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LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE FOR FOREST SCHOOL LEADERS

PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE

[redacted]

THE HIVE AMAZING OUTDOOR MISSIONS

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LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE FOR FOREST SCHOOL ASSISTANTS
PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT CRITERIA & GUIDANCE

A Little Housekeeping Before Submission

1. Make sure to add your name and submission date on the front cover of your portfolio

2. You need to add the following plagiarism statement to the inside front cover of your portfolio: "I *confirm that this portfolio was written by me and in my own words, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such. I am conscious that the incorporation of material from other works or a paraphrase of such material without acknowledgement will be treated as plagiarism, subject to the custom and usage of the subject, according to the OCNWM Regulations on Conduct of Examinations. The source of any picture, map or other illustration is also indicated, as is the source, published or unpublished, of any material not resulting from my own experimentation, observation or specimen-collecting."*

Reminder of Training Milestones

Stage 1	○ Attend Face-to-face training week		X
Stage 2	○ Practice practical skills ○ Complete Portfolio ○ Assist on and evaluate 3 FS sessions	You have up to 5 months to complete your portfolio after your face-to-face training. You must submit it no later than 6 months from the training week	

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UNIT 1 - SUPPORTING A FS PROGRAMME: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Q1. Describe the Forest School ethos, principles and approach to learning and development

To answer this question, you need to write a short summary describing the 6 Forest School Principles, as well as explaining the Forest School approach to learning and how it supports holistic development.

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In 2011 the Forest School community agreed on the 6 principles that encompass the Forest School ethos. Learning takes place through regular, preferably weekly, sessions in a woodland or natural environment with session planning based on observation and collaboration between learners and qualified practitioners – who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice. The holistic approach builds confidence, resilience and independence. It is a learner-centred approach, whereby children can take supported risks, relative to the individual, situation and surroundings supporting development.

It enables the learner to form a relationship with the natural world through personal experiences by providing a community of learning which may lead to the long term sustainable attitudes and practices of staff, learners and the wider community.

The learning intention is to empower students when faced by the demands of everyday life; this is through considered attitudes to physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The Forest School ethos is founded on the research and theories of many educational psychologists. Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory is amongst these. In this the learner is presented with a task they see as achievable, they are able to focus on this and it has clear goals. Feedback is provided immediately the task is completed. During the task there should be a feeling of freedom from outside worries and frustrations as all the mind's focus is on the task itself – in control of own actions. The sense of self is strengthened on completion of the task.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is reflected in the ethos, where an individual can achieve self actualization – the Forest School methods ensures that all needs are met so that the learner is freed from discomfort or unwanted distractions. The learner is seen as a whole person with needs and the potential for growth.

Vgotsky's social development theory, the Zone of Proximal development, defines the space or difference between what a learner is able to do independently and what they are able to do with support and guidance from a skilled partner or educational practitioner.

Holistic learning is an alternative to traditional teaching styles. Many mainstream schools now follow this philosophy, yet are limited by the constraints of expectations and the school buildings themselves.

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'The philosophy of holistic education emphasises the education of the whole learner and encourages growth and a fulfilment of potential in every aspect of their being. In particular it highlights the social, physical, intellectual, communication, emotional, spiritual aspects of the individual.'
Training Handbook, The Hive, page 40.

The Forest School practitioner and assistants enable the learner by responding and reacting observation and talking with the learner. The learner is not passive or spoon-fed in this transaction. It is transformative and connects students to themselves, others and the environment during the learning process. Forest School is a nurturing experience, in which the child is considered as a whole person, it is shared and enabled by the practitioner and assistants in a safe environment (which is continually assessed for hazards). By following the ethos, principles and approaches to learning, a learning community evolves, where we can all be in flow with each other and our surroundings. These weekly sessions enable a participant to take calculated risks thereby expanding their abilities and their own possibilities.

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Q2. Explain how Forest School experiences can support learning and development

Summarise the key characteristics of play and its role at Forest School

Bob Hughes (1996) has identified up to 16 separate play types from published research literature, suggesting that these appear to be the building blocks for how and why children play. The extent to which children can engage in them deeply influences children in the here and now, as well as who and what they become as adults. These play behaviours have been consistently observed in children across different cultures and over many years, though with differences according to the culture and environment in which children play. (Play England, 2017, from Quality in Play)

By using and exploring a natural environment through play the learner is able to expand their own experience of the world around them and by having an understanding of different types of play and their benefits the practitioner or assistant is able to enhance this. Activities, although led by the will/interest shown by the learner are adapted by the practitioner/assistant to cater to the needs of each individual child.

For example, some children in a group may demonstrate the need/desire for '**deep play'** (Bob Hughes, 1996); those often seen taking chances like climbing or swinging on any object the group may encounter. In the same group there may be other children who are

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reluctant to engage in such play independently or even in an adult led project. Forest school supports all levels of confidence in all types of play-based activities.

Play involves risk taking. By being aware of and taking part in safety assessment the children can feel safe to participate in activities – practicing risk identification identifying and then weighing up the benefits of undertaking a task or participating in play can be carried through into other areas of life. By adopting the hierarchy of needs approach, catering for wellbeing of the individual can encourage the learner to feel confident to go beyond their usual experience and reach self-actualisation. By incorporating Vygotsgy's zone of proximal development, when the learner observes another person (a leader or assistant) safely carry out a task, whilst involving them in discussion about problem solving, they can then carry out the task themselves with any scaffolding necessary. They may also try something out they have designed themselves with scaffolding or independently, promoting personal growth. Playing within groups and teamwork can result in improved communication skills and decision making.

So, returning to my theoretical group of risk takers and those not so keen on this, a session of tree climbing could be planned for – this could incorporate an upright tree or one that has fallen. In pairs the children could discuss how they could approach the journey up and down, this could then be shared with the group and added to by the adult leader through open questions – drawing out what she else she/he needs the children to notice/consider. After the risk assessment has been made by the adults and learners, those who are confident might just need to be observed from a safe distance whereas others might need support in taking small steps towards a success such as balancing on a low fallen branch, with any support needed, and eventually independently - if appropriate for the individual child.

For some children, the risk they take is being part of a group. By providing tasks that engage the children whilst having catered for their individual needs (making them comfortable – no one is left worrying about snack/toilet breaks, everyone is safe – they know we and they are constantly checking this, their clothing is suitable, if they ask for help the response meets their needs), it is hoped that they will be in a state of flow – whereby the sheer joy of being engaged with the activity removes any of their usual concerns about working with others.

It is the intention of Forest School to be socially, physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually character building.

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Explain, giving examples, how play and choice are integrated into Forest School programmes

It is broadly understood that play and choice are integral to learning and personal development. Playing is an exploration, it does not need a goal or an end product. Much of my work in a primary school usually involves teaching music. I know that for children to get the most out of sessions they must be free to explore instruments - I believe this translates comfortably to the Forest School ethos. Learners must be free to investigate possibilities whilst being aware of themselves, others and their surroundings – the support of knowledgeable partners and practitioners enables their progress.

Choice is intrinsic to self-growth - the children are given the opportunity to choose and the practitioner tailors activities around these choices. By observing, listening to and speaking to the children the leader and assistants can then consider the suitability of a particular games etc.

An outdoors environment/woodland setting, gives children the opportunity to play at a distance (within a safe boundary) from adults – presenting them with a sense of freedom they may not previously have experienced.

