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As a school we decided to bring in GCSE PE for our students to give them another practical option. I had recently been in the Centre completing my ML Training and was so impressed by the facilities and quality of instruction I thought it would be perfect for our school. Steve Millar, an instructor with Tollymore, visited our school in February and we planned the course alongside the CCEA GCSE specification. Steve spoke to the pupils and detailed the skills they would gain from the course. Infact, he sold the course so well we had to take two groups and, around 50 pupils completed the GCSE course at Tollymore.

Tollymore made the running of the course easy. They supplied experienced and qualified instructors who interacted with the pupils well and were able to give the pupils a great understanding of how to be safe in the mountains, navigate in the mountains, basic camp craft and the equipment required. The equipment which Tollymore supplied was excellent so all the pupils were comfortable and warm.

Being in the mountains made all the pupils particularly hungry. A highlight for them was the quality of the pack lunches, breakfast and evening meals. The chef accommodated all tastes and special diets.

In the evenings after some theory lessons the staff were also willing to accommodate activities to keep the pupils occupied. The large screen playing the World Cup football games was another highlight for the football fans in our group! The Centre is very comfortable and the constant supply of tea and coffee was great.

After the course Tollymore supplied us with a video of our days training in the Centre and in the mountains. We are using this as evidence to show the GCSE moderators and also as video to show our new GCSE students to try and promote the course. We are currently booking again for a new group next year.

After the course Tollymore were keen to improve the course so I was able to liaise with Steve and change the course slightly for next year to maximise pupils learning and marks.

Steve and the other instructors also helped us with the allocation of marks for all the pupils. After sitting down with the other instructors, the PE teachers present and the CCEA GCSE mark scheme we were able to produce a spreadsheet of results for all the pupils present. The marks were based on the pupils participation in the training and a practical assessment in the mountains covering all aspects of the course which the instructors administered.

The course is excellent, provides a practical option for all pupils and all abilities. We found it particularly useful for pupils who find it difficult to pick three practical options. A lot of our pupils didn't even think of an outdoor and adventurous practical option and from taking part in this course have developed a real interest in the mountains. Many of the pupils have now gone on to complete the DOE award scheme in their own time. The course is very informative, pupils achieve well and ultimately it provides them with the knowledge of how to enjoy the mountains safely.