cannot afford to educate them in the independent sector.

AIMS AND ETHOS

Cumnor seeks to educate children in the fullest sense, and the pupils are exposed to a wealth of opportunities that allow them to discover their talents and tastes. The children are encouraged to be successful in their own way and according to their own individual strengths. The teachers pride themselves on tapping into each child’s individual talent, building confident and questioning minds, and enabling them to realise their personal potential both inside and outside the classroom.

The school motto ‘Aim High, Be Kind, Dare to be Different’ runs through the veins of this busy and thriving school, reminding all to seek the best in, and for, each child and to be ambitious for every one of them. Kindness and courtesy are core values throughout the school community, encouraging staff and pupils to treat others as they would wish to be treated themselves. In daring to be different, we believe that each child is to be afforded whatever degree of differentiation is appropriate, providing a balanced, varied and happy education for all.

Equal praise and equal opportunity are given for every sort of achievement, whether academic, sporting, musical, artistic, dramatic or any other, so that all the children can learn to aim for excellence.

The set of ‘Cumnor Principles’ guides the community:

- The happiness and wellbeing of each child is of paramount importance. In all decision-making, the impact upon children is considered first
- We are ambitious for every child in our care

- We aim to be sympathetic, empathetic and professional in our relationships with children, staff and parents
- Cumnor is non-selective and both embraces and supports a diversity of interest, ability, background and outcome
- We seek to communicate clearly and without favour
- We act in partnership with other school communities – both state and independent
- We keep in mind our local community as well as wider environmental issues and encourage children in similar thinking
- We seek to develop ourselves as a staff through appraisal and CPD
- Children are offered a fully rounded education within a community that values the concept of childhood
- Old Cumnorians, and past and present parents, are seen as valued members of our community
- We embrace both change and tradition in turn where either benefits our principles
- We aim for the highest standards of professional performance and behaviour supported by these principles.

The ISI Inspectors found that: *“The school is successful in placing a strong emphasis on good discipline, social skills, respect for each other and traditional values. Relationships are very positive and the pupils find staff are friendly and approachable. As a consequence, pupils, in turn, show respect, friendship and kindness towards each other, fulfilling the school’s guiding principle to ‘be kind’.”*

CUMNOR IN THE COUNTRY

The 65 acres of tranquil grounds, enhanced by awe-inspiring distant views, offer endless opportunities for play. With a lake to row on, woods to explore, and trees to climb or read under, the outside spaces are as important as the wonderfully light, airy classrooms. The Reading Garden is a particular delight, conveniently set just outside the new library. Children are able to move naturally and easily around the site, using indoor and outdoor spaces cleverly designed to relax and accommodate children.

This is most beautifully illustrated by Cumnor’s Head of English: *“We must not forget that Cumnor is not only about ‘busyness’. There is also a quiet but robust thread of mindfulness weaving its way through school life... The physical landscape of Cumnor lends itself to the development of a sense of wellbeing. The fresh air we breathe, the views of the South Downs, the fields and woods that surround us and the ever-present call of the natural world help us to keep in touch with what really matters in the world. [The children] value the quiet moments reading in the Secret Garden, watching the wildlife or sitting in the warm sunshine with a book, chatting to their friends or tutor.”*

WHAT WE ARE MADE OF

With approximately 350 pupils currently on the school roll, Cumnor naturally divides into three separate sections: the Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep School, with the ‘standard’ entry points at Nursery, Reception or Year 3.

The Nursery has grown apace, developing its numbers and allowing two year-olds to join the three year-olds. A large extension has already been added to accommodate the growing numbers, and there is a wide outdoor space for play. Places are provided in the Nursery for

children of parents living in the local community, who will not carry on through to Cumnor Reception, as well as those for whom the traditional prep school route is expected.

Children are admitted to the school on the strength of an interview and discreet evaluation, and a report from their previous school. The school is non-selective, academically, but there are basic academic standards required for entry to ensure that new pupils are capable of meeting ongoing academic standards and that the school has suitable structures to cater for them educationally.