During a session the responses of the children direct its course. If a session opened with a game such as Sleeping Bear (where attempts are made to steal the animal's food) the children might want/demand to keep on playing that game while the practitioner will have prepared another activity for that session, following the observations of the previous one. Although no plan is set in stone, it is possible to let the children have the games they want and still complete the mud faces, for example. It could be put to the children that they would be playing the game again at the end of the session or before lunch. They could be asked to go and find certain objects needed while the bear counts to 100; practice being silent around an imaginary bear whilst collecting their items. Their choice has been interwoven with the activity.

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The mood of the children can also redirect events – they may just show that they are full of energy and in no frame of mind to undertake focused activities involving sharp tools – well they might be after they have played a game of Forest Fire.

SUPPORTING HANDOUTS
You can find further information on the play principles on pages 27-30 of your trainee handbook (Unit 2 | Handouts 2a, 2b, 2c)

Describe how to develop a community of learning by meeting the needs of all participants, giving examples from your own Forest School experiences

We often learn by watching each other and then practice what we have observed - it's something that all animals do. In a community of learning competent individuals display their skills and then stand back but support where needed, with appropriate questions and encouragement, those making attempts to achieve the same goal. This follows the theory of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.

In this community nothing is fixed, the roles can be transient. When our needs are met we can progress to a position of self-actualisation. Within the Forest School experience this can mean that someone who has experienced a less significant position in the classroom or social hierarchy can become a leader in learning due to their otherwise unnoticed abilities whilst having their basic needs cared for. Whilst taking part in a group, making mini-shelters from twigs and ground debris, one of them (who is usually quite disorganized in the classroom) showed great ability in organising and arranging their shelter and became leader. This won him great admiration from all when we inspected all the shelters. (photo will be added but it is on the school Ipad).

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It can also mean that someone who is unused to asking for assistance needs some support and guidance. During the same activity, a child who is very independent chose items too long or heavy for the structure her group were building, resulting in repeated collapse. The other children went on to show this child where they were gathering items from and demonstrate how they were arranging these – this child then started to work more as a team member and was pleased with her success.

When making magic wands a child was put off the task after discovering a wood louse on a rotting leaf she was using. She then stopped gathering anything; observing this I found her a partner who was glad to inspect any item she pointed to. Happy with this she continued and after some time felt able to collect things herself and, following the example of her partner, picked these up by one corner and carefully inspected them.

Shared outdoor activities are an opportunity for growth as individuals in a community. Part of this is being able to decide, as a group, what you would like to do. The decision to make magic wands came from the children's enjoyment in working with sticks in the first session – they insisted that these be kept for the following week, wanting to do something else with them. As we were working on our own school site, we were able to do this by making a pile.

In the third session we used these again when creating a large forest face as a team of 12; our entire group. The previous sessions led naturally to this – the children were gathering familiar objects and had an idea of where to find them. We would split into smaller teams for this. For example, they were asked to collect something small, that could be held in the palm and retuned with acorns fallen from the oak and the seed pods from the London Plane trees.

Being part of a community also means knowing and following the rules adopted by it. Some children can find this difficult. Some had to be reminded not to run with sticks – I told them the story of the girl who always wears the same top to Forest School, so that she can remind others of how close she came to seriously injuring herself; when it tore after she fell on it whilst running, luckily only grazing herself. I got them to tell others in their groups this story and they all stopped running.

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Q3. Explain the role of Assistant at a Forest School in relation to the Forest School ethos and principles

Describe the role of the Forest School Assistant mapping to the Forest School ethos and principles, and giving examples from your own Forest School experience

The Forest School assistant's role is to take a proactive part in planning and delivering sessions, considering risks and benefits, alongside and with guidance from a level 3 practitioner. They facilitate children in their own exploration of the natural world. They should understand holistic development and how outdoor learning supports this and must possess a range of outdoor practical skills; including the safe use of tools, making items from natural resources, building shelters and campfire use.

During sessions, they are to be guided by the level 3 practitioner. They should ensure that the learners are safe, cared for and supported in their exploration. They should take part in risk and safety assessments before, during and after sessions.

They value children as individual learners and enable them to learn at their own pace, in a space free from the expectations and levels that most pupils know they are measured by in the classroom. They share feedback from the children with other adults and their own observations with other adults – planning for future sessions is the result of this but sessions are flexible; if something isn't working out or the children find something else that has interested them the plans can change (sudden changes in the weather or an interest in some discovery – which may well be gone by the next visit my cause a change in the session).

As I have mentioned already, the children in my group have a fascination with doing things with sticks and floor debris. I had already observed this when watching their whole year group at play times. Whilst scrubbing around for items to use for construction is of benefit to them, in order to expand their experience, we have started to identify the trees, plant and wildlife that exist on our site. In the classroom they are confident in naming and describing some of these to their teacher. We have also been looking at

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tracks made by the foxes, noticed areas that they appear to enjoy resting in and considered the routes they take and why. We have looked for food sources that support other wild life, such as berries and the worm castings. They are considering what they already know about their surroundings; expanding on this and becoming more connected to nature and themselves.

Summarise your experience of assisting with the planning and delivery of 3 consecutive Forest School sessions

Session 1

Theme - Mini shelter building

LO; to safely gather and use natural resources when building mini-shelters

Activities/general order of session

- Understanding and taking part in risk assessments/site check. Ensure that children notice and learn about blackthorn, nettles, check for any loose overhanging branches, rubbish, animal waste, areas that foxes travel through, ant hills, hole in the ground (coned off) and accepted perimeter for them to move around in freely.

- Head to toe check for suitable clothing and no pick, no lick and no kick
- Making and sharing rules we could follow on staying safe while enjoying ourselves
- Playing 123 where are you (to use to help gain attention of group during session)
- Looking at plant life on the site (what is safe to touch?/what could be a hazard?
- Gathering and building mini shelters
- Sharing shelters and observations
- Returning site to original state
- Reflection time

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The children demonstrated a desire to work with floor debris, much of the learning has been led by this. An area on the site was chosen that would support this, with plenty of debris available.

In this first instance we hadn't counted on the arrival of the contactors coming to do some gardening, so we had to change our plans and move to somewhere slightly less suitable. We then performed another risk assessment with the children, which I felt useful anyway as it embedded in them the reasons and need to do this. I had already undertaken one on the first site, as had they on arrival but the need to do this again was made clear to them when we discovered a large hole in the ground. It then poured with rain, and as our equipment (including the tarpaulins) is still on order, much of the session was took place underneath the canopy provided by the plane trees. We had taken some of our sticks with us as I knew there were less in this area.

Before having to move, we had already made our site and clothing checks, played 1,2,3 where are you and begun gathering items for our mini shelters. We had also had a look at one of the Blackthorn trees and identified the spikes as a potential hazard – I told the children that this is said to be what the crown of thorns Jesus wore was made from, being a Church of England school they were very interested in this and have remembered it well; they demonstrated that they could recognise all of these, even those that had no berries. The children were quite enthused by the change of direction and took this in their stride. They went on to create wonderful mini shelters, propped up against the trees and enjoyed looking at those of others at the end of the session. The session was cut short by the weather and our lack of shelter. They agreed why the site should be cleared to leave it as we found it but wanted a pile of sticks left for future use, given that it is our own site we found a suitable place for this – taking them back to the original site after the gardeners had left.

We had a few moments of feedback (due to the very wet and windy weather). The group were very excited by the whole thing – they were looking forward to the arrival of the equipment but agreed that they were very happy working with what they had for the time being. (A photo of a shelter from this session appears on the last page).

