

Llandudno 2020 coaches report – What a great camp with great time had by all

We have just safely returned from our annual swimming development camp in Llandudno. A larger number of swimmers attended than last year but we probably had the most positive behaviours we have ever experienced so well done all. We took a group of new swimmers, some of whom hadn't even been away from home before.

New to camp this year were Emma M, Olivier, Ethan C, Inas, Sam C (Big Sam), George P (Boy George), Millie, Jessica, Rozena, Keya, Zoe, Phoebe L (Big Phoebe), Sebastian, Elizabeth, Harry, Marcus, Paul, Michael, Evan, Toby, Fernella, William.

Returning were Daniel E (Big Dan), Joshua, Kai, Jamie, Ethan G, Daniel B (Little Dan), Anna, Bobbie, Keira, Clara, Lukas, Arnav, Elliott, Gabriel, Sam B (Little Sam) Scott, Saoirse, Chloe, Violet, Lana, Aran, Rohan, Noah, Phoebe R (Little Phoebe), Rowan,

Staff were Karen, Georgina, Steve, Pam, Dave, Heather, Emma C, Emaan

Helpers, Additional teachers and Chaperones were Grace, Alex J (boy Alex), Alex D (girl Alex), Meredith, Sanaa,



The youngest swimmers were aged 7 years old and the oldest being over the age of 21 (by quite a long way). Quite a range. We also had 2 sets of twins on the camp, so that made life interesting too.

Some of the helpers also swam and trained at the sessions and took part in land training so they had a lot of extra rest periods and time away from the 'crowds.' I managed one session in the water this year and at the end of it, seemed to be the victim of a major splashing frenzy but as I had already got soaked that morning, it didn't really make a lot of difference

This year's camp had a lot of positives but also very hard work, with very few issues or problems arising. Of course, managing that amount of people from very early until very late is tiring, so all the staff knew we would be coming back pretty exhausted but

on the whole the time off rotas seemed to work well, with everyone having some time to themselves.

The camp itself has been very successful, with some very hard work being demonstrated in the pool, and some very well-behaved young people who were a pleasure to look after.

Swimming sessions and land training

We had seven swim sessions over 5 days and a land training at every session. Land training sessions varied from between 10 minutes to over an hour, depending on what time we had arrived at the pool.

Each swim session was divided into 4 lanes, with a training programme specifically written for each of the four lanes. Some sessions were just under 2 hours, some sessions one and half hours and one session being just one hour. Not all swimmers attended all 7 sessions, and those who were on the break, had a lie in at the hotel, supervised by at least 3 staff members, or had the opportunity to come to the pool to attend the land training.

Lane 4 had specific individual plans per swimmer.

Helping on poolside with dressing and changing was Emma C, Pam, Heather and Meredith, with at least one of the helpers whilst Steve, Grace, Dave and I took on the coaching. Grace and Dave had the challenge this year of just trying to get the swimmers to go in the right direction and not to swim down the middle of the lane and to only overtake when there was room to do so. Alex J (boy Alex) coached some lane 4 swimmers, delivering the planning that was in place.

At one point, we had to get the swimmers out of the pool from lane 2 and 3, to teach them lane discipline and to go over some straight forward fundamental skills. These skills should have been thoroughly embedded for swimmers at this level but it would seem that they have forgotten them or just not bothering to implement them. Well done to Fernella, Toby, Elizabeth, Inas, Clara, Rohan, Lana, Chloe, Kai, Keira, Elliott, Sebastian, Gabriel and all the Lane 1 swimmers, who remembered they needed to streamline, tumble turn and wait until the swimmer in front of them had got past the flags before leaving the wall at the start of each set, without the reminders. They also remembered how to finish correctly on the wall, without breathing in the red area and finishing with 2 hand touches on the breaststroke and fly.

Once we had got over that hurdle, everything then ran a lot more smoothly within the swim sessions, with Lane 1 solely being coached by me, Lane 2,3,4 having a different coach across different sessions (to allow for staff breaks and time off)

All the support staff had the opportunity to teach/coach a session, with Grace taking up the challenge of coaching her own lane for a couple of sessions. She said she enjoyed the experience but it was hard work. In fact, I think the comment was 'how on earth do you manage more than one lane at a time – its really hard'

Sessions focused on different technique, speed and stamina, and specific stroke technique was implemented, where a swimmer had a particular weakness area. Lane 1 and lane 2 had set turn around times to be achieved, with timed swims across 100m, 200m and 400m. They also had start, turns and finishes to work on, sprint speeds, and

stamina building sessions. They were pretty worn out and needed to use the recovery/rest periods effectively to ensure they were ready for the next session.

We had two late evening sessions, which meant coaches could really focus hard on pushing the training, as anyone not demonstrating skills and techniques required for these sessions did not attend. These sessions brought about 4000m mileage so they were not easy to complete and required a lot of concentration, stamina and basic hard work to achieve the required outcomes. Most did, with only a few struggling. The walk back in the dark also proved to be interesting and hot chocolate was waiting for us upon our return.

After each session, one swimmer was acknowledged per lane for their hard work and these are names below

Session 1

Lane 1 – Jamie – really worked hard to keep up, and although he wanted to give up at times, he didn't.

Lane 2 – Inas – remembered the streamlining without the reminders.

Lane 3 – Daniel B – remembered to finish on the wall every time

Lane 4 – Violet – really worked hard to complete the set.

Session 2

Lane 1 – Scott (hit the turnaround times every 12x100m)

Lane 2 – Lana (got moved up a lane)

Lane 3 – Keira (got moved up a lane)

Lane 4 – Michael (worked hard on those over the top arms)

Session 3

Lane 1 – Millie (hit those times but really had to work at it)

Lane 2 – Chloe (worked hard on streamlining passed the flags)

Lane 3 – Zoe (kept up well)

Lane 4 – Paul (overcame the cold water in a faster time and worked on the leg kick)

Session 4

Lane 1 – Alex D (had to work hard to keep up with Scott)

Lane 2 – Clara (led the lane)

Lane 3 – Kai (worked out for himself that he needed to change his standing position at the end of the lane so that others could finish on the wall)

Lane 4 – Georgina (still swam despite getting up in the night)

Session 5 (starts, turns and finishes)

This session there were 10 swimmers in each lane divided in half, so half turned in the shallow end and half turned in the deep end then they swapped over.

