

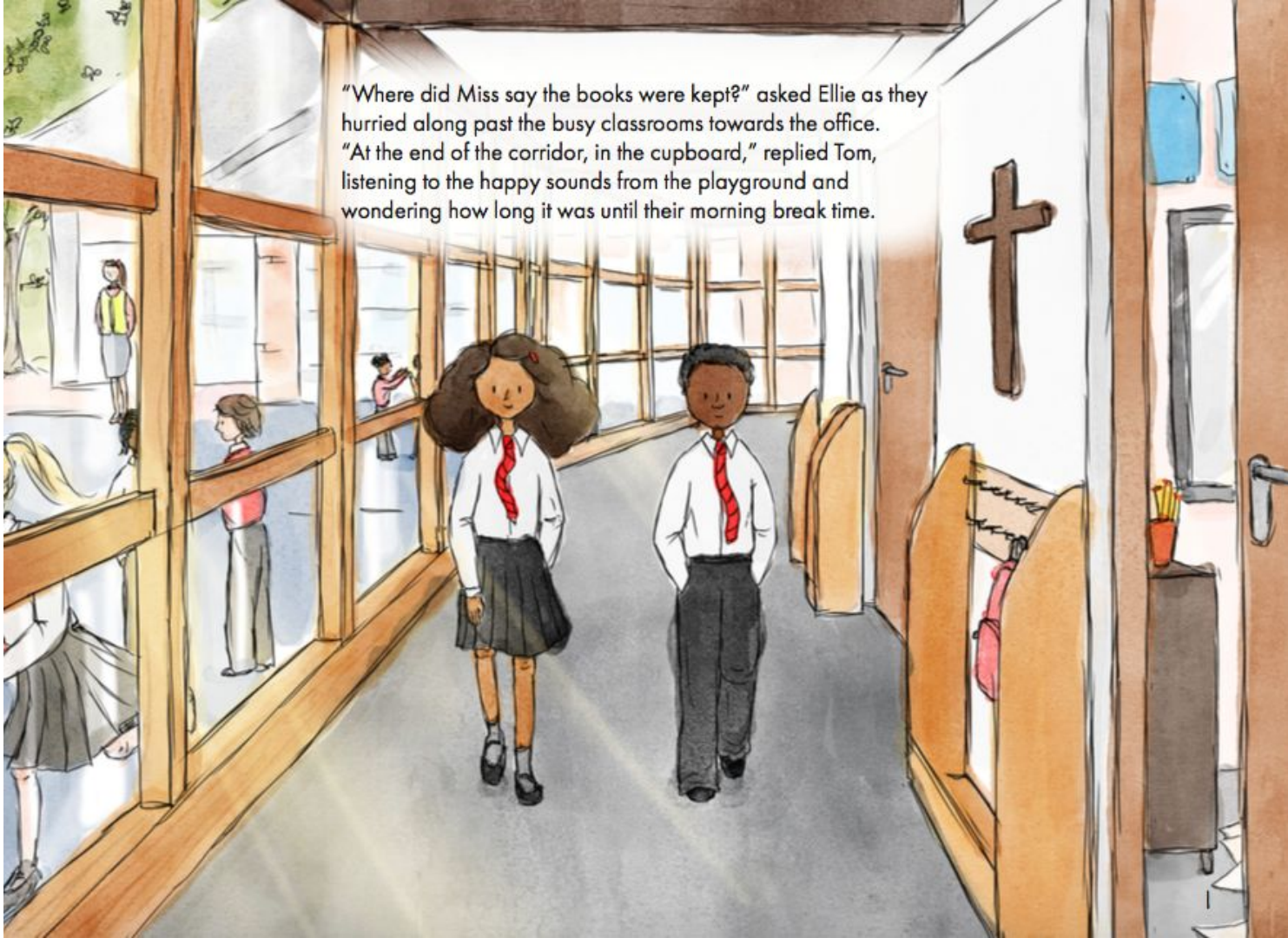
Up the Spiral Staircase



An adventure into the history
of Christ the Saviour Primary School

Illustrated by Emily Larson

"Where did Miss say the books were kept?" asked Ellie as they hurried along past the busy classrooms towards the office. "At the end of the corridor, in the cupboard," replied Tom, listening to the happy sounds from the playground and wondering how long it was until their morning break time.





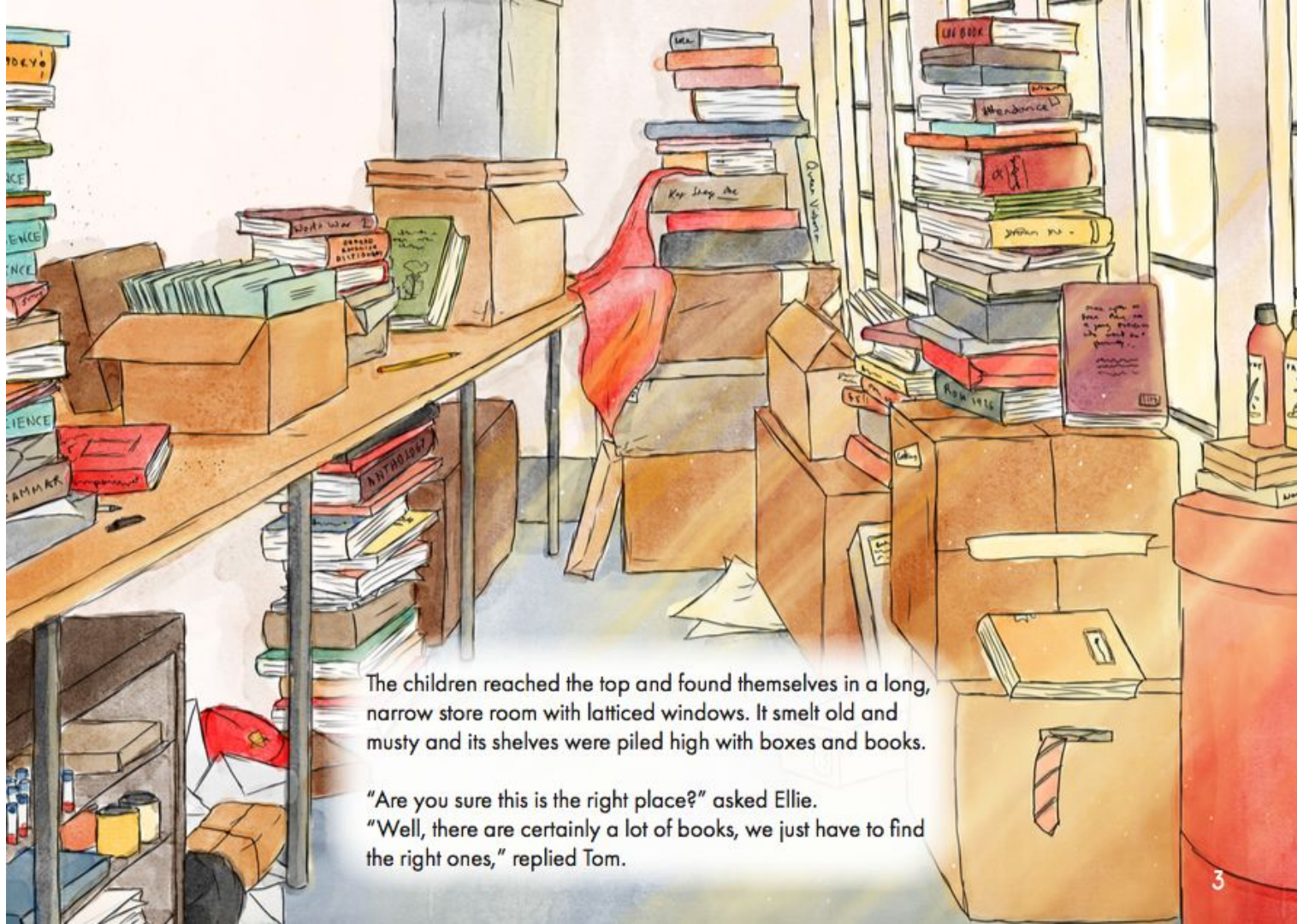
As they reached the end, the children paused. "Is it the door on the left...or the right?" wondered Tom. The children stood for a moment, uncertain, staring at the blank, white doors. A ray of sunshine was shining through the crack in the door on the left, casting golden light on the floor.

