

VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme 2017

Penlee House Gallery and Museum

You were visited by Laura Hetherington on Wednesday 30 August 2017

The following report relates to the recent quality assessment of Penlee House Gallery and Museum under the Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme. The report details the findings of the assessment, as discussed during the debrief on 30 August with Zoe Burkett, Education and Outreach Officer.

This attraction has passed its VisitEngland accreditation.



	Score awarded	Score possible		Score awarded	Score possible		Score awarded	Score possible
Online presence	4	5	Car park & arrival areas	3	5	Ease of use & visitor flow	3	5
Leaflet / brochure	4	5	The attraction	4	5	Display units, fittings & lighting	3	5
Pre-arrival total	8	10	Toilets	4	5	Presentation of merchandise	4	5
	80%		Catering outlets	4	5	Range & appropriateness of merchandise	4	5
Car park	N/A	0	Retail outlets	4	5	Retail total	14	20
First impressions	4	5	Cleanliness total	19	25		70%	
Layout & entry management	4	5		76%		Appearance of staff	3	5
Visitor information & signage	4	5	Provision, location & layout	4	5	Admissions: customer care	5	5
Arrival total	12	15	Décor & maintenance	4	5	Admissions: efficiency	5	5
	80%		Fixtures & fittings	4	5	Admissions: knowledge	5	5
Layout & visitor flow	4	5	Toilets total	12	15	Guides: customer care	3	5
Range of content	5	5		80%		Guides: efficiency	3	5
Visitor information & signage	4	5	Layout & ease of use	3	5	Guides: knowledge	3	5
Appearance of grounds & gardens	N/A	0	Ambience & first impressions	4	5	Catering: customer care	4	5
Appearance of buildings	4	5	Decoration, furniture & fittings	4	5	Catering: efficiency	3	5
Décor & maintenance	3	5	Food: range & menus	4	5	Catering: knowledge	4	5
Presentation of displays	4	5	Food: quality & presentation	4	5	Retail: customer care	4	5
Quality of interpretation (fixed)	3	5	Catering total	19	25	Retail: efficiency	4	5
Quality of interpretation (other)	3	5		76%		Retail: knowledge	3	5
Attraction total	30	40				Staff total	49	65
	75%						75%	

You have achieved 163 marks out of a possible 215 marks, which gives a score of 76%

KEY: 0 = unacceptable / 1 = poor / 2 = disappointing / 3 = good / 4 = very good / 5 = excellent

In order to achieve accreditation, the attraction must score at least 60% overall and in all sections, excluding Pre-arrival. Additionally, all individual elements must score 1 (poor) or higher. A sectional or overall score below 60% or an individual element score of 0 (unacceptable) will result in a fail.

Overview

The Penlee House Gallery and Museum has passed its visitor attraction assessment with an overall score of 76%. This represents an improvement on last time's scores with five out of eight sections of the report showing improvements.

Accolades were discussed at the debrief and these may well be within reach if plans to create more space come to fruition and with some further staff development.

Community engagement has increased since the last assessment and plans continue to increase this further.

The art activities in the Gallery are very engaging and attractive to family audiences and the display of work produced with Eye Sight Cornwall was lovely and added a real community feel.

The Gallery is beautifully presented in a very traditional style and the focus on art baskets and art activities will help to remove barriers for non-traditional audiences.

Further engagement and welcome from the Gallery guides would enhance a visit for all and help to make visitors feel more comfortable. The excellent customer care and welcome demonstrated at the Admissions Desk highlighted the potential for exceeding visitor expectations across the attraction.

The art activity in the Upper Gallery was engaging for a range of ages and enjoyed by families being creative together as well as by teenagers who were encouraged to take an individual approach and allowed to dwell as long as they wanted.

The cafe and shop are limited by their size but both make the best use of space possible although the cafe terrace could be improved visually which would also enhance first impressions for those walking from the car park.

Pre-arrival

The website is well designed, easy to use and contains all necessary information to plan a visit to the Gallery and Museum. There is lovely use of photography on the website and links to social media.

96% of 507 TripAdvisor reviews are either excellent or very good and a Certificate of Excellence has been awarded. The House is #2 of 65 things to do in Penzance and there have been no 1* or 2* reviews since 2015 - all of which are great results. Facebook posts highlight the popularity of the Stanhope Forbes exhibition.

The leaflet contains all essential visitor information as well as promoting future exhibitions.

Recommendations

Add a link to Trip Advisor and to Instagram from the website.

Provide a sample menu for the Orangery cafe.

Include a dwell time for the attraction.

Highlight pictures from the collection through Curator's choice or Visitor's choice to add interest.

Highlight 'pop and see' items from the collection to encourage locals to drop in more often.

Highlight any new products in the shop or dish of the day/new recipes in the cafe to encourage local residents to pop in.

Add an accessibility guide in line with guidance on the VisitEngland website at www.visitengland.org/accessibilityguides.

Social media is used effectively and generates interest with users.