Turning well – Lana, Ethan C, Gabriel, Sam B, Dan B, Keya, Emma M, Inas.

Session 6 was a dive session. We divided the swimmers into 3 groups – those who could dive and those who were struggling and the belly floppers. Those who could already dive, completed sprint sets from a dive, looking at competitive starts and faster starts, whilst lane 3 had swimmers who needed to build their confidence. Steve and I got very wet, but we had remembered our change of clothes. Some of the

younger swimmers joined the older ones for this session, Phoebe R, Noah R, Fernella, Harry, Aran, and Toby, whilst Paul and Michael worked on their skills with Sanaa. Dan and Anna were coached by Alex J. Sam C achieved the fastest sprint times under 13 seconds for 25m free, well done Sam.

Session 7 was our relay session. For this session, each team was given a captain Emaan., Sanaa and Alex D. Grace coached Anna and Dan along with Alex J and Georgina led the fun session with the younger swimmers. Dan E (big Dan) decided to get out of the water after around 40 minutes, as his back was sore, resulting in Grace and Alex J having nothing to do, so Grace did some revision on the side of the pool and Alex helped Dave overseeing the land training and roller work taking place with the little ones who had finished their fun session.

There was some great encouragement shown by all the relay teams. Only the stronger swimmers took part in this session, and well done to Violet, Rohan, Zoe and Keira who proved themselves worthy of a relay place, alongside our competitive swimmers.

There were some great relay lengths swam at this session, and everyone put in 100% effort. A special well done to Lukas, Rozena, William, Scott, Sanaa, Millie, Lana, Josh, Jamie, Chloe, Clara, Jessica and Sam C who brought their teams into first places.

There were some disqualifications, with all 3 teams at one point being disqualified for infringements but some great fun too.

Sam C, Jamie and Ethan G received GMW awards – they will know what that means, trust me!

Medal winners

We had some medals to give out this year, one per day. It was awarded by staff voting on who they thought deserved it based on behaviour, hard work in the pool, going out of the way to help others etc. Most days staff did pick the same person, although one day we went with the majority vote.

Day one – Keya

Day two – Elliott

Day three – Inas

Day four – Rozena

Day five – Georgina

There were some additional rewards given out for positive behaviours and for helping me out with small tasks (such as tidying up) when asked to do so. These were drinks bottles, games, some toys and swim bags

Entertainment

We had trips to the beach, sandcastle building, seashell hunting, walks on the pier, trips to the shops, trips to the amusement arcade, walks on the promenade, exploring the town, as well as the 4-6 times a day walk to and from the pool. We went for a

walk in the dark to look at the stars, and to watch the waves from the sea in the lights from the promenade.

We spent over an hour in the amusement arcade with swimmers spending their 2ps. There are a lot of photographs around from this activity.

We went to the shops and Emaan took root at the rock shop counter whilst swimmer after swimmer made their purchases.

In the evening, we had a quiz night organised by Josh, and all the swimmers took part in that. All the staff, except Pam and I, had a night off, so most had a sleep, shower and a chill out (not necessarily in that order) and the helpers/chaperones and some older swimmers had an evening to go out into the town (back at the hotel by 8.30pm). The winning team was captained by Emma M. Grace and Alex completed some revision ready for those all-important forthcoming exams. Alex J read his Harry Potter book with Dave.

We found jelly fish on the beach, so we spent a long time looking and discussing the finer points of jelly fish, along with crabs and other creatures. Ethan G found the biggest piece of seaweed ever and having persuaded him that he really did not want to put into his pocket he then put it on his head instead. Fernella heard me say pocket and then decided to put all her seaweed into her pocket rather than her bucket (sorry mum suspect you found that when she got home)

We had board games, Rubik cubes (my goodness Rohan – you amazed the staff with just how fast you can solve that), Dominos, colouring, nail painting, hair dressing, and other activities. Thank you to Grace and Rozena who completed a lot of hair plaits in just one hour.

We had piano playing and music.

We had construction with Lego and waffle bricks and a ball maze that Alex J spent a long-time mastering.

Georgina organised our karaoke and party night – what fun that was. There are some recordings around, but I am having difficulty uploading them to the web site. There was a lot of older swimmers still up at nearly midnight on Friday but it was the last day and there was no swimming the next morning – lie in time. Some of the younger swimmers did not want to go to bed at 9pm, (we let them stay up until 9pm on our last day) and we had a few tears, as they were having a lot of fun. However, once in bed, they were asleep within 20 minutes, so really needed to go to bed. Steve wanted to go to bed at 9pm and offered to go in place of a couple of the younger swimmers but that was refused – it was his excuse for getting out of the singing but that failed. (I have the recording to prove it)

We had balloons and banners and even the hotel staff joined us at one point.



Well done everyone – a credit to your parents

All of our swimmers this year demonstrated positive behaviours throughout our camp with some young people whose behaviour totally outshone everyone else's. They were a total pleasure and a well-deserved mention in this report so acknowledgement goes to Scott, Josh, Little Dan, Kai, Keya, Sebastian, Clara, Jessica, Inas, Zoe, Michael, Arnav, Saoirse, Lukas, William, Jamie, Keira, Aran, Elizabeth and Rohan. I am not saying that the others not mentioned here did not behave, just that these people demonstrated such over and above positive behaviours that they need a mention. Parents – they did you proud. The conduct of our swimmers was commented on by the pool staff and the hotel staff, and even members of the public who saw us walking on the promenade asked who we were and what we were doing and again commented on the behaviour of the squad. So well done guys. The hotel staff in particular said that we were the most well-behaved group they had ever had at the hotel, and they couldn't believe just how organised we were.

Whilst a couple of sanctions were put in place, mainly for running around the hotel after being asked not to, and for being found in another person's room when being told that was not allowed, we had very little problems, which meant the camp ran smoothly and even quietly at times.

Sunny Weather – not!

