



Marsh Hill, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7EY
Tel: 0121 464 6136

Email: enquiry@pines.bham.sch.uk www.thepinesspecialschool.com

Headteacher: Miss Emma Pearce, B.Ed. (Hons), MEd, AdvDipEd

6th November 2020

Dear families.

Welcome back!

I hope you had a happy and healthy half term break. This year has certainly presented us with many challenges, but time really is flying! The most important thing for us is that we have a school full of happy children, and I believe we really do. The children have taken the changes to school life in their stride and have accepted them. To support the children, staff continue to keep school as predictable and normal as they can. As always, the staff team at The Pines continues to work tirelessly for the children and their hard work and commitment is appreciated, more so now than ever before!

Apologies for another long letter – there is some information that needs to be shared.

National Restrictions

As you will all be aware, as of 00:01am on the 5th November we entered a second national lockdown where there are a number of social restrictions in place for all of us. These restrictions are to be enforced in a bid to reduce contact and the spread of the virus. Like all schools and colleges we are set to remain open and will continue with the measures that we already have in place. These include enhanced cleaning, encouraging children to wash their hands frequently and maintaining social distancing as much as is practically possible within school.

In addition, all classrooms and office spaces will be kept ventilated. This means that windows have to be kept open at all times to ensure there is a flow of air. Obviously, as we enter the winter months we will continue to adhere to this as it is a directed control measure but similarly we want to maintain comfortable working conditions for all! So we are happy for you to send your child in with an additional fleece or hoody and this doesn't have to be school uniform (please ensure that it is named!). We will have the windows open when children are in to ensure there is an air flow, and then open them fully to purge the air when children go out to play. The guidance is clear that this is a control measure and that we have to ensure that this is built in,

"natural ventilation – opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation, and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space)

We continue to follow the guidelines around what to do if there is a confirmed case in school, and this does mean that there is the possibility of bubbles or classes having to close. I would like to thank you all for your continued support and understanding with this. We know that it isn't easy and that the children like the predictable routine of coming to school, but your support has been appreciated as has your ongoing engagement with online learning and communications. We are looking into an online learning platform that can be used and I hope to be able to share details of this with you in the coming weeks.



Birmingham Special Schools'
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Face coverings

One of the changes to guidance is the use of face coverings in school and this is the most difficult for us, an all age special school to interpret. The guidance below is written for mainstream schools and doesn't take into account the needs of our children specifically.

In primary schools and education settings teaching year 6 and below, there is no change to the existing position. It is not mandatory for staff and visitors to wear face coverings. In situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible (for example when moving around in corridors and communal areas), settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors.

In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

At the Pines we appreciate that all of our pupils would be exempt

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or disability*
- speak to or provide assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate*
- The same exemptions will apply in education settings, and we would expect teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs.*

We have measures in place to ensure that there is social distancing in corridors and communal areas. As I have said previously, all of our children here would fall into the exempt category so there is no expectation for this to be enforced for pupils over the age of 11. However, if parents and children wish to wear masks on transport and when moving around school then obviously they can. We would ask that that you provide a bag or a container for the mask to be put in when they arrive at school. This should be a container or bag that can be sealed.

No child or staff member will be challenged for wearing or not wearing a face covering, as we appreciate that some people are exempt and some of our children need to see people's faces when they communicate. Similarly, we will support those who can and choose to wear a mask.

Apologies if this sounds vague, it is us trying to interpret the guidance in the most user friendly way for our pupils and school.

Parents evenings

Just a reminder to you all to send you preferred slots back for parents evening. As you will be aware we are running things slightly different this year given the current situations and you will have received a letter asking you to select your preferred time for a telephone consultation.



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Parent Governor

I am pleased to introduce you to our new parent Governor, Mr Ujja Ali. Mr Ali's son joined us this year and he has expressed an interest in ensuring that the school continues to move forward. Mr Ali has a background in banking and is really committed to the school. I am sure he will be an excellent addition in joining Mrs Tracey O'Brien as parent governor and will officially join the Governing Body on the 30th November at our FGB. Welcome aboard!

On behalf of the school and governor I would like to thank Mrs Rachel Broderick whose term of office has come to an end with us as of 30th November. Rachel has supported the school as a parent governor since we moved into the building and has been a great source of support to us.

Transport

We have been asked to remind parents that the guidelines that transport adhere to restricts the guides or drivers from leaving the vehicle. They are unable to knock doors or collect children from parents and this remains the responsibility of the parent. They are also directed to wait no more than 2 minutes when waiting for a child to come to transport. Often, the drivers and guides are supportive and will do what they can to support. There have been some issues with transport as they have had to change the way they work also, but things do appear to have settled down now. Thank you for your patience and support.

Allotment

We are so proud of our allotment, it really is a beautiful place that has flourished thanks to the help of staff, parents and families. We have had a lots of support in establishing the allotment, with time and resources being donated. It is something incredibly special and we are hoping to be able to get lots of photos on the website over the coming months. It is a safe area for all of our children to access and they really enjoy working in the outdoors.

This week we have taken delivery of two very special benches. One is a recognition bench, dedicated to the O'Brien family who have been instrumental in setting up the allotment, sourcing support, digging, painting, building... and so much more. The second is a memory bench of the granddad of one of our pupils who sadly passed away recently and donations were requested by the family to contribute to the allotment. Both very special dedications to the school and allotment, we look forward to the warmer weather when we can sit back and admire everyone's hard work!



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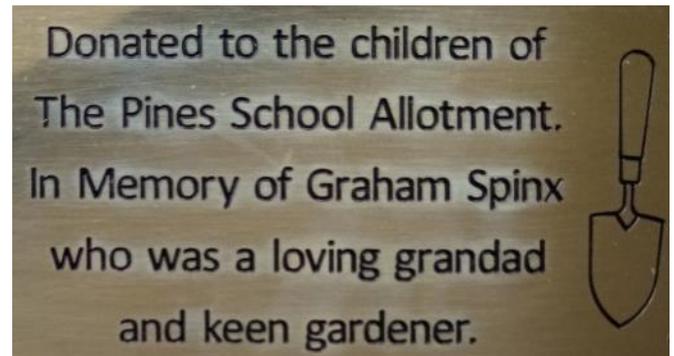
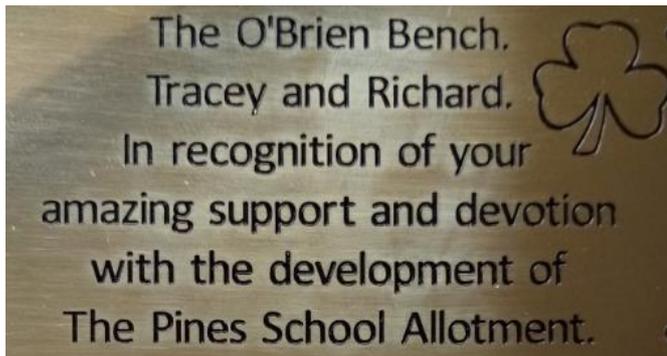




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As always many thanks for your continued support and understanding.

Emma Pearce



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