

CITY OF DERBY ACADEMY

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15th April 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to inform you that Mr Harding has decided to step down as headteacher at The City of Derby Academy (CODA).

Mr Harding has served as Headteacher at CODA for three years and was Deputy Headteacher before this for a period of six years. During his time at CODA, he has worked tirelessly to improve the life chances of all the young people in his care. Whilst we understand and are respectful of Mr Harding's decision to step down, it is nevertheless with great sadness that we say goodbye.

We would like to sincerely thank Mr Harding for his commitment, passion and hard work over the last 9 years. Thankfully, he won't be a total stranger as he has already stated his intention to visit school at key events such as sports day and results day and we very much look forward to seeing him then.

In the meantime, extra support has been put into school. Ms Backhouse has stepped up as Acting Head of school and will be working under two of our very experienced Headteachers, Mr Smith and Mr Garrity. Mr Smith is the headteacher at Djanogly City Academy in Nottingham and Mr Garrity is headteacher at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ashbourne. Mr Smith and Mr Garrity will share the working week between them at CODA and will also be ably supported by the Deputy Heads and senior leaders from both CODA and across the wider Trust.

Mr Harding wanted us to share the following correspondence with you. This has been shared with students in school.

Many thanks

Mark Mallender (CEO Tapestry Learning Partnership)

A famous writer once wrote "progress is impossible without change", and I strongly believe that leaders in business, politics, sport or education must always make changes if they are the right thing to do for the people they are responsible for.

*I have therefore taken the very difficult decision to step down as Headteacher of City of Derby Academy. I believe that my decision will help the school to make more progress towards achieving its vision of **improving the life chances of all students**, which has always been my priority.*

CODA is a wonderful school. You are awesome young people. My colleagues are amazing people who work very hard every day to care for you and to improve your life chances. Whatever changes happen, please recognise that they will help you to focus on your learning, achieve your potential, and develop as responsible young adults who are ready for life beyond school.

*I have reminded you often of CODA's values and have emphasised how important they are as I truly believe in them. During your time at CODA, therefore, please focus on improving your own life chances by always being **respectful, responsible and ready to achieve**.*

Other than raising my two boys, being your Headteacher has been the proudest achievement in my life. I am sad to be leaving, and I will miss you all, but I know this is the right thing to do.

Best regards,
Mr. Harding

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