

John Grant School Forest Schools Handbook



Who We Are

We are Jess Flowerdew (aka Jess Jacaranda), and Mike Jones (aka Mike Mole).

Jess has worked with children and families for about 20 years in various settings. She is passionate about providing quality therapeutic experiences and interactions that support healthy development. She has been involved in forest school personally and professionally for 7 years. She leads the school's social, emotional and mental health provision and works with children and young people across the school with the view to improve their wellbeing by providing 1-1 support and various groups including forest school. Her favourite season is autumn and although she loves the woods her favourite place to be is the beach.

Mike grew up in the hills of North Wales and has fond memories of mud slides and tickling trout, gorilla nests in the trees and damming streams in glorious long hot summers. He hankers for those experiences and so you will find him getting as close to those things as he can in his current role as Harrier Class Teacher working with the younger children in the school.

Together we run John Grant School Forest Schools, a project which aims to enhance the lives of our pupils across the school by encouraging and supporting a closer attachment to nature that can support the children throughout their lives. We hope to develop the site and to begin to bring the ethos of Forest Schools into the very fabric of John Grant over time.

Where to Find us

Our initial site is based at the rear of the primary building in a small but perfectly formed mature wooded space. As yet the ecological diversity of the site is limited but the potential for other spaces around the school to become part of a network of "forest patches" is huge and a significant project into the future. Hopefully our existing space will develop it's own character and density of diversity over time as we allow for an element of rewilding alongside the importation of natural resources from donations and other sources on site.

Contact Us:

Jess and Mike can both be contacted via their school e-mails:

jessica.flowerdew@johngrant.school

mike.jones@johngrant.school

Or you can catch us via school reception on 01493 720158

What is Forest School?

Origins

The approach that we now call 'Forest School' here in the UK, was initially developed in the 1980s in Denmark for Early Years provision. In 1993, after visiting Denmark, a group of nursery staff from Bridgewater started to adapt these child-centred, outdoor learning methods to the UK Early Years setting. Through ongoing observation and research they started to realise the hugely positive impacts of the 'frulitsliv' (outdoor living) approach and worked to set up 'Forest School' training courses for UK practitioners. This UK Forest School approach is now widely recognised for its benefits in a broad range of sectors – in education (from birth to adulthood), and as an alternative to traditional therapies promoting wellbeing and mental health.

6 Definitive Principles of the Forest School Ethos:

- It is **learner-centred**; the FS leader observes and responds to the needs and interests of individuals within the group, allowing them opportunity to make their own choices through play, responding by facilitating access to a full range of learning preferences, including creating opportunities for self-reflection and promoting a sense of community for learning and development.
- It **aims to promote the holistic development** of individuals within the group, seeing all areas of development as interconnected – each as valid as any other to any person as a 'whole' being.
- It is a **long term, collaborative process** allowing for ongoing formative observation, planning and adaptation to suit the needs and progressive development of those involved.
- It offers learners the opportunity to take **intrinsically motivated, appropriate and supported risks** conducive to the promotion of healthy self-esteem, and focuses on processes rather than products - more on the 'how' than the 'what'.
- It takes place in a **natural environment**, preferably woodland, allowing opportunities for exploration and discovery to encourage individuals to foster and develop a healthy relationship with the natural world.
- It is run by a **Level 3 qualified Forest School Leader** (who is self-reflective and committed to ongoing CPD), and there is a high adult to learner ratio which ensures good practice and the safe management of the site, activities and individuals involved – as well as promoting the development of secure learner-leader relationships.

Aims & Benefits of Forest School

- The development of **greater confidence**. Learners are given the time, space and freedom to undertake activities and respond to appropriate challenges which allow for the development of greater independence.
- An **improvement in social skills**. Allowing individuals time to take part in intrinsically motivated participatory play encourages involvement in group activities, team activities, tool sharing and a heightened awareness of the consequences of one's own actions on one's peers.
- **Improved communication**. Language development is prompted and promoted through sensory experiences and the sharing of these.
- **Greater motivation and concentration**. Learners are fascinated by and keen to engage with the woodland environment.
- The **development of physical skills**. Woodland activities promote physical stamina and the development of both gross and fine motor skills.
- **Greater knowledge and understanding of the world**. Spending time playing in nature encourages a deeper interest in one's natural surroundings and promotes a healthy respect for the environment.
- **New Perspectives**. Teachers have the opportunity to observe learners in a different setting and form new understandings of them, their interests and their capabilities.
- A **'ripple effect'**. The positive experience of Forest School is talked about and more widely shared with friends and family. Thus others are motivated to become increasingly engaged with natural places and taking part in activities within them.