"Must be this one!" said Ellie cheerfully, pulling the door on the left open. They saw a red staircase stretching and winding above them.

"Ooh, I love spiral staircases!" exclaimed Tom as they began climbing, "they seem adventurous, you never know what might be round the corner."

"I've never been to this part of the school before," replied Ellie as they wound their way round and round, going higher and higher. "What a strange place to keep the book cupboard!"





The children reached the top and found themselves in a long, narrow store room with latticed windows. It smelt old and musty and its shelves were piled high with boxes and books.

"Are you sure this is the right place?" asked Ellie.

"Well, there are certainly a lot of books, we just have to find the right ones," replied Tom.



Ellie reached up on tip toe and took down a large volume from the top of the biggest pile. Its cover was dusky, red cloth and the gold letters on the front were faded but readable.

"Log book," she read aloud.

As she opened it up, a cloud of dust rose into the air, glittering and shining as it caught the sunlight. Tom and Ellie gasped, temporarily dazzled.



"Hello there," spoke a soft voice. The children looked up and saw a pretty lady, wearing a long, blue dress with her hair piled elegantly on top of her head. Beside her was a smiling gentleman with an impressive beard and a long, dark robe.

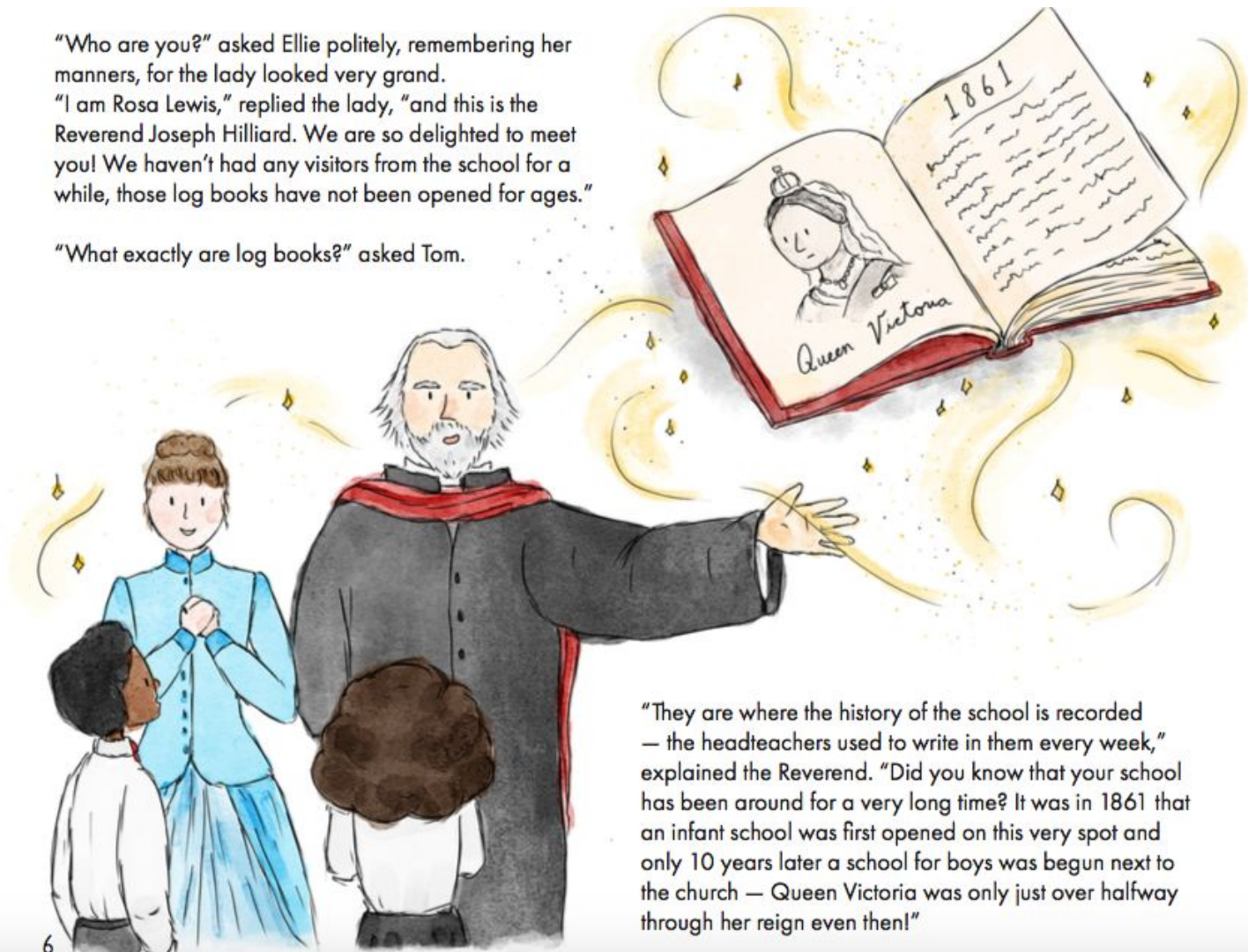
"G-Gosh!" stammered Ellie. "You l-l-look..."

"Victorian!" exclaimed Tom. "Well, it did look like an old book."