Session 2
Theme – Magic wands
LO; The safe use of sticks and creating a positive spell (incantation)

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Activities/general order of session

- Safety assessment and clothing check (no pick, no lick and no kick and otherwise same as first session)
- Playing 1,2,3 where are you
- Re-cap of the rules made by the group
- Considerations when choosing suitable sticks (length, condition and how to carry these) and other materials (including reminder of the blackthorn!)
- Gathering resources and making wands (Ant trail game to get them started)
- Creating and sharing incantations for re-wilding our school site
- Site check
- Sharing thoughts, ideas on what they would like to do next and observations

Planning for the second session was informed by observation of the children and knowing that the gardeners would not be returning to the area with most debris, including some long hay-like grass that could be used to tie objects to sticks – although short lengths of string were available if needed. As some of the children were using sticks as wands, when they shouldn't have been running around, making magic wands was agreed upon by the children when suggested at the end of the previous session.
Most of the children remembered the need for a safety check – they enjoyed checking the canopy for potential falling branches – and the reasons why then need to wear long trousers and sleeves. They were then keen to play 1,2,3 where are you followed by a game of Ant trail – from this all the children would already have one item for their wands.

Given that we are doing this during the covid outbreak, the head teacher has chosen a small group from the year group I am in a bubble with to take part. Each of these has individual needs. Some need to strengthen their hands and build dexterity, others need to work more independently or become a team player, whilst some will just benefit from the freedom. All will benefit from the Forest School experience and connection to nature with those they may not usually choose to play with.

As expected, some of the children found attaching items to their sticks difficult but they had been put in pairs with a child who could guide and help them – by this they were also protected from the harsh reality of comparing what they could produce alone with the results of other individuals. Those children had already been identified and are working with me in school on exercises that support using their hands. This also inspired me to gain permission from the teachers in this year group for a length or para cord to be kept

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in all children's personal packs (we have these due to covid) so that all can share in this. We will be tying them to pencils.

The group enjoyed the session, in our feedback most said they couldn't wait for next time; the few who don't say much nodded.

Session 3

LO; To collaborate in a piece of natural art.

Activities/general order of session

- Safety assessment and site checks/rules to keep us safe (potential falling branches, hazards from plant life -blackthorn, nettles, uneven surfaces, muddy areas, any debris from animals and litter – children to recall what they remember)
- 1,2,3 where are you?
- How is our natural world feeling today? – In threes for discussions then sharing with group.
- Ant trail to begin gathering, then in groups
- Placing the objects in different categories (shapes, size and texture)
- Making our forest face
- Whole group discussion on how the face felt/making any adjustments suggested
- Site check (adult to return and clear)
- Feedback time and discussion for future session
- Sleeping bear game

Using what is available to us, as our equipment is on order, and being informed by observations and discussions with the children it was decided that we should collaborate as a group to create a forest face. As planned and anticipated by the group, we checked clothing and area and played a game of 1,2,3 where are you.

Following an ant trail, the children were then sent out, in groups of three (already chosen for their mixed abilities and needs) to gather from the ground. They followed instructions such as 'find something for the hair' or 'find something that fits in the palm of your hand for eyes or making up the mouth'. We arranged these next to the area we were going to make the face on.

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Together we then made the face (photo on school ipad and to be added), we had to do this slowly due to social distancing, with a child on either side adding something at one time.

We then discussed how this could be improved and did this as best we could. The children were happy with the outcome. We decided that the forest face was happy that it was autumn as he needed a rest; children made the smile bigger and the eyes sleepier. The subject of Covid was brought up by some of the children, one child said that she was happy that the plants didn't get ill; another mentioned that it was better for everyone to be outside.

I took photos of the face and we left it where it was, I went back afterwards and put the items back approximately where they had come from, as the children may have been upset on seeing their work dismantled. We did a site check, the children considered that the face posed no threat to the environment or creatures and then had a short game of sleeping bear, and our end of session feedback, before going back into class. (A photo of the face appears on the last page of portfolio).

Summarise your experience of assisting with the evaluation of the 3 consecutive Forest School sessions, showing how observations and evaluations inform future session plans

I listened to and made notes from the many 'next time I/we could' or 'wouldn't it be good if we could..' and even noticing that someone didn't enjoy it so much because they didn't like getting their hands grubby (which may have something to do with all of our

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circumstances at the moment). All of which could be and were incorporated into the sessions that followed.

The children knew that our equipment wouldn't be arriving for some weeks, therefore they planned around this. I observed that the children were becoming familiar and more ambitious with the objects they had gathered. Their comments dictated the events – such as the desire to save the sticks and use them next time. We made a pile of sticks and I let the gardeners know that they were to be left. The grubby hands comment told me to bring gloves the next session but the child chose not to use them after we discussed why we wash our hands before and after, and why we do not touch our faces.

The initial use of sticks for shelter building was suggested to me by watching the children making nests and artwork with them during playtimes. Wand making and spell casting came about after children did this independently during the first session. After working in pairs and groups it was agreed by that a collaborative piece of art would suit the group – something to bring them together.

Observing each session also informed me on who to pair up in groups – I changed the groups sometimes during a session as some groups lacked someone prepared to make decisions and they became inactive – I identified groups where children were most capable and suggested that they might want to share their expertise. For example, during the shelter building one group had their own ideas and had built three nice shelters, very quickly, around the base of a tree – after bringing everyone together this group were shared as design advisors with the other groups.

During the wand making one pair didn't gel very well together. One child had finished their wand and paid little, if any, attention to their floundering partner. I brought them together to discuss how the successful wand had been produced, after this they both created a wand for the second child.

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Use your observations of one participant over 3 consecutive sessions to assess the impact of Forest School on their learning and development

I have been really impressed by the way that my group have taken on-board the rules and routines of safety checks and standing still when asked to do a 'ninja' pose or 1,2,3 where are you – much more willingly than some of these do on a day to day basis in school.

One child in particular has really stood out. He is often late for school or absent, through no fault of his own and presents as tired or sometimes disinterested in class. This child flourished from the first session – after building his own mini-shelter he was then busy organising the arrangement of the mini shelter and becoming a natural leader in a group effort. Despite being a bit of an alpha male in the playground he isn't used to success in group tasks - I could see that he was very pleased with this. I don't think he seeks the approval of others but just took this in as a personal land mark. He has become increasingly willing to share his sensibility to wildlife and his expertise. When considering pairs for the second session, it was agreed to place this child with one who would need support.

After the first session he held his hand up in class the following day and named the Blackthorn tree recalling association with the crown of thorns, that we had learnt about (he is usually reluctant to do this)- he has since enjoyed making others aware of these during other sessions. He has repeatedly asked if we are having Forest School again and also has attended school, and punctually on those days – this leads me to believe that he may have spoken about it at home.

During the face making task he was very happy to take a back step and collaborate, after silently trying to take control of the piece to begin with. This was without asking him to do so.

Over the weeks, since taking part in Forest School, his attitude to other learning has already improved in such a short time. Always someone who is careful with his hand writing, even though this is difficult as absences have resulted in a delay of this, and reading, he is now paying more attention to how his work is laid out on the page.

It is interesting to see how 3 sessions have already had an impact on this child. I have great hopes for the effect a year of this will have on him. I have shown him some of the illustrations in the 'Play the forest School Way' and hope to impact on his reading skills and Forest School learning through this. He is showing a great interest in this and I hope the personal skills and further appreciation and understanding of the natural world, and our connection to this, he gains through his experience of Forest School will have a lasting impact on his life.

