

Parental Engagement Policy

We will work in partnership with parents to ensure that our children have every opportunity to enjoy, achieve and learn together. We will promote positive partnerships with parents, founded on effective, honest and open communication, on mutual respect and the shared aspirations that each child reaches their potential whilst at Cargilfield and beyond.

We hope that parents will want to be involved in their child's education but recognise that each family has different circumstances and differences in work commitments or the domestic arrangements of families can have an impact upon this. Likewise, the age of the child, size of the family and demands of other siblings mean that there is no one pattern for how parents will engage with Cargilfield.

Access to the School

At Cargilfield, we aim to create a home from home and so we wish our families to feel welcome at school. Parents should feel that they can come into the School buildings although we ask that parents do not come into School before 8.15am (with the exception of the Music School and Changing Rooms where equipment can be dropped off on arrival at School or for early morning music practice as agreed by Dr Allsop).

In line with the need to make Cargilfield a safe space for our children, we ask that parents do not enter the changing rooms after 8.45am and that parents do not go into the boarding house unless accompanied by a member of the boarding team.

Upper School parents come into the Front Hall to collect children at 5.30pm and 7.30pm (and any times in between) except on Fridays when the 5.30pm collection is much busier and children can also be collected from Ash Court.

Pre prep teachers bring their children outside to the Headmaster's Lawn at 3pm and 4pm (before or after clubs). Nursery and After School Club children are collected directly from the Nursery and After School Club, respectively.

On other occasions, parents will be expected to sign in and out at the School Office and receive a visitors' badge.

Meetings with staff

Pick-up and drop off isn't always the best time for an extended meeting but can be ideal for brief conversations or a catch-up on small matters.

While there is a pattern of more formal meetings between teachers and parents, staff can be available at other times to speak to parents where necessary. These are often best organised by email and might take the form of a telephone call, video call via Teams or meeting onsite.

School Office

This is staffed between 8.15am and 5.45pm. Outside these hours, email is often the best means of communication although Mr Kerr, the Head of Boarding, carries a mobile phone should boarding parents need to be in touch with him and, in extremis, for the parents of children attending evening clubs.

Communicating your child's absence is best done by email. Please send an email to the School Office with a copy to the School Nurse and your child's form teacher.

Requests for your child to be absent should be sent to the School Office. All these requests are passed to the Headmaster for approval.

Please try to give as much notice of a likely absence as possible and remember that absences should be requested rather than stated. While it is rare for an absence request to be declined, this is a courtesy when dealing with school and also means that the absence can be recorded as an approved absence.

Email and School Post

Given the busy nature of a school day, electronic communication is often the best way for routine communication between the School and parents. Parents should not expect immediate replies from staff as their main focus during the day will be the children.

School Post also manages the sending of group emails and organisation of replies. Parents have a School Post account on which these messages are stored.

Parent/Teacher Meetings

In the Nursery, there are termly meetings with the Head of Nursery and the Nursery team. In the Pre Prep there are meetings with your child's class teacher in the Autumn and Spring terms.

In the Upper School, parents meet teachers twice in form 4 (with their form teacher at the start of the year and with all subject teachers towards the end of the year). In Forms 5 – 8 there will be a scheduled evening to meet all subject teachers once a year.

Reports

In the Upper School, there are grades and short reports twice a term with a full set of reports at the end of the year. This pattern changes slightly in Form 8 to suit the pattern of examinations.

In the Pre Prep, written reports are produced at the end of the school year.

In the Nursery, a child's progress is recorded within care plans and learning journals. These will be explained in more detail by the Nursery Team.

Parent Information events

There are also events organised at school to help parents to better understand the nature of the Cargilfield education or issues that are relevant to their children.

These are delivered by Cargilfield staff and external experts. The dates and times for these events will be published in the termly calendar and parents will also be informed/reminded about these separately.

Teaching and Learning Blogs/Podcasts

This activity is supplemented by a series of blogs posted by teachers on the Cargilfield website. Teachers and other staff will share their reflections on their professional activity to give a window on life in and out of the classroom.

Since COVID, this has been supported by a series of podcasts in which the Headmaster explores topics of interest for the parents of prep school age children.

Termly plans and Round-ups

Each term, form teachers in the Upper School will share a summary of what will be covered across the curriculum so that parents can be aware of what their child will be covering.

Pre Prep and Nursery teachers share a round-up of their class' activities at the end of each week. These are sent by email on Friday afternoons.

iSAMS App and Calendar

In addition to reports and meetings with teachers, parents can learn more about their children and school events by using the iSAMS app. This records commendations (for repeated good work), good marks (for good behaviour) as well as conduct marks (for poor behaviour).

The app is also a record of what is happening every day at school. This is pulled together to create an online calendar which we share with parents on the iSAMS Parent App, and it is updated throughout the term. We also share an incomplete list of events ahead of the new term and before the next term's calendar is published.

Website, Social Media and Publiciser

Records of what has been happening at school can often be found on the School Website: www.cargilfield.com These are also shared via our various social media channels. A fortnightly magazine called the Publiciser pulls together the highlights of these events and is sent out to parents by email as well as appearing on the website.

Friends of Cargilfield

Friends of Cargilfield or FOC is an organisation which aims to bring parents together on a social basis and also helps to raise charitable funds for the nominated school charities. An executive committee is supported by year group representatives to support the School in these activities.

Regular Social Activities

There are a number of events annually when parents are invited onsite for social events. These can be drinks parties for particular year groups at various points in the year. There are larger annual events such as the Summer Fair (on a Saturday afternoon in June) or the Pentland Round (which is a 21km walk around the Pentland Hills and which is followed by a BBQ onsite) which are popular events and raise significant sums of money for the school charities.

