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Dear Parents, Carers, and Colleagues,

We are writing to share some important news about the leadership structure of our school, which will come into effect from January 2026.

Following the forthcoming retirement of Mrs. Butler-Willis, Headteacher of South Lake Primary School, one of our OLA primary schools, Mr. Hickey has been asked to take on the role of Interim Executive Headteacher for both Highwood Primary School and South Lake Primary School for the remainder of the school year. This arrangement will initially support South Lake during the period required to explore the recruitment of a new Headteacher. The Trust is confident that there is strong leadership capacity in both settings for this to be a success, and this arrangement provides an opportunity to further our commitment to developing and sustaining excellent leadership from within.

In this new arrangement, Mrs. Welsh will become Head of School for Highwood, with full operational responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school. The Trust has every confidence in her and the school's wider leadership team to continue driving the school forward and ensuring that the high standards of education and pastoral care remain at the heart of all we do. Mrs. Hamer will be taking on the Head of School role at South Lake and undertake the same level of operation responsibility outlined for Mrs. Welsh.

As Interim Executive Headteacher, Mr. Hickey will take on a more strategic role, working across both schools to provide guidance, coaching and mentoring to the Heads of School, and to lead on long-term planning, finance and wider school improvement. This will be a very different role to the one he currently holds, designed to strengthen collaboration and make the most of the strong leadership already in place across both schools, ensuring continued support and stability for staff and pupils.

This new structure will enable both schools to benefit from Mr. Hickey's experience and strategic leadership, while continuing to preserve and celebrate the unique character, ethos and identity of each school. The Trustees want to be clear that this is not a federation; both schools will remain distinct and will continue to serve their communities with the same warmth, care and ambition as always.

Over the coming weeks, we will continue to work closely together to ensure a smooth transition. Both schools are part of the same wider community, and we are confident that this new structure will build on the strong foundations already in place. From January, Mrs. Welsh will take on the Highwood Headteacher email address and be your main point of contact for all school matters.

We appreciate your continued support as we move through this next chapter together.

With warm regards,

A blue ink signature of Tom Bartlett.

Tom Bartlett
Chief Executive Officer, OLA

A blue ink signature of Wendy Sabaroche.

Wendy Sabaroche
Chair of Governors, Highwood