

# BENEFIT RISK ASSESSMENT

*Auchlone Nature Kindergarten*

## QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

### Skills and knowledge

Give children the skills to identify the positives of an experience, the hazards or associated risks and the precautions to keep us safe.

### Open, not dominant

Allowing children to discuss and identify their own precautions to stay safe.

### Happy and secure outside

When we know how to stay safe, it reassures us and we become happy and content in our environment.

### Respectful

Encourage children to self risk assess.

## Children undertake Benefit Risk Assessment by answering:

What is good about the experience?

What do we need to be careful of?

How do we stay safe?



## EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage shows two members of staff working with five children aged 4- 6 years old.

They have stopped by the gate and fence created by the children, next to the burn (stream) to undertake a Benefit Risk Assessment.

The practitioner asks each child what they will enjoy about going to the burn. What they may need to be careful of when they

travel to and arrive at the burn. Finally, how they will keep themselves and the others safe when they go to the burn.

Each child shares their ideas. They then approach the burn and use the techniques discussed to get down the slope. They then test the depth and speed the water is travelling before they continue with their activity of a boat race.

See footage Benefit Risk Assessment at <https://youtu.be/ou1DOh6XHU>

### WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

At Mindstretchers we use Benefit Risk Assessment. Risk assessing in the past focused on removal of hazard and was often undertaken by the adult. In Benefit Risk Assessment we aim to reduce risk to as safe level but not remove it entirely.

Maslow in 1943 developed the 'Hierarchy of Needs'. If children have not met their physiological needs (food, water, sleep, clothing) and do not feel safe, they will learn very little, if anything. They will be too concerned about what may happen to them in a new or different environment.

By involving children in Benefit Risk Assessment they are aware of the dangers and how they will stay safe.

**B: "WE HAVE TO CHECK IF IT'S OK."**

**M: "HOW DO WE DO THAT?"**

**F: "WE PUT A STICK IN FIRST... IT WILL TELL US HOW DEEP IT IS".**

This footage shows two staff members working with a group of four to six year old children. They discuss and then physically assess the benefits, hazards and risks of going to the burn (stream) and how we will stay safe (precautions). The practitioner asks the children: "What is it that's good about going to the burn?"

B: "We can sail boats."

F: "We can watch the sea go in different directions."

One of the children tells us we need to check if the water is ok. Another suggests we use a stick to check this and a further child contributes that the stick will show us how deep the burn (stream) is.

D suggests a final benefit is we can also play.

The practitioner then moves onto discuss what we need to be careful of, beyond the depth and asks the children to identify the associated precautions.

"We could fall in... we stay back and lean backwards."

"We don't run... we walk."

"On the slope... Slide down or walk carefully or hold onto the trees."

Finally, the children are reminded why we have stopped at the gate. Don't go through without an adult.

We then go to explore the burn. The children carry the branches. The children try different techniques to get down the bank of the burn.

They then use the stick to test the depth and discuss the speed of the river.



## NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



**Kate Hookham**, Senior Trainer from Auchlone Nature Kindergarten says:

"I have trained adults and children in risk assessment for many years. Often documentation focuses on the negative of 'all the things that can go wrong'. Benefit Risk Assessment focuses on positive language. We discuss what we will learn and experience (these maybe Physical, Intellectual, Linguistic, Emotional and/or Social).

When children take ownership and responsibility for their own safety it reassures and empowers them. It also means an adult is not directing children, but they are self-regulating themselves fully aware of the potential hazards and risks of a situation and how to keep themselves and others safe. Adults are there to reinforce practice but not to dominate. Children often air on the side of caution, especially if they have limited life experience of the situation. Adults are there to balance the risks and benefits to a sensible and manageable level.

I really believe this is why Auchlone (luckily) has minimal incidents as children are managing themselves, with adults supervising supportively. The three questions keep children safe, paperwork does not!"