



THE PINES SCHOOL

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20th March 2020

Dear parent/carer,

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing this letter to provide you with information about your child's education following the Government announcement on Wednesday that all schools will close today other than to the children of Key Workers and the most vulnerable learners. We have had to take the decision to partially close the school, offering provision initially for those pupils whose parents are Key Workers and those with the highest levels of vulnerability. This will be reviewed early next week. This is a really challenging time for us, as Leaders, Governors and the Local Authority continue to work with minimal guidance that changes daily. I know everything seems vague but the pace in which things are changing does not give us time or capacity to plan and implement things in the way that The Pines would normally do.

The Government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially.

The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society. Schools, and all childcare providers, are therefore being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children.

In order to open our school for pupils we need to make sure we have safe staffing levels and this includes having cooks, cleaners, first aiders, leaders and those with responsibility for safeguarding on site. Your child's safety and well-being has always been, and will continue to be, our top priority.

Sadly, at the current time nearly 40% of our **class based staff** are unable to work due to self-isolation, social distancing or illness; this is 26 members of staff. As more stringent social distancing guidance comes into place we predict staffing absence will continue to rise. This means that we are unable to safely open our school for **all** pupils. All staff who are well will be continuing to attend school.

We have identified a priority group of children and I must inform you that we will only be able to offer provision to these children as of Monday. This will be reviewed regularly and we will update you accordingly. We will be communicating with you regularly. We remain hopeful that at some point we will may be able to offer extended provision. At the minute we have had to prioritise and will continue to be guided by Government advice.



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For any children not in school, home learning will be provided and regular contact will be made.

Please be aware that this situation is changing rapidly and if we find ourselves in a place where if we cannot provide safe staffing levels, the school may have to close to all pupils at short notice. We will try to avoid this but you need to be aware that it is a possibility and would be out of our control.

For parents of children who will be in school, I would like to reassure you that we have rigorous hygiene practices in place and are enforcing regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitiser throughout the day. The school has an increased cleaning schedule and staff or pupils who have a cough or high temperature are prohibited from coming to school.

However, due to the changing role of schools across the country, as of Monday we will be moving towards care provision rather than an Education focus. Please be assured that those children at home will not be at an educational disadvantage. Again, this is in line with government guidance – which as you will appreciate changes daily.

I am extremely grateful to the wonderful and dedicated team of staff at The Pines, many of whom continue to work full time in periods of high pressure and high anxiety. I can assure you that we all remain committed all of our learners and their families, and whilst we are physically unable to operate as we usually do, we will still be here to support families as best as we can and how we do this will become clearer over the next few days.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during this testing time and reassure you that my team and I will do everything in our power to remain connected to the whole school community over the coming weeks and that we will try to get this as right as we can for all, parents, children and staff. I can only apologise for the inconvenience and any distress that may be caused. Guidance comes in so late we are being forced to make last minute decisions with minimal information. Again, rest assured we are doing the very best that we can in the most difficult circumstances. As of Monday, we will be contacting each and every family to hopefully reassure you during this challenging time.

If you have any questions or queries, we will try to answer them as best as we can.

With best wishes



Emma



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