

INSPIRING YOUNG WRITERS – MAKING CHARCOAL

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Skills and knowledge

Supporting children to learn new skills through demonstrating, but also encouragement to explore and find out. Adults have visible skills and know how to support individuals appropriately.

Open, not dominant

In the footage Sam allows the child time and space to explore.

Happy and secure outside

All aspects of nature and the elements are embraced and brought to the child's attention.

Reflective

Sam summaries the key learning experiences and creates possible lines of development as she works.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage demonstrates a child lighting the fire in the setting and planning to make charcoal. The child leads the learning and the adult supports the child to manage the risks of the fire, with awe and wonder at the impact the elements are having upon the process from start to finish.

As well as the adult teaching a skill and supporting the child to reflect upon their own progress, the adult ensures the child is making links to their already existing knowledge of the world around them. Through open ended questions and encouraging the child to recall and remember, the

experience becomes much more than a 'process'.

As the experience unfolds across the session, the importance of nature around the child is a key part of the engagement with the child at every opportunity – listening to the birds, feeling the wind on their skin and noticing how it makes the fire roar and then linking this experience to the season. The adult is prepared for work with children, equipped to respond with resources, tools and opportunities (wherever that may take them) – as well as an obvious joy being in the environment itself.

📺 **See footage** Inspiring Young Writers – Making Charcoal at <https://youtu.be/nGBngPVQJdc>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

This is an experience that the children are part of from very early in their journey. After establishing respect and understanding for the fire, and confidence in their ability to light it and manage the risk we begin to use it for a purpose, whether that is cooking, keeping warm or creating.

In this example the experience develops many skills, alongside inspiring children to write with their own pencil.

“I DID IT! I REALLY DID IT! I MADE MY OWN PENCIL.”

A GROUP OF CHILDREN SPEND A DAY, WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS MAKING THEIR OWN WRITING TOOL – USING THEIR EXISTING SKILLS WITH FIRE AND TOOLS.

The group of children share a friendship and this is key. One of the children is the 'planner' and the adult supports her to lead the learning throughout. This works well because the children are comfortable with each other and it is natural for them to work this way, a group of children put together by the adult without a relationship would be very different. As the children use the whittling tool, the adult is careful to correct the skill and support technique. The adult works openly with the children and is not in 'control' instead of dominating the conversation she uses carefully chosen moments to enhance the thinking, and then to scaffold the learning through encouraging the children to listen and respond to each other – instead of relying upon the adults responses. It is evident from the video footage that the children are confident to share their ideas both with the adult and the other

children, this comes from a strong, reciprocal relationship that has been built upon and respected since the child started their journey. There is a distinct link to each part of the process and time is taken to draw the child's attention to the effect they are having upon the materials, and the changes that they have made to natural objects through the elements (fire) and use of tools.

Although there is an end product in this footage, often this will take much longer than a day and is something the child will re-visit over time as their skills increase. The risks involved when using the fire in the setting are supported by knowledgeable and confident practitioners, secure in their own understanding of how to ensure children benefit from experiences like this one. Fire and tools are not feared, but respected and understood.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Sam Kerr, Senior Educator from Boldon Outdoor Nursery says:

"This experience is magical from a practitioner's perspective, as well as the child's. The ability to use nature and the elements to create a mark making tool supports the children to make connections between materials and the world. Throughout each step - from chopping down the willow that has grown in our garden, to watching the colours change as the bark has been stripped back - to then using the fire and a simple processes to change its properties becomes complex and thought provoking.

As the adult I see the whole process through from start to finish, ensuring the group revisit at each stage and look back on the things they have achieved, as well as how nature has impacted their work. Too see how much the children want to write and record their ideas with their own pencil is inspiring!"

The group of children have complete ownership of the process, materials and space – time to see things through is very important.

