

Chelmsford County High School for Girls



Community Policy

Approved by the Academy Board: 9th July 2025

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Community Policy

Introduction

Chelmsford County High School for Girls (CCHS/the School) is committed to working in partnership with the school community, which includes students, staff and parents.

This policy uses the term 'parents' which includes: parents (natural or adoptive), a carer, a guardian, an individual who has parental responsibility, or any person who cares for or has cared for the child, i.e. anyone else in whose home the child is living and who is involved in the full-time care of the child on a settled basis, e.g. stepfather, grandparents, other relatives, co-habitees and foster parents.

The School communicates with parents in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances around the communication. Communications are made via SchoolPost messages, reports, letters, emails, telephone calls, and in-person meetings.

Parents are encouraged to contact the School whenever necessary in order to seek clarification, address concerns or resolve queries. Such communication can be made directly to/received from a subject teacher, form tutor, Year Leader, Subject Leader, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher, as appropriate to the situation. Communications can also be sent via the general School email address (office@cchs.essex.sch.uk) from where it will be directed to the most suitable member of staff to address the issue.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Parents of current and former students of CCHS
- CCHS staff
- Senior Leadership Team
- Headteacher of CCHS

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Complaints Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy

General Principles / Aim

To ensure clear and effective communication and open discussion between the School and parents. This is deemed an integral part of CCHS, making the environment as welcoming and inclusive as possible.

To provide clarity on School life to support a parent's understanding of the School, the education their child receives and to encourage parents to actively engage in their child's education. The School welcomes dialogue with parents on all aspects of their child's education, their personal and social development and their care and welfare.

To encourage an open and friendly relationship between parents, staff and CCHS and that any relationships are kept professional and respectful.

The school aims to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to parents' correspondence.

Expectations

It is essential that all communications are civil and respectful, including any communication from parents. By respecting one another, education professionals and parents will be in a strong position to work together for the benefit of the children whose interests are paramount.

The School benefits from a supportive school community.

Parents recognise that educating children is a process that involves a cohesive partnership between parents and staff. As part of that partnership, parents will understand the importance of a good working relationship.

The School understands that there will be some circumstances/situations where working together to support students may result in different and possibly conflicting views regarding what the approach should be. Constructive dialogue will be used to promote a shared understanding of the circumstances/situation and discussion regarding the way forward.

If staff were to receive inappropriate communications or experience unacceptable conduct from a parent, CCHS will take steps to address and resolve this. The staff member will not be expected to continue the communication with the parent directly and the matter will be escalated to an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Sharing information

In order for the School to provide the best possible education and care for a child, it is essential that full details are provided and that details of any matters that may affect a child are shared with the School in a timely, constructive and transparent manner, and that such information is clear and accurate. This can include information (or any updates to information) relating to:

- the child's emotional, psychological or physical wellbeing;
- any health/medical condition, disability or allergies;
- any special educational needs;
- any court orders applicable to the child;
- any other matter that may impact on the child's engagement in day-to-day school life.

Statutory Regulations

It should be noted that there are some specific circumstances (including, but not limited to, requests for a student's examination results or personal student information), where statutory regulations prohibit the School from disclosing such information to parents. The School is legally obliged to adhere to these regulations and cannot fulfil any such request. If such a request arises the School will, where permitted, inform the parent accordingly and further communication on the point will cease.

Separated Parents

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the School when there is a change in family circumstances. Parents must ensure that parental contact details are kept fully up to date for general communication purposes and in case of emergencies.

In the case of separated parents, the default position is that all School communication relating to their child is sent to both parents, this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the School does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another and will not act in this capacity.

The information provided to the School when the child was enrolled detailing whether parents have parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order, original birth certificate or correspondence from a relevant authority proving otherwise is provided to the School.

School updates, primarily received via the SchoolPost system, will contain information on all events within the School including productions, sports days, parent's evenings, class trips, etc. In most circumstances, CCHS expects separated parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other on matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other similar instances. This is the default position.

A parent, as defined in law, has the right to receive progress reports and review student records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent at the address in the School's records specifying where the child resides with the expectation that such parent will share the report with the other parent.

If the child is subject to a joint Child Arrangements Order and the School's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses. The School will send copies of progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request.

The School will not be held liable for any matters relating to communications surrounding separated parents.

Designated Contact

The school understands that there are some circumstances which may mean a temporary contact needs to be registered. The school requests that it is kept fully up to date in this respect.

It is the responsibility of the family to keep the school informed in this respect.

Communicating with the School

The School values positive, timely and civil communication with parents and expects that all parents will:

- refrain from unreasonably duplicating correspondence;
- respect the working hours of staff and term time when making contact and while awaiting a response;
- understand that teachers must prioritise time with students and are unlikely to be able to answer calls or respond to emails immediately during the school day;

- where requesting a meeting or telephone call, provide as much information as possible in advance so that staff can prepare appropriately to ensure a productive meeting;
- raise any concerns or complaints directly with the School via the appropriate channels; and
- ensure all communications (whether in person, via email, by telephone or otherwise) are reasonable, polite and appropriate, including in respect of the content, tone, volume and/or nature of the communication.

The School encourages parents to raise any day-to-day queries or issues regarding the child's experience at school at the earliest opportunity.

The School hopes that all involved can work together in a constructive manner to resolve any concerns.

CCHS has a Complaints Policy which governs how any complaints will be handled which seeks to resolve complaints informally, where possible and as appropriate.

