

27 March 2026

Dear families,

I write to share with you an update regarding the principal position at Hanham Woods Academy. After taking time to reflect carefully, I have decided not to apply for the substantive Principal role at HWA, and I will be returning to my post as substantive Principal at Digitech Studio School.

Although this news may be unsettling, I want to reassure you that my decision has been made with the best interests of both Hanham Woods Academy and Digitech Studio School—two communities in which I am deeply invested.

It is with great confidence, and with the knowledge that Kath Cooper, a CLF Senior Principal, has agreed to take on the leadership of HWA, that I am able to return to my substantive post. I know the academy will be in exceptionally safe hands and will continue to go from strength to strength under Kath's leadership.

I am incredibly proud of the work we have begun together and look forward to seeing HWA continue to thrive with Kath as Principal. She is an outstanding leader with an exceptional track record in school improvement.

I want to thank you all for your support and partnership during my time at HWA. It has been a huge privilege to lead this academy over the past year, to work closely with you all, and to serve the Hanham community. I wish you and your children the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely ,

Chris Ballard

**Interim Principal**

Dear families,

It is with real delight and excitement that I step in to the daily leadership of Hanham Woods Academy, having worked alongside Chris Ballard over the last year. I have known the school well for more than a decade and have led the CLF Post 16 provision for all of that time: I have a very strong sense of what is expected and needed of students as they leave secondary school and am keen to make sure that your children benefit from that advantage.

I do know some of the Hanham students well already, but I am very much looking forward to getting to know your children better over the next two terms. I am also looking forward to meeting as many parents as possible before the summer, and I will be in touch in the coming days with some dates for 'Meet the Senior Principal' events after Easter.

I do understand that many families will feel disappointed that Chris Ballard's secondment here is ending. He and I have worked together for a number of years, and I know that he has thought long and hard before deciding to return to his post at Digitech Studio School. He has been a very important part of your children's lives, and I have very much enjoyed supporting him in that; I look forward to building on his work in the coming weeks and months as we move the school towards the outstanding provision we all know it can be.

This is a very exciting time for our school; there are challenges ahead, of course, but new heights to reach together.

Thank you in advance for your support of our school.

Yours sincerely,

Kath Cooper

**Senior Principal**