(From Murray and O'Brien: Social Economic Research Group for Forest Research in 2006, "Forest School, a Marvellous Opportunity to Learn,")

Activities at John Grant School Forest School

Forest school is very much learner-centered in its approach so specific activities will be dependent upon the interests of the child along with those of other children within the group. Generally, though, there will be den-building, tree/rope-climbing, bug-hunting, natural material craft and exploring tool use, foraging (for food, medicine, construction/craft), a mud kitchen and tool use of the tool area already in situ. Into the future as more “patches” come into use around the school site and our insurers are reevaluated we might hope for pond-dipping, camp-fire cooking and perhaps a foray into “Beach Schools” in view of our proximity to the coast.

Risk-Benefit & Risk Management

At Forest School we talk a lot about 'risk benefit'. We offer children supported opportunities to assess the benefits and possible risks of a range of activities. We want children to be able to learn about and reap the benefits of fire, tool use, climbing and foraging, for example, but also to be aware of and know how to reduce/ protect themselves from the risks. All activities are carefully considered by Leaders in advance in terms of risk benefit/ management and written Risk Assessments exist for the identified activities to date and will be developed for new ventures as the project develops. Potential risks are openly discussed with learners and we work with them to find ways to benefit while remaining safe. We also aim, over time, to give learners the appropriate autonomy to make independent decisions about risks they may choose to take. In this way they learn about their own strengths/limitations and develop a deeper understanding and respect for the natural world around them.

The Role of Adults at Forest School

Because of the nature of Forest School, we aim to allow children a certain degree of autonomy and, from the very first session, we place a very clear emphasis on trust. As the children within the group develop their skills and learn to trust themselves, us and each-other, we gradually increase these levels of autonomy. This gives children the sense of 'freedom' needed for uninhibited exploration /experiential learning, which leads to building confidence and the development of healthy levels of self-esteem. This approach also allows for us to be easily available to them should our direct interaction be requested/ should we observe that we need to intervene. We continuously observe and assess in order to ensure your child is happy, safe, and to scaffold their learning.

All sessions are led by a suitably qualified Forest School Leader. All staff/ volunteers are DBS checked/ risk assessed. There is always a qualified First Aider on site in the school and easily contactable via radio.

There are 5 key safety rules we expect children to follow at John Grant School Forest School:

- Welfare: Always attend in appropriate clothing.
- Climbing: Always work with an adult to check trees/ ropes before climbing.
- Tools: Only use sharp tools in the tool area unless The FS Leader/ Assistant says otherwise. Always do tool work with the FS Leader/ Assistant, until they say that you can work independently.
- Fire: Always walk around the outside of the fire area unless the FS Leader/ Assistant invites you in.
- Foraging: Never put anything in your mouth/ on your skin until you have checked with FS Leader/ Assistant.

We run activities/ play games to stress the importance of and reasoning behind these rules on a regular basis to ensure that children can understand expectations or can be identified as needing closer support to adhere to expectations.

The Forest School Site:

Policies and Procedures:

Below you will find Policies and Procedures relating to a range of activities which Learners can take part in at Forest School. Detailed Risk Assessments are also available in Appendix B.

John Grant School Forest Schools Tools Policy/ Procedures

Benefits of Tool Use

Children can learn and use skills to manipulate/ make objects from natural materials. Tool use promotes focus and healthy levels of self-esteem. It allows for creative expression/ the development of items for practical use and imaginative play. It gives learners the opportunity to focus on and appreciate crafting processes, not just products.

Sharp -edged tools used at John Grant School Forest Schools: Saw (for cutting lengths of wood), file (for smoothing and shaping), gimlet (for drilling small holes), loppers and secateurs (for pruning and cutting plant stems and small branches), shears (for cutting back vegetation), knife (for cutting, carving and shaping), chisel (for shaping wood), billhook and froe (for splitting and shaping wood), auger (for drilling larger holes). Spades, trowels and forks (used for digging in specified areas). Children often use sharp sticks as tools and in creative play. (For safety procedures using sticks and digging tools please see relevant risk assessments in Appendix B)

Other tools: We also use mallets for hammering and (into the future) fire-steels for fire-lighting (please see Fire Policies and Procedures for info on using Fire Steels).

Risks of Tool Use

When using tools, children could injure themselves/ others. Sharp edged tools can cut/ impale, mallets can cause impact damage, (into the future) fire-steels can cause burns/ fire

Procedures: Sharp-edged tools

Trained FS Leader to always model safe tool use before giving tool to learner (each time until clear that procedures understood).