The pupils come from predominantly professional and business families who live locally. The school recognises the demands of the working lives of today's parents and, in response, offers flexible wrap-around childcare from 7am until 7pm for all pupils throughout the school, at a small charge per session. Pyjama-clad Nursery pupils can be delivered in time to have breakfast alongside the older boarders and then picked up ready for bed at night. This is known as a 'Jim-Jam Day'. For older children, from Reception onwards, there is a Breakfast Club, After School Activities, After School Clubs, Extended Care, a Supper Club and Supervision. Flexible child-care is also offered out of term-time and the Nursery is open 50 weeks a year, available to the whole community. Holiday Clubs and Sports Camps are also offered throughout the year. A daily minibus service is provided by the school, with an online booking service to assist parents with the school run.

Children take little or no work home with them and prep is generally done at school. The school took the decision not to have compulsory Saturday morning school from September 2019 thus enabling busy families to benefit from precious time together at the weekends after a full week of work, although matches and activities continue to be on offer for Years 5 to 8.

Our dedicated teaching and support staff members are fully immersed in all aspects of school life. Apart from their normal academic responsibilities, they offer evening activities during the winter terms, games, swimming and athletics coaching, look after the boarders in the evenings and at weekends, and take an interest in the general welfare and progress of all the children.

Continuous Professional Development for all members of staff is a priority, with Governors very willing to finance and support those who wish to develop their career and benefit the school. Consequently, the teaching enables pupils of all abilities to attain and make excellent progress in all areas of the curriculum and beyond.

ACADEMIC MATTERS

Cumnor prides itself on a carefully supervised but organic curriculum, equally reflective of the needs of secondary schools to which the children move on, the specialisms of the teachers and the interests of the children. The imaginative and flexible curriculum from Year 4 upwards is enhanced by specialist teaching, developing creative and sporting skills, alongside literacy and numeracy.

The breadth of the extended curriculum and the exceptionally rich educational environment allow pupils to enjoy and take pride in their learning. Embedded within the curriculum are the vital skills of creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.

The Cumnor journey often begins in the Nursery, a truly wonderful space for young children to explore, investigate, create and discover through play under the care of the qualified staff and curriculum specialists in music, art, drama, physical education, dance and swimming. The children work through and beyond the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, with tailored individual learning for each child. In addition, there is 'Woodpeckers Forest School', a fully equipped forest space with classroom, set in the Cumnor woods.

From Reception, the children move to the Pre-Prep, which, whilst being in the heart of the school, is a self-contained area, and the classrooms surround 'Grace's Garden', one of the Pre-Prep's own play areas. The Pre-Prep staff teach core subjects, Maths, Science, English, 'Topic' (History, Geography, Religion), Art, IT and PSHE. The children also have the benefit of subject specialists who teach French, music, drama, games and physical education, drama and swimming. Pre-Prep continues to visit 'Woodpeckers' to enhance an understanding of the natural world, and the PSHE and Wellbeing curriculum runs through every aspect of daily life at the school.

From Years 3, 4 and 5, the emphasis is on English and mathematics, taught largely by form teachers. Year 3, being an important year of transition between the Pre-Prep and the Prep, continues with 'Topic'. Specialist teaching in science, design technology, home economics, music and drama begins in Year 3. Simple written French and Latin are introduced in Year 4. Flexible setting begins in Year 6 and children are taught by subject teachers. In Year 6, whilst the children are still in mixed ability forms, they are put into 'sets' for English, Maths and Science. In Years 7 and 8, children are streamed, for all subjects including languages and the humanities, with mixed groupings remaining for PE, DT, IT, Art and Music. A scholarship 'stream' operates in Years 7 and 8 leading towards a range of Public School Scholarship Examinations.

The school has developed its own 'Religion and Philosophy' curriculum into a thought-provoking and insightful opportunity for children to study a variety of religions, whilst debating ethical and philosophical issues.