We had some of the wettest weather we ever had on camp this year. We got absolutely soaked walking to and from the pool, with every hotel radiator being used to dry out coats, on every floor, and in every corridor. Shoes, socks and trousers were also being dried out all over the place. The tumble driers worked over time to get clothes dry as well as towels, as most coats proved to be non-waterproof (including mine) Drying out thoroughly took some time and everyone who had done the walk to and from the pool, had to change from head to foot as people were wet through to their underwear (trust me everything had to be changed) . It did result in some people

running out of clean clothes, so apologies for those parents who wondered why their child was returned in unclean clothes, but getting them dry was more important than clean.

Most swimmers spent the evening time in their pyjamas as it was the driest items of clothing they had, whilst the staff endeavoured to dry out as much as they could ready for the next day. Radiators were on full, so it meant we steamed and cooked as it got very hot.

We went paddling in the sea at one point (we were already that wet that it made no difference and the fun that we had outweighed the getting wet) We had a great time paddling in the waves, although some passer-by thought we were stark raving mad and needed a sanity check

Storage space

This year the pool allocated us some storage space so we were able to store the kit bags and land training equipment at the pool, which meant we did not have to load and unload the car every day – yeaay. However, the kit had to be collected every session and returned to the storage at the end of session. Thank you to Scott, Emma C, Aran, Noah R, Gabriel, Emma M, Marcus and Sam C who helped with this every day. It certainly made life a lot easier and it meant swimmers had less to carry to and from the pool every day. Jamie had the job of collecting and transport Scott's leg around the pool. A large thank you goes to the pool staff. I have always found the pool staff very helpful and they look after Emily with a tail really well too.

The hotel provided us with board games, cards and additional tables for activities, so again this meant we did not need to transport as many items this year as previous years, which again was very helpful.

Problem and issues

There were a couple of issues that arose. Firstly, we had parents who failed to adhere to the rules of the camp again!

We had 3 swimmers with severe nut allergies this year and carry EpiPen's, but we still had parents packing biscuits and other food in their child's suitcase that could have caused a major problem. Two children had got 2 packets of Maryland cookies biscuits packed in their suitcases, that clearly contain nuts, some large packets of popcorn and crisps. Fortunately, staff located them and removed them before an issue could arise. Next year, please do not do it – no additional food, sweets or drinks in suitcases, it is really hard to manage dietary requirements as it is without hiding additional food that could be consumed inadvertently.

We had parents providing medication that was clearly out of date – in one case by over 12 months. We had empty inhalers canisters, out of date inhalers, out of date creams, we had containers that stated one medication on the outside, but when opened did not contain what it stated (in other words, someone had changed the container and/or the content). We even had medication prescribed for another person. We

cannot administer out of date medication, medication that is not declared or medication that is not in the correct container or medications prescribed for someone else.

We had parents providing us with additional medication not declared on the consent form, and others declaring medication on the consent form that was not handed in. This resulted in a lot of phone calls home (very difficult with no phone signal at the hotel, so resulting in poor Heather standing out in the pouring rain on the street corner trying to contact parents to sort out the medication issues)

No illness this year, with most people following the hand washing guidance. Some people forgot about stroking Emily (with a tail) just before eating, so had to be sent back to wash their hands again but on the whole no major issues around the hand washing.

Packing

Packing this year was very much uneventful unlike many other years. Suspect it was because we had a lot of experienced 'camp' swimmers this year so they knew what they needed to do. We had only one room of swimmers who were sent back to their rooms four times to re pack, having had the room checked after packing and more items found. Even after the fourth time, we still found a few items.

Older swimmers helped younger ones carry their cases and a special thank you to Jamie who must have run up and downstairs about 10 times carrying cases for younger people. Also, a thank you to Chloe who helped Bobbie carry her case down the stairs.

Dave, Georgina and I did the room checks before we left and I happy to say, we have left the hotel in a fairly decent state.

I did end up with one large bag of lost property, 3 or 4 mesh bags with kit, one lunch box, one holdall, one roller and one coat. For Orion swimmers who had their belongings named, these has been given to several different Orion parents who will hopefully find a way of returning them to you. For Orange Squad/Birmingham Marlins swimmers, where the item is named, I will endeavour to return it to you at some point. I suspect it will sit in my car for weeks or in the boot of the car of the parent who volunteered to take it home with them.

Planning and organising

I would like to thank everyone who helped with the organising of this camp. I have to say that the build up to this camp was difficult for many reasons but mainly due to the changes that are taking place at the same time within Orion and having to say goodbye to a lot of people. I did get quite stressed at one point and when Steve phoned me with a question, I yelled at him to just leave me alone. (Sorry Steve). We had a major hiccup with the hotel just before Christmas, and this again caused stress but with Dave's help, we got that sorted out.

We found the hotel staff extremely helpful and kind and they bent over backwards to ensure that our stay was as perfect as possible.

Thank you

I would like to firstly thank Heather. We had a lot more swimmers on medications this year than last year and we also had some additional medication routes that required a lot of organising. I have also mentioned the issues that we incurred this year around medications and that takes a lot of managing. Heather rarely got a hot meal, as by the time the medication was checked, recorded and administered her meal had gone cold. Without her, some of your swimmers would not have had their medication on time, or be creamed sufficiently. I have to say that this year, I was not required at all with Heather implementing the cream routines all the time with Meredith's and/or helper chaperone support. I think it helped that our swimmers who require creaming routines were that much older this year and therefore, capable of completing the tasks themselves with just a little promoting. With some swimmers having to have cream applied both before and after swimming at every session, first thing in the morning and before bedtime that's not a quick task. Along with medications also being administered several times a day, morning, bedtime, and one set to be given at midnight, it requires organisation and implementing effectively and the routines were completed very efficiently. We also had to re write MAR sheets for some swimmers. Due to some late sessions at the pool, it meant that some swimmers had to have their creams applied once they got back to hotel, resulting in another medication round for Heather, but all was organised and implemented effectively and efficiently. Well done Heather as its not easy but you make it look so easy.

Thank you to Emaan, Sanaa, Grace and Alex who supported me greatly. I will get around to giving you all a reward as you all deserve it. I did thank each of them individually but thank you again. All four took on teaching roles this year. I could not do it without you and I am so very grateful for your help and support. All four of you are exceptional and I know Emaan won't be with us next year as she moves on to University and will be greatly missed. All 4 of you are wonderful, nice people to know and I do sincerely mean that. I have watched you grow into the beautiful young ladies you are and everyone commented on what lovely, thoughtful and kind people you have become.

