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Dear Parents and Carers,

This letter marks the end of the school year, and the end of an era, for both our schools in many senses.

Downs Way formally closes on 31st August. We celebrated the contribution the school, staff, children and parents have made to the Oxted community after our Open Evening on 10th July – and at our End of Era party on 15th, where we enjoyed the fabulous sunshine and rocked out to Randy and the Rockets. What is clear is that, although the name will go, we have a responsibility to ensure that the 'spirit' of Downs Way lives on. The spirit which keeps children at the heart of everything we do; that provides outstanding learning and support distinctive for the needs of children in the Infants; that builds strong relationships between staff and parents and above that keeps a real sense of fun and purpose in learning through play. We are fortunate that all the current staff at Downs Way, who we have already been working closely with for 4 years, will be formally joining the combined St Mary's team. I would like to thank each and every one of them for all their commitment and hard work throughout this busy year.

It is an end of an era for both the PTAs as well. Jemma Rudnicki and Emma Courtman and have been co-chairs of Downs Way for 2 years, and Sophie McTavish and Andrea Oxlade have co-chaired St Mary's – supported by Abi Monk and secretary and Esmeralda Dujmovic as treasurer. This year in particular has marked a tremendous effort by the PTAs in both schools – providing not only amazing contributions towards the MUGA but also experiences for our children, the audio visual equipment in the Infant hall, a Ball, the fairs and of course the memorable Carnival procession. My heartfelt thanks go to them and all the committee members and class reps who have made this support so vibrant. In September we will be a new school, with a new PTA and we will need new people! Please step forward if you can to ensure that the first year of the new group is just as successful as the final year of the old!

St Mary's ceases to be a Junior school on 31st August – and for the first time will welcome 60 children into reception and 120 children in year 3. It seems to me that learning experiences have been even more varied and vibrant this year than ever. I am full of admiration for my staff who work tirelessly to keep things fresh, and keep moving forwards and thank them all. I thank all my year leaders for their support given both to me and their teams. The strategic leadership of the school would have fallen apart without the outstanding support I have received from Anna Woodward, Sahrah Chaudhri and Kate Wylie – who have been working like Trojans across both schools, and picking up all the balls I have dropped throughout what has felt like a frantic year!

As you will know the path of the building works has not run smoothly to say the least! The governors at both schools have been both decisive and steadfast in ensuring that timely decisions have been made in terms of investment in the resources and infra-structure that have been within our own control, and held a firm line in negotiations of those which are not. They have been aided in this by the exemplary work of our premises manager Linda Avery and our Bursar Sue Duff. We've all become expert at things we didn't even know existed before this year – and they have frankly been superstars!

At St Mary's, everyone is supported, challenged and secure in a caring Christian environment



We will be saying goodbye to some of our families this summer as the children move on to other schools. Some of them have been with us for many, many years: we will miss them all – and wish them all the best for the future. We are also saying farewell to, Ken Roberts who has managed all the chairs and tables at Downs Way lunchtimes all year and supported with lots of maintenance tasks and to Jo Knight who has worked in the St Mary's office since April 2003! Frankly at the moment we don't really know what we will do without her – but we thank her for everything she have given our school and wish her every success and happiness.

It may be the end of an era but the end of this year has been full of smiles! So many joyful events have filled our days – in which your children have shone. I believe our future is bright and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to continue the journey with you all.

Sarah Lewis

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