



THE PINES SCHOOL

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

8th January 2021

Dear families,

It is with a heavy heart that once again I am writing this letter to provide you with information about your child's education following the Government announcement on Monday that once again we are placed in lockdown. This brings restrictions on schooling, with advice being given to stay at home, stay safe and protect the NHS and reduce the contact that we have with other people. Whilst I predicted January would be a difficult return to school, I hadn't anticipated it being this tricky, with ever rising levels of infection, a new highly transmissible variant of COVID and sadly the ongoing reports of mortality due to COVID. This combined with late guidance from the government and ongoing media reports and campaigns against Education and the teaching profession. As a school, we hear changes to the guidance at the same time as it is released to the general public. At present we are only able to offer provision for those whose parents are critical workers and those who are deemed to be most vulnerable. I do appreciate how difficult this is for families. We are continually reviewing numbers and safety, but it continues to be an ever changing picture as we try to reduce contact for staff and children. Our children are amazing and we really do miss them when they aren't here. As a special school we have the added complication that our children really struggle to maintain social distancing. 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 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.

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.

For any children not in school, home learning will be provided and regular contact will be made, this will be shared on DOJO and learning uploaded to Purple Mash. We have applied for additional ICT resources so that we are able to offer it to some families who have no access. This is scheduled to arrive next week (fingers crossed). We have some resource packs (glue pencils and so on) made up that we can get out to families to support the home learning process

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. We are trying to be as COVID secure as possible.



Birmingham Special Schools'
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Several of the mobile phone companies (EE, Sky mobile, Smarty, Tesco Mobile, Three and Virgin) are offering additional free monthly data allowances for parents who are supporting their child's home learning. They have outlined their criteria for eligibility, which is that you:

- do not have fixed broadband at home
- cannot afford additional data for their devices
- are experiencing disruption to their face-to-face education

Each service is giving different benefits (20GB free per month, 100GB free for 3 months or unlimited data)

If any parent is finding difficulty in connecting remotely to school and they meet the above criteria, please let us know. You can email the school office email address (enquiry@pines.bham.sch.uk), ring school (0121 464 6136) or contact Mr Lawrence on School Dojo

To request extra mobile data, you will need to give us the following information:

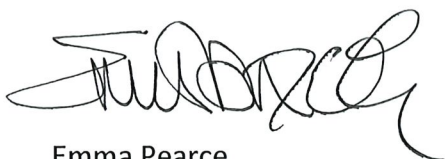
- the account holder's name
- your mobile number (a number beginning with '07')
- your mobile network
- whether you pay monthly or pay as they go

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.

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

With best wishes



Emma Pearce



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