A huge thank you to Pam, who watched all the swimmers with dietary requirements, monitored and checked everything several times, to ensure safe eating. Not an easy job with so many swimmers on specific requirements. She liased with the chef and ensured that all needs were met. Pam herself had a little upset but continued on and helped me out enormously. She is what keeps the team ticking over, and drove to and from the pool that many times that the car has probably made grooves in the road. (I won't mention the parking)

Thank you to Emma for her chaperone work. She has been helping out at Orange Squad for a little while now, and understands the importance of my cups of tea. She tapped for Anna and carried out her chaperone role exceptionally well. Without Emma, hair washing, dressing and even just getting people out of the bed in the

morning would have taken a lot longer. She has also mastered the art of returning dried out clothes to the correct person, and finding homes for the odd socks that randomly appeared from nowhere.

Thank you to Georgina, who mastered the art of juggling 10 tasks at once. Georgina also supported with transporting swimmers, assisted with food and drink, putting swimmers into beds, teaching the younger ones in the pool, and organised the karaoke night. She was also the on-call staff member alongside me at night, so had to get up, breaking her sleep pattern. She implemented the play session in the pool, completed 3 swim sessions herself, and still found time for supporting with the nail painting and hair plaiting.

I would like to thank Dave, Jamie, Scott, Joshua and Meredith who have all helped me out this week, with teaching, coaching, chaperoning and just being there when needed. Jamie and Scott helped with Hi Vis Vests, carrying suitcases, loading and unloading of the coach (along with some other swimmers) and checking of the swim bags (although that failed on one occasion – see below)

Meredith was the teacher for Paul and Michael at some sessions and supported with dressing, walking to and from the pool and general support. She also helped out Heather with some of the medication routines that required a chaperone.

Joshua supported with Alex and helped to transport him to and from the pool (not easy in the pouring rain) He organised the quiz night and acted as compare for this activity.

A very special thank you to Steve and his suburb coaching skills that allowed the achievements of the main aims of this camp. He also drove there and back, which meant we were able to take the number of swimmers we had, as the transport coach could only accommodate 49 people, He has the knack of keeping me sane (not an easy job as I must be stark raving mad in the first place) and he lent me his shoulder to cry on. He is also very good at giving out hugs when required – trust me I need a big hug sometimes. He makes me laugh, donates his bread and toast (although not intentionally) and works just as hard as I do, without expecting anything in return. When the tiredness crept in (as we knew it would) he volunteered to do the 3am checks so I could have a straight 3 hours sleep. He is my assistant coach and teacher who has got my back but more importantly he is my trusted friend, that I can yell at, laugh with, cry with, talk with and can get absolutely soaking wet with and he still comes out smiling.

A thank you goes to Orion committee who have stepped in to pay the hotel difference when that issue arose.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Martin. He was my rock but he also kept the web site/ page up to date, helped me with IT hiccups (when things don't work, I have no idea why or how to make it work), for making me laugh, for making everyone else laugh with the skateboard video, went shopping for last minute items whilst I was at work, put my car through the checks and then paid the garage to put the car right so it could make the journey and for being at home, waiting for me with Pizza when I got back.

Highs and Lows of the week – I know this list won't mean a lot to some people and only those who were there at the time will appreciate some of this, but it's worth a read and hopefully will bring back some fond memories for all who attended, some memories we would all rather forget and a smile to those who did not attend but probably wished they did.

No Parking ticket for Karen – that's 3 years running. 3 out of 10 – still wrong ratio.

Arrived safely at Llandudno but nowhere to park – so had to park on double yellow lines and hope for the best.

Ethan G phoning down to reception (err no Ethan)

Daniel B eating vegetable soup – dad said he won't eat vegetables but he ate the soup.

I have got some petrol – oh great Pam, well done Pam, I am so glad Pam.

Toothpaste on the dining room table

No running in dining room. Did anyone take any notice? How many times did we send people back to walk?

One teapot full of Tea, just enough for Karen's large mug. Karen brought a mug with her name on. The only problem is that Steve brought a bigger mug than Karen's.

Really, really, hot tea pots that burnt your hand when you picked them up. What was that word you used Steve? Not sure that is in the English dictionary.

No sense no feeling

Forgot to tell Georgina that we had twins on camp, she just thought we had some very busy children who managed to be in two places at the same time.

Introduced Paul to some new music whilst he was a passenger in my car, that he had never heard of before including Westlife, Wham, Abba, Bon Jovi and Whitney Houston.

Car overtaking on the A41. Alex said he had not heard of some of the vocabulary that came out of my mouth before or the names that I called the driver of that car as I slammed on the brakes, hit the horn and prayed that Steve did not run into the back of me. I think the coach driver probably heard what I shouted as well, and he was half a mile down the road at the time. Steve certainly heard as I had my window down at the time. What a complete idiot, whose car engine size is not in line with his brain cell capacity. Do they test for common sense on driving tests nowadays? I am sure they used to teach 'if in doubt don't,' as opposed to 'if in doubt, put your foot down and hope for the best.'

Karen's cut arm – resulting from slammed on brakes and catching my arm on the open window.

Car on roundabout who did not stop to give way – more colourful metaphors.

Couldn't catch the coach – he really did drive fast on that motorway. I was doing 70mph and could not catch him up. Paul was disappointed that I could not over take the coach, but he did wave at Steve when I over took his car.

Karen making 2 mistakes in 1 day. I sat down twice, that was two big mistakes I regretted. I had to get up again

Fernella doing roller work really well.

Aran doing roller work really well

Sanaa leading the land training whilst Dave and Steve had a catch up.

Candle for birthday cakes – cake wasn't big enough so had to use 2 cakes.

Lit candles and then we had to try and not to set off the fire alarm.

Keira swam two lengths and then stated she wanted to get out so she can eat her birthday cakes

Good time over arcade.

Zoltan Machine outside the arcade, that drove us mad – it nearly got thrown over the pier!

Rounded everyone up when trying to leave the arcade – I need a shepherd's hook and a sheep dog! Just got everyone out and then Michael decided to go back in, got Michael out again and then Paul when back in, just got Paul out and then Michael went back in. Paul had to hold Steve's hand the third time, so I could round up Michael without Paul sneaking back in.