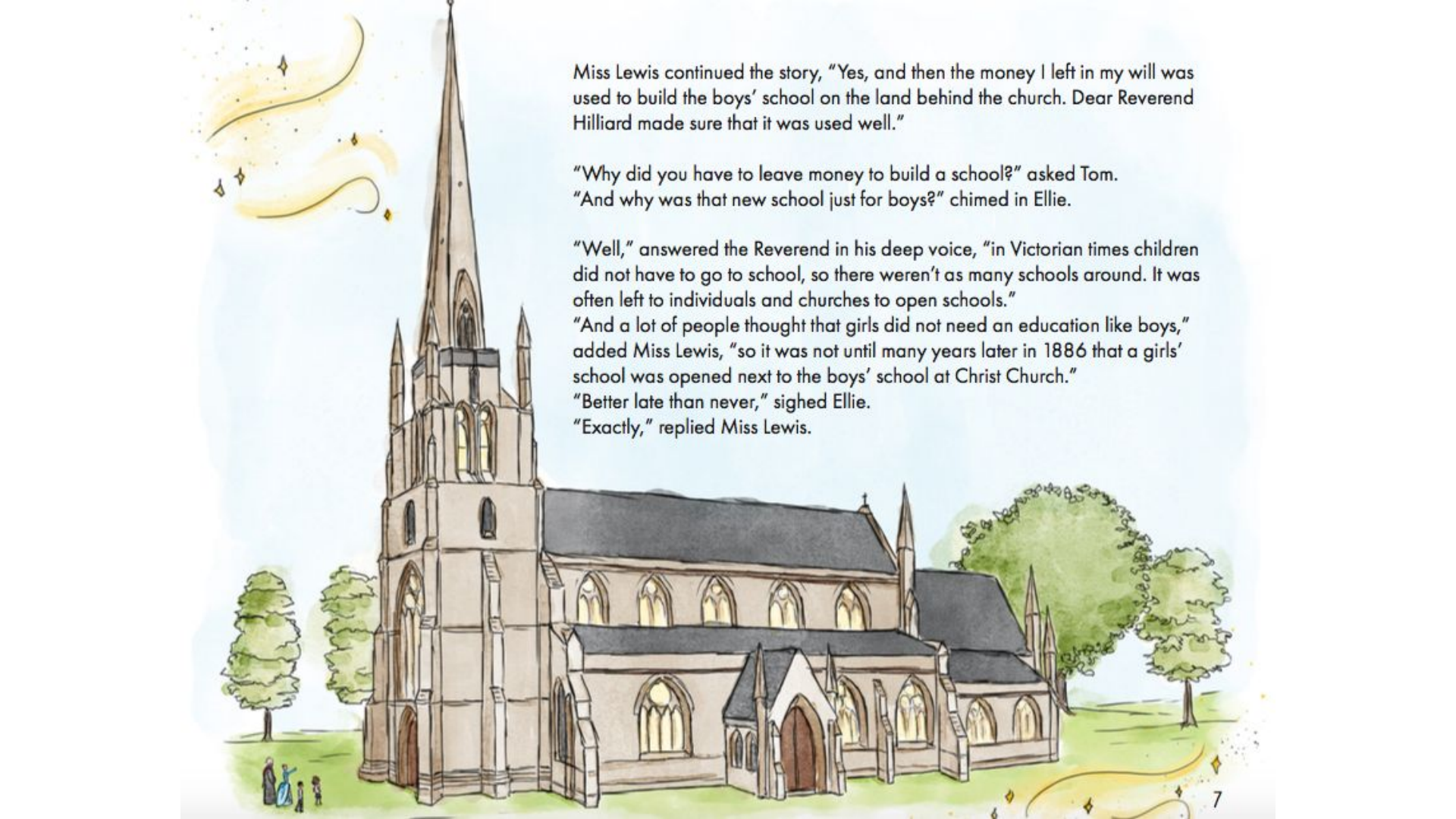


"Who are you?" asked Ellie politely, remembering her manners, for the lady looked very grand. "I am Rosa Lewis," replied the lady, "and this is the Reverend Joseph Hilliard. We are so delighted to meet you! We haven't had any visitors from the school for a while, those log books have not been opened for ages."

"What exactly are log books?" asked Tom.



"They are where the history of the school is recorded — the headteachers used to write in them every week," explained the Reverend. "Did you know that your school has been around for a very long time? It was in 1861 that an infant school was first opened on this very spot and only 10 years later a school for boys was begun next to the church — Queen Victoria was only just over halfway through her reign even then!"



Miss Lewis continued the story, "Yes, and then the money I left in my will was used to build the boys' school on the land behind the church. Dear Reverend Hilliard made sure that it was used well."

"Why did you have to leave money to build a school?" asked Tom.
"And why was that new school just for boys?" chimed in Ellie.

"Well," answered the Reverend in his deep voice, "in Victorian times children did not have to go to school, so there weren't as many schools around. It was often left to individuals and churches to open schools."

"And a lot of people thought that girls did not need an education like boys," added Miss Lewis, "so it was not until many years later in 1886 that a girls' school was opened next to the boys' school at Christ Church."

"Better late than never," sighed Ellie.

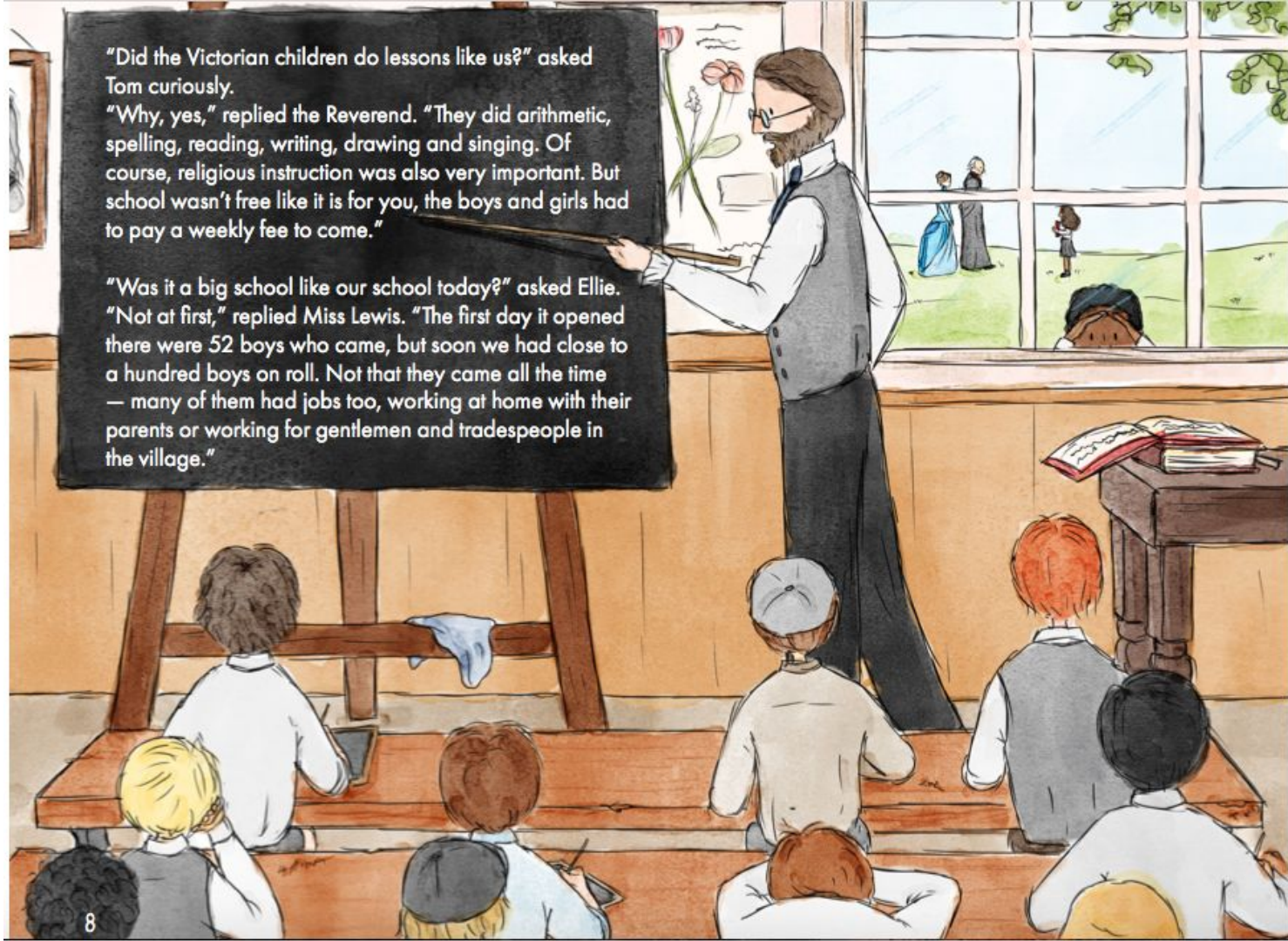
"Exactly," replied Miss Lewis.

