

March 2023

Dear Families,

Each new term brings new challenges and opportunities and we have to make changes in response. We have all been affected by the increased cost of living and have had to reduce our spending. This has been the case for schools as well as individuals and some projects on our list have had to be deferred until the situation eases. The positive news is that Blackwell First School has been invited to be a founding member of the Worcestershire Hills Trust (WHT) which has the particular attraction that it will provide stability for the school and ensure that we can continue with our current tailored approach to the education of our children. I believe that there will be a range of educational benefits from the change over the longer term and these were outlined in the documents sent to you some weeks ago.

However, I am well aware that life has been increasingly difficult over recent years and that making ends meet is a major issue for many families. An important feature in the proposal to join the WHT is that with the focus on education and not unnecessary and expensive rebranding, it will avoid unnecessary problems and costs for families as there will be no changes to routine and no changes to school uniform. I am pleased to report that the proposal has been well received by both staff and families and we that we can now move on to the next stage of the process which should be completed later this year or early next year. While there may also be some financial benefits for the school, particularly improved access to capital funding in the medium term, the budget for the 2023-2024 Financial Year will be funded as in previous years through Worcestershire County Council. We expect to carry forward a modest sum at the end of March as security but, until the salaries for the coming year are agreed by the Government and energy costs become clearer, it is difficult to predict how much we can afford to put towards the various projects that we should like to initiate. The top priority, for which we have already gained planning permission, is to provide a dedicated Staff Room as the previous one had to be taken over for the enlarged kitchen some years ago but, for the reasons mentioned above, we cannot commit to this until the financial situation is clear. However, I think this would be a highly appropriate way of showing how grateful we are to the staff for their continued commitment to the school and for working as normal during a period when many public sector workers have been on strike. Once again, their dedication to the children has been demonstrated by their actions!

I can report that Governors have continued to make regular visits to the school now that Covid restrictions have been removed. This allows us to be aware of the detailed work that goes on day by day in order to ensure that each child is supported at the appropriate level. It still remains likely that we will be inspected by Ofsted in the coming months but on the evidence we have seen I remain confident that we can demonstrate that we are providing a well-balanced programme which meets the needs of all the children in line with our vision.

Once again I should like to thank the PTFA for their many efforts in support of the school which help to make the school community such a valuable entity and also make a greatly appreciated financial contribution. In conclusion, I should like to thank Mrs Moss and all the staff for their truly outstanding efforts in what has been another challenging term. We are indeed fortunate to have such dedicated staff. I hope you will all have an enjoyable holiday.

Hugh Evans

Chair of Governors