Paul not winning on the 2p machine and getting upset. He got given another 30p in 10pence pieces to change into 2ps, so we made out he had won when he collected his change

Chloe's indecision – could not make her mind up what to exchange her tickets for in the Arcade, took that long that we went back the next day so she could think about it overnight. Same for Phoebe L and Sam B.

Olivier lying down in the dining room

Noah's blanket – what a beautiful blanket made by mum

No mobile phones – what do we need to do to make it anymore clearer – there is a no phone policy and you will survive without a phone for a few days. I know it is hard to believe but trust me you will survive. You will continue to breath in and out without having a phone on the end of your arm.

No electronic communication devices at all – no TV's either. What a change and the skill of verbal communication and interaction was born again.

Jamie bringing unsuitable DVD to watch – did not watch it

Jamie's fall. What a sight for sore eyes. Still not 100% convinced that he wasn't messing about but we had blood and cuts and scrapped skin, bruises, and large red marks, had to contact mum. He also slipped climbing out of the pool and he landed on the lane rope, resulting in another cut and rope burn.

Gabriel finger in door – ouch. (Although it would seem that it wasn't his bedroom door that he shut his finger in, so why was your hand on another person's room door?)

Paul's fall whilst running along the promenade. More bruises

Chloe's fall off the blocks – she fell forward and straight into the water. She scraped the back of her leg so another bruise.

No Leaky teapots. Just poured the whole lot into Karen's mug before Steve could full up his mug.

Name plates on the tables, good idea, but we had a late swimmer join us and therefore, didn't have a name plate. Had to improvise.

Several swimmers forgetting swimming bags, having to go back and fetch them.

3 swimmers in one session forgot trunks had to swim in pants. There is always one every year who ends up swimming in pants but 3 at the same time is a new for this year. One swimmer also forgot their towel.

Jamie and Scott had the job of checking that the younger swimmers had got their swimwear and towels. Told Scott and Jamie that for every swimmer in pants they would also have to swim the same session in pants – they soon improved on the swim bag checks after that and no one else forgot their trunks.

Violet's nose bleeds not once but twice. One out in the street on the way to the pool, that was fun, trying to find tissues in the pouring rain and wind.

Medication not declared and but handed in, medication out of date, medication in wrong containers, medication prescribed for someone else, medication missing, medication declared but not handed in, medication chaos.

Biscuits, popcorn and crisps hidden in the bedroom.

Karen lost the will. (several times).

Brain cells not working – they are still not working. Will they ever work again?

Karen's bad knees, Steve's bad knee, Dave bad knees. Between 3 coaches, we had one good working knee. My knee is still swollen and hurts like hell.

Rock shop trip – Emaan has never been in one shop so long in her entire life without actually purchasing something.

Purchasing sweets in the rock shop and paying with 2ps that had been won in the arcade.

Aran confusion over rock – they only sell long stick sweets not rocks. I want to buy rock like you said the shop would sell. Found him some shells to buy instead.

Weather, very, very, very wet!

Some swimmers thought it was acceptable to get out games and activities and to leave them on the tables without putting them away afterwards. Another lesson learnt as swimmers did not go out until the day room was tidy.

Lego – I do not need to say anything else – just Lego. Some great constructions though and I loved the police car

Land markers when walking – they could run to the land marks and then wait for everyone to catch up. It was hard to stand still when the wind was blowing you over.

Toby being traffic warden. He stopped the cars with Steve so we could cross the road.

It was amazing the number of cars that decided to take a different route when they saw us on the zebra crossing.

It was amazing the number of cars that did not stop to allow us to cross over the road.

0.8 mile walk to and from the pool at least twice a day, every day in the pouring rain.

Pants on poolside – Its ok Fernella I won't embarrass you by telling everyone that they were yours.

Pants in the garden – its ok Fernella I won't embarrass you by telling everyone that they were yours. I suspect they fell out of your pocket when running around after we had found them earlier.

Phoebe's beautiful black and white checked dress.

How much luggage – see photos. The hotel staff just laughed.

Left Langley safely but there is always one who is late and we end up waiting for (this year there was 3)

Toilet needed urgently by little person just after leaving but we hadn't even got to the motorway (less than 5 minutes from Langley)

Are we there yet?

Jingle bells on the coach – Emily's bells (Emily with a tail) that resulted in a round of Jingle Bells.

Alex foot pedal on this wheelchair applied and attached upside down

Rubbish collection at the truck stop. Bag wasn't big enough.

Wooden keys – even Heather couldn't lose them.

Masters keys to rooms, brilliant idea lot better than cards than previous years

Steve eaten Karen bread – bread plate to the left Steve, he kept eating the wrong bread as he kept taking the bread from the wrong plate on the table.

Steve ate Pam's bread – Bread plate goes to left on the table not to the right

Steve could not butter his bread

Mine is bigger than yours

Additional people on the coach on the way back – wanted to know if we had picked up a couple of strangers. (Georgina and Dave met us in Llandudno so did not travel down in the coach with us. We gained another 2 people who travelled back with us but had travelled down independently, but lost Toby and Meredith who travelled back separately, so it meant, we only had one spare seat whereas on the way down we had got 2 spare seats. It confused a lot of people and made the head counts difficult. The coach driver was totally confused and just gave up trying to work it out.) It also meant that we had to have extra swimmers in the cars travelling back. Took a lot of maths to work out sufficient seating for all on both journeys.

Hands on head – if you cannot listen to the instructions, then you need to stand with your hands on your head, so I have your attention, whilst I explain again. It was Steve and Dave who ended up with hands on head, along with George P, Jamie, Ethan G and Sam B. (Seems to be the older ones for some reason)

Drink's cost £74.00 (should have been £24.00) – what the heck!!

Karen's 3 puddings – eyes bigger than tummy

Karen - I have got a problem with my underwear – it was twisted. It was a swimmer's underwear (not mine I hastened to add) and she asked me to sort it out for her. It was well and truly twisted and half way down her legs, with leggings on over the top, so had to start from scratch.

Steve walked into flag pole at pool – that was really funny.

