

## PINS Project – Final Report (July 2025 – March 2026)

### Overview

The PINS (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools) project has delivered a sustained programme of engagement across schools, working collaboratively with parents, carers, and school staff to strengthen inclusive practice for neurodiverse pupils.

Across three academic terms, the project has focused on:

- Amplifying parent/carer voice within schools
- Supporting schools to reflect on inclusive practice
- Sharing best practice across settings
- Identifying systemic challenges and opportunities for development

### Engagement summary

|   | <b>Summer Term<br/>(July-Sept 2025)</b> | <b>Autumn Term<br/>(Sept – Dec 2025)</b>  | <b>Spring Term<br/>(Jan – March 2026)</b>   | <b>Total</b> |
|---|---|---|---|--------------|
| Number of sessions                        | 22                                      | 32  | 29  | <b>83</b>    |
| Additional sessions offered               | 0                                       | 4<br>1 Book Look<br>1 Parents Evening (Due to no or engagement at previous meetings)<br>2 online meetings | 3<br>2 online meetings and<br>1 additional session on OAP for junior & senior setting | <b>7</b>     |
| Number of parent/carers attended sessions | 144                                     | 164   | 97  | <b>405</b>   |

PINS has received strong engagement across the project, with 405 parent/carer attendances. We have increased engagement through online meetings and additional sessions. Schools demonstrated responsiveness by adapting engagement approaches where participation was initially low.

A core group of schools maintained consistent attendance across all three terms, indicating sustained engagement and trust, other schools with low parent engagement previously had increased levels of engagement through the PINS project. Only one school in the project received no engagement from any parents/carer through the project.

### Conclusion

The PINS project has demonstrated significant impact in:

- Strengthening parent voice
- Driving improvements in school practice
- Identifying systemic challenges

There is clear evidence of:

- Positive cultural shifts within schools
- Increased collaboration between families and education settings
- Commitment to inclusive practice
- Some incredible knowledgeable and experienced staff across the borough who regularly go the extra mile

However, the findings also highlight the need for:

- Greater consistency across schools leading to less of a 'postcode lottery' for SEND children and families
- Clearer systems and communication
- Local Authority investment in training, resources, and support pathways

## Recommendations going forward across the borough

- Develop a Borough-Wide **Masking Toolkit** - Co-produced with parents, schools, and specialists
- Standardise **Communication Expectations** with clear guidance for schools suggesting the consistent use of newsletters, websites, and direct communication
- Expand **Parent Engagement sessions** where possible using termly planned meetings/information sessions.
- Training and Development with **ongoing SEN training** and SEN champions in schools
- **Clarify SEN Pathways** for families with accessible guidance on OAP, IEPs, EHCPs and family friendly resources
- **Improve Transitions** through year groups and share this best practice borough-wide.
- **Enhance Learning Environments** through regular PINS type walks and access to specialist advice (EP, OT, SaLT)
- **Promote Inclusive Practice** across all schools by sharing best practice schools and using peer-to-peer school support – not just within academy trusts
- **Continue independent facilitation** to maintain relationships

## Key Themes Identified by Parents and Carers

### Masking and Emotional Regulation

Masking remains one of the most significant concerns raised. Parents report:

- High levels of masking across both boys and girls
- Negative impacts on mental health, learning, and home life
- Feeling unheard or unsupported by schools
- There is strong demand for a masking toolkit for schools and families to increase staff understanding of masking behaviours and structured opportunities for children to safely self-regulate and unmask.

### School Communication

- Communication from schools has been raised as an area requiring improvement across many settings, though it is worth noting some of the boroughs schools are said to be good with communication.
- Parents and carers report a lack of clear, timely, and accurate information regarding next steps, available support, school processes, and signposting to appropriate staff or services.
- Some schools arrange information sessions with roles such as the SENCO, family support worker, or mental health leads and bring in external bodies to support this. This is hugely beneficial for families.
- Some families report they frequently fail to receive emails or are given insufficient notice to attend sessions or meetings in school.

- Regular yet manageable communication from class teachers is also an area where parents would welcome improvement, feedback in relation to their child, especially if there have been some challenges through the day is essential, however more positive conversations would be appreciated too.
- Internal communication between class teachers and the school's SENCO/inclusion teams works well within some schools however lacks consistency across others.
- We have already seen PINS schools updating the SEND information on their website and adding quality SEN sections into their weekly newsletter as an extremely positive starting point, this has been well received by parents/carers.
- Some schools have begun introducing SEN parents' evenings also by way of ensuring regular contact with parents/carers as well as having the opportunity to ensure IEPs and Pupil passports are up to date.

### **Parent Support and Engagement**

- Parents consistently express a need for:
  - Regular coffee mornings and information sessions
  - Opportunities for peer support and shared learning
  - Advanced scheduling to improve attendance
- These sessions are most impactful when:
  - Held in familiar school environments
  - Paired with practical topics (e.g. sleep, emotional regulation)

### **Staff Training and Consistency**

- A clear inconsistency exists in staff knowledge across schools.
  - Key issues:
    - Variable confidence in supporting neurodiverse pupils
    - Impact of supply staff on continuity
- Suggested improvements:
  - SEN "champion teachers"
  - Whole-school training programmes
  - Use of one-page pupil profiles for consistency

### **Understanding SEN Pathways (OAP, IEPs, EHCPs)**

- There is a limited understanding of Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)
- Confusion and inconsistencies remain around thresholds for IEPs and EHCPs
- There is a need for:
  - Clear, accessible guidance for families
  - Information sessions for families from SENCO / leadership within school

### **SEN Register Inconsistencies**

- There is a wide variation in how schools identify and record the pupils they put on the SEN register
- At times the lack of transparency leads to confusion and mistrust
- This area is currently under review at borough level

