

Update for Schools

Friday 26th March 2021

Its good to see schools returning and summer approaching. Plas Pencelli has been closed since March 2020 as government advice has not allowed schools to attend residential educational visits. As conditions with the pandemic in the UK have improved the government has begun to re-examine their advice to schools and provided the data is positive then Plas Pencelli may be able to open for school's residentials from May 17th 2021. This statement by the Department for Education was issued today 26th March:

“Domestic residential educational visits

In line with the roadmap, we advise against domestic residential educational visits until at least step 3, no earlier than 17 May.

The roadmap is driven by data not dates. The approach to domestic residential visits is dependent on the roadmap and is subject to change.”

Here's the link to that advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#educational-visits>

Whilst this is good news, it still includes a degree of uncertainty. Step 2 of the lockdown easing is due for April 12th, again which is uncertain. If all goes well then day trips from school will be allowable from that date but not residential trips. There are many steps for Plas Pencelli and schools to undertake before a residential can go ahead at the centre. Therefore, both bodies need a reasonable degree of surety to run a residential course. For example, staff need to be trained, the centre needs to be resourced and covid protocols need to be put in place. For now, you are encouraged to maintain your booking in the strong belief that the course will go ahead. We intend to confirm the May 17th restart on **Monday April 19th** as schools return from the Easter break. See below for further advice according to when you may have a booking at Plas Pencelli.

1. **Booking between May 17th and June 20th**

The government have advised that if all conditions are met then Plas Pencelli can reopen as part of step 3 of the lockdown easing on May 17th. Positive progress over the next few weeks will allow this to be confirmed by, at the latest, **Monday April 19th**. Affected schools will be contacted directly and encouraged to liaise with the Plas Pencelli. COVID-19 protocols agreed with the Department for Education will apply and the practical aspects of courses may need to be adjusted.

2. **Booking between June 21st and July 31st**

This corresponds with the 4th stage of the UK roadmap when “*No legal limits on social contacts*” should be introduced. We fully expect to be open during this period. However, it is possible that Covid 19 protocols may still need to be followed as this may instead be an extension of step 3 of the easing of the lockdown. You are advised to maintain your booking and start making preparations as it is very likely to go ahead. Both the Wiltshire and Swindon Outdoor Education Advisors agree with this step.

3. **Booking from September 1st 2021**

Plas Pencelli should be operating as normal, and you are advised to maintain your booking.

A Final Note

- Throughout this difficult time no school has been levied any charge for cancelling a booking for *bona fide* pandemic reasons and all deposits have been returned. Normal booking conditions are expected to resume in September.
- There is no better time for young people to attend an outdoor education residential.
- At present there are vacancies in the future we normally don't have and now would be an opportune time to make a booking. We welcome booking enquiries from now for bookings from September 2021 forwards.
- Bookings are taken up to 2 years in advance,
- Please make contact if you have any queries.

Thanks for your continued support.

Peter Blackburn (Head of Centre)

Office hours: Monday to Friday 9am-3.30pm

Email: Office@plaspencelli.co.uk

Post: Plas Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre, Pencelli, Brecon, Powys LD3 7LX

Telephone: Office number 01874665241 (leave a message). Alt mob: 07507 963127