"Did the Victorian children do lessons like us?" asked Tom curiously.

"Why, yes," replied the Reverend. "They did arithmetic, spelling, reading, writing, drawing and singing. Of course, religious instruction was also very important. But school wasn't free like it is for you, the boys and girls had to pay a weekly fee to come."

"Was it a big school like our school today?" asked Ellie.

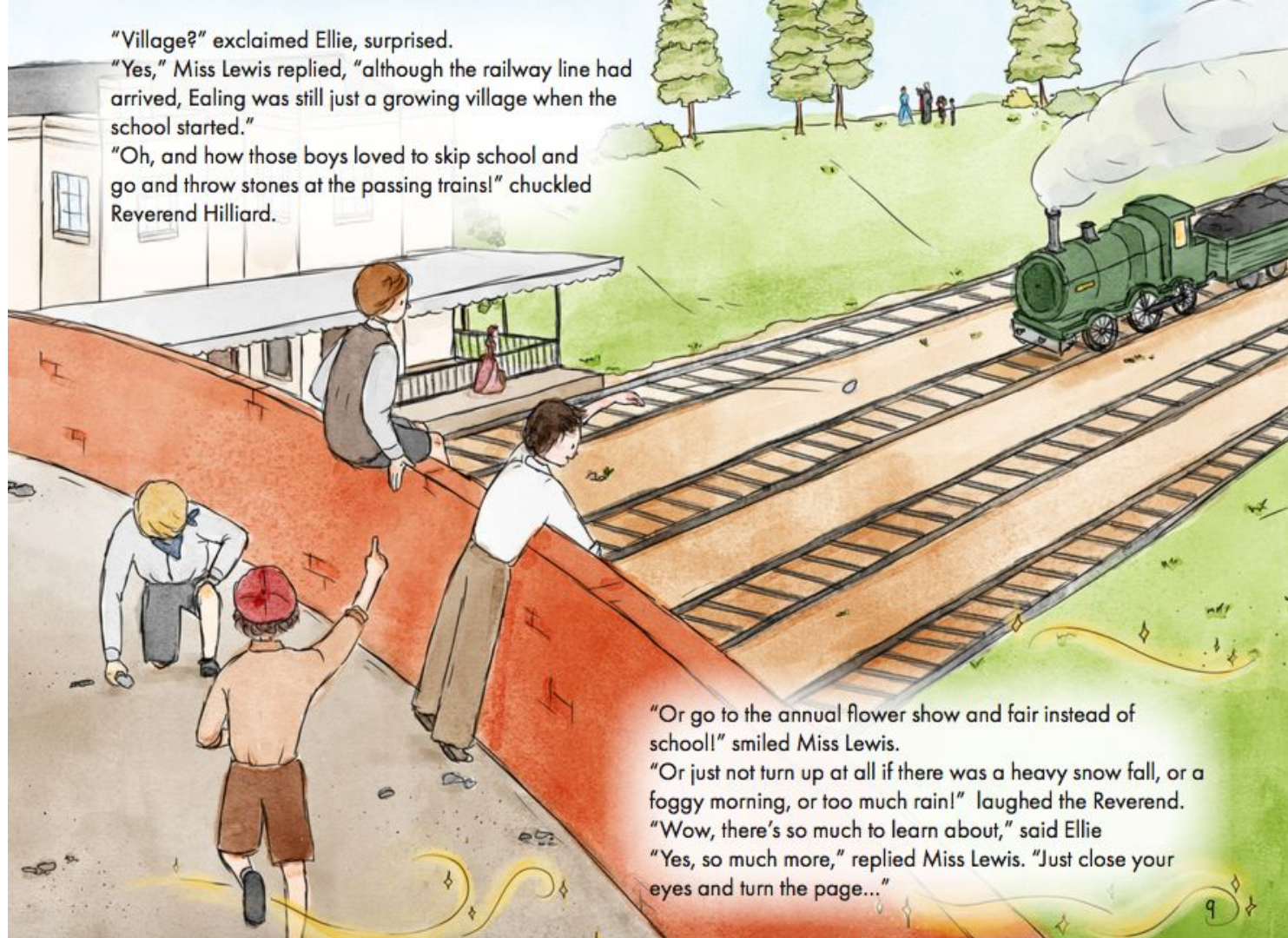
"Not at first," replied Miss Lewis. "The first day it opened there were 52 boys who came, but soon we had close to a hundred boys on roll. Not that they came all the time — many of them had jobs too, working at home with their parents or working for gentlemen and tradespeople in the village."



"Village?" exclaimed Ellie, surprised.

"Yes," Miss Lewis replied, "although the railway line had arrived, Ealing was still just a growing village when the school started."

"Oh, and how those boys loved to skip school and go and throw stones at the passing trains!" chuckled Reverend Hilliard.