- Remind learner to only use sharp-edged tools in designated area (explain & model check for trip hazards etc)
- Model safe stance (explain: 3 points of contact to maintain balance)
- Show tool and model safety check - talk about appropriate uses and show sharp edges etc
- Model how to check blood bubble and explain (will vary depending on tool)
- Model safe tool use - holding item and tool securely with fingers well away from sharp edge, always working to side & away from body, using controlled movements directed downwards towards work-bench/ ground. Talk through reasons why.
- Model safe way to stash tool once done (return to sheath and toolbox/ workbench)
- FS Leader to do tool count/ return all tools to box at end of session.

Only give tool to learner once confident they understand appropriate use, are fully focussed etc. Observe 1:1 and intervene if needs be. If need to physically guide movements, ask learners consent 1st. Allow learner greater autonomy as skills/ confidence progress but always be to hand to observe/ supervise/ in case of injury.

Procedures: Mallets/ Hammering tools

Trained FS Leader to always model safe tool use before giving tool to learner (each time until clear that understood).

- Discuss appropriate use (if necessary)
- Discuss extended blood - bubble (reach of throw in front/ behind) & model re-position/ asking others to move etc
- Model secure stance, checking tool and holding securely
- Model & discuss ways to protect fingers/ hold hammered item & safest/ most effective hammering action to use.

In case of Injury If a child is injured, ask all other tool users to down tools and leave the tool area. Move child to safer location if appropriate, sending responsible child/ adult to get 1st aid kit/ emergency bag. Administer 1st aid where necessary. Follow emergency procedures if needs be and contact parents to notify. Monitor child.

John Grant School Forest Schools Tree & Rope Climbing Policies/ Procedures

Benefits of Tree - Climbing

Tree climbing offers great opportunities for physical development and exercise, for learners to assess risk, and to learn about and extend their personal limitations leading to the development of healthy levels of self esteem. Added to this is the joy and adrenalin rush of being up high and seeing the world from a different POV.

Risks of Tree Climbing

Learner falling / landing on someone when jumping down. Learner getting stuck. Learner falling on something sharp.

Procedures

- Trees and branches (and surrounding areas) to be checked during daily site check
- Remind children at beginning each session to check trees/ branches/ surrounds before/ as climb
- Model checking trees 1:1 for first few sessions until confident children can check themselves.
- Encourage independent climbing (no physical support - if not ready yet can try again later)
- Observe 1:1 first time climb to ensure children competent/ aware of own limitations (advise 3 points of contact etc).
- If multiple children climbing - remind to be aware of/ communicate with each-other

Benefits of Rope Use

Learners can design their own physical challenges, learn knots, and extend their ideas for creative play/ construction.

Risks of Rope Use

Falling / landing on someone when jumping down/ getting stuck when climbing. Getting tangled in/ strangled by/ trapped/ hit/ whipped by ropes. Friction/ pull burns.

Procedures

- Existing rope structures (incl hammocks, swings etc) to be checked during daily site check
- Remind children at beginning each session to check ropes before/ as climb
- Any new ropes tied to be checked by trained FS Leader before use
- Model checking ropes 1:1 for first few sessions until confident children can check themselves.
- Encourage independent climbing (no physical support - if not ready yet can try again later)
- Observe 1:1 first time climb to ensure children competent/ aware of own limitations (advise 3 points of contact etc).
- If multiple children climbing - remind to be aware of/ communicate with each-other
- FS adult within sight to regular check safe play and intervene/ remind if necessary (no ropes around neck/ pulling each-other too hard, check surrounding areas before throwing etc - communicate with each-other...)

In case of mishap involving trees/ ropes

If child falls/ gets landed/ trodden on: Cease all climbing in immediate area. Check child's wellbeing and administer 1st aid if needed. Send responsible child/ adult to get 1st aid kit/ emergency bag if needed. Follow emergency procedures if necessary. Follow school policy on use of accident book and reporting.

If child gets stuck: Ask others nearby to move so stuck child has space. Calm and reassure child (ie not going to fall as holding on etc) if panicky, advise to take slow, steady breaths and look carefully for way to get down. Adult/ peers to advise route down if necessary and encourage/ reassure. Best if child can get down independently (confidence boost etc) so only offer physical support as last resort (if too panicky eg).

Check trees/ ropes at site of mishap after event . Make safe/ remove & complete incident report if necessary.