Name of Child ***(confidential)***

Child observation Form		Score 0 – 5 (0 being lowest 5 being highest)		
Area of Development	Skills	Before Week 1	Week 3	Week 6
Self-esteem and confidence	Happy to take risks	2	3	

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	Able to speak up for themselves	2	3	
	Wanting to try something new	3	4	
	Aware of own needs	3	4	
	Able to lead group in tasks	2	3	
	Able to work in a team	2	3	
	Able to wait and take turns Able to form relationships	3 3	4 4	
	Contribution to group discussions	2		
	Total	22	28	

Child Observation Form		Score 0-5 (0 being lowest 5 being highest)		
Area of development	Skills	Before Week 1	Week 3	Week 6
Language and Communication	Able to share ideas with a friend	2	3	
	Able to take turns to speak	3	3	
	Listening to instructions	3	3	
	Holding eye contact	3	3	
	Responding to stories, songs and poems	2	3	
Motivation and Concentration	Excited and interested in activities	2	4	
	Able to take time to perfect a task	2	3	
	Maintaining attention	2	3	
	Asking questions during a task	2	3	

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	Total	21	28	
Physical	Able to move around on uneven ground	3	4	
	Has physical stamina	3	3	
	Has spatial awareness	3	3	
	Aware of physical space of self and others	3	4	
	Able to climb up onto trees and grip branches	N/A so far		
	Total	12	14	
	Overall total of all areas	55	70	

Summary of abilities/ strengths/areas for development		

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Before week 1	Week 3	Week 6
• Physically able but appears tired • Likes to work alone – would benefit from sharing ideas • Shows some organisational skills which could be developed by adding knowledge • Enjoys end product – develop understanding of keeping site in its natural state	• Alert from start of session • Working well in pair • Shows great interest in tasks/games • Getting him to demonstrate and share skills with whole group when using tools would enhance his sense of self and abilities	

Q4. Reflect on your own Forest School training

To answer this question, you need to summarise your development and the learning you gained whilst training to be a Forest School Assistant

I was very fortunate when my school offered me the opportunity to train as a Forest School Assistant. It is something I have had my eye on for a long time, after experiencing years of visits to Suntrap in Epping Forest and the Epping Forest Field Centre with the pupils. That this has taken place during the Covid outbreak has made it difficult in many ways but this event has made me appreciate living and working in a school so close to the forest even more than ever – and enhanced my desire to share the personal growth that

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is experienced by exploration of and forming a greater connection with the natural world around us with the children.

While so much was restricted, I found pleasure in the reading matter and felt able to make some progress with this, despite not actually being able to do anything practical with the children. With so many disappointments this year I was so grateful for the Zoom tutorials which very enjoyable and informative, the tasks and homework flowed and tied in well with these. I was lucky be working with my colleague Julie, so we could bounce ideas off each other and make notes for what we could do on our school sites and locally.

During this phase the theories and ethos of Forest School as a holistic experience, which I had read about became more of a reality through our discussions. As did the more practical side, involving, to name but a few: site safety assessments, clothing checks, the safe use of tools, identification of plants and trees and learning a repertoire of knots – mine, I have to say, were pretty ropey to begin with; I was even to be seen busily tying knots on the bus and underground on the way to the practical sessions.

It was delightful to actually meet everyone, when we all gathered at the Hive the bond we had already formed as a virtual group was surprisingly apparent – we were fast becoming our own community of learners. I was very proud to be part of the blushing blue-tit group!

Having a walk around the Hive was very useful – I planted a small meadow at school last year but now have plenty more ideas about rewilding some of our school grounds. One thing I saw, and have already agreed with my head, is building a dead hedge with the pupils.

Checking our clothing, toilet visits and then collecting all the necessary equipment was our morning routine before making our way to the site. This was followed by the site safety assessment and an enjoyable game of '1,2,3 where are you?'. Other games magic balls and one I really enjoyed but the name of it is lost to me…the leader is an owl and the learners are its potential prey, hiding (the leader can take a sneaky peak through their fingers to keep a safe eye on the children when hiding within the boundary). We all made great progress in shelter building – Jeremey in our team happened to be a bit of an expert but we all played our own part; making decisions and tying knots. I am very pleased that I can now tie a taught-line hitch that actually slides when I want it to.

I thoroughly enjoyed, and feel competent, in using the tools – such as the billhook and mallet when making our own mallets or chopping wood for the fire. I had two goes at setting up, lighting and making tea with the storm kettle and am looking forward to doing this at school. Making natural dyes and producing our Hapa zome framed forest art exhibition was also great fun and something else to look forward to sharing with the children at school.

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I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of our practical days – I was sad when it was over. Gemma was a fantastic tutor/leader.

LEVEL 2 PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE
UNIT 2 - SUPPORTING A FOREST SCHOOL PROGRAMME: PRACTICAL SKILLS

Q1. Define and compare the structure and biodiversity of native broadleaf and coniferous woodland ecosystems.

To answer the question, you need to describe the vertical and horizontal ecological structure of ***British broadleaf woodlands.***

Vertical layers	
Below ground	Roots of plants, soil, stones, and sometimes clay exists here. Some animals have areas below ground that are part of their habitat. The badger's setts, rabbit warren and foxes earth are amongst these. There may also be underground springs or streams, providing water to the forest. Beneath every woodland there exists a network of fungi, delivering nutrients and information to the roots of trees and plants. These fungi and bacteria form a type of 'internet' connecting the plants in a woodland. They can also poison unwanted plants by spreading toxins to them.

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Ground	The ground layer consists mainly of the decomposing plant matter from previous seasons, creating the humus, that eventually becomes soil due the support of micro-organisms converting this debris into minerals that can be absorbed by the living plants and trees. It may also be made from mosses lichen and fungi. Many small creatures can often be found here under rotting leaves and dead wood, as this debris provides nesting material and habitats for them. Worms, slugs, crustaceans such as woodlice, harvestmen, spiders and forest bugs amongst others, and toads all do their jobs in refining the debris and providing food for larger creatures in the food chain, such as fallow deer, foxes, hedgehogs and birds who also have their jobs to do by grazing and spreading seeds in their droppings. In the autumn many creatures, including badgers, will seek out the fallen beech nuts or masts, and other fallen seeds. Due to variation of light, caused by the seasonal changes in the canopy, things change throughout the year on the ground in a broadleaf woodland. The plant life here varies throughout the seasons. The variety/quantity of plants depends on the type of tree; the ground beneath a mature Beech tree will often become a bare ring, due to the density of the leaves. An Ash tree, with its fine and divided compound leaves, allows light through to woodland floor thereby giving room for other life.
Field	Sunlight is needed for plants to grow and thrive. These areas may have formed naturally or be firebreaks in a managed forest or woodland. This layer may consist of many different types of grasses, ferns, nettles, yarrow, brambles and other flowering plants like bluebells and primroses. Snails, spiders, crickets, grasshoppers and many varieties of birds make this part of their habitats, alongside the mammals. Greater diversity of plant life can be promoted by grazing animals. These areas are usually bare of plant life during the winter months and may become boggy.
Shrub	Prunus spinosa, often called the Sloe bush, blackberries and mistletoe may form part of a deciduous shrub layer. Hazel, ash