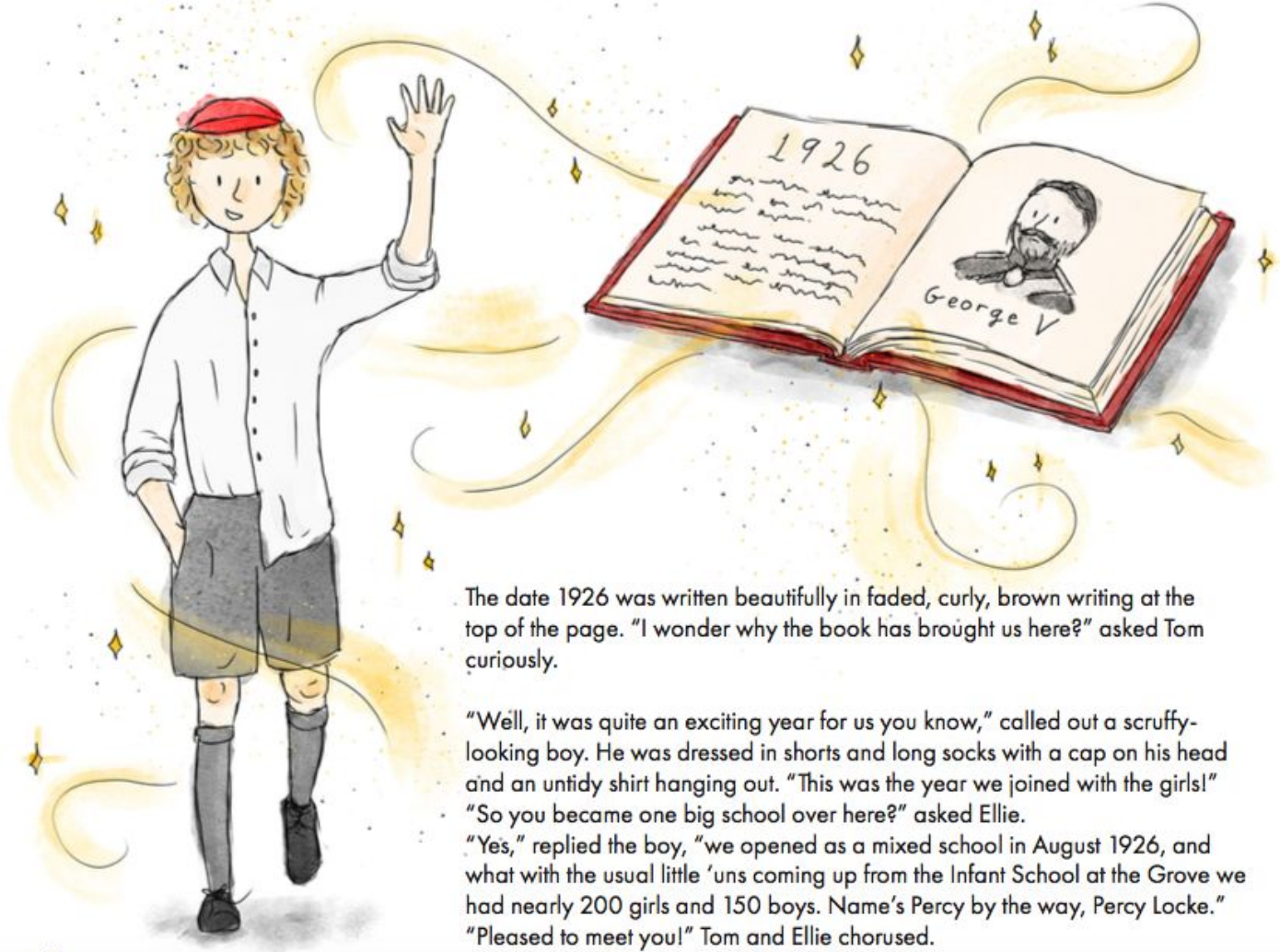


"Or go to the annual flower show and fair instead of school!" smiled Miss Lewis.

"Or just not turn up at all if there was a heavy snow fall, or a foggy morning, or too much rain!" laughed the Reverend.

"Wow, there's so much to learn about," said Ellie

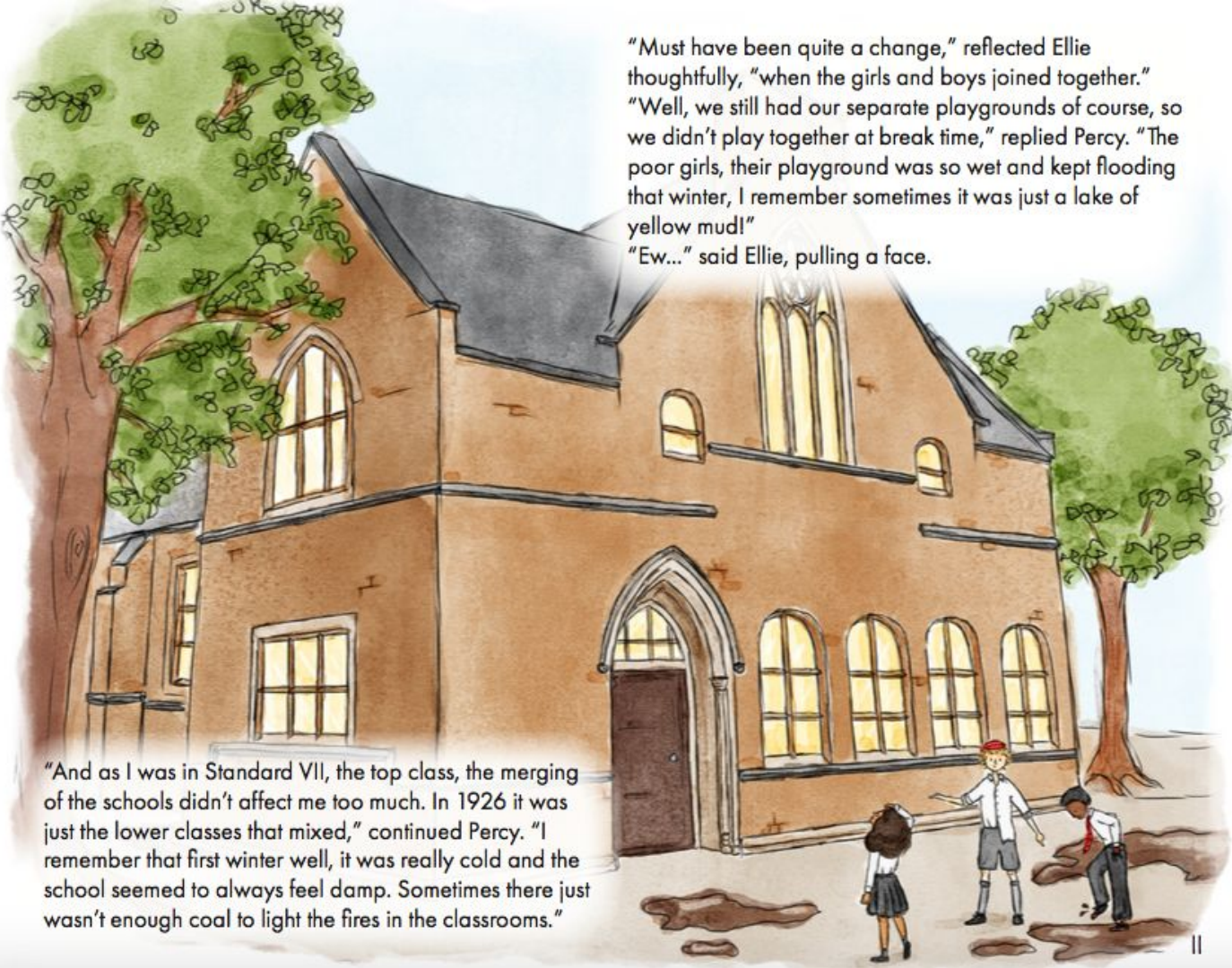
"Yes, so much more," replied Miss Lewis. "Just close your eyes and turn the page..."



The date 1926 was written beautifully in faded, curly, brown writing at the top of the page. "I wonder why the book has brought us here?" asked Tom curiously.

"Well, it was quite an exciting year for us you know," called out a scruffy-looking boy. He was dressed in shorts and long socks with a cap on his head and an untidy shirt hanging out. "This was the year we joined with the girls!" "So you became one big school over here?" asked Ellie.

"Yes," replied the boy, "we opened as a mixed school in August 1926, and what with the usual little 'uns coming up from the Infant School at the Grove we had nearly 200 girls and 150 boys. Name's Percy by the way, Percy Locke." "Pleased to meet you!" Tom and Ellie chorused.

A watercolor illustration of a two-story brick school building with Gothic-style windows and a large tree on the left. In the foreground, three children are standing near a muddy puddle. The scene is set outdoors with a clear sky.

"Must have been quite a change," reflected Ellie thoughtfully, "when the girls and boys joined together."
"Well, we still had our separate playgrounds of course, so we didn't play together at break time," replied Percy. "The poor girls, their playground was so wet and kept flooding that winter, I remember sometimes it was just a lake of yellow mud!"
"Ew..." said Ellie, pulling a face.