John Grant School Forest Schools Mud/ Water Policy & Procedure

Benefits of Mud play An excerpt from communityplaythings.com:

"Recent research has shown that dirt contains microscopic bacteria called *Mycobacterium Vaccae* which stimulates the immune system and increases the levels of serotonin in our brains, an endorphin that soothes, calms, and helps us to relax. Scientists say regular exposure to the bacteria may help reduce a child's vulnerability to depression. In short, playing in mud makes you happier!

Playing in mud can make you healthier too. Science shows that today's sanitized world is actually contributing to increased levels of childhood allergies and asthma. Exposure to dirt and germs works to prime a child's immune system to prevent allergies. Yes, it's actually healthy for children to get muddy!

Mud is also an excellent medium for learning. The same release of serotonin that occurs when playing in *Mycobacterium Vaccae* dirt has also been shown to improve cognitive function. And the rich, engaging sensory play children partake in while playing with mud allows them to express their creativity while enhancing their fine motor skills...

...The open-ended nature of mud encourages creative thinking and allows children to freely create without fear of making mistakes. This also contributes to a child's sense of self, helping to build a strong inner sense of competency.

Mud play is inclusive of all children. It allows children to play at their own developmental level. Mud is an open ended material that meets the diverse needs and interests of different children...

Playing in the mud inspires children to feel a connection to nature and develop an appreciation for the environment."

Mud/ Water and Risk

Mud, and the water it is mixed with, may contain bacteria which could cause diseases/ irritation.

Procedures for Mud Play

- Only use tap water to mix mud
- Check children have no open wounds on hands etc. If they do, discourage from mud play/ give plastic gloves
- Remind children not to splash mud near mouth/ eyes as play
- Check children wash hands thoroughly in clean water after play and then again before handling food

In case of mishap

If mud/ water gets into mouth/ eyes, rinse thoroughly with clear water. If open wound affected, clean with sterile wipe and dress wound. Monitor for signs of infection. Contact parents if concerned. If skin irritation occurs, wash with clear water and monitor. Contact parents if irritation continues.

John Grant School Forest Schools Foraging Policy & Procedure

Benefits of Foraging

Children learn how to identify which wild plants can be used for culinary, medicinal, construction and craft purposes, and the best ways in which to do this in a range of contexts. They can also be taught how to identify which plants to avoid and why.

Risks of Foraging

Poisoning/ irritation due to the mis-identification and mis-use of toxic/ inappropriate species.

Over-harvesting leading to detriment of ecology.

Foraging Procedure

- Tell children the name of the plant and its uses.
- Show an example.
- Explain how/ why it will be used today.
- Point out key features to look for.
- Have children seen this plant before? Where? Does anyone know where we can find some on site?
- Remind children of 'rules' of foraging - never put anything in mouth/ on skin until checked by qualified adult, never take more than 1/3 from any one plant in any given area. Remind them why these rules are so important.
- Point out any toxic species which can be seen nearby - what are they? Why is it so important not to harvest those ones? Be explicit about risks.

- Model how to forage plant to be used with minimum impact on future growth.
- Closely observe children as they harvest.
- Intervene and correct if needs be.
- All samples collected to be placed in basket (etc).

- FS leader to check and re-check all samples collected before use, tell children why so important to do this (eg, as other leaves may have been accidentally picked as growing alongside/ other similar species may be confused with etc).

- As plant is put to use, remind children of name, features, properties, uses, any dangers. Ask them to consider sensory responses.

In case of poisoning:

If a child/ adult consumes any toxic/ unfamiliar plant:

- Ask them to show you the exact plant.
- Find out which part of plant consumed, how much, how long ago.
- Immediately pass this information on to Forest School Leader.
- Forest School leader to identify the plant (Known toxic plants on the school site are listed).
- If plant is considered toxic in any way, ask for expert advice regarding possible symptoms of poisoning to look out for - call 111.
- If judged necessary, call 111 immediately. (FS Leader) to communicate exact sequence of events, procedures taken and find out what to do next.
- Contact emergency services if needed and follow advice. Leader to escort casualty to meeting point if necessary.
- Contact parents following school procedures (FS Leader) to communicate sequence of events, procedures taken and what should happen next. Reassure parents & child.

In case of irritation:

Wash all areas affected/ potentially affected with clear water. Does child know which plant?. Monitor symptoms. Contact emergency services if needs be and follow advice. Contact parents.