### **Resources and Capacity**

- Parents recognise significant pressure on school budgets.
- Schools are often having to exceed available resources.
- Increased staffing and resources would enable earlier and more effective intervention

### **Transitions Between Year Groups**

- Year group transition quality across PINS schools varies considerably
- The impact of poor transitions, increased anxiety, reduced readiness for learning

- Effective approaches we have discussed include, extended transition periods (a whole week) early introduction to new staff and environments, bespoke plans, as well as additional opportunities to access the new classroom during inset days in September

### **Learning Environment**

- Challenges around overstimulating classrooms (noise, lighting, clutter) leading to a child potentially being unable to learn as soon as they enter the classroom
- Increase in pupils not being able to access or being removed from class and missing learning – “corridor kids” who are in mainstream schools with minimal provisions unable to access overwhelming space
- PINS walks have been a really positive intervention providing practical, achievable adaptations

### **Inclusion and Access**

- Some schools demonstrate excellent inclusion, some do mostly well and others struggle due to reasons such as staff training or resource limitations
- Adaptations would be welcomed around school trips, classroom participation, uniform adjustments and overall equity of experience

### **Lunchtime and Behaviour**

- Lunchtime is frequently a trigger for overwhelm. The lack of structure and the unknown is really challenging for some neurodiverse children.
- Effective strategies available at many of the PINS schools include, Quiet clubs, 20/20clubs, structured play and OPAL approaches

### **Dyslexia and Dyscalculia**

- Parents/carers report the confusing and inconsistent assessment pathways and financial barriers to diagnosis. A needs lead approach to dyslexia is not always being achieved
- A key need here for all schools is clearer guidance and improved school-level understanding through dedicated training and screening support

### **Neurodiversity Awareness**

- There is strong support from parents for school to embed neurodiversity understanding education in the curriculum, extending awareness to wider families through teaching children in school about differences and celebrating them. To help reduce stigma and build long-term understanding

### **Health Pathways (CAMHS, SALT, MHST)**

- Many families through PINS have reported significant systemic challenges that include
  - Long waiting times for ASD/ADHD assessments
  - Being passed from one person to another
  - Limited awareness of Right to Choose
  - Delays and communication issues with SALT
  - MHST pathways not always meeting complex needs

### **Homework**

- Multiple PINS schools families reported excessive workload and a lack of differentiation for those who may find this increasingly difficult
- Many schools do not enforce homework however there is usually an element of pressure from reward systems
- Moving forward suggested alterations: Homework kept to an absolute minimum, adaptive tasks, reasonable expectations and more creative reward systems

### **Secondary School Transition**

- Parents/carers often feel underprepared for this process leaving them feeling anxious and unaware of options.

- Moving forward parents/carers would like more access to open days, earlier opportunities to visit perspective schools, SEN open sessions and better guidance on what is available within mainstream settings

### **School–Family Relationships**

- At some schools, families and staff have reported that at times relationships are strained, however the use of independent facilitators (e.g. PINS/SVW) has been highly effective in supporting rebuilding these relationships

## **Impact and Positive Change**

### **Strengthened School Practices**

Schools within the project have implemented many things, such as:

- SEN newsletters and improved communication
- Coffee mornings and workshops
- Updated pupil passports
- Increased staff training
- New sensory spaces
- SENCO at parents' evenings.
- Updated SEN sections on school websites

### **Quick wins from PINS walks & offer of support**

- Classroom adaptations (lighting, displays)
- Whole-school training on masking and sensory needs
- Introduction of visual timetables or more consistent approach to visual timetable.
- Development of inclusive classroom models and appointing champions of this.
- Increased neurodiversity awareness activities & curriculum input.

### **Parent Engagement Success**

Notable schools with strong engagement:

- Shinfield Infants
- Willowbank Infants
- St Paul's
- St Nicholas
- Highwood
- Alder Grove

## **Best Practice Identified Across Schools**

### **Year to year transition**

- Extended transition programmes leading to reduced anxiety, examples such as St Pauls 'Big Swap Week'. Willowbank send postcards over the summer holidays and multiple schools have bespoke transitions with appointments available on the September inset day to meet the new teacher again.
- Informing children earlier on who their next teacher will be to allow them time to build a relationship has also worked well in some schools.

### **Strong Parent Partnerships**

- Many of the PINS schools have excellent parent/carers engagement and information opportunities, they operate strong open-door policies and have regular, well-planned engagement opportunities

### **Effective Communication**

- Parents/carers in many schools reported regular updates being provided, useful and timely communication and the feeling of always being listened too. Some provide effective communication (postcards over summer, pupil passports/one-page profiles etc)

### **Inclusive Practice**

- St Nicholas has a clear dedication to inclusivity in the school. The school works hard on adjustments that allow full participation in trips and classroom activities.
- Many other schools work hard at inclusive practices too.

### **Therapeutic Behaviour Approaches**

- Walter Infant has the policy is embedded into the school's ethos, parents/carers are aware of the policy, and the school encompasses a calm and consistent environment with strong staff-pupil relationships and neuro-affirming language used.

### **Universal Provision**

Many of the PINS schools have excellent provisions in:

- Sensory circuits
- Visual supports
- Movement breaks embedded across schools
- Nurture / ELSA programmes

*"We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Cathy and Hannah from SEND Voices Wokingham for their invaluable support.*

*Through their work with both parents and staff, they have empowered families to feel more confident in sharing their thoughts and experiences, while also fostering greater understanding across the wider school community. Their contribution has strengthened communication between home and school, enabling us to make meaningful adjustments that enhance inclusivity and accessibility for all children.*

*Their dedication, approachable manner, and clear expertise have had a significant impact. Thank you Cathy and Hannah, you've been here with us throughout the project with empathy and professionalism." – SENCO from PINS school.*