"And as I was in Standard VII, the top class, the merging of the schools didn't affect me too much. In 1926 it was just the lower classes that mixed," continued Percy. "I remember that first winter well, it was really cold and the school seemed to always feel damp. Sometimes there just wasn't enough coal to light the fires in the classrooms."



"Sounds miserable!" commented Tom.
"Oh, we were used to it," explained Percy, "and there was lots to enjoy about school: special days like Armistice Day when we listened to the service from Canterbury Cathedral on the wireless, visits to the central library..."



...singing carols at Christmas and then half day holidays for religious days like Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day — not to mention a full day off school in June for Sunday School treats!"
"Did you and the girls do the same lessons?" asked Ellie.



"Yes, mostly," replied Percy, "all the usual written lessons were the same, but we boys did handiwork whilst the girls did needlework and took cookery and laundry lessons. The girls also went to Walpole Park to play netball, but we all got to go swimming. The boys' team was really strong — we won the Ealing schools swimming trophy two years in a row you know!"



"I've heard school was strict in the past," said Ellie.
"You did have to do as you were told," grinned Percy,
"I got into the habit of being late when I was in
Standard V, but after two strokes of the cane I soon
found it easier to make sure I was on time! Punishment
like that didn't happen often, and it was usually just the
older boys. We soon learned not to tell lies, swear or
disrupt the lessons and we were always given plenty of
warnings before the cane came out..."



...It all had to be recorded very officially in the school
punishment book by the headmaster, Mr Hayles. He
wasn't so bad, he was at the school forever!"
"Well, I'm glad I didn't go to school then," said Tom.
"Thank you for telling us all about it, I would love to know
more but I do think we should be going. Come on Ellie,
let's close our eyes and turn the page. Goodbye Percy!"
"Good bye!" Percy called, fading into the distance.
"Come and visit again soon!"

Ellie turned the page, the dust billowed up and sparkled once again in the sunlight. As it settled, a high pitched wailing sound could be heard, gradually getting louder and louder.

"What's that terrible noise?" cried Tom, as he and Ellie clamped their hands over their ears.

"It's the air raid siren of course," said a serious voice. "That noise told us we all had to get into the shelter until the planes had gone."



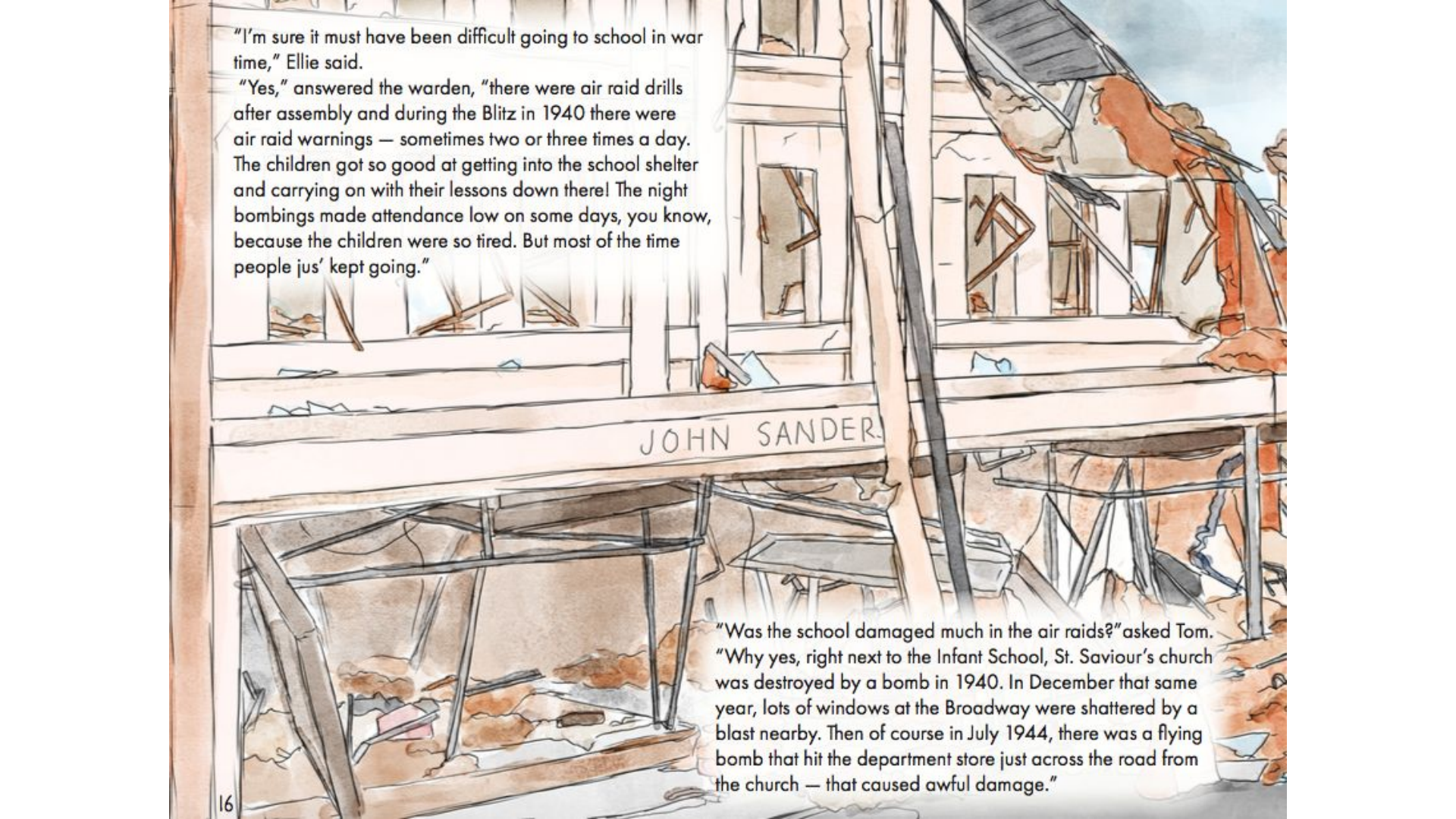
The children looked up and saw a man in uniform walking towards them.

"I know when we are," said Tom, "this is the Second World War, right?"

"Exactly," replied the man with a kindly smile, "I am the Air Raid Precautions warden for around here — it's my job to make sure everyone's safe when that siren goes off. It's been quite a job keeping all you school children safe during the war!"



"Did school keep going even when there was a war on?" asked Ellie.
"Yes of course," replied the warden, "it was closed for a while at the beginning. In September 1939 lots of children from your school were evacuated — sent to live in safe places in the countryside — and the school closed down completely for nine months. But, by the end of May 1940, some children had returned home and the school opened up again. Many children did stay away for the whole time of the war, but they had their teachers with them and Mr Chandler, the headmaster, used to go out to the villages and visit them."
"Oh, that was very good of him," said Tom.



"I'm sure it must have been difficult going to school in war time," Ellie said.