Other Events at School

We enjoy hosting parents onsite every week. Regular opportunities include sports matches (generally on Wednesday afternoons but sometime at the weekend or on other days) which are often followed by match teas for children and parents.

Concerts, plays and poetry recitals are advertised in the calendar. We also enjoy having parents attend our formal chapel services. These sometimes include visiting preachers and can be an opportunity for parents to meet visitors from senior schools to discuss transition for their child.

The Christmas carol services, Easter service, sports days and end of year prize giving events are among a list of other occasions on which we enjoy hosting our parents.

Attitudes to Independent Study

This is an area where it is helpful for Cargilfield to work closely with parents in the best interests of the children.

While we are keen for parents to support children in the Pre Prep with activities that support their learning such as reading aloud, learning spellings and developing number bonds, Cargilfield is relatively unusual in not setting homework for children in form 4 and above (in the year where children generally turn nine years of age). Instead, we have a longer school day and also encourage children to stay at school in an evening to take part in a wide-range of clubs that extend their all round development.

We are still keen for children to continue their reading habit at home (which we also encourage at school). There is time in the day – generally at morning form time – for learning activities to continue.

As the children get older and generally from Form 6 and above (in the year where children generally turn eleven years of age), we will start to use tests and examinations which require some independent learning. At this point, we teach the children study skills which help them to organise revision material and develop strategies for revising and practising skills. These are skills which stand the children in good stead for what will be expected of them at senior school.

The Role of the Form Teacher

The Form Teacher is a parent's first point of contact with the School. Form teachers monitor the academic progress and welfare of the children in their class.

Form teachers will generally be in touch with parents at the start of the new year and will aim to build a relationship with the parents of children in their class across the course of the year.

Support for Learning

Children who have specific learning needs will be supported by the Support for Learning team. In this case, parents are encouraged to develop links with the team so that extra support can be co-ordinated between home and school.

The Anchor Practice

We seek to support the children through the challenges that they may face as they grow up. For more serious concerns, we have an ongoing relationship with The Anchor Practice, a team of experienced mental health professionals offering clinical psychology and child psychotherapy. They help to guide our staff in giving the best support for our children but are also available for individual sessions with children or families. A conversation with your child's form teacher or via enquiries@theanchorpractice.co.uk is the best first step in seeking this support.

Future School Choices

Cargilfield aims to support parents in helping them to make decisions about their child's senior school. It is important to note that parents are responsible for registering their child at a senior school and, while senior schools do liaise with Cargilfield within this process, their relationship is directly with parents who make the decision about which senior school their child should attend.

Conversations about senior schools are almost always had with the Headmaster. This process tends to start within Form 5 but there is no hard and fast rule about how this should happen as some families require more or less support in this process.

This advice is tailored to individual children and families. These are complex decisions and are, at their best, a dialogue between school and home as both bring different experience of the child and of the senior schools. It is not, therefore, given in writing.

Families split across more than one household

Whatever the responsibilities for fees, both parents of a child tend to have full parental responsibility and, as such, the School will aim to treat both parents equally. We must see any court orders that make different arrangements for the care of children attending the School if we are to adopt a different approach.

While we do our best to make sure that all parents feel as though they are kept in close touch with their child's progress, we will always prioritise the best interests of the child and so we ask that, wherever possible, separated parents try to work harmoniously in those best interests.

Boarding

Almost all children will spend some time away from home during their Cargilfield career. This might be for boarding weekends, camps, school trips or sports tours.

Mr and Mrs Kerr are responsible for boarding at Cargilfield and they will seek to build a relationship with families where children board for as little as one evening per week or for the whole week, Monday to Friday. They are supported by a boarding team of houseparents, graduate assistants, gap students and the Headmaster and his wife. They can be contacted via email (boarding@cargilfield.com) or, outside School Office hours on their mobile phone.

More information about boarding is contained within the Boarding handbook but it may be worth noting that:

- Children cannot come into board midweek on demand unless they have already established a regular boarding routine (i.e. they already board at least one night per week already).
- Weekly boarders are encouraged to have their own mobile phone at school so that they can call their families during the week. They can also make use of school phones to make those calls.
- While we recognise that parents may be keen to speak to their children who are staying at school overnight, we discourage this for weekend boarding or one night stays as the time upstairs is short and we try to prioritise the experience and time spent with their peers as part of the boarding family.
- We will always do our best to make sure that weekly boarders can speak to parents (and, where it is allowed, with both parents in the case of separated parents), it is worth noting that even our weekly boarders spend three nights per week at home and squeezing calls into the busy evening routine can be more difficult and isn't always in a child's best interests. The final decision on such matters lies with the Headmaster.

Complaints Policy

While we hope that all the dealings between school and home will be in the best interests of each child and suit both sides, we recognise that there may be occasions when parents or children are unhappy with something that has happened at school. In this instance, we would point them to the

complaints policies for both parents and children which can be found on the School Website: www.cargilfield.com/policies .

Parental Contract

Aspects of the relationship between parents and the School are dealt with in the parent contract that must be read and signed before a child starts at Cargilfield. We reserve the right to change details within this contract going forward and will alert you to those changes annually.

Governors

The Board of governors is made up of up to fourteen experienced individuals who help to set the direction of the school and provide oversight for what happens at Cargilfield. Their details are posted on the School website: www.cargilfield.com/ Should you wish to be in touch with a governor, the process for contacting them is made clear on this page.

Rob Taylor

25th June 2023