Where's your clothes, do not leave them in the cubicle please, bring them on poolside – we must have said that at least 12 times

2 new rules – no play fighting as someone always ends up getting hurt, no running in the dining room. Did they take any notice at all – no, not until sanction was put in place of not going to the beach. That seemed to focus some people.

Bucket, spade and teddy taken to the pool in swim bag.

Toby got soaking wet trousers in sea

Lana, Chloe and Clara all changed lanes for fantastic swimming.

Hi vis vests on when going out

Dan B left in bed as staff on his floor forgot to wake him up – he still swam though.

Lana doing shoe laces up

Anna and Dan E eating breakfast with hi vis on

Early pool arrival on Wednesday – it was raining that hard that we legged it there in fast time, so had longer land training session.

Land training exercises at pool

Do not push the pool alarm button whilst using the wall to lean on during land training exercises.

Swimmers up in the night – Rowan, Fernella and Toby first night (half expected it) then Lana (wasn't expecting that one), then Paul and Harry and Phoebe R (half expected the first night but they didn't budge that night but second night was up), Chloe, Violet, Harry and Phoebe next night (not expected) Paul, Ethan and Rowan last night (half expected as they did not want to go bed) Just meant Karen and Georgina and Heather were also up.

Pam trying to go to the toilet. 20 minutes later still hadn't got there as kept getting distracted.

Dave left camera in dining room twice

Ethan G amazing piano playing

Shoes in sea, had to be rescued from the waves before they got washed out to sea.

Roller work at hotel and pool

Georgina pinched Karen's milk

Karen's disappearing chocolate sponge and ice cream (Steve took it)

Hotel just gave me a full pint of milk still in the bottle in the end, gave up bothering with little milk jugs.

Dave dressed Karen, Pam dressed Steve, Steve dressed Pam, Karen Dressed Steve, Steve dressed Karen, Heather dressed Dave– we couldn't get the Hi Vis vests on over the layers of clothing. That happened all week. Try to get the vests on over wet coats wasn't easy.

Scott's new fin – worked really well

Karen hour break turned into 15minutes

Kit bag not labelled but we think it was Sebastian's. He ended up with it anyway

Lots of wind and rain

Group photo x 4 attempts.

No phone signal or internet.

Loads of paddling in sea- in the rain.

Missing pair of socks on beach – green and black striped ones – found but not named and therefore, could not be returned. They were covered in seawater, seaweed and sand anyway.

Fernella digging towards Australia. She was digging the biggest hole she could on the beach as she wanted to see Australia.

Dead jelly fish on beach

Seaweed in pockets

Crab still in sea shell

Bird that went up and down in the sea. What is that bird called Karen – Betty I think Michael, (I had no idea)

All of the swimmers following Pam out of the door to the car. She turned around when she opened the car door to find everyone had followed her out. The look on her face was really funny.

The bread, teapot, milk, sugar wars between the staff. Dave had to intervene and announce a winner.

Violet and Michael's second bowls of soup – they really liked it

Orange socks – good colour

Karen glass of water full – very full and no chance of not spilling everywhere.

Hot man in chip shop – Georgina went back twice just to get another look.

Georgina Fish and chips

Heathers injury to leg – no idea what. how, when, why but she could not walk properly for 2 days.

Alex J bookmark – what book mark Alex?

Steve Charlie Chaplin walk using the umbrella and walking stick.

Skateboard video that everyone laughed out loud at. Millie found it hilarious

Weird man at door - it was Steve locked out by Pam after he had tried to re park the car after it had been abandoned.

Karen's reindeer slippers – they kept my feet warm

Grace wanted my reindeer slippers

When approached by children at breakfast asking question after question, Karen responded to each of them with the same answer 'no idea'

Sharp icicle type rain pelting down into our faces.

Let's go and jump in biggest puddle to soak Karen. Steve jumping in the big puddles to add to Karen's wet legs, followed by Toby jumping the same puddle, followed by Michael, followed by Harry, followed by Zoe, followed by Paul, followed by Noah, followed by Keya, followed by Ethan, followed by Sebastian, by that time, there was no water left in the puddle.

Ran out of radiators to dry out clothes

Empty tea pots – not allowed

Loads of tickets in arcade on pier

Nail polish galore – all sorts of colours, glitters and shades. Had to open the window to ventilate the room.

Sam B and Elliot wanting nail polish on (I have no issues with boys having nail polish on but did you really need to pick bright fluorescent glittery green colour)

Karen pouring milk into saucer – missed the cup

Karen dripped soup all down her sweatshirt

Hair plaiting sessions

Dominoes, cards, mazes,

3 swimmers on a consequence for running around (Oh dear)

Paul and Arnav and Oliver and Evan on water machine at arcade (there are some photos somewhere)

Keira's birthday surprise

Marcus and Evan and Sam B all in shorts.

Alex D gained 2 dogs on pier – she just walked off with 2 (live) fluffy dogs on leads.

Llandudno not London

Balloons – lots of them

Phoebe R very green tongue following the lollipop she had just eaten

Donuts on the pier

Jamie exercises – he had to keep moving his shoulder following a fall, to prevent it from stiffening up.

Scott hi vis vest – far too small – Scott you have grown rather a lot from last year.

Sam B selective bad chest. He had such a bad cough that he could not swim or keep up with others or meet his turn around times. Ok Sam, you obviously need a lot of rest and recovery so whilst we go to the arcade, you can stay dry and recover. Oh, what do you mean you have already recovered and the cough has gone?

Keira left her bag on the bench. You have one minute to fetch it, counted down by everyone.

Karen, you get one 1 minute to go to room and back to fetch car keys, counted down by the swimmers. (I made it with seconds to spare)

One paper bag of teddys that remained unclaimed for 2 days

Dave going to the car in his slippers and no car keys.

Songs at pool (sweet Caroline) – the tune came on the radio, so all the swimmers, staff and poolside staff, lifeguards all sang along with Sweet Caroline.

Alex J always dangling his feet in the water at the pool

Fernella organising land training at pool on poolside and giving great demonstrations

Olivier's fast running on the spot during land training

Phoebe L - I can't possibly swim any more too tired, I just need to go to sleep. Ok Phoebe, you can go to sleep but the others are going to the arcade and beach. Oh its ok Karen I am not tired any more.

