



## **Blewbury Pre-School Update**

### **Introduction**

Blewbury Pre-School has been providing early years education for the children of Blewbury and the surrounding area for over 50 years. We have survived the challenges of another year of the pandemic and remained open for all our families, offering the same standard of care and education but with increased cleaning and hygiene routines. Covid has obviously prevented us from staging any large scale fundraising initiatives, including celebrating the pre-school's 50th anniversary last year. However, thanks to generous donations from the Malthus Trust, Tesco, local residents and the introduction of our lottery scheme, the pre-school has continued to provide quality education for local children.

### **CIO**

As a charity, Blewbury Pre-School is managed by a committee of volunteer Trustees. In May 2021 we officially changed the charity into a charitable incorporated organisation, or CIO. As part of this switch of status we simplified our name to Blewbury Pre-School, dropping the word "Playgroup". While becoming a CIO makes no difference to how our pre-school operates on a day to day basis, it does mean we now technically appear as a 'new' provider with Ofsted and are awaiting our 'first' inspection.

### **Extended Hours**

In response to low intake in 2019 we extended the hours on offer by two hours each day, now operating from 9am until 2pm, Monday to Friday. It has improved attendance levels and the debate could now possibly be, whether we extend them further. However, this does pose other complications such as staffing breaks and adult/child ratios.

### **Revised Curriculum**

In September last year, as per government guidance, staff implemented the new Early Years' Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum for all Primary Schools and Early Years' Settings. This included updating the paperwork required for Ofsted to show how the progress of each child in attaining the goals of the EYFS are recorded and planned for.

## **Lease**

Under the terms of the current lease, our rent has increased by 50% from 2021. With the renewal to take place in 2024 we expect conversations to begin soon with the leaseholders. Obviously in such circumstances it will provoke thoughts about the long term future of the pre-school, including the viability of the existing setting. These are complex and far reaching considerations that will no doubt involve discussion with numerous parties such as other pre-schools and Blewbury School.

## **Fundraising**

Rising costs will put further pressure on the pre-school finances and therefore fundraising remains an essential part of our revenue mix. The Blewbury Pre-School Lottery launched in July 2021. We now have 77 members enrolled, with a total of 91 numbers allocated and have raised £2122.50 so far. This regular income is crucial for the sustainability of the pre-school.

We will also be staging our Quiz & Curry Night on 21st May this year, in Blewbury Village Hall, which will include a raffle. This event raised around £3000 in 2019 and we hope this year will be a similar success.

## **Long Term Outlook**

The finances remain precarious. National living wage increases, energy price hikes and other consumables mean that our costs will go up. So the pre-school has to be inventive with how it raises the money to bridge the gap.

For the longer term, we also need to think about ideas around making the pre-school more competitive with other settings in the area, offering a pre-school provision that is relevant to the needs of local parents. The teachers and the committee remain invested in the pre-school to ensure that we can continue to provide a constant source of quality early years education in our village.

We are lucky to have enjoyed tremendous support from local residents and organisations, The Malthus Trust and of course Blewbury Parish Council. However, we cannot assume we will enjoy this level of support indefinitely. We need to be agile in our thinking, creative in our ideas and courageous enough to make sensible decisions to ensure this 51 year old pre-school survives for the next five decades and beyond.

Philippa Weeden  
Chair - Blewbury Pre-School CIO  
April 2022

For more information about Blewbury Pre-School go to [www.blewburypreschool.co.uk](http://www.blewburypreschool.co.uk)