As previously mentioned, laptops are being used by Year 7 and 8 this year, and will be rolled out to other years in the coming months. Meanwhile, children also use iPads and other ICT to support learning.

Departments come together to enrich the learning experience and staff make sure that there are many opportunities for cross-curricular links which they develop through projects and topic days.

THE CO-CURRICULUM

The school values its deserved reputation for excellent art, music, drama and sport, which are regarded as central, rather than peripheral, aspects of the curriculum. The numerous scholarships awarded are testament to the importance the school places on these subjects and the skills and opportunities to develop creativity and imagination that they bring to the children.

Art

The children are encouraged to develop their own skills, ideas and knowledge of a wide range of materials, processes and techniques using both 2D and 3D media – including drawing, painting, pastels, printmaking, sculpture, pottery, mosaics, photography and screen-printing. All the children in Prep enjoy a double period of Art a week and those who

show interest in further developing their artistic potential are encouraged to attend artistic activities and Art Occupations.

Projects range from: Year 3's ceramic-beaded, Egyptian jewellery to wear on their annual Egyptian Day; Year 4's William Morris project including a trip to Kew Gardens to look at tropical plant inspiration; go-kart projects; 'Spaghetti Bridge Building'; and Year 8's sustained artworks over the course of the year, with a recent assignment entitled 'Roots 'n' Shoots' seeing the children design a personal ceramic vessel inspired by the work of artist, Grayson Perry.

Besides the fantastic displays of work throughout the corridors of the school, there are opportunities for children to enter art competitions, to exhibit work in the local community and galleries, and to work with visiting artists. In 2018, for example, 14 pupils were selected to exhibit their work at the Royal College of Art in their annual 'Young Art' competition, with several of the children's artworks being commended and highly commended by the judges, and one Year 5 artist winning second prize out of all of the 7,600 national entries!

Design Technology

Design & Technology at Cumnor gives an opportunity for the children from Year 4 to Year 8 to develop their designing and making skills in a safe and productive environment. The workshop is very well equipped with CAD/CAM facilities, as well as the more traditional equipment, machinery and tools, all beautifully and safely maintained by the highly experienced technician.

The children have one lesson a week with the full-time teacher, with the part-time technician lending a hand. Opportunities are available for drop-in sessions, enabling Year 7 and 8 children to work towards a DT Scholarship for future schools.

Projects generally involve the use of wood, plastic, graphic techniques and basic electronics, while the focus is on being as sustainable as possible, in consideration of World climate change and consumerism. A few examples range from making a traditional wooden trapeze toy in Year 4, building an electric go-kart from a kit and entering a regional competition in Year 6, to an upcycled vase or planter made from single-use plastic bottles, containers and scraps of material from the workshop store.

The curriculum is designed to build confidence and to equip the children with life-long skills, while becoming more aware of their surroundings and conscious of the impact of design and manufacturing on their lives.

Information Technology

Children moving on to Senior School, University and adult like will clearly use IT a great deal. Therefore, it is our job to prepare our children by introducing them to PCs, laptops, tablets, and the software that comes with them. Email, the internet, word processing, spreadsheets and other facilities are fully explored. IT lessons are taught from Reception through Y6, and a new syllabus is being prepared for pupils in Years 7/8, who have their own laptops. IT is integrated into most subjects, via these laptops or by using the two IT suites available.

Music

The music teachers at Cumnor believe that every pupil has the potential to be a great musician and it is their role to support each child on their unique musical journey. To this end, almost 90% of the children learn to play a musical instrument, with over half of those learning more than one instrument.

The Music Department is supported by 25 visiting music teachers, who deliver lessons on a wide variety of instruments. Pupils can learn to play any of the following orchestral instruments; violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, cornet, trumpet, French horn, trombone and tuba. Alongside these, children can take up: saxophone, drums, guitar, ukulele or bass guitar. The school is a host ABRSM exam centre, and all pupils are encouraged to take graded exams on their instrument and voice. Last year, 88 pupils sat music exams, with over 55% achieving Merit or Distinction.