Respecting professional decisions

Where possible the School is willing to discuss the context for any decision regarding a child. The School expects parents to understand and respect that the School and its staff:

- have a duty of care to each individual student which must always be balanced against the needs of the School community as a whole and legal requirements in respect of the same;
- may issue a disciplinary sanction against a student, following due process and in accordance with the School's policies relating to behaviour with the expectation that parents will support, co-operate with and (if relevant) uphold any such measure;
- will allocate students to teaching sets (where applicable) based on their professional judgment and knowledge of each individual student within the context of the student's peer group; and
- are obliged to act with integrity and honesty when predicting grades or writing references for students.
- may not be permitted to communicate due to various circumstances, including (but not limited to) privacy law requirements, involvement of authorities, any other prohibition by statute.

Unacceptable conduct

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of conduct that the School considers are unacceptable:

- disruptive behaviour, which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, or any other area of the School grounds
- using offensive language, aggressive gestures, swearing, cursing, or using profane language to a member of School staff, Trustee, visitor, fellow parent or student (including that made on or off the school premises, in writing, on social media or in person insofar as it relates to the school, CCHS matters or a student)
- making a malicious allegation about a member of staff or the School
- communicating with the School in person or in writing (directly or indirectly) in a manner which is deemed voluminous, vexatious, relentless, confrontational, unreasonable, and/or overly aggressive
- abusive or threatening emails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication to a member of School staff, Trustee, visitor, fellow parent or student
- unacceptable social media use (please see the section below)
- smoking, vaping or consuming drugs whilst on School property or accessing the School site whilst under the influence of drugs
- consumption or being under the influence of alcohol (excluding during official school functions) whilst on School property
- the use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against their child whilst on School premises
- approaching another parent's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of that child towards their own child
- behaviour that would compromise the Health & Safety or welfare of any member of the School community
- damaging or destroying or other unreasonable use of School property
- behaviour that compromises the School's Data Protection responsibilities or discloses confidential agreements and/or other information
- providing false or misleading information to the School or failing to disclose important information
- failure to respect the School's need to remain neutral in the case of family disputes
- driving without due care and attention on the school premises, including unauthorised parking on the School site or without consideration for our local community
- bringing dogs or other pets on to School premises (other than Service Animals)

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of unacceptable conduct.

Every instance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Should any unacceptable behaviour (whether listed above or not) occur on School premises, the School may take any action it deems necessary, including requests to leave the premises, contact to an appropriate authority, and, if necessary, ban the offending person from entering the School grounds in the future.

Inappropriate use of Social Networking Sites

The School recognises that social media is a platform by which the school community can communicate. However, the School does not condone behaviour in which social media platforms are used to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, and in some cases other parents or students. The School considers the use of social media platforms in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the students or the school community. Any concerns you may have should be made by using the appropriate procedures (see Complaints Policy) so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

The School considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social media. (This list is non-exhaustive and is intended for illustration purposes only):

- defamatory, offensive or derogatory content/comments regarding any school matters, including the School, the curriculum, or any of the students, parents, staff or Trustees on WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, Twitch or any other social media platform
- making false/vexatious allegations against members of the School community or recklessly repeating gossip/unsubstantiated allegations
- identifying or posting images/videos of students
- bringing the School into disrepute
- content circulated or sent directly with abusive or personal comments about staff Trustees or students
- using social media to publicly challenge School policies or discuss issues about individual children or members of staff
- threatening behaviour, such as intimidating staff, or using foul language
- breaching School security procedures

In the event that any student or parent is found to be posting or inciting any such content on social media platforms, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of those sites and where deemed necessary escalated further to a relevant authority or within the parameters of the school policies.

All social media platforms have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the platform and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The School will also expect that any parent or student infringing this policy removes such comments immediately (see Acceptable Use Policy).

In serious cases, the School will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social media and other sites.

Where the issue of cyber bullying is relevant or apparent relating to the use by one student or a parent including the intention to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry, the School will deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying.

Breaching the Community Policy

If the School suspects, or becomes aware, that someone has breached the Community Policy, the School will gather information from those involved and conduct an investigation

Depending on the nature of the incident, the School may take any step it considers necessary, including (but not limited to):

1. send a warning letter to the person
2. invite the person into school to meet with a senior member of staff or the headteacher
3. contact the appropriate authorities (in cases of criminal behaviour)
4. seek advice from our legal team regarding further action
5. put in place a communication plan which places some parameters or conditions on the manner in which the parent(s) may communicate with the School
6. ban the person from the School site or certain School events

The School will respond to an incident in a proportionate way, which will be assessed at a senior level within the School based on all relevant facts and circumstances.

The final decision about how to respond to breaches of the Community Policy rests with the Headteacher, or in their absence, an appropriate person authorised by them. The Headteacher will consult the Chair of Trustees before making such a decision.

Decisions to ban a person from school premises are taken within the framework of the DfE Guidance ([Controlling access to school premises - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlling-access-to-school-premises)) and may be

reviewed by the School. The letter banning a person from the School site will make clear how communications with the School can be maintained.

Accessibility

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

The font used in all printed communications is Book Antiqua in size 12 Documents printed using a larger font can usually be provided and requests should be made via office @cchs.co.uk or the office telephone on 01245 352592.

The School requests that parents notify it of any adjustments it needs and due consideration will be given.