

Covid-19 Update for Schools Thursday 4th November 2021

General. The incidence of Covid-19 is currently at a high level in the UK even though life has returned almost to normal due to the mitigations of vaccinations and partial immunity from previous infections. Plas Pencelli has been open since July thanks to the adoption of controls outlined in the Covid-19 risk assessment. Staff shortages have brought challenges though feedback indicates young people have had very positive experiences. Although there have been adjustments, see the Risk Assessment, this won't greatly impact on the quality of the service and young people will receive a positive, impactful, and undiminished outdoor education experience.

Infections at Plas Pencelli. There have been no coronavirus infections reported amongst centre staff or visitors in the last few weeks, largely due to the controls set out in the Covid-19 Risk Assessment available on the centre website (www.plaspencelli.co.uk). Young people and staff are no more at risk than in their school environment provided control measures are followed. Centre staff are vulnerable to infection and undertake lateral flow tests on Sunday and Wednesday each week and we kindly request that all visiting staff and secondary age students follow this regime.

Mask Wearing. We request that visiting staff wear masks indoors, particularly when Plas Pencelli staff are present, in minibuses and when caving. Secondary students do need to bring a mask and will need to wear it on limited occasions such as traveling in a minibus. Primary children aren't required to use face coverings in line with Welsh guidance.

Avoiding Introducing Infection to Plas Pencelli. We request visiting schools are particularly vigilant before travelling and avoid bringing any young person or member of staff displaying Covid-19 symptoms or where there are significant concerns of infection. It's likely to be a bigger issue in a residential setting. Centre staff undertake regular testing, live in a rural area, travel by private vehicle, and contact few people in their home lives.

For Schools Visiting in November/December. Please liaise prior to your visit to discuss arrangements. Schools will wish to undertake risk assessments for travel, free time, and overnight supervision. An emergency mobile number is useful in case contact is needed.

Financial Issues. No school has been financially penalised during the pandemic for Covid-19 cancellation reasons. All the financial risk has been held by Plas Pencelli and Swindon Borough Council during the last year and a half and this has had a financial impact. However, this policy will continue during this present pandemic for the foreseeable future until such time that normal booking conditions resume. It means that where schools have made a booking but then genuinely aren't able to attend partially or wholly directly due to Covid-19 infection reasons of those attending then all monies paid, including deposits, will be returned and payment liabilities for non-attendance will not apply. This arrangement is offered in good faith and to allow schools confidence when making bookings during this period where the pandemic is still a significant factor. No organisation can exist without sufficient income for long, so this step is not without risk to Plas Pencelli.

Thank you for your support.

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