Numerous formal and informal performance opportunities punctuate the school year, from musical coffee concerts to the orchestra tour. The Autumn Term culminates in the Junior Christmas Celebration and the annual candle-lit Senior Carol Service at All Saints Church in Danehill. The Summer Gala hosts a fantastic array of performances from all groups, including Junior, Senior and Boys' Choir, Concert Orchestra, String Orchestra and Training Strings, Training and Senior Wind Band, Guitar Group, Cello Ensemble and Jazz Band.

A highlight of the year is the magnificent House Music Competition, with heats and sectional finals for individuals, followed by House Songs. Each year, over 40 Cumnor pupils attend the 'Young Voices' concert at the O2 Arena, performing in the largest school choir in the world involving 8,000 children.

Amongst the many recent musical successes was the win by one pupil of the 2018 West Sussex Youth Music Award at the Mid Sussex Competitive Music Festival, and the outstanding composing ability of another Year 8 pupil who composed the music for the school's 2018 Shakespeare play, *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Drama

Drama is seen as an essential part of school life, both in the classroom and on the stage, with performance in front of an audience being an important part of the Creative Arts programme. As the children progress through the school, they explore voice, movement, gesture, facial expression and other forms of theatre.

The school's 400-seat theatre has the benefit of professional-standard lighting and sound, a green room, 'Shakespearean' prop shed, dressing/practice rooms and foyer, and is used for Cumnor productions as well as by touring professionals. There is also a laurel-enclosed amphitheatre which is a magical setting for the annual Shakespeare play.

Six drama productions are produced, directed and choreographed during the school year, involving every pupil and culminating in the summer Shakespeare production. These include: Year 5 who put on a 'show in a week'; Year 6's Theatre Competition involving iconic performances played out in front of a visiting judge; Year 7's musical (last year saw the staging of *Oklahoma!*); and Year 8's Variety Show which is usually a 'spectacular' encompassing many and varied acts full of fun, dance, song and hilarity.

Children can also take drama exams and, last year, 170 pupils sat LAMDA exams, with 85% gaining Distinction.

Sport

Cumnor's Sports facilities are outstanding, and include an outdoor pool as well as a 25-metre indoor swimming pool, allowing for year-round lessons and activities; a 9-hole golf course; five new outdoor pitches for football, cricket, rugby or rounders, with pavilions; Sports Hall; indoor and outdoor cricket nets; several netball/tennis courts; and an invaluable full-size all-weather pitch.

Cumnor's Director of Sport highlights the school's view on the importance of sport as a key learning opportunity: *"Sport gives a safe environment that has naturally occurring situations that will test each individual. One of the biggest life skills that sport helps develop strength in is dealing with mistakes, failure or setbacks. Sport, by its very nature, throws setbacks at you from the off, and failure or a mistake is close at every moment of practice or competition. Mistakes are the lifeblood of learning. Harnessing these learning opportunities will enable each person to better themselves if the situation were to occur again."*

With this in mind, sport at Cumnor is for everyone and there are no clearly set A, B or C teams until Year 6, when team line-ups change every week depending on the strength of the opposition.

The school produces teams in myriad sports, including: aquathlon, athletics, basketball, cricket, cross-country, equestrian, football, golf, hockey, hockey indoor, hockey sevens, multi-skills, netball, rugby, skiing, squash, swimming, tennis, rounders, pop-lacrosse and triathlon.

The school often enjoys success at local and national level competitions. Cricket, in particular, continues to keep ahead of the curve and all the girls now play cricket as their main sport in the Summer Term. This focus appears to be paying off as in 2018 the Girls 1st VIII cricket team were crowned Sussex Girls champions and the Girls U11 VIII cricket team won the annual IAPS cricket tournament. One U13 pupil was also selected for the U17 Sussex Girls' EPP Cricket Programme and was even invited to bowl with the Senior England team ahead of their tests versus South Africa.