John Grant School Forest Schools Policy & Procedure: Exploring New Territory

The site currently used by John Grant School Forest Schools is limited. Over time and when building works have ceased it will become appropriate to seek out/forage in other areas of the school grounds. Currently many areas around the school site are considered 'unexplored' by learners – especially in the early years classes. This can offer the exciting opportunity of exploring new territory. If children are keen to visit areas of the site that they are not yet familiar with/ are not regularly used, we set up an 'expedition'. An FS Leader will visit the area first to risk assess. They will then return to the group and discuss their findings. If work needs to be done in the area to make it safe/ weather is unsuitable etc, the expedition may be postponed. However, children are still given the opportunity to plan how/ when etc it will take place.

Once the area is made safe, necessary equipment will be discussed and issued, risk assessments and suggested actions will be shared with children and then, if still appropriate, the expedition can begin!

There may be times when we invite children to explore more independently in order to introduce new challenges and give them a sense of belonging in the natural spaces used around the school site for Forest Schools activities. Although new/ unfrequented areas are always visited in advance by FS Leaders in order to ensure that they are safe, children may not always be made aware of this if we are encouraging them to take risks and make explorations into 'the unknown'.

Incident Reporting

School policy will be followed

Welfare at Forest School

Welfare is paramount to a positive learning experience. In the 'wild' outdoor setting of Forest School it is especially important.

Consider that learners will need to go to the toilet (factor in a toilet break). Wash hands, eat, and drink etc as and when they need to (factor in and provide the necessary arrangements for this – a “snack” time during the course of a session).

At the beginning of each session we assess weather conditions and check we can provide shelter from the rain/ sun and (into the future - warmth from a fire) if needed. Of course we can always return to class for additional bits and pieces but how much better to “be prepared” and to be in the wild for as long as possible.

We also suggest classes bring extra snacks/ drinks - Forest School seems to make people very hungry!

We need your support in providing high welfare standards. Otherwise, in the context of the great outdoors, a seemingly unproblematic situation of cold/wet/hungry children (or grown ups!) can quickly escalate into an emergency one.

Appropriate Clothing

At Forest School we will be outdoors in all weather – wind, rain, hail or shine...
As such, we believe that there is no such thing as ‘bad weather’, only bad clothing!

So that learners can be safe, comfortable, and fully enjoy learning in the outdoors, we ask that they attend with appropriate clothing from home. There are some finite clothing resources to call upon but they will not last forever and of course incur costs.

Here is a list of clothing that the children/you will need:

- Sturdy closed-toe footwear (Wellies are not the best for tree- climbing)
- Long trousers and long sleeves (to protect from nettles/ insect bites)

- An extra fleece or jumper (or two!) in case the temperature drops
- Waterproof jacket (there is nothing worse than getting wet and then cold... and then miserable ☹)
- Waterproof trousers (also help protect against nettles & bites & keep the mud out = less washing to do at home ☺)
- Winter coat, hat, scarf and gloves in cold weather
- Sunhat for the summer months

Please note that, for safety reasons, hair longer than shoulder length should be tied back at all times.

Food & Food Hygiene

We would encourage groups engaging in Forest Schools sessions to have their snacks and drinks on site. Please consider the following.

Food Preparation Policy

Preparing food in a very “different” environment can be a great learning tool and contribute to a real boost in self-esteem from sharing/ preparing meals with/ for the group in an unusual setting.

As adults we should do our utmost to model safe/ hygienic food prep.

Food Preparation Procedures

- Wash hands in clean water with soap/ antibacterial gel. Dry with clean towels.
- Create safe, clean area to work in - use a suitable disposable / cleanable layer over designated surfaces.
- Check all utensils needed are clean - wipe with clean water and soap again if needs be.
- Wash hands again and set up food for prep.
- Invite children to help. Ensure they wash their hands as above.
- Children to prep food under direct supervision of FS Leader (for knives see tool policy).
- Once food prepped, children to wash hands, utensils, cloth etc as above.
- Check area for any dropped food and discard (see food waste & packaging disposal below).
- Cups, plates, spoons should always be checked for cleanliness/ cleaned again if necessary before food is served.
- Children are reminded to wash hands before/ after eating and prompted to remain seated whilst eating.
- After eating/ collecting plates etc, check area again for dropped food and discard appropriately.
- All remaining washing up will be done at the end of the session or back at class.

Food Waste, Allergens

As the space is shared across a number of classes please be mindful to clear up any spilled food/packaging and take it back to class for disposal in case of allergies in other classes.

