Otterburn Primary School



Forest School Fire Policy

Location

* Only agreed areas will be used for a campfire
* We use a raised, moveable fire pit currently or the fire circle in the forest
* An adult must be present around the fire at all times when lit

Positioning of Children and Adults

* Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 2 metres from the fire pit.
* When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission. They need to ask, ‘May I enter?’
* When allowed to access the campfire, children must walk around the outside of the seating logs and wait for permission to step over.
* They must sit, ensuring legs are drawn into the log and not outstretched.
* Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
* Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
* Children will be taught the RESPECT position if they are cooking on the fire. This position allows children to move away from danger, quickly.
* Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
* Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.

Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: They are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30. If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided. If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible. Fires will not be lit in strong winds!!!

Safety and Responsibility

Tie back long hair!

Lighting and keeping fires burning

When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square. Kelly kettles are only used on a stone slab and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use. No flammable liquids or plastics are to be used on the fire. If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision. Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.

At the end of the session, the fire must be extinguished with water until all smoke and steam has ceased. The bowl will be filled with water.

These items will be essential whenever a fire is lit:

* WATER! 1 x 10 x litre container and 1 x 20 l container
* Children’s medical information to hand in FS medical bag
* Heat proof gloves
* Fire gloves
* Burns kit
* Scissors
* Fire steel and matches
* Tinder and kindling boxes
* Fire starter box – emergency matches, cotton wool, striker, choc tin with natural ingredients

The FS leader may teach a small group how to build a small fire.

* FS leader should ensure that any large remains of wood are separated from one another.
* At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
* Children will collect tinder (dry grasses, very dry leaves, birch bark from the floor, very fine twigs, pine needles or open pine cones) to make an apple sized tinder bundle. They collect their kindling. FS leader will also have alternative tinder if wet. Small twigs are best as it’s the thickness not the length that counts! They will be separated into piles of different sizes - very fine twigs (a few mm diameter, size of a toothpick), slightly larger twigs (diameter of a pencil), and bigger twigs (approx diameter of adult thumb). 3 different thicknesses of wood (pinky finger, thumb or breakfast, lunch and dinner sticks)
* FS leader will explain that those that make a nice snapping sound when you break them are drier, and good for fire lighting, whereas if they bend, then they’re not very dry and not good for fire lighting. Bone dry wood and small twigs make less smoke, and standing dead wood is better than wood from the ground.
* FS leader will also have fuel: a few larger diameter pieces of dry wood, own supply of charcoal, dry sticks or small split logs. Starting the fire
* A few slightly larger pieces of wood will be put in the base of the firepit to create a dry platform and keep the tinder off the floor.
* Tinder will be lit with a spark from fire striker (fire steel or matches). The finest tinder will then go on, e.g. paper thin bark, pine needles, dry grass, dry (dead) nettles, hay, super thin twigs.
* Someone compared tinder and sizes of kindling as gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in a car. You need to go up all the gears in order. If you skip a gear, you’re in danger of not having enough power and your fire faltering. Gradually add larger sized tinder and kindling. As one piece lights, add another - too much too soon can suffocate the fire of oxygen and put it out. Make waffle with chipwood. Put tinder on top Cotton wool and tepee around it Make fire star around it (if in sunken pit and wet)
* Catch spark on cotton wool or other tinder using fire steel (strike away from body)
* We will explain the purpose of a particular fire. For example, the above method is best for getting a fire started, ‘grid fires’ are good for cooking (a criss cross piece of metal over it, so that pans and kettles can be heated on a flat surface). Long fires are long burning and are good for keeping us warm overnight.
* Fires will be built with the session length in mind and with an aim for them to extinguish naturally by the end of the session.

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