The achievements across the board of sports are truly impressive. Last year, three swimmers qualified for the national finals at the Olympic Aquatic Centre and a Year 8 pupil won 13 medals at the Sussex County Swimming Championships; a Year 8 pupil was selected for the ISFA South East Football team and there were numerous medals in local hockey and netball competitions.

LEARNING ENHANCEMENT

"We promote inclusive teaching and learning across the school from the roots of the Treehouse." Head of Learning Enhancement

Special educational needs are supported by the school's Learning Enhancement Department (LED). The team of eight experienced, specialist teachers have the overall aim of offering early identification of learning needs in order to provide a better understanding of a child's learning profile in the classroom and appropriate intervention. The LED aims to support class and subject teachers in delivering high quality teaching in lessons, along with personalised, targeted one-to-one support in the LED, ensuring best progress is achieved through strong links between their work within the LED and the wider school.

The department has a dedicated building known as 'The Treehouse', the name reflecting the nature of growth through learning in a safe and fun space. Last year, a Treehouse Committee was set up to organise the Treehouse Club at break-time, and end-of-term Treehouse parties with fun activities which help to promote a positive association with Learning Enhancement.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

An extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities, known as 'Occupations', take place after school and are tailored to suit and attract a variety of interests and engender the self-confidence and motivation for children to explore, enhance and develop their personal strengths.

Inspirational trips to, for example, the STEM Sussex Big Bang Fair, the British Wildlife Centre, Cuckmere Haven to explore coastal defences and chalk cliffs, Leeds Castle and Hampton Court to understand better the lives of the those in the Middle Ages and Tudor periods, and trips to the local residential home to interview war veterans whilst studying the World Wars - all serve to bring the study of science, geography or history out of the confines of the classroom and into the real world.

The local Wilderness Wood Forest School opens the eyes of the younger pupils to the natural world, bushcraft, fire safety and survival; and the children's creative imaginations are allowed to run wild on theatre trips such as to the stage production of Michael Morpurgo's *'War Horse'*.

Recently, visiting authors and story-tellers Danyah Miller and John Harris mesmerised as they wove their storytelling magic around the children; and one of the wildlife photographers who worked on David Attenborough's *'Blue Planet'* series came to share his amazing photographs.

The annual pageant of World Book Day gives every child and all the staff an opportunity to dress up as a character from a book; Science Week opens up a world of inventions and problem-solving activities; and the popular Zulu Day is packed with cross-curricular themes linked to geography, dance, food, diary writing, DT and debate, immersing pupils in the Zulu culture. The Year 6 annual go-karting weekend at Plumpton College is a highlight of the school year, whilst Year 8 have their own much-anticipated Leavers' Programme of activities and events throughout their final furlong. This includes a Burns Night celebration and the Spring Ceilidh, where all the Year 8 children and their parents learn to reel. In the Summer Term there is a week-long French trip and the annual night-time hike over the Downs, known as "Race the Sun".

Pupils also venture further afield on surf trips to the Devon coast and international orchestra or sports tours. Last year 30 children from Years 7 and 8 set off to South Africa on a cricket and hockey tour. Years 5, 7 and 8 embark on three separate trips to northern France, with Year 7's four-day visit to Cahagnes, near Bayeux, balancing 'fun' educational activities with more thought-provoking visits to the Bayeux Tapestry Museum, war cemeteries and site of the Normandy Landings.

Children are encouraged to enter local and national competitions of all kinds. In the last academic year, for example, three Cumnor pupils reached the final round of the Townsend Warner History prize, from over 1,000 entrants from prep schools across the country; and there were runner-up and highly commended successes for three pupils in the Small Steppes 'My Best Wildlife Experience' Writing Competition; while other pupils took part in the Junior Maths Olympiad. The children also participate in music festivals and workshops, such as the Wind Band Day at Lancing College, the Eastbourne Jazz Day, and the Ardingly Make-A-Noise Day.