Into the future:

Fire Policy

Fire has many uses – practical, social and therapeutic. We believe that is important for students to be able to learn about and benefit from these. Fire can also pose a risk. If students are given the opportunity to learn about fire and its properties in a controlled context where these risks are discussed and safety issues are openly considered/ safe use is clearly modelled, this risk will be substantially reduced, both in the immediate and the wider context.

Benefits of Fire

Fire is hot: It can keep us warm and provide light, we can cook on it, we can use it to make charcoal/ other resources. A fire creates a welcoming social context as the focal point for a group, bringing the group together and promoting unity/ cohesiveness. As such, fire is therapeutic, both for the group and for the individual. We work together to gather wood to prepare for and feed the fire, s/he who lights the fire gains a sense of achievement and grows in the knowledge that they have helped provide warmth, food and unity for the other members of the group. Engaging with fire on an elemental level contributes to a sense of mindfulness and wellbeing, and can even promote a sense of spiritualism; a reflection upon our place in the natural world.

Fire and Risk

Fire is hot: it can burn and it can spread. It also produces smoke which can lead to respiratory problems.

Fire Procedures

Before lighting fire:

- Practise 'around the outside' and 'stop, drop, roll' games (at start of and intermittently throughout programme)
- Talk about what to do in case fire spreads beyond the inner fire circle (practise if necessary to group)
- Check weather conditions, wind direction
- Check 3m+ radius for trip-hazards, loose/ flammable objects and remove/ secure - including canopy
- Ensure a full watering can, plunge bowl and fire-blanket are at fire point
- Check for and secure loose clothing, long hair etc
- FS Leader to direct/ supervise fire-lighting

When Fire is lit:

- FS adult always in attendance
- Only use 'safe' fuels - model safe use (see 'stoking the fire')
- Flames no higher than knee height
- Students only enter fire-circle under FS Leader/ Assistant direction/ supervision (loose clothing/ hair checked)
- FS Leader/ Assistant to supervise cooking
- All hot things to remain in inner circle until cool
- If fire area to be left un attended, extinguish fire with watering can until all embers cool - FS staff to check.

Activities Involving Fire

Fire-Lighting Using Fire-Steels

Fire-lighting is a popular and useful skill to practise at Forest School. Learners often express great pride in developing their skills to safely and competently light a fire which can bring the group together and provide warmth, light and opportunities for cooking. Fire-lighting in the Forest School context provides a great boost in Self Esteem.

Procedure for Teaching Fire-lighting Using of Fire-Steels:

Work with children to create basic fire lay. Model/ discuss appropriate use **before** handing fire-steel to learner:

- Invite children (maximum of 3) to come and kneel by inner fire circle.
- Show fire steel and explain what is/ how works.
- Remind children of benefits/ risks of fire - What useful for? Why? What are dangers? How can we check it's safe?
- Model quick re-check full watering can, plunge bowl and fire-blanket in place, weather conditions, that canopy and surrounding area secure etc. Ask children to check hair & clothing secure, roll sleeves up etc.
- 'Now I will show you how to use the fire-steel...' Show safe stance, how to hold fire steel and how to strike (remind downwards towards ground in inner fire area so sparks not falling on others).
- Re-model. Answer questions. Offer children chance to have a go 1:1.
- Check stance/ positioning of child and then give fire-steel. Watch 1:1 to check using safely. Intervene if needed.
- Once child(ren) producing sparks with confidence, ask to stop and lay down steels to watch Leader.
- Leader to show and explain tinder. V. easy to set fire to so where best to use it? (Inner fire area)
- Leader to model lighting tinder with sparks from steel. Once lit lean back so away from flame(explain why).
- Explain how this is what can use to light fire as flame will set fire to kindling/ small sticks.
- Re-check childrens stance/ positioning and give tinder so can attempt to light.
- Once competent, ask if Leader can use their flame to light fire.
- Once tinder is lit, ask children to lean back and lay down steels.
- Model poking lit tinder into kindling and gently blow to catch flames.
- Children return steels to Leader so can be put away and carefully make way out of fire area/ remain kneeling if invited so long as away from smoke/ flames. (Leader can the model how to grade and add fuel etc)

Stoking the Fire

Children often ask if they can add fuel to the fire. They are supported in doing so 1:1 under direct supervision and at the discretion of the FS Leader once we have assessed that they are ready for this responsibility.

Using the Kelly Kettle

The Kelly Kettle (sometimes called a Storm Kettle) provides a very fast and efficient way to boil water for hot drinks. It is also a great tool for prompting enquiry and discussion amongst learners regarding the way in which fire works. Children can assist Leaders with the use of the Kelly Kettle at the Leader's discretion and under direct supervision .