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	and holly can also be found here, as can honeysuckle (which is great for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds) or woodbine; to name but a few. Many of the plants and berries found here are edible to the knowledgeable human forager or animals. Throughout the seasons, these plants provide for wildlife. In the spring the nectar-rich blossom, and then in summer the flowers attract birds and insects. In the winter, their berries and nuts are an important supply of food for many creatures. These also give shelter and places for nesting.
Understorey	Young trees and saplings are able to grow with the light permitted seasonally and through coppicing. This will vary depending on the type of tree forming the canopy, as those with less dense leaves allow for more light below. The tree trunks are home to moss and lichen. Oak woodlands can host up to 80 different types of moss and 324 of lichen – these can be inhabited by invertebrates, providing food for others and birds. They are also harvested as nesting material.
Canopy	Broadleaf woodlands are mostly deciduous therefore the canopy, consisting of the oldest and tallest trees, is bare of leaves in the winter as most of the trees will lose theirs in the autumn, as they produce abscisic acid to encourage them to shed. They also slow their growth, becoming dormant – they appear to be sleeping. During this time, they protect their cells from the cold by moving water to outside their cells into tiny spaces, to prevent the living cells from freezing. When this happens a surge of energy takes place within the cells, where sugars, fats and proteins can build up. In the spring, as the days become warmer and longer, the trees are encouraged to grow. As water and nutrients from the soil travel up the tree from the roots the water mixes with simple sugars and photosynthesis begins becoming sap. Buds produced in the summer and autumn begin to open. The trees us chlorophyll, carbon dioxide, sunlight and water to create food. When the leaves emerge, the summer canopy will darken with their density. The trees spread pollen using wind, animals or floating seeds to allow themselves to reproduce. Cherry trees produce blossom, attracting bees, wasps and other pollenating

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	insects, and then fruit that is eaten in early summer, spreading their seeds via animal droppings and wind fall; whereas trees such as the oak and horse chestnut drop their seeds, in the form of acorns and conkers, in the autumn. The seeds formed here come in a large variety of shapes and types, from acorns to berries. The canopy provides nesting areas for birds and food for them, often in the form of caterpillars. The oldest trees often carry the rarest inhabitants. Amongst the most common broadleaf trees are Oak, Beech, Birch, Ash, European Hornbeam and Willow.

Horizontal layers	
Rides	The rides are tracks around the woodland, these may be intentionally created by the woodland management or by the frequent use of animals or people.
Banks	These can either be long mounds of earth or the land alongside a stream or river. Alder and Willow trees favour these areas, when next to water.
Hedges	A boundary formed by bushes and shrubs. These are places where food and habitats may be found by many creatures. They are mini ecosystems
Edges	This is the transition area from trees to more open spaces such as fields. These areas support many different plants and creatures, ones that we are more likely to see in other places – such as pigeons and magpies. Plants such as Monkshood, with its beautiful purple, blue, pink, yellow or white flowers – with one of the petals forming a hood – may be found here. This plant forms erect finger like seed pods. It can be poisonous to the touch but this isn't usually fatal. Ragwort, toxic to humans and animals alike, is also to be found here – as are foxgloves (tall spikes of tubular purple flowers) and hemlock (can grow up to

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	2m tall, with purple blotched stems and clusters of small white flowers – smelling of mouse urine) is often confused with cow-parsley. There are other plants here that are good to eat – if you are certain of them. Nettles, and hedge garlic -this plants leaf shape can be confusing as it changes shape from having broad heart shaped leaves in the first year, to arrow headed ones, with serrated leaves in its second year. The hedge garlic sprouts tiny white petalled flowers at the top of its flower spike.
Glades & water	Glades are grassy meadows and the water may be in the form of streams, small springs, ponds or lakes. Throughout the seasons many different plants and species benefit and thrive in and from both. Sunlight, space and water support life and growth.
Aspect & topography	The broadleaf woodland consists of the layers, previously described, and is foremost an area of deciduous trees mainly native to the United Kingdom. They may be mixed deciduous – consisting of oak, beech, birch, willow, ash, horse chestnut or/and sycamore. Ancient woodlands have been woodlands since 1600 and are often homes to wild daffodils and wood anemone, which are rarely found anywhere else. These woodlands have often been coppiced so there are few trees of any great height but many of great age. Such woodlands prevent flooding, as the trees soak up water from heavy rainfall. They develop in countries with warm summers and cold winters. The trees that grow here have broad flat leaves, as opposed to those with needles – their immense autumn leaf fall provides fertile material for the forest floor and create fertile brown soil, with the help of worms. These woodlands are often managed by conservationists and ecologists, in order to thrive – unmanaged, some plant life would possibly take over or deer, without their natural predators, such as wolfs, would wreak devastation by their sheer numbers and appetites. They support a diversity of birds, mammals and

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	insects; thriving in the habitats, and on flora and fauna, to be found here.

To answer the question, you need to describe the vertical and horizontal ecological structure of ***British coniferous woodlands.***

Vertical layers	
Below ground	Roots and soil. Burrowing animals, such as rabbits and badgers, may live here in drier areas but as coniferous woodlands do not suck up as much water, they make this there habitat less frequently.
Ground	The debris from the trees creates a rust coloured ground, the needles rot quickly and suppress weed growth, they do not provide places to hide, which is inhospitable to many creatures. As these trees are mostly evergreen, the larch being one of the few to shed its needles, the ground does not have much damp rotting debris to support lower level insect life. There is also less dead wood on the ground to support life eg; fungi, toads and invertebrates; as these trees are very often a crop, they are harvested. The seasonal variation of plant growth provides food all year round. When other plants have gone to sleep or disappeared in the autumn the ivy flowers.
Field	Firebreaks and management often create room for other wildlife in clearings, although in the winter this is scant. Smooth snakes and sand lizards may be found here. These may consist or areas covered with bracken or heather. The plants found here tend to have a shorter life span than those found deeper in the woodland – grazing animals promote the diversity of plant life found here by giving light to smaller plants when they eat the longer grass and by spreading seeds in their droppings.

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	If the trees are permitted to grow very tall, the field area may produce a greater diversity of other life, due to the increased amount of light available, throughout all seasons.
Shrub	Rhododendrons (now often removed in managed forests as not a native species and pose a threat), azaleas, juniper bushes and witch alders may be found here. Honeysuckle can be both deciduous or evergreen. The plants found here are a food source to insects and birds.
Understorey	This is less diverse than that of a broadleaf woodland as there is little light. Plants that grow here are shade tolerant, such as the toxic monkshood, daisy-like anemone with splendid white petals surrounding a yellow but these bulbed plants dislike deep shade so may not appear everywhere in an understorey. Grouse, long-eared owls, bats and red and roe deer may be found in such woodland.
Canopy	The cone shape enables snow to fall from the coniferous tree, which is usually found in colder climates, rather than causing branches to break under its weight. The canopy is dark, dense and inhospitable to many creatures however, many beetles and moths live here. Goshawks, siskins, great crested tits and osprey nest in tall pines. The sparrow hawk prefers to nest in conifers and feeds on the smaller birds. The firecrest, common crossbill and tree pippet may also be found in coniferous woodland. Where the canopy is thinned by the height of mature trees or felling there is more opportunity for diversity of other species. The bark of the coniferous tree in thick and they have resin in their sap – this can create a blistered appearance on the trunk of trees such as the Douglas or Grand Fir. The seeds from a coniferous tree are cone shaped, within these male pollen and female seeds are produced.