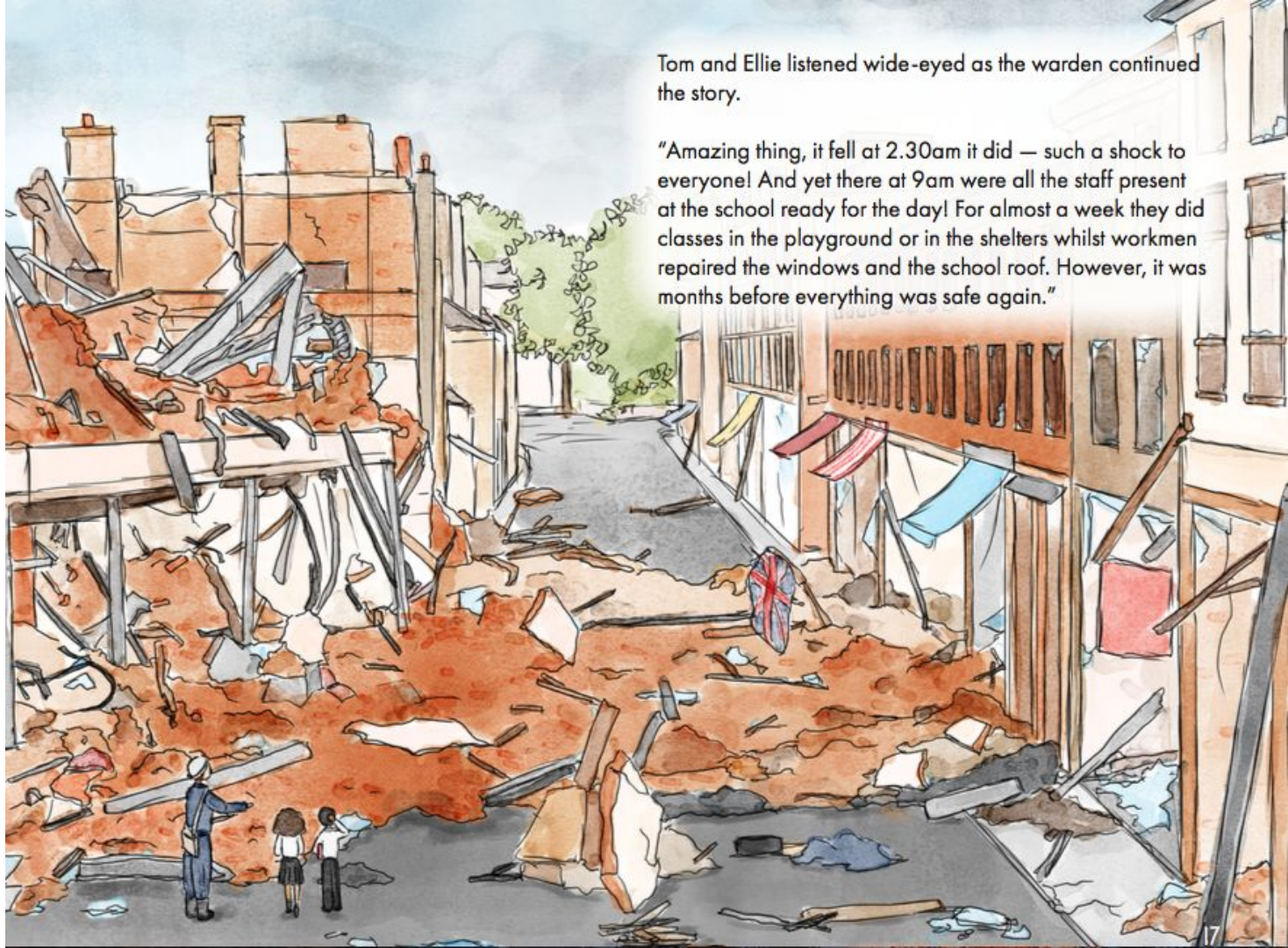
"Yes," answered the warden, "there were air raid drills after assembly and during the Blitz in 1940 there were air raid warnings — sometimes two or three times a day. The children got so good at getting into the school shelter and carrying on with their lessons down there! The night bombings made attendance low on some days, you know, because the children were so tired. But most of the time people jus' kept going."

JOHN SANDER.

"Was the school damaged much in the air raids?" asked Tom.
"Why yes, right next to the Infant School, St. Saviour's church was destroyed by a bomb in 1940. In December that same year, lots of windows at the Broadway were shattered by a blast nearby. Then of course in July 1944, there was a flying bomb that hit the department store just across the road from the church — that caused awful damage."

Tom and Ellie listened wide-eyed as the warden continued the story.

“Amazing thing, it fell at 2.30am it did — such a shock to everyone! And yet there at 9am were all the staff present at the school ready for the day! For almost a week they did classes in the playground or in the shelters whilst workmen repaired the windows and the school roof. However, it was months before everything was safe again.”





"Sounds to me like the war was a time when everyone was a hero," said Ellie in admiration.

"That would be right," replied the warden, "we all had to do our bit."

Tom was pulling at Ellie's sleeve. "We really should be going back to class you know," he whispered.

"Just one more page, please," pleaded Ellie.

"All right then," replied Tom.

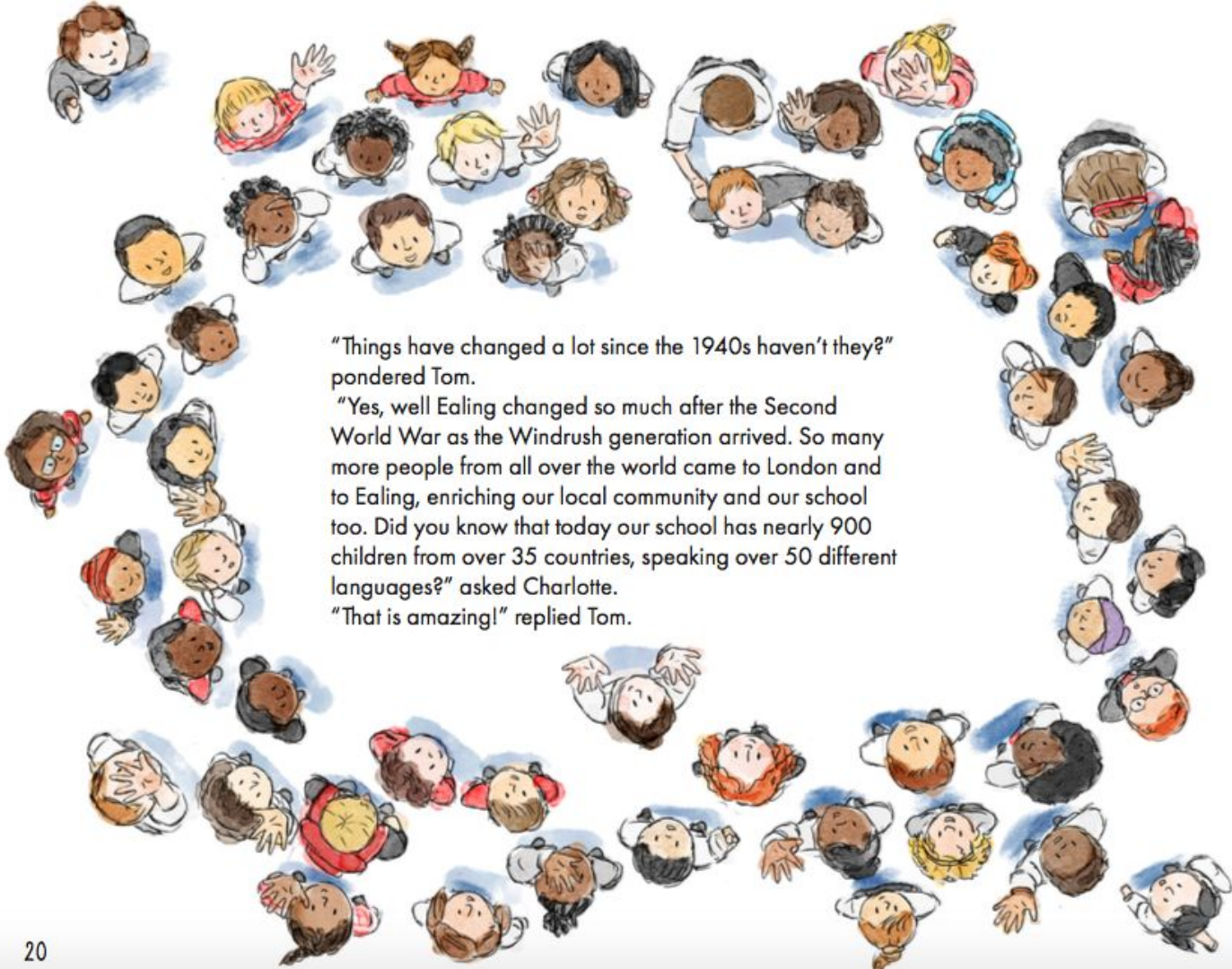
"Cheerio!" called the warden, fading from view as the children closed their eyes and turned the page once more.