PASTORAL CARE AND WELLBEING

“In a caring, nurturing atmosphere underpinned by the Christian faith, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.” ISI Inspection Report, 2015

It should be noted that the recent ISI Compliance Inspection of 2018 offered an enviable ‘No Recommendations’ in its report to the school. Cumnor’s ethos is based on the belief that a child who is happy, inspired and secure in school is one who is going to learn, thrive and aspire. To this end, ever-increasing emphasis has been placed on Child Safeguarding not only in response to broadening regulatory demands but also because it is deeply embedded in the DNA of Cumnor that every child must be safe while being allowed the freedom to be boisterous and happy children. The members of the Safeguarding Committee of the Board are active, diligent and very professional.

Arrangements for pastoral care are excellent and the pastoral system was found by the ISI Inspectors to be *“well designed”* and *“well managed”*. In Years 3 to 5, form teachers look after the welfare of the children in their form. As the children move into Year 6, they are assigned a tutor who backs up the role of the form teacher, by having a five- to ten-minute meeting with their tutee every week.

Regular full-staff pastoral care meetings are held in which every child is brought to mind, and their welfare considered. Tutors speak up for their tutees in such meetings, and will communicate with parents regularly, as well as writing tutee reports at the end of each term.

It is an over-arching concern of the school that children’s wellbeing must be at the heart of their Cumnor experience. The school’s forward-thinking approach to wellbeing has seen it pilot, and now embrace, the iSpace Wellbeing programme curriculum, which has received critical acclaim and has been rolled out in state and independent schools throughout Sussex. Set up by the school’s previous Director of Health & Welfare, the iSpace Wellbeing Curriculum and its supporting toolkit, enables staff to identify concerns early and implement early intervention strategies with successful results. Children learn an extensive range of calming and coping strategies and they demonstrate, through their actions, how these have helped them to become more empathetic towards others and more able to be self-compassionate.

A qualified counsellor on the staff body also assists with any emotional problems suffered by pupils and provides one-to-one counselling and advice.

In addition to the innovative wellbeing initiatives embedded within the curriculum, the school hosts its annual Wellbeing Day as part of Children’s Mental Health Week in order to make the conversation about mental health and wellbeing a normal part of everyday life. Parents are invited to join the school for sessions during the day and, this year, Harley Street Consultant Psychiatrist Professor Stein, and mental health campaigner Hope Virgo, have been invited to discuss the theme of *‘Sharing the Conversation on Understanding Child Behaviour and Positive Mental Health’*.

BOARDING

“The best bit about boarding is the breakfast! There are plenty of toasters which are really easy to use... and there is always a delicious hot dish such as pancakes or eggs!” Year 7 pupil, Cumnor Prep School Magazine

Cumnor continues to be firmly rooted in the boarding tradition, with a long working day enabling access to the opportunities a boarding school can offer that are beyond the scope of the normal day school. Children in Years 7 and 8 have the option to board either as weekly or flexi-boarders.

Boarding is seen as an ideal preparation for senior school within the nurturing atmosphere of Cumnor. The school sees itself very much as an extension of the family and recognises that benefits of boarding for children include a growth of independence, self-reliance and responsibility, as well as learning to be part of an extended community.

The friendly and caring boarding house is led by House Parents who have been described by parents in The Good Schools Guide as *“warm and welcoming,”* ably assisted by gap year students who have rooms on each corridor and are the first point of call in the night. Open communication is encouraged between all members of the boarding community through pupil surveys, house meetings and frequent informal opportunities to talk to house staff.

The new Common Room is a haven for all the boarders, with sofas, beanbags and all sorts of board games to play, along with a TV. Wednesday movie nights are a highlight of the week and, every fortnight, the boarders attend a themed Monday Staff Supper. Thursday nights are known as ‘Thursday-Night-Throw-Down’, which consists of a competition followed by edible rewards! Other evenings are rounded off with hot chocolate in the dining room before bedtime. Dormitories sleep four to six children, and there is a pantry where fruit is readily available and boarders can make tea, toast and hot drinks.