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Horizontal layers	
Rides	Tracks made between the trees by forest or woodland management or by humans or animals frequently following a path. They may provide links between areas of natural vegetation.
Banks	Long mounds of earth may be naturally formed ledges, on a slope or by streams. They can be man-made, in order to deter traffic (horse/human or bike) or as part of fire breaks. Stream banks are often kept clear of conifers by woodland management, to reduce the effects of acid rain and to promote the growth of a greater biodiversity, of flora and other life, in the woodland.
Hedges	Hedges filter pollution. Those growing around and within a coniferous woodland could consist of Cedar, Cypress, Laylandii or Yew. These are efficient in soaking up traffic fumes.
Edges	The edges present the opportunity for growth of plants that cannot survive in the woodland itself. With management this is enhanced. The plants which grow here are will probably be younger or appear seasonally, such as daffodils and ragwort.
Glades & water	Open spaces within a coniferous woodland can provide a space for creatures and plant life that are unable to flourish within the woodland itself.
Aspect & topography	Coniferous woodlands are often planted for trees to be used for timber, in bogs or the poorer soils of heathland, and the trees are sometimes arranged in avenues. They are needle bearing (the waxy needles prevent water loss) or have scale-like leaves, mostly Scots Pine, juniper and yew and do not shed seasonally. Such woodlands are instantly recognisable, even from a great distance, as the trees grow up instead of out.

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	These woodlands are not hospitable to the nesting of many species of birds and the constant shading, the rusty ground below and the debris from the trees means this not a suitable habitat for many creatures. However, within cleared areas, such as rides and fields, some plants and creatures do thrive here or alongside them. Larch, Scots Pine and Spruce have been reintroduced to managed coniferous woodlands in the UK as they create greater biodiversity.

SUPPORTING HANDOUTS
You can find more information about the woodland environment on pages 120, 131-133 of your trainee handbook (Unit 5 | Handouts 1 & 3)

Q2. Identify 10 woodland flora and fauna for your own site, detailing the characteristics for each species

To answer this question, you need to produce detailed identifying traits for 24 species across a range of flora and fauna, to include:

Trees (2)

Tree name	Description
Blackthorn	Also known as Sloe. Spiny shrubby tree with small narrow leaves - white blossom in spring and dark purple berries. Associated with the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. Caterpillars, moths and butterflies enjoy the blackthorn, as do the magpie and other birds.
Oak	Deciduous shrub or tree may live for 1,000 years. Produces acorns that fall in autumn. Round-lobed leaves with short leaf stalks (petioles). Throughout history the oak has been associated with strength and appears on many badges. It has been used in the form of oak beams in Tudor buildings. Mistletoe, which is present around our trees, is said to have been placed there by bolts of lightning. The bark has been used to make a dark dye.

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	In the autumn, deer, squirrels and badgers enjoy the acorns. The oak also provides food for moths and purple hairstreak butterflies.

Plants (2)

Plant name	Description
Common daisy	Wild flower. A small rosette of white flowers surrounds a bright yellow centre. Not usually more than 10cm tall, prefer to grow on fields and lawns. The outer tips of petals appear a reddish pink, when young. Most prolific in May, can survive well into the autumn. They hold nectar, food for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Used for making daisy chains.
Dandelion	A small plant that grows close to the ground. The green stem produces a milky white fluid when broken. Its yellow head turns to a fluffy white, which we sometimes blow – spreading its seeds - windborne. Good source of nectar and pollen for insects. May be used in salads or roots used to make coffee (my favourite alternative tipple; tastes something like bitter cocoa). Also used as herbal medicine. Guinea pigs love them!

Insects (2)

Insect name	Description
Ladybird	A flying beetle that is usually red with black dots. Helps gardeners by eating pests; adults feed on aphids and other small insects. Their bright colour tells predators that they have a bitter taste, warning them off. They can also release a pungent fluid. They hibernate during the winter, in debris, cracks and crevices. In the spring they re-emerge to find mates. The female lays eggs which hatch, depending on the temperature, after around four days. Farmers believe that seeing ladybirds in the spring is a sign of a good harvest to follow.
Dragonfly	Often found near water. Long body, with two sets of blue/transparent wings – hind wings broadest - and large multifaceted eyes. Their name comes from their scary jaws, which are used to catch prey. Have to be warm to fly – wing-whirring and soaking up sun before doing so. Rest with wings horizontally – as opposed to the vertical holding of wings together (unless very small) that can be observed in the damson fly. In folklore, it is recommended that you make a wish when you see one. Their presence is a sign to fishermen of the presence of abundant waters.

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Mammals (2)

Mammal name	Description
Fox	A wild member of the dog family, sometimes little bigger than a cat – native to Britain. Red-brown coloured. Their homes are called earths or dens. They are omnivorous, eating rats, spiders, worms, fruit and berries and even a jam sandwich. Shy; do not approach – will probably run away but still best not to! They have 42 very sharp teeth. They rest at the top of our woodland food chain, as they have no natural predator (except us, sometimes). A fox can live up to 14 years in captivity, but due to their harsh living conditions in the wild, most only reach 3 or 5. In folklore they are considered cunning and may even possess magical powers.
Hedgehog	Small mammal with coarse-haired cone-shaped face. Short legged and round body, covered with light brown porcupine-like spikes with creamy-yellow tips. Diet includes slugs, earthworms, nestlings, carrion (dead stuff…). Remember to tell your adults not to use slug pellets (unless non-toxic) as these ancient creatures, and many others, will eat the slugs for them, and are poisoned if they eat the slugs that have consumed pellets. They are mainly nocturnal and have poor eye-sight but well-developed senses of smell and hearing; if you are very lucky, you might hear one snuffling around in a hedgerow, and crunching on a slug or two, in the evening. Hedgehogs hibernate during the winter months in hedgerows – in the summer their time is mostly spent hiding in piles of leaf, moss and other debris. Species sadly threatened by loss of hedgerow. National rewilding efforts should be good for them! They live from 2 to 5 years.

Birds (2)

Bird name	Description
Woodpigeon	Large, grey and dumpy looking with a white cuff around each side of collar. They make a deep coo-coo-coo call. Found in fields, woods, and towns and cities, in gardens and green spaces. Their crop (thin-walled pouch between the oesophagus and stomach) can carry up to 15 acorns! Their diet also includes worms, seeds flower buds and berries – they also feast on invertebrates, such as; beetles, slugs, worms, spiders and snails. They build nests about two metres above the ground from twigs, lining them with leaves and grass – reusing and adding to these. They may live for three years but longest recorded life span was 17.
Blackbird	Blackbirds are part of the thrush family and most live for an average of 3 years but the oldest know wild blackbird lived to 21 years! The males are

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	black with a yellow beak. Females are sooty-brown with a paler throat and a dark yellow beak. Most staying here all year, with a few heading off to southern Europe and some migrating from Scandinavia and Northern Europe (these have duller bills). Male birds establish a territory for nesting and forming pairs, although they feed from a wider area on a diet of invertebrates, berries and seeds. They defend these areas from other blackbirds. Their predators are foxes, cats, sparrowhawks and suffer from the effects of pesticides used by us! Their nests are the classic cup shape, made from small twigs, grass and other natural materials, forming these in hedges and bushes, out buildings and sheds – sometimes even on the ground.

Q3. Describe how you would manage the ecological impact of running a Forest School programme on your own site

To answer this question, you need to describe the impact that running regular Forest School sessions would have on your site and the measures that could be put in place to minimise and remedy this impact.

We are very fortunate to have extensive playing fields and a pond area at the junior site in our school. We also have Epping Forest within 15 or so minutes walking distance. For our own site we have permission to use this but when visiting Epping Forest, the Corporation of London will be informed before each visit.

On our own site we will avoid following the same route to our pond, for example; so as not to create a muddy track.

We will educate children to understand that on our site and in the forest, we are sharing a space that is the habitat to many creatures and to know how to treat this responsibly. The broadest message is to leave no trace that we have visited a site and instilling in them the 'no lick, no pick, no kick rule'. For example, not kicking up leaves as insects and plants may be hidden beneath them. On our own site we will create designated wildlife areas, such as bug hotels and a dead hedge.