Cooking on the Fire

Children who are keen to cook food on fire will be invited into inner fire-circle (2 max) to kneel by the fire under direct supervision of FS Leader who will model safest way to cook and then serve food using relevant methods, utensils and safety equipment provided.

In Case of Accident Involving Fire

If person's hair/ clothing catches fire instruct all others to move away (they can go and inform other leader) and put out flames by most appropriate means - rubbing in dirt/ pouring on water/ using fire blanket. Practise 'stop, drop, roll' procedure if necessary. Extinguish all fires using water/ blanket and tend to casualty. Assess needs, call 999 & administer 1st aid if necessary. Communicate with 2nd leader to keep rest of group safe/ get further help via walkie-talkie. Contact child/ren's parents using emergency contact procedure.

If flames spread beyond inner log circle, adult in attendance to immediately attempt to extinguish using water/ fire-blanket & instruct all other people to move away from fire area as soon as possible to safe place at suitable distance upwind with access to escape route (under 'wild willows'/ in 'flatlands' area). 2nd adult - alerted by wolf call/ shout of 'fire!' by children if not already present - to headcount and check all learners present. If attempts to extinguish fire are unsuccessful, adults to assist children in leaving meadow by quickest safest possible route. FS Leader to call 999 and ask for fire brigade. Headcount again. If any injury from heat, smoke etc, administer 1st Aid, call 111/ 999

for medical services. As soon as all children safe, contact parents. Explain exactly what has happened and next steps. Advise parents to collect children if necessary and agree meeting point. Walk with children to meeting point.

John Grant School Forest Schools Pond-Dipping Policy/ Procedures

Benefits of Pond Dipping

Children can learn about plants and animals that live in aquatic habitats. They are also provided with opportunities to assess and make decisions about the physical risks of playing near water, considering their own limitations and setting themselves new challenges.

Risks of Pond Dipping

Children could fall in the water. They could contract disease/ infection by coming into contact with 'dirty' water.

Pond-Dipping Procedures

- Check safety equipment in place (lifebelt with rope and long sturdy stick) and easy to access.
- Check bank and slope for slippery areas/ trip hazards and clear if necessary.
- Talk children through safety procedure - only go down bank with adult there, no splashing, check hands for wounds etc (give gloves if necessary)
- Adult to model safest way (crouching) to pond-dip and kindest way to look at creatures found (turn net inside out into white tray containing water/ scoop with spoons for closer look/ remind will return findings to dyke etc)
- Adult to return to water's edge and invite children to have a go one at a time.
- Remind children that will need to wash hands with clear water and soap after activity.

In Case of Mishap

If child splashed in eyes/ mouth - stop activity, ask all children to leave area near dyke and supervise child in rinsing areas affected with clear water.

If wounds affected - stop activity and clean wounds with sterile wipe (in 1st aid pack). Dress wound if necessary. Contact parents to tell what happened.

If child falls in water - if within reach grab where can and haul them from water asap, telling other children present to sit down. If out of reach grab lifebelt and throw to them, instructing to hold on. Haul in using rope attached/ using stick. Send other children for help if necessary/ go through emergency procedures. Monitor child. Contact parents.

Contingency Plans:

Extreme Weather

If there is a severe weather warning for when a session is due to run, we will need to consider whether or not to cancel the session in order to keep children safe. If the warning is red, the session will definitely be cancelled, if amber, it is likely to be cancelled, if yellow, the session may possibly be cancelled. **Wind speeds of 40mph+ are too high for a session to take place.**

Other policies referenced at John Grant School Forest Schools:

Food: Food Safety Act 1990 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/16/contents), HACCP (www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/hazard-analysis-and-critical-control-point-haccp#.UH1ku-1OE20)

Ofsted: 'Requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register'
(www.southglos.gov.uk/Documents/CYP070120.pdf)

Data: 'EU General Data Protection Regulation' (www.eugdpr.org/)

Risk Management Policy/ Procedures - The different types of RAs we complete and when/ how often we review them

Written RAs are undertaken if there is more than a low level of risk involved in using resources, taking part in activities or accessing areas of the site. Dynamic RAs are also undertaken during immediate practice and these are discussed as/ when appropriate, then written up/ used to update existing written policies later at home if relevant.

Site RAs are undertaken whenever we access a new site/ area of the site, daily/ at the beginning (written) and end of each session, whenever there is an incident/ near-miss/ concern. Written RA review: at the beginning/ end of each programme - usually half-termly - or whenever there is an incident/ near-miss/ concern. Site maintenance is ongoing.

