

Update for Schools

Thursday 10th June 2021

Although the pandemic situation in the UK has greatly improved since January there has been a recent increase in infection rate. Although schools have been back for some time, Plas Pencelli has still not re-opened for schools to attend. The intention had been to reopen on the June 14th. However, this is not now possible. The intention is now to **reopen to schools from Sunday July 4th** (see below).

Why was the restart date moved backwards again?

1. The Welsh Government through the Department for Education Wales continue to state against expectations:
“We continue to advise against domestic residential educational visits.”
This was further clarified by the Minister for Education Wales to confirm that this would also mean students from England should not stay at Welsh outdoor centres.
2. Welsh Government rules on regulated activity state:
“Residential activities that would need to utilise shared accommodation (such as mixed household dormitories) are not permitted at this time.”
3. We had a strong indication that the above rules would have been relaxed as Wales entered tier 1 coronavirus controls and that large school bubbles could be accommodated without the normal hospitality rules applying. Wales did enter tier 1 on Monday June 7th but the expected change in Welsh rules applying to outdoor centres did not take place.
4. The next announcement on the relaxation of Coronavirus controls in Wales is due on Friday June 25th if the normal timetable continues. This is the first date confirmation would be gained that Plas Pencelli is able to reopen. As a week is needed beforehand for staff to return and set up the centre it means that Sunday July 4th is the most likely date now for reopening. This does rely however on the coronavirus pandemic being under control and that Welsh Government will take the decision to allow outdoor centres in Wales to reopen.

Plas Pencelli is in a very good state and the staff are very keen for young people to return and gain from the experience a stay brings. We are very disappointed with the delays in the reopening of Plas Pencelli due to circumstances outside the centre's control. It is a very frustrating situation.

Coronavirus Protocols

Schools will want to discuss arrangements for coronavirus before their visit. A detailed and thorough risk assessment has been produced which addresses all areas of operation 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.

For those schools booked between July 4th and July 31st we do expect those weeks to go ahead. However, group leaders are encouraged to liaise with Plas Pencelli over the next few weeks so that we can keep all in touch with developments.

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 your course.

Finally

- 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 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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