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The children will learn to lift and replace logs gently where they have fallen, after looking beneath them so as not to have a negative effect on the habitats these provide. Each time we visit a site we will monitor it for changes due to our use and take account of these – this could be through reminding children to leave the area just as it was when they first arrive or by avoiding that area until nature has recovered. In all instances, the children would be involved in assessing the sites for these factors.

I was blessed to spot a pallet in a front garden, just as the home owner came out (I felt in flow with the universe…). I carried it back to school and the site manager told me that he would ask a neighbour – having some building work done – for more. We now have 6! The children are very excited about building their bug hotel at the junior site; the infants already have one that they know of. I have more redundant materials coming from a neighbour near home, who is a builder. We are now considering where best to situate this, how to level off the land and the correct weather conditions for successful construction!

We will make use of existing beds and create other raised ones, for planting seasonal produce and flora to attract insects. The local allotment group have already offered to share seeds with us, such as poppies and sunflowers. We will be using manure from nearby stables to enable us to create compost; also using food waste from the school kitchen.

We are lucky to have a large site, and the forest to use, after Covid calms down. On our own site we should have enough areas to visit so that we don't constantly tread over the same ground or disturb the same areas on a too regular basis. We are also very fortunate to have our pond, in a highly fenced off and padlocked gated area, which is very rarely used at present – I have ordered nets for observation purposes. It was probably built into the original Swedish open-plan learning space of the school in the 1970's. This is already maintained by the parents' association seasonally – the children will be more involved with this in the future - and is already a haven for invertebrates.

As I have already mentioned, not returning to the same area frequently is at the forefront of our long-term planning; we were a bit restricted with this at the beginning but not enough to leave a trace.

We do have some rough edges and hedges and meadow areas but to counter-act our increasing presence, in the school outdoor space not usually frequented, our rewilding project should add something above any damage caused by our presence.

Our school has friends and contacts within the local allotments and local horticultural society. I am making a provisional date (the present Covid situation permitting) for them to come to meet the children and share ideas on the protection/improving for our Forest School needs/ rewilding of some parts of the site.

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SUPPORTING HANDOUT
You can find an Ecological Impact Assessment template on pages 59-62 of your trainee handbook (Unit 3 | Handout 3)

Q4. Summarise the role of risk assessment at Forest School

To answer this question, you need to define the terms 'hazard' and 'risk' with reference to Forest School and explain what a risk assessment is

Risk assessment at Forest School incorporates two different assessments. The first is a pre-session dynamic risk assessment, completed on arrival at the site – this may be completed by assistants with a check list, reporting back to the leader. This is to Check for hazards eg; glass, rubbish and any wildlife threats to safety, such as wasp nests, fox faeces, dead animals etc. This could also be dead wood, hanging from the canopy.

Hazards should be identified and removed or measures taken to avoid them. Those who may be harmed by these should be identified. Responsibility for other eventualities should be taken care of by designated adults eg; head counts, care and location of equipment, providing welfare facilities, contact details, insurance.

The second is an ongoing dynamic risk assessment, which continues throughout the session. This may include instructions/precautions that the tutor may need to remind participants of. The assessments may be shared with some of the participating learners, who would then be able to identify hazards. Continued attention to the welfare of the individual needs of children.

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'Forest School leader actively shares their value judgement about risk and reasoning with other stakeholders. ● Risk assessment and risk benefit processes are in place and implemented' – *from The Hive handbook*

Learning is expanded by children being able to assess hazards and then take calculated risks. There is a risk in using tools, such as pruning or lopping shears. They should learn that tools are sharp, how to use and carry them without them being of danger to themselves or others. They may then take a calculated risk by using them – is the outcome worth the risk? Hopefully, more often than not, yes.

'Clear & appropriate processes in place for higher risk activities (such as tree climbing, wild food foraging, using tools or fire etc). These processes are shared with learners so that they understand the protocols.' - *from The Hive handbook*.

Q5. Describe the risk assessment process for a Forest School site

To answer this question, you need to carry out a site risk assessment and a risk- benefit assessment related to ONE activity at Forest School

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Before every Forest School session, a risk assessment must be undertaken by an adult and then by the adults and children taking part. A continual risk assessment is ongoing during the session. During of these the site is checked for any threats to safety, such as dangerous litter (broken glass or other human debris), dead animals and faeces, holes or stumps, hanging dead branches and anyone or animals entering the site. Personal welfare is assessed by suitable clothing checks and any individual health requirements being provided for such as asthma pumps or epi pens – first aid kit. Contact details of parents etc should also be available and a charged mobile phone. Boundaries will be chosen and head counts taken frequently throughout the session.

For our first session a risk assessment was taken of the proposed site, the trees were fine – no hanging branches that posed a threat and the ground was clear apart from a few things the foxes must have taken and then dropped, as this is on the school premises. We planned for the children to select sticks and small debris to create mini shelters. The site is kept quite clear by frequent visits from out-sourced gardeners but one area is left quite wild, so a spot around this was chosen. There was plenty of debris here, the main risk discovered was the amount of Blackthorn in this area – the children were to be told the story of Jesus' crown thorns and to avoid these. There were also some live nettles and blackberry bushes – both posing hazards. They were also to be asked if they knew what the mounds were – ant hills.

Once these potential hazards had been recognised, by the children, they would be able to move about the area freely, gathering their objects; whilst being observed by adults.

As we were making mini shelters, the children needed to gather sticks. They would be instructed and then have to demonstrate that these should be no longer that the length of their wrist to their elbow, nor wider than a finger. Sticks should be held by their sides, pointing downwards at the front end. This exercise did not demand long sticks but, just in case, they would be shown that longer sticks should be dragged or carried by two. But again, they would be reminded of the length and width of the desired sticks.

Physical Hazards

Hazard	**Who is harmed and how**	**Precautions and Control Measures in Place**	**Action by who**	**Action by when**	**Further Action required Y/N**
Hole in ground	Participating learners and tutor – fall/injury	Place cones around area and inform participants. Inform site manager.	Tutors	Before and remind during session	Before next session check that it has been filled or coned off
Blackthorn	Participating learners and tutors cuts/ ingestion	Supervision for foraging for materials/ activities	Tutors	ongoing	no
Environmental and general and severe allergies	Participants and tutors	School medical information/medication of individuals. First aid kit. Qualified first aiders on site	Head of organisation and All	Pre-course and ongoing	Tutors to keep records updated before each session

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Outdoor and Forest School Activities

Hazard	**Who is harmed and how**	**Control measures in place/comments**	**Action by who**	**Action by when**	**Further action required**
Gathering natural materials for mini-shelters	Participants/tutors	Working area and activity risk assessed pre-session. Learners to be shown how to identify and blackthorn and nettles pre-activity.	Tutors	Before and during activity	No
Carrying and using short sticks	Learners and tutors	Participants to be shown how to carry short sticks safely – held at side with front end lowered. Nothing longer than forearm. Long sleeves and covered legs.	Tutors	Before and during activity	No

Environmental considerations

Hazard	**Who is harmed and how**	**Control measures in place/comments**	**Action by who**	**Action by when**	**Further action required (y/n) If so, what and by whom**
Disturbing habitats	Invertebrates and participants	Choose areas for shelters with care. When gathering disturb as little as possible and replace	Tutors and participants	Before and during session	No
Weather	Tutor and participants	Suitable clothing and access to shelter at all times	Tutors	ongoing	

FS Risk assessment benefit form

Activity	How will young people benefit from this activity	Possible hazards	Who is at risk	Precautions in place to reduce the risk of injury	Risk rating L/M/H
Mini-shelter building	Support hand-eye and motor skills. Creative/independent/pairs	Injury to eye, cuts/abrasions	Tutor and participants	• Children to follow instructions of carrying and using sticks •	L

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SUPPORTING HANDOUT
You can find a Risk Assessment template on page 66
of your trainee handbook (Unit 3 | Handout 4)

Q6. Summarise the process and safety considerations involved in applying the following practical skills with a FS group

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Using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing for Forest School

Process	Safety considerations
Sing song about correct clothing Sleeve and trouser length	Long sleeves and trousers should be worn to reduce risk of injury from branches or thorns.
Suitable footwear	Woods and forests are often muddy, slippery and uneven.
Gloves	These may be required due to the temperature or as protective wear for some tasks.
Hats	Summer hats with a neck shield should be worn in the summer and warmer ones for winter month
Sun cream	For the summer to prevent burning.
Anti-bacterial hand solution and/or wipes	This will be required where hand washing is unavailable.