As the dust glittered and sparkled and fell to the floor, Ellie and Tom opened their eyes to look at the date.

"2011! Why that wasn't long before I was born!" exclaimed Tom. "Is this still history?"

"Yes, recent history, but still important in the life of our school!" chimed in a voice as a young, red-headed girl bounced into view. "I'm Charlotte, the first house captain for St Peter and St Paul and I remember when we finally became one school. It was in 2011 that St. Saviour's Infants at the Grove site and Christ Church Juniors at the Broadway merged to become Christ the Saviour as you know it today."





"Things have changed a lot since the 1940s haven't they?" pondered Tom.

"Yes, well Ealing changed so much after the Second World War as the Windrush generation arrived. So many more people from all over the world came to London and to Ealing, enriching our local community and our school too. Did you know that today our school has nearly 900 children from over 35 countries, speaking over 50 different languages?" asked Charlotte.

"That is amazing!" replied Tom.

“And there’s been so much building and expansion since the schools first began,” said Ellie. “I don’t think Miss Lewis or Reverend Hilliard would recognise the school today — the new build with the rooftop playground is almost as tall as the church tower!”

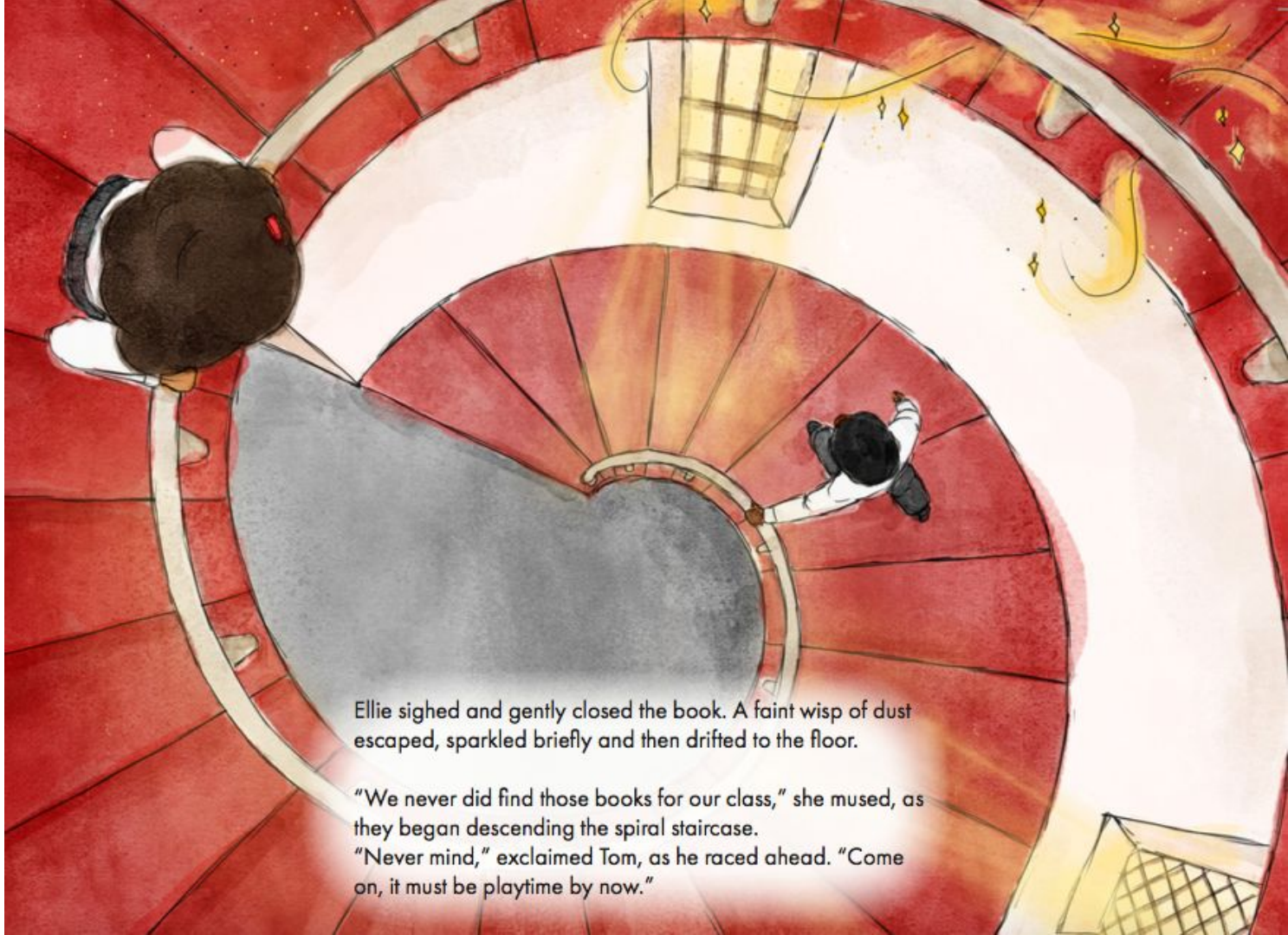




"They might not recognise many of the buildings but I do think they would recognise our school spirit — I think Miss Rosa Lewis and Reverend Hilliard would be proud if they could see us today. What a long history our school has," answered Charlotte thoughtfully.

"Yes, and what a long time we have been gone," replied Tom.

Charlotte smiled at them. "Maybe it's time to close the log book for now, you can always come back another time, there is so much more to discover."



Ellie sighed and gently closed the book. A faint wisp of dust escaped, sparkled briefly and then drifted to the floor.

"We never did find those books for our class," she mused, as they began descending the spiral staircase.

"Never mind," exclaimed Tom, as he raced ahead. "Come on, it must be playtime by now."



Tom and Ellie saw a red staircase stretching and winding above them. "Ooh, I love spiral staircases!" exclaimed Tom as they began climbing, "they seem adventurous, you never know what might be round the corner."



Journey up the spiral staircase with Ellie and Tom to discover the story that is the history of Christ the Saviour Primary School, Ealing.