

**Cressex Site  
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**Downley Site  
Faulkner Way  
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Tel: 01494 525728**

**Chair of Governors: Bridget Ledson  
Headteacher: Mr Bradley Taylor**

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

Dear Parents and Carers,

A very warm welcome back to school to all our children and young people. After the long summer holiday it is always lovely to see them all back in school as we start this year's journey of learning. A special welcome to all youngsters new to the school, we hope the first day has been as smooth as possible. For parents of new children, we'll be in touch shortly about coming along to a new parents' coffee morning on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September, welcoming you to the school family and giving you the opportunity to meet others and discuss any teething issues.

We have had some minor building works over the summer, and the Cressex site has a refreshed Reception area. Some work is still ongoing to convert our old laundry room which was part of the boarding area of the school, into a learning space. We have also had some new fencing put in around Rainbow building. On the Downley site we have reconfigured some of our rooms, with the soft play area being relocated to the rebound room, enabling the creation of a new classroom in the Woodland department, Bluebell class. A further development at Downley is that we are making use of a classroom space in The Downley School, affording some pupils the chance to be part of a mainstream environment whilst still receiving a special school education.

Speaking to a number of parents last year, I was asked to give an overview of how the school is made up, to help parents understand how children may move from one department to another over successive years. I hope the start of the year is a good time to do this, and if it throws up any questions from parents – be they old or new – then this can be discussed early in the year.

Little Wings – this department welcomes our youngest children who have some form of a speech, language and communication need (SLCN), including those with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), some of whom may have complex learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. There are 4 classes in this department. The approach used is largely a modified Early Years framework, although many strategies supporting ASC are used too. Typically there are 6-8 children in a class group. At the end of (typically) year 2, children go to either Rainbow or Coppice department.

Rainbow – for pupils mainly in Key Stage Two (years 3 through to 6) who have a complex ASC need. There is a highly structured approach making use of multiple smaller rooms allocated to designated activities. There are usually 6 or 7 pupils in a class group, and there are 4 classes in the department. Some children move to Coppice department after one or more years in Rainbow, or to Treetops in Year 7.

Coppice department also supports children in Key Stage Two, although predominantly years 3 and 4. These groups have less complex needs than those in Rainbow, although will follow a highly structured set up. A typical class size is 8-10 children and there are 4 classes in the department. The majority of children from Coppice will move to Gemstone department at year 5 or 6. Some current year 5s and 6s who are in Coppice will move to Treetops in year 7.

Treetops department caters for our secondary-aged young people, and includes children who have quite a range of learning difficulties and SLCN. Class group size can vary from 6 to 11 depending on need; again there are 4 classes in the department. Young people usually leave Treetops at the age of 19.

These four departments are located at the Cressex site.

Gemstone supports children at Key Stage Two, the majority of whom are in Years 5 or 6. These groups have a diverse range of learning needs, but generally have more moderate learning difficulties. Class group sizes tend to be between 9 and 12. Many of the children within the department will go on to another special school at secondary age, although an increasing number are staying with us. There are 6 classes in this department, including Emerald class which is situated within The Downley School.

Woodland department is a specialist set up for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) of all ages, from 3 to 19. Pupils with the most complex difficulties are supported here, in classes of between 5 and 8, with a very high pupil to adult ratio. Five classes exist in this department, including the new Bluebell class.

Gemstone and Woodland departments are located on the Downley site.

One of the school's unique strengths is that no child fits in one box. So whilst the description above is largely correct, the make-up of the classes is flexible to best meet the needs of the children within the school. As a result there are pupils who won't fit the description above, and there are specific reasons why some children need a different solution or approach.

You should receive a class or departmental newsletter by the end of next week giving an overview of your child's learning for this term; you'll receive a school newsletter in two weeks' time and fortnightly thereafter. Please do feel free at any time to contact the school, however, if you have a concern or issue to clear up.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Taylor', written in a cursive style.

Bradley Taylor

**HEADTEACHER**