The popularity of boarding is no more evident than in the description of the life of a boarder in the latest Cumnor Prep School Magazine, with the one pupil talking of the *“really fun activities in the evenings, such as going to Brighton football matches, and skateboarding down the school paths,”* whilst another put it simply: *“I can only compare it to a long sleepover with all my friends!”*

THE CUMNOR COMMUNITY

One of the keys to the school’s success is that it sets the greatest store on the achievement of happy relations among the staff, between adults and children, and between the children themselves. Children are taught the invaluable lessons of community life: unselfishness; courage; thoughtfulness; and the good manners that they produce.

Daily morning prayers, assemblies, and boarders’ Sunday matins services help pupils develop a sense of spirituality and are seen as important times during the busy day to stop and reflect.

The children are encouraged to take an active part in ensuring that the school runs smoothly and happily. Pupils are allocated to one of four houses: Black, Blue, Red, and White. These vertical groupings allow close friendships to be developed across the age

ranges. Aside from the healthy rivalry between houses in inter-house competitions, the houses also provide senior pupils with a taste of responsibility. Not only do elected House Captains organise house teams and activities, but they are also responsible for seeing that the other children are happy and that any anti-social behaviour is spotted so that it can be dealt with immediately. Once a term, the senior pupils attend a staff meeting and are encouraged to air any subject that concerns them or members of their house.

Other children are also given many opportunities to take responsibility for the school through roles looking after the younger children, as Pre-Prep prefects, or as sports captains, librarians, and visitor guides. A Head Boy and Head Girl are selected each term. Cumnor Care Committees, for which pupils from Year 4 upwards can volunteer, provide valued opportunities for them to voice their opinions and ideas, or raise concerns about the needs of others. Food committees offer suggestions for additions to the school menu.

'Cumnor Credits' for kindness and consideration are awarded weekly to children who go above and beyond to help others within the school community. These children are subsequently awarded points for their house, which can accumulate for good work as well as kind deeds, and contribute to the termly award of the House Point Cup.

Another recent initiative has been the introduction of 'Golden Ticket' rewards for reading. A Golden Ticket is given to a child who has read a certain amount, (it can vary from child to child), and who has collected reading raffle tickets. The more raffle tickets they earn, the more Golden Tickets they receive, which can be exchanged with the Headmaster for a 'chocolatey' reward! Raffle tickets are also collected and used in a grand draw at the end of each term, with book prizes handed out to the winners.

However, Cumnor does not exist in a 'bubble' but is always looking beyond the school gates to embrace, support and promote the local community, to provide and share facilities, to stretch out its hand to charitable causes and, in so doing, to extend pupils' learning experiences and social awareness. A local primary school head currently sits on Cumnor's governing body.

The school's annual fundraising efforts are impressive and often focus on particular causes that have some relevance to the Cumnor family. Last year's Christmas Fayre, involving children, parents and the local community, culminated in the presentation of a £26,500 cheque to Chailey Heritage Foundation. Children themselves ran a variety of innovative initiatives such as a two-week music 'practice-a-thon' in aid of CLIC Sargent charity, a Pre-Prep 'Elephant Walk' for Happy Days Children's Charity, and a collective marathon for the Gurka Welfare Trust.

The Choir and music groups visit the local Abbeyfields residential home and Charters Village retirement home to sing carols, and the school sponsors the local Cuckfield Bookfest, a festival celebrating books and reading for adults and children.

Parents have many opportunities to be actively involved in the life of the school, including attending seminars and information evenings, such as Q&As with the Head and Governors, a parents' Maths Forum, E-Safety talks, and more light-hearted discussions on parenting issues.

Cumnor also brings parents together for informal social and sporting events, such as parents' cricket, rounders, netball and tennis matches against the children. Golfing

enthusiasts join together at the local golf course for matches and lunch, singers are invited to be part of the newly-formed Cumnor House Community Choir for parents and staff, with all abilities welcomed, and keen cricketers are given use of the cricket nets at weekends.

