

Update for Schools

Monday 21st June 2021

The pandemic situation in the UK has greatly improved since January but there has been a recent increase in infection rate. This had the delayed Welsh Government's easing of lockdown and Plas Pencelli was not able to re-open for schools on the June 14th as hoped. However, following Welsh Government guidance Plas Pencelli will be open for primary schools only from Sunday July 4th. However, secondary school students are not able to attend currently. (See below).

What has changed to allow this?

The Welsh Government unexpectedly announced on Friday 18th June that: "*Primary school children in the same school contact group or bubble will be able to stay overnight in a residential outdoor education centre.*" This means that once centre staff have been prepared for a return and the centre has been set up, Plas Pencelli can open from the 4th July onwards, though only for primary school children.

Why can't secondary school students attend?

The same Welsh Government statement also included the words: "*We continue to advise against domestic residential educational visits for secondary aged learners and international residential educational visits for all learners.*" This means that secondary students cannot attend Plas Pencelli at this time.

When will secondary students be allowed back to Plas Pencelli?

A review by the Welsh Government is due on 19th July. This may allow outdoor centres to reopen to schools for the last week of term onwards or from the start of the new term in September. There is no indication which it is likely to be at this stage.

Primary schools booked from July 4th onwards These courses will now go ahead with some extra safety protocols in place due to Coronavirus. (See below). Students will be able to attend in their school bubbles. Autumn visits are expected to go ahead with similar arrangements to normal. Schools are encouraged to liaise with Plas Pencelli.

Secondary schools booked between July 4th and July 19th. These courses are no longer allowed to go ahead.

Secondary schools from July 19th.onwards Whether these courses go ahead depends on Welsh Government announcements due on July 19th. Otherwise, its expected secondary courses in the Autumn term will go ahead much as normal. Schools are encouraged to liaise with Plas Pencelli.

Specialist Adult Courses in July/August.

These courses will go ahead and are allowable under present restrictions. Further details will be supplied 2 weeks before the start of each course.

Coronavirus Protocols

Schools will want to discuss arrangements for coronavirus safety before their visit. A detailed and thorough risk assessment has been produced which addresses all areas of operations at Plas Pencelli, from minibus transport to outdoor activities. This illustrates that the levels of risk can be controlled so that young people and staff would be no more at risk than in their school environment. Adjustments to our Coronavirus Risk Assessment will continue as conditions change to remain in line with current standards. The current

Coronavirus Risk Assessment will be accessible on the centre's website (www.plaspencelli.co.uk). All schools due to visit are encouraged to liaise with the centre so that measures can be adjusted to be in line as far as possible with each school's standards so that young people can more easily understand and adhere to the protocols at Plas Pencelli. Schools will want to undertake risk assessments for the travel to and from the centre and overnight supervision regarding coronavirus and other risk factors. Plas Pencelli will take prime responsibility for all other activities. We will also want to discuss with every school arrangements for accommodation, activity groups and bathroom facilities to ensure all is organised before arrival.

Finally

- Plas Pencelli is in a very good state and the staff are enthusiastic about working with young people once again.
- No school has been financially penalised by Plas Pencelli during the pandemic.
- There is no better time for young people to attend an outdoor education residential.
- There are vacancies, particularly during the November to March periods, when the adjusted programme is even more effective and run from a warm and cosy base with free use of fleeces, gloves, waterproofs etc.
- Bookings are taken up to 2 years in advance and there is much competition.
- Please make contact if you have any queries.

We look forward to once again welcoming young people to Plas Pencelli very shortly. Thanks for your continued support and understanding.

Peter Blackburn (Head of Centre)

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