Arrival

Signage to the Gallery is excellent through the town and then through the Park and first impressions are very good but could be improved further with some attention to detail.

Recommendations

Remove or camouflage large rubbish bins.

Remove laminated posters from glass on Entrance doors.

Ensure weeds are removed from under the benches at the front of the Gallery.

Attraction

The Galleries are well laid out with space for viewing and sitting and the exhibitions are beautifully presented. Changing exhibitions present plenty of reasons to return. Interpretation is professionally presented and the basket activities offer some engagement and participatory opportunities as do the art activities in the upstairs galley although there is still scope to improve interpretation further, particularly to attract non-traditional audiences.

Recommendations

Continue to add new interpretation considering recommendations from last year's assessment which included:

An interpretation plan written with target audiences as well as current audiences in mind would enhance interpretation for all.

Create a community engagement plan.

Shorter-term:

Offer sketch books and pencils to visitors to use whilst touring the galleries.

Consider easels with something to add to encourage participation, e.g. colouring by numbers-type copy of a painting; a collection of words to add to inspired by the exhibition.

Add sound to the galleries and Doodle tables in galleries with quality materials.

Participatory exhibit showing staff choices for favourite painting and allowing visitors to add their own choices and why.

In the Museum:

Automata exhibit to demonstrate the workings of the clock and/or the bicycle.

Provide a replica gold collar to try on and a replica or handling quern to have a go at grinding.

Introduce stones to touch.

Consider a 3-D burial urn jigsaw.

Install a display to demonstrate conservation in action, e.g. showing damaging effects of light and fingers.

Cleanliness

Although standards of cleanliness are generally very good, attention to detail in some areas as detailed below would improve the visitor experience further.

Recommendations

Clean the umbrella stand in the Entrance.

Clean the window ledges outside to remove cobwebs and leaves.

Sweep the steps at the Entrance.

Ensure floor edgings in toilets are cleaned thoroughly.

Check toilets regularly to avoid wet sink areas and a build up of soap on sinks at busy times.
Check cutlery for cleanliness and keep cutlery tray clean.

Toilets

Toilets are clearly signed from the arrival area, with separate ladies, gents and accessible/baby change.

All fixtures and fittings were serviceable and in good working order.

Recommendations

Touch up flaking paint work on door to Ladies and handle to Ladies.
Attach the red cord notice left at the debrief.
Remove laminated notices.

Catering

Outlet(s) visited: The Orangery

Food & drink sampled: Coffee, hot chocolate, salad, panninis, scone and tea.

The cafe is a popular aspect of a visit to the Gallery and first impressions are very good with lovely flowers on the tables, bunting up high and a bright, light and airy feel with a welcome outside seating area for warmer days. Although this is a franchise this would not be known by the visitor as the cafe is so integral to the attraction. The planned extension will help with the layout which is rather cramped when busy. The food was very tasty and there was a welcome flexibility to adapt the menu to suit fussy eaters.

Recommendations

Have a separate board to highlight local produce and show food miles.
Remove all laminated notices which detract from the lovely aesthetics created by the beautifully presented blackboards.
Reconsider systems to reduce queue times at busy periods.
Have jugs of water available for customers to help themselves.
Remove old tatty seagull notices from outside tables - these could be replaced with a humorous or creative picture notice.
Remove mop and bucket, shelving unit and bins from the end of the patio.

Retail

Outlet(s) visited: The Shop

Purchases made: A postcard.

The Shop is small but good use is made of space available and there is a very good range of appropriate merchandise for the art enthusiast and for children, although less on offer for teenagers.

Recommendations

Remove small laminated stuck-on notices and replace with something more professional and in keeping with the Gallery.
Display samples of children's stock, e.g. open and display a folding robot.
Include lovely quality crayons or art materials which older children may buy/collect for art projects.
Include grown-up colouring books to appeal to teenagers.

Staff

Customer Care is very varied and standardising the welcome and care shown to visitors would enhance a visit to Penlee enormously.

Admissions care was excellent with appropriate information given to aid an informed visit and knowledgeable answers given to questions.

The customer care offered by Gallery staff was somewhat disappointing and lacked any pro-activity.

Customer care in the cafe was generally very good. The striped T-shirts and colourful aprons worn by cafe staff are lovely and ensure that they are easily recognisable without appearing too formal.

The ladies leading the art activity were friendly and helpful.

Recommendations

Implement a staff training programme to ensure all gallery staff make eye contact and smile as a minimum when visitors enter a space and that they understand how to judge whether visitors require further interaction.

Ensure all staff are aware of art activities and happy to support families to take advantage of them.

Ensure cafe staff make eye contact and acknowledge waiting customers when busy.

Advise customers of a wait time for food at busy times - being told there is a wait time of 20 minutes and then food arriving in 15 minutes will create a feeling of having expectations exceeded whilst no given wait time creates a feeling of frustration.

You may find the VisitEngland Exceeding Visitor expectations course useful: <http://www.welcometoexcellence.co.uk/trainingprogrammes/exceeding-visitor-expectations.asp>