Checking, cleaning, maintaining and storing tools and ropes at Forest School

Process	Safety considerations
Stored and counted in labelled boxes	Missing tools or those not kept in a safe place could result in injury.
Oiling metal parts to prevent rust and oil unvarnished wood to keep these supple and prevent splitting and splintering	Care should be taken when wiping blades and instructions on using any oil – such as linseed – should be followed carefully, as these my spontaneously combust.
Sandpapering rough handles	These may cause splinters – care should also be taken when sandpapering.
Cleaning	All tools should be kept clean and dry – wipe wet handles with a cloth. Keep free of mud to prevent rusting. Always clean after use and before storage.
Storage	Tools should be kept in a dry airy space, preferably hung on the wall in groups. Always keep guards on tools when moving

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	or being stored. Release tension on bowsaws before hanging.

SUPPORTING HANDOUT
You can find guidance on tool maintenance and storage on pages 89 - 91 of your trainee handbook (Unit 4 | Handout 2)

Using different hand tools for Forest School (choose 2 hand tools)

Process	Safety considerations
Using a knife or potato peeler	Do not use folding knives as the closing action can be dangerous - fixed blades are safer. Chose smaller sized ones for children (rounded smaller blades and handles). A glove should be worn for the helper hand but not the one holding the knife (risk of lack of grip). Children should sit with their arms past their knees and move the blade away from themselves.
Using a storm kettle	Use on flat clear area. Make a safe space around this with clear rules to follow: Only the people operating the kettle should be close to it – the area should be large enough that there is no danger of them being knocked over and onto the kettle. The kettle should not be overfilled as it will boil over and may spit. THE CORK MUST ALWAYS BE REMOVED WHEN IN USE OR IT WILL BE SPAT OUT AND BOILING WATER WILL SHOOT OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS. Lighting the kettle – using either cotton wool or King Alfred's cake, with a fire striker (struck away from the body) in a clam shell – then placed with a stick into the well of the kettle.

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	Never look down the chimney to check the fire. Care should be taken when removing the kettle from the base – using the side handles. Pour holding handle and tip using bung and chain. Always place cups on floor – never pour into a cup that is held. Wet ashes, giving at least half an hour to ensure that they are our, and dispose of with care, onto wet ground – stirring ashes. Ensure that kettle is dry, leaving bung out for storage in a dry place.

SUPPORTING HANDOUTS
You can find guidance on tool use on pages 87 - 88
of your trainee handbook (Unit 4 | Handout 1a, 1b)

Using a range of knots for different applications at Forest School (choose 2 knots)

Process	Safety considerations
The reef knot is used to bind objects together with two pieces of rope or cord. Cross left over right, right over left - Like tying a shoe lace.	Not to be used for weight bearing objects.
The clove hitch is used to secure a line around an object by using two half hitches. The working end is brought over and under the standing part and tied in an overhand knot, then a second overhand knot is made in the same direction.	It can be used as a binding knot but is not very secure for this purpose as it can slip and become undone.

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SUPPORTING HANDOUT
You can find guidance on knot techniques on pages 98 - 108
of your trainee handbook (Unit 4 | Handout 5)

Making craft items using woodland materials (choose 1 craft)

Process	Safety considerations
Hapa Zome	
Collect natural materials and arrange on calico square, folded in half – then fold back to cover these.	Care should be taken if gathering nettle leaves – wear gloves.
Gently hammer the fabric	Avoid bashing fingers when you are doing this. Although it is good to keep the fabric as still as possible it may be wise for children to hold the non-working hand behind their back.
Unfold the calico and carefully remove the leaves and berries, revealing a beautiful piece of natural art.	Return leaves and berries to be rotted with other humus.

Erect temporary group shelters using tarpaulin/natural woodland materials

Process	Safety considerations

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Erecting a windshed wedge	If this is for a group of children – make sure the open end is placed where adults have a clear view inside.
Choosing a suitable area for this	Make sure the ground is as even as possible and free of trip hazards. The access should also be clear of hazard or the children should recognise them. Brightly coloured para cord could be used to remind them of small stump (to be removed when site cleared).
Tie a ridge line	Consider height. Use a taut tarp hitch on at least one end so that the line can be tightened if sagging.
Using tent pegs	Make sure that these do not create trip hazard – bright cord could be used or something could be tied in places on the line to make it stand out. Use the positioning of these to shape the structure and ensure that water can flow off this. Wearing a glove on non-working hand may be required when using a mallet.

SUPPORTING HANDOUTS
You can find guidance on shelter building techniques on pages 98 - 111
of your trainee handbook (Unit 4 | Handout 5, 6)

Building, lighting and managing a campfire

Process	Safety considerations
Choosing site for fire	In a clearing away from any foliage, buildings, tarpaulin or tents using gloves or tools. This area should be only soil. On even ground – uneven could pose tripping hazard and falling into fire. Consider direction of wind or strong winds – flames can travel and alarming distance in sudden gusts. The area should be surrounded with a safety zone of stones or logs. All should

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	be aware of zone rules, including one-way traffic.
Lighting the fire	After construction, the fire should be lit using fire striker (away from the body) to ignite either cotton wool or King Alfred's cake, in a clam shell. This should then be placed on the kindling with a stick.
The pit	This area should be clearly defined and never be left unattended by responsible adult. Only designated individuals should be attending to the fire. Ensure that all materials are around the pit before lighting, to avoid carrying and stumbling around it. Water should be nearby for extinguishing.

SUPPORTING HANDOUTS
You can find guidance on fire making on pages 92 - 97
of your trainee handbook (Unit 4 | Handout 3, 4)

Extinguishing a fire and leaving a site safe

Process	Safety considerations
Avoid putting more wood on fire for 30 minutes before extinguishing.	Even if it is not glowing it may be able to reignite. Prevent excessive smoke when dampening by allowing the fire to burn down.
Prevent fire spreading after extinguishing.	Rocks or stones should have been placed around the site of fire to confine it. The children should share in discussions about this.
Dampening ashes.	This may be shared with children, but to avoid them testing the heat with their hands establish a ritual of watering the

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	ashes with one cup of water each – perhaps with a wish or intention.
Make holes around the fire area with a stick.	To ensure that there could be no spread of heat and reignition by dampening ground below.
Check for any remaining heat.	Stir ashes. Check for any embers or sparks. Feel for hot spots and add more water. Check again.
If a temporary site.	Ensure that no trace of fire remains, clear area and remove ashes to a safe place.
If a designated fire site.	Leave as you would wish to find and stack any remaining wood for next time.

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