Karen and Steve soaked at pool (again)

Steve kept all butter to himself.

£10 and £5 notes found by kids – they have been donated to the hotel to pay for staff extra cups of tea and coffee.

Karen's knees and feet won't work. They would not walk any further or go up and down any more stairs. Knee still hurts now.

Paul's bag left at pool

Sebastian trunks left at the pool

Harry's trunks left at the pool

Gabriel's goggles left at the pool

Emma M hairbrush left at the pool

Unknown person hair band left at the pool

Green poolside shoes left at the pool

Unicorn socks left in changing rooms at pool (I am still convinced they were Steve's)

George P no swimming hat, but then it turned up in lost property a day or so later. Left on poolside.

Big pot of tea vanished into thin air (raided by others) I went to pour but nothing came out.

Karen's 11 hours sleep in 4 days but I did get 3.5 hours in one go after Steve volunteered to do the 3am checks.

Steve 1½ hours sleep – during the day time following the night of 3am checks.

Smallest milk jug ever seen – it was tiny.

No more hair dryers in rooms – swimmers do not use these properly and we ended up removing the hairdryers from several rooms. They all seemed to end up in my room though.

Sam and Noah leaving the TV on in the room

Zoe and Emma leaving the TV on in the room

Chloe and Violet leaving the TV on in the room – very loudly

Lana and Saoirse leaving the TV on in the room

Rozena and Inas leaving the TV on in the room

Heather leaving the TV on in the room

Leaky kettle in Pam and Steve room

Steve and Pam's room Best in hotel

Karen buttering table instead of bread – I missed!

Pam abandoned car outside hotel twice – that was funny. Nowhere to park so she just left the car in the middle of the road with hazards on and gave the keys to Steve and walked away. Steve had to squeeze the car into the smallest gaps. Resulted in my car being blocked in.

2 hand touches and finishes on wall.

Kids very impressed with vegetable soup (NOT) They liked the carrot and tomato soup though. Several had seconds including Violet and Bobbie and Michael

Evan and Marcus refused to eat any dinner but then wanted cakes and treats.

Wind took car doors – very much like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!!

Michael wants to peel Karen's fingers off as Scott peels his leg off and it doesn't hurt him

Daniel B eating vegetables – just need to remember to tell his parents but they won't believe me!

Steve's missing soup – not me this time.

Georgina trip to the Antarctic. She had so many clothes on that she could have gone to the North Pole.

Lasagne that turned into Scampi then chicken breast fillets.

Rohan Rubik cube 4 fingers twists and can complete the whole cube in less than 12 seconds

Alex D cuddling teddy bear in dining room

Lost teddy bears!! Next year – no teddy bears at all, I will provide the bears/ rabbits, pandas/ dogs/ cats etc. My giddy aunt, staff spent more time looking for missing cuddly toys than anything else this year.

Pam and Dave duet on Karaoke on last night – recording available

Bobbie, Zoe, Phoebe R, Keira, Fernella, Rohan, Sebastian, Kai, Inas, Saoirse, Arnav, Emma M, Chloe, Olivier, Paul, Elizabeth, Daniel B, Ethan, Millie, Clara, Rozena, Phoebe L, Aran, Rowan, Violet, Gabriel, Noah, William, Alex J, Daniel B, Anna, Sam B, Dave, Pam, Steve, Georgina, Grace, Emaan, Millie, Scott all taking part in Karaoke (probably missed someone here but there lots of photos and videos around)



Georgina best singer on Karaoke night so winning a medal

Karen suitcase would not shut – I tried everything. In the end, had to take out the trainers and leave them lose in my car.

Noah not dressed at breakfast still in pjs – he said he forgot to put out his clothes when he packed his suitcase to go home, so planned to go home in pyjamas. We had to locate his case that had been placed with all the others ready for loading and then find him some clothes to put on.

Michael at breakfast still in wet clothes so had to go and get him changed again. He had got changed but put on the wet clothes from the day that were still drying out before so was still wet.

Karen's breakfast not ordered! Everyone else had ordered but they missed me out because I was sorting out a little one!

Can't find my towel, cant find my socks, cant find my gloves, cant find my teddy bear, cant find my swim bag, cant find my Hi Vis Vest, cant find my coat, cant find my room, cant find my toothbrush, cant find my floats, cant find Ethan, cant find Harry (swimmers not staff who could not find each other), cant find my panda, can't find my trousers (drying out), can't find my green towel (drying out) cant find my trunks, cant find my goggles, cant find my hat, cant find my bucket, cant find my shells, cant find my purse, cant find my money, cant find my drink bottle, cant find my slippers, cannot find my pink balloon (it had gone pop), cannot find my rocks (removed), cannot find my spoon (that was me, someone had taken my teaspoon) cannot find my bread (Steve had taken it), cannot find my roller, cannot find my hair bobble.

Lana's disappearing act. She did get a little telling off for that as it resulted in a major staff hunting exercise as we could not locate her. She was under the quilt in her bed but when we looked in her room the first time, she was hiding from us so did not locate her until the second time we searched it. We know she was only playing but it did scare us as we could not find her. I suppose it was a good exercise for us as we knew she was missing, but it made the hearts race a little! We even sent a lookout to the pier to see if she had wandered out of the hotel without us noticing.

Georgina's tray of toast all to herself

Explaining the fire procedures to everyone – using simple terms (you try finding another word for exit other than way out that a little person will understand and explain that it can only be used should the alarm be ringing) Also trying to explain to the swimmers in room 19 that they have a fire exit door in their room (as it is on the end of the corridor) but it will set off the alarm if opened, so therefore, do not open it unless told to.

Pool alarm to indicate that the floor is changing depths – its high pitched and our swimmers with sensory processing disorders found it very difficult to cope with. The pool staff had to come and warn us the second time, due to the problems the first time. Even Dan E found it scary the first time as it does sound like the fire alarm.

Hi Vis vests – gathering them in, giving them out, folding and unfolding, could not find my number, putting the wrong one on. They were very useful though. Keya's was too big and Steve's was too small. Scott's was also too small.

Lots of untied shoe laces. Next year can we have swimmers who can either tie their own laces or lots of Velcro shoes please? I will include myself in that as mine kept undoing all by themselves as well.

