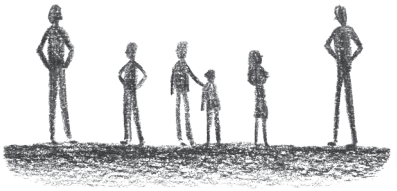
MR GOSFORTH



The mural had gone and all.

Instead, there was just a big blank wall with holes where the pins had been, and standing in front was the head teacher Mrs Pritchard looking a bit sick and a tall man with a red face and grey hair called Mr Gosforth, which I knew because he'd written it on the whiteboard and underlined it twice in case we might not remember it or realise it was important.

'Any questions?' said Mrs Pritchard, and Ahmed stuck his hand right up.

'Where's Mrs King?' he said.

'She's unable to teach at the moment,' said Mrs Pritchard. Only when she said 'unable', her voice

went weird like Dad's did when he said he was fine that time after playing football and it turned out he'd fractured a leg and had to go into hospital and Horrible Nan had to look after us for a week – i.e. it was a lie.

Paris's hand went up. 'What's wrong with her?'

'I . . . I don't know,' said Mrs Pritchard in that weird voice again.

'When's she coming back?' said Paris, and this time she didn't have her hand up, which usually means you lose five minutes of golden time, which is when you can choose to do anything you want, even games, but Mrs Pritchard must have forgotten.

'I don't know,' she said again, and this time it wasn't a lie, but it wasn't good either. 'Any questions not about Mrs King?'

I put up my hand. 'Where's our mural gone?'

This time Mr Gosforth answered. 'It was deemed inappropriate,' he said.

Which no one understood, which he must've realised because then he added, 'Not suitable.'

'Why?' I asked.