The school's strong links with families include performances put on for grandparents, along with the annual Grandparent Afternoon. There are also various functions throughout the year to which families are invited, such as Sports' Day in June, the Shakespeare Play in the final week of the Summer Term, the Fireworks Party, and Carol Services.

Parents are invited to discuss their children's progress with members of staff at regular parents' evenings, after which parents and staff have supper together in the dining room. Weekly newsletters and the school's website provide detailed information on school life. The parent portal and 'Foldr', which enables access to the children's online school curriculum, along with the dedicated sports website and e-calendar, allow parents to keep up with all aspects of Cumnor life.

The school has an active and impressive community involvement programme. Local primary schools and clubs use Cumnor's sports and music facilities throughout the year. The school provides free physical education, swimming and games teaching for the children, and training of their staff. Children from the local area also attend the school for Science Workshops in the Cumnor Science labs, and events such as authors' storytelling sessions.

The theatre has acted as host to a number of well-attended charity fundraising events, including those of Christo Brand, Nelson Mandela's prison guard on Robben Island, speaking about his friendship with Mandela, and the comedian father-and-son double-act of Jack and Michael Whitehall.

The Cumnor Foundation

The Cumnor Foundation has been established to provide means-tested 100% scholarships to children (from Year 4 to Year 13) whose families cannot afford to educate them in the independent sector. Within the first two years of its existence, the Foundation enabled scholarships to five exceptional children and the aim is to reach 20. In offering an extended Scholarship to Year 13, the Foundation works in partnership with 16 senior schools, and provides a benefit which we believe to be unique.

Alumni

Cumnor encourages Old Cumnorians - past pupils, parents of pupils and former staff members - to continue a long and happy association with the school, with the aim of creating a community that is supportive of past associates of Cumnor as well as all current pupils and families involved in the school.

The Development Office is the administrative hub for everything associated with the Old Cumnorians, arranging events, publishing an e-newsletter and sharing news and achievements with the wider community on the school's website.

Two years ago the school began a pattern of 10-year reunions, when past pupils, parents and staff spent an afternoon at the school, with lunch, tours, matches and a Match Tea. We fully expect this to become a tradition in the coming years.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

“The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent.” ISI Inspection Report, 2015

The Headmaster and his Leadership Team are supported by a knowledgeable Board of Governors who all take a strong interest in the school and are immensely committed to its success. The Governors have a wide range of experience and skills, along with an excellent understanding of the day-to-day working of the school.

The Board has been established on a highly professional basis with effective committees covering Education, Finance and General Planning and Safeguarding. There is also a Standing Committee, which oversees nominations, remuneration and succession. As well as full board meetings, these relevant sub-committees meet regularly to enable oversight of the school’s activities, whilst much time is spent in visiting lessons, attending events and receiving reports and presentations from the staff and Senior Leadership Team. Papers for the Board are well prepared and distributed in a timely fashion by the Bursar. Meetings are focused and open, and minutes ensure clarity on decisions and responsibility. A Board performance review has been introduced. Strategic direction is clear and is reviewed at the annual strategy meeting.

SCHOOL FINANCES

Finances have been managed, by the current Bursar, Matt Mockridge, prudently and robustly with continuous attention to cost control. The tight financial control has allowed the school confidently to cap fee increases (10% over five years), and Governors regularly review the sustainability of the fee structure. The cash surplus, before depreciation, generated in recent years is approximately £400,000. The current and projected cash surpluses will exceed a long-term loan (currently standing at £1.9m, repayable over 18 years) by 2026.

Fees and Assistance

Fees at the school range from c. £50 for a ‘school’ day in Nursery to £6,745 per term for the children in Years 5 to 8. The school also offers flexi-boarding for Years 7 and 8 with fees ranging from £61 to stay on a one-off, mid-week night, to £1,160 per term for four nights a week. Weekly boarding fees are £7,820 with full boarding rising to £8,035 per term.

Music scholarships may awarded. The school also provides opportunities for charitable benefit whenever possible, including the provision of financial support in the form of fee remission for those in genuine need of financial assistance.