Untidiest room award goes to room 43, closely followed by room 19, closely followed by room 4, closely followed by room 6.

Tidiest room award goes to room 2 followed by room 8, followed by room 3.

Steve not seeing his bedroom until midnight on the first night as didn't get time to even go upstairs.

Steve and Pam's bathroom – best in the hotel. I am having their room next year.

How many chips at Truck stop? – 55 plates of chips, 8 teas, 2 coffees, endless jugs of squash Georgina's can of coke (brought and then hidden from sight)

Ice cream at the Truckstop.

Georgina's sausages.

That is a big sausage

Got a large sausage??

I have locked myself out of my room – again and again and again and again, and again, and again, and again. Put your door on the latch, yes Karen, is it on the latch, yes Karen, I can't get in Karen, I forgot to put it on the latch, Karen. Can you just run up the stairs and let me into my room please Karen? Ahhhhhhhh

Jamie trying to do up the coat of a younger swimmer who would not stand still (Jamie finds zips hard to do up anyway so even more difficult when the person would not stand still)

Why are you not wearing a coat Ethan it is pouring with rain and it is cold? I don't know, Karen, I forgot that it was cold and wet outside. Did you not realise when you had walked two steps out of the door Ethan that it is raining? No Karen, I did not feel the rain on my face or the rain soaking through my sweatshirt within 2 steps of the front door. Do you think it would be a good idea to go and get your coat Ethan? Yes Karen. So, he comes back carrying it!!!!

Can we not wear soaking wet coats in the dining room please?

Can we all go and change before eating please and take off your wet clothes please? Sam have you changed as that sweatshirt looks very wet to me? Its ok Karen is it not wet. I think it is soaking wet Sam, so can you go and get changed please. Its ok Karen I will put it on the radiator later on. No Sam, go and get changed please? (This was big Sam not little Sam, being lazy as he couldn't be bothered to get changed)

Got stuck at the left-hand turn at Chester again. I either get stuck on the way there or on the way home – On the way there this time

Sat Nav stating turn left when I knew it was a right turn. I went down the middle in the end.

Emily with a tail – one very wet dog every day.

No toilet paper in the coach toilet

Hot hotel rooms – too blinking hot. Unable to open the windows in case anyone decided to climb out so top floor swimmers cooked! Turned down radiators but nothing dried out so had to turn them back up again.

Early mornings – everyone was up and ready on time – not an easy feat. Kept bumping into staff, on the corridors trying to get swimmers out of bed.

Most difficult person to get out of bed award goes to – Fernella. Almost had to tip her out of bed. Once up she was fine but getting her to part with the bed clothes was almost impossible.

Bumped into hotel staff at 3am when doing the checks – scared each other to death, but I managed not to scream.

Bumped into Heather at 2am check – again managed not to scream but made each other jump.

Bread rolls, fruit, squash and tea in the morning at 5.40am. Lots of tea.

Broken glasses on the table – twice. Glasses were removed from that table after that.

Drinks bottles worked a treat, only one spillage this year for the whole week. First meal, a lot of people forgot to bring their bottles to the tables, by the third meal, very few people forgot.

Phoebe's dropped can of pop – tears until the hotel staff replaced it for her (it was an accident and she had only just purchased it from the bar)

Friday night purchases from the bar – cans of pop, sweets and crisps all paid for with whatever coins they had left – mainly 2ps

Hot chocolate top ups in the evening – we kept running out but the hotel staff kept topping us up.

Straws for Alex – we need to make sure we have got hundreds next year as we kept running out.

Bruises that just appeared for no apparent reason, we think from climbing out of the pool as it is high or from suitcases. I got one on my wrist and Steve got one on his arm and we really do not know where they came from.

Steve's cut knuckles – no idea but caught them on something

Diving and the resulting showers that soaked Steve and I. Some good starts though, with timed sprints. Dave gave lots of feedback to swimmers on how to improve their times, whilst I supported the non-divers.

Violets relay breaststroke length – what an effort.

Rozena relay breaststroke length – what a race.

Scott/ Sam race on the front crawl.

Georgina's hair plaiting session.

Rozena's hair plaiting session – the results were lovely

Elliott being hairdresser, he likes putting the rollers in

Hand washing –lots of clean hands

Swimmers who needed reminding to wash their hands after using the toilet – that became a bone of contention for some people, when they sent back to wash.

Went through whole bottle of hand gel.

Updating the web page every evening, uploading the photos and tweeting out. It was still time consuming but certainly better than receiving loads of texts and phone messages. However, very difficult with no internet and no phone signals. Had to send the photographs whilst out and about – very difficult in the pouring rain.

Steve announcing to the whole of the Truckstop that Daniel E was going to the toilet

My 12 pens – I took 12 pens with me and within 24 hours I could not find a single one

Left Llandudno safely ahead of schedule with sun shining for the first time all week. Was raining again though by the time we got back to Langley.

Coach driver very polite and helpful, loading and un-loading the coach, very patient and kind towards our swimmers. Helped with seat belts.

Arrived at Langley ahead of schedule.

Next time

We do plan to return next year but it will be under Birmingham Marlins and not Orion. Therefore, we had to say good bye to a lot of swimmers, some of whom had been attending for many years. We tried our best to make this camp very special and to give everyone some lasting memories. For some of our regular ‘campers’ including Bobbie, Lana, Kai, Ethan G, Keira, Saoirse, Arnav, this will be their last camp with us. I think the karaoke night will be remembered by most if nothing else.

This has been one of the best swim camps we have ever run, although there are still a few problems that need to be ironed out, mainly around medication and additional food and drink. It has given not only me but all the other staff and helpers the inspiration to run it again but also to look forward to exciting changes ahead. I have received a lot of positive feedback from everyone involved including the pool and hotel staff, coach drivers and swimmers followed with a lot of thank you comments.

We must be doing something right as we have a demand for next year places already. The hotel wants us back and that’s despite the wet clothing everywhere.

I hope that the swimmers this year really enjoyed their swim sessions, the activities and the camp itself. Invites for next year’s camp will start to go out around May time, as hopefully we should have all caught up on sleep and recovered sufficiently to do it all over again.

Karen.