Resource/ Activity RAs are undertaken whenever we access a new resource/ activity or use a resource in a new way/ with new learners, daily/ at the beginning and end of each session, resources are re-checked immediately before use, or re-assessed whenever there is an incident/ near-miss/ concern. Written RA review: at the beginning/ end of each programme - usually half-termly - or whenever there is an incident/ near-miss/ concern. Resources are mended/ replaced as an when necessary. Activities are adapted accordingly.

'People' RAs may be undertaken - if we come across a learner with unpredictable behaviour patterns, for instance, and are planning to undertake specific activities (eg pond-dipping with a child who has a tendency to push/ shove peers). These are usually based on verbal discussion between practitioners and noted in relevant session plans. Most learner RAs are dynamic and based on immediate observation. For example, we may be planning specific tool use as part of a session, but then decide that a particular learner is not quite ready to be shown tool use in this way/ needs to be extended so we adapt teaching accordingly.

We also have more general 'people' RAs which form a broader part of our policies and procedures (eg for parents attending on an informal basis who are not DBS checked - see 'safeguarding policy' and 'taking photos' in Handbook/ Admissions pack). Written aspects of these are also reviewed at the beginning/ end of each programme - usually half-termly - or whenever there is an incident/ near-miss/ concern.

Daily Operating Procedures

Before - Emergency bag unpacked and 'pouches' checked (relevant emergency contact info for attendees etc) and given out on arrival of other staff. Walkie-talkies checked. Daily site RA undertaken, results shared (and addressed if necessary - then re-checked, notes amended), weather conditions checked (canopy erected if necessary and safety checked), Kit unpacked and resources checked and distributed to appropriate areas (including tools for planned use), household activities undertaken (kitchen kit checked, water for washing, drinking etc), activities set up (if necessary). Session plans, roles and relevant RAs discussed. Final check of main area before meet group.

During - Basic routine for short session.

Start: Meet learners at gate, headcount*/ register, journey together to main area, stash learners' kit/ new paperwork etc and check no trip hazards. Share any new info with other staff if necessary as group settle. Greet as group and gauge mood/ find out what learners planning/ share leader plans ('Talking Stick' activity). Recap safety routines (poss play 'Duck Duck Goose' etc). Introduce new/relevant resource/ activity/ area-specific safety info.

Middle: Learner-led activity. Leaders observe to see what choose/ engage if necessary. Areas/ resources/ activities RA checked before and throughout use. Tool policies/ procedures followed. If further perimeters of site to be accessed, staff to check learners in view/ inform colleagues if going with/ once return.

Fire-lighting/ cooking usually forms part of child-led activity - whichever adult leading to inform colleagues when fire activities starting (fire area, canopy etc RA checked first). Fire, food and cooking policies and procedures followed. Other staff adapt roles/ activities to cover for this (eg tool-use may stop) as fire leader will be limited to fire area when fire lit.

End: Re-group. 'Wolf call' to gather group by fire to share snack as soon as cooked. Headcount*. Adults check clean water available and all hands washed. Learners may help distribute cups, plates etc following safety procedures suggested for fire area, leaders checking resources clean/ cleaning if needed, plus tidying trip hazards etc (some children will fetch own lunch-boxes at this point and resources tend to get scattered). All sit together around fire and share snack/ chat. Plates etc collected ready for washing, debris and rubbish cleared.

Talking Stick activity and discuss ideas for next time. One leader stands by path ready to lead learners to gate, others check they have all their stuff. Headcount. One leader walks with group to gate to check all learners met by parent/ carer. Other(s) remain by fire to tidy. Once all learners accounted for, first leader returns to help tidy.

*Regular head-counts take place throughout - usually during child-led activity if a leader is aware that children have moved from one area to another/ hasn't seen a child for a few minutes/ has been absorbed in an activity and just wants to check where everyone is. 'Official' headcounts are made if further boundaries/ less visible areas of site are being accessed (before, during and after by appointed leader) and at times when we re-group (eg snack time).

After - Leaders discuss observations of individual learners and group as whole, what went well & why/ what didn't & why not/ how to improve, along with ideas for next time, what will need, who will get what etc. If necessary discuss/ write up incident reports (eg if have given 1st aid). Work together to wash up, extinguish fire, tidy & check resources/ site (discussing/ making note of things need to address for next time). Clean toilets etc. Pack up trailer and go. Josi writes up observation notes and session evaluations etc at home.