



OPPORTUNITY WITH DIGNITY

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Dear Parents and Carers at Meadow Wood and Breakspeare Schools,

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about the important initiative that is taking place to develop our schools.

**Background:** Over the past four years Meadow Wood School has had three head teachers (and 2 interim Head Teachers) and this has impacted on the stability of leadership for the students, parents and staff. This situation has affected everyday school life and the future development of the school.

As part of the government's initiative to support schools who may wish to convert to academies, Breakspeare School expressed an interest in working closely with Meadow Wood School under the umbrella of academy conversion. This interest was expressed through discussion with Nathan Taylor and the board of governors from Meadow Wood and Breakspeare in the 2016 summer term.

In September 2016 when the leadership situation at Meadow Wood School changed with Nathan's resignation, Breakspeare School took the view that it would be very committed and interested in developing a long term close partnership with Meadow Wood School. In November 2016 the governing bodies of both Meadow Wood and Breakspeare School decided that our schools will be working towards developing our practice in establishing a close partnership.

**The benefits** of both schools working towards the development of a 'one school community' are:

- To develop a school structure that supports both schools' sustainability and stability in the ever changing landscape of education
- To utilise the skills and knowledge, that are present in both schools, to develop the provision of outstanding teaching and learning
- To maximise the use of resources at both schools in developing consistent processes and systems that are effective and financially sustainable.
- To extend opportunities for innovative school development

Hertfordshire County Council's Integrated Services Special Needs department is supporting us in this development. The Local Authority considers that this development can extend and develop the provision on offer at both schools.

**Next steps:** Currently we are working on a short term operational handover. This means that myself and my deputy Mrs Caroline Day-Lewis are familiarising ourselves with Meadow Wood School practice and processes and getting to know the students and the staff.

At the beginning of January 2017 I will be the executive head of both schools and Caroline will be the interim (or acting) deputy head and will be placed at Meadow Wood School. Caroline works Monday to Thursday and therefore I will be working at Meadow Wood School on Fridays. Mrs Liz Vaughan who is an experienced leader from Watling View School, will be appointed as the acting deputy of Breakspeare



School for the 2017 spring and summer terms. She will be working at Breakspeare School Monday to Friday.

Some people have asked why Caroline is to be placed to Meadow Wood School and not Liz. The rationale is that as Caroline has previously worked in a supportive role at Meadow Wood School she is familiar with the provision. It is also important to note that Caroline has been part of developing our strategic vision for both schools.

**View to the future:** An important element of this development is to provide maximum stability to both schools as soon as possible. We need to understand that Academy conversion will require a long preparation period. Therefore we are exploring the option of establishing a Federation between Meadow Wood School and Breakspeare School. This structure could provide us more readily with a coherent and united leadership for both schools as there would be only one governing body for both schools. How far the schools would be federated within other practices and processes would be up to the stakeholders of both schools. We have nominated an internal strategic group which have representatives from both schools to explore the Federation process in more detail and ascertain if this is appropriate for us.

**What will this all mean to a child and their family at Meadow Wood and Breakspeare School?**

The teaching and learning at both schools will continue as normal. In the short term we are not aiming for any changes other than the already mentioned leadership structure for January 2017; the provision at both schools will stay the same. Our aim is to provide both schools with stability and continuity as we plan the future of our wider school community.

However it is likely that in the long term there may be some changes in our organisation and systems as we are aiming to maximise resources, skills and knowledge available from both schools. We intend to make only those changes that are necessary and well researched after full assessment and in liaison with all stakeholders.

**What will this mean to the staff, governors and volunteers at Meadow Wood and Breakspeare Schools?** For an interim period of time the schools will have a temporary leadership structure, as described before, and two governing bodies. We are aiming to establish a permanent leadership structure as soon as possible; the Federation process may be the right way to achieve this. Nothing will change for other members of staff, volunteers and our partners such as NHS nurse and therapy services; it is very unlikely that there will be changes in these structures in the future either. However in the future we will be able to utilise the expertise amongst our staff and some external provision more cost effectively (such as music therapy service).

**From my personal point of view** I want to express my utmost commitment to support a positive development for both schools. We are about to start a journey that will have an impact on both schools. I believe that that we will be stronger together and by working openly and co-operatively we will achieve the practice that will contribute significantly to developing our provision at both schools. This development will take time and proceed in stages.

We will hold parents' coffee mornings in January at both schools to facilitate a consultation discussion and provide an opportunity to ask questions. I'm looking forward to meeting you either at Meadow Wood on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January at 9.30 – 11 am or at Breakspeare on Thursday 26<sup>h</sup> January at 9.30 – 11 am. All parents and Carers are invited to both events. In the meantime please take the time to look at both schools' web-sites as they provide a comprehensive overview of the provision on offer.

Wishing you all a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas Holiday, Merja

