|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fieldnote Note | 4 | Date | 4/5/21 |
| Locations | Bungalow 2  School (Pick up)  Outdoor/Forrest area | Weather | Sunshine and showers, cold at times |
| Child interactions | [one of the children], Junior, Eva, Dom and Simone | Staff Interactions | Ronnie, Quin, Helen, Blane, Florence, Heidi, Michelle, Millerton, Mick, Martha, Karly and Diane |
| Times | 9.30am – 6.30pm | Total Time in field | 8 |

Arrived on campus at 9.30am in order to be there in time for the team meeting in Bungalow 2 at 10am and then the team building exercise that Helen had planned in the absence of the DDP meeting going ahead. Chatting a bit with Diane and with Karly (SW student) in the morning. Diane showed me the bit that the smokers go, which is right away from the general campus area and down a lane in a wooded part of the grounds. Off to the left I could see tracks and she told me there’s a bike track through the woods that the children can use. There were a few other tracks on the other side as well as a shelter called ‘The [name redacted]’ [Picture stored separately], which I later found out that the children had constructed with Millerton and other staff.

Back in Bungalow 2, before the team meeting, Karly asked me how I was finding being in the bungalow as a student she felt that the team to be a bit ‘fractured’. We discussed her feelings around this and the potential nature of the work and how that may contribute to tensions at times. I got the impression that she was feeling a bit defensive today as she’s applied for a sessional role at the organisation and someone said to her ‘a lot of very experienced people have applied’, which she seemed to take as her not being very experienced.

Ronnie started the team meeting at 10am although there were a lot of side conversations and banter at the start and the banter did continue throughout the meeting (suggesting that things were not quite as fractured as Karly thought?). They discussed each of the children in turn including things like requests the children had made (for dolls, for screen time etc) and how these were to be responded to – this seemed to be a way of communicating so that all staff were aware of what was going on for the children and so that staff could respond in a consistent way. As Diane is leaving this week there was some adjusting of keyworkers with Heidi being switched to [one of the children] and Mick taking on the key-working role with Dom – it was anticipated that the children would probably like this change even though changes can sometimes be difficult for them.

After the team meeting, the team building exercise was a fun 80s music workout with some dayglo tutus and mankinis (worn over clothes). Everyone seemed to have a laugh and most (but not all) got into the swing of things, me included. After this a big 80s style lunch was had including prawn cocktail and the cheese/ham/pickle ‘hedgehog’ with cocktail sticks etc. I started to realise today that, while all the staff know each other well, they are in wee teams within the bungalows as well and work pretty tightly with each other within them. So, even though there is some movement between them depending on need, they do seem largely stable.

As the lunch was winding up, I was talking with Mick who was on with Millerton and Martha this evening. Both Mick and Millerton have undertaken outdoor/bushcraft training and both are into outdoor activities. Mick has previously talked to me about this. When he suggested taking some of the kids out when they got back from school, I said I’d definitely be up for it. We got kitted up in ‘the bunker’ (storage bungalow with outdoor boots, waterproofs, and various other tools such as axes, saws, knifes etc). I was feeling quite excited about the exercise and wandered around the campus for about 30 minutes in my full waterproof gear waiting for school to end and chatting to some of the staff from other bungalows when they were moving between. I bumped into Philippa outside and she was asking if I was just going to be in Bungalow 2 for a while and I explained the consent situation and the reasons I was targeting it like this for now. She will check out the situation for the children in Bungalow 1 and chase things up – Florence said this the other day about Bungalow 3, so they do seem to be up for the research and keen for me to be involved in their respective teams.

After Mick returned with [one of the children] and Dom, Millerton and I went to the school to pick up Eva and Junior. At the school, there were a few school and residential staff (from the other bungalows) around outside along with some children (Simone, Jonny, Dennis and James). Jonny said hello to me and Simone (who I haven’t formally met asked who I was but didn’t engage beyond finding out my name). After we had returned to the bungalows and I was outside, Simone was talking with Quin and asked if I was working there but, in the few seconds it had taken for he and I to look at each other and for me to start explaining what I was doing, she wandered off uninterested.

There was some initial resistance to the outdoor activity from Junior and from Eva, but I was pleased that all of the children and staff from Bungalow 2 headed out after they had had a snack and were kitted out in boots and jackets.

We headed off out the back of the campus, past Bungalow 3 and down onto a track road and over by a big stately looking building that is now used by an organisation that does outdoor learning. As we walked over kept grounds and round a big pond our group bunched and thinned at times with Junior typically at the front on his bike and then the children moving between different staff members all spaced out then stopping and coming together with a group. [One of the children] stayed almost exclusively with Martha for the whole journey up into a wooded area while the other children moved more between different staff members and me at different points on the journey. The path we took cut through a wooded area, and it was pleasant and sunny – both me and Martha had to take off our waterproof coats on the walk! There was lots of chat between everyone, which all seemed fairly typical ‘Junior, don’t go too far ahead on your bike’, ‘look at the size of that slug’ etc. some of the behaviours that typically escalate in the bungalow did seem to be more easily managed out here. For example, Dom can be very physical and, while he says he’s hugging you, it feels more like a headlock. Some swearing and other low-level stuff (or what I would call low level stuff – swearing, being a bit unkind to each other). All of it seemed to be drawn back relatively easily and I think maybe the environment provides space to get away physically from each other and also many interesting distractions that perhaps aid this.

When we reached the point where we were going to build a den, Millerton tried to bring some order to an initially chaotic scene by drawing everyone into a team meeting and describing the types of wood and sticks we would need for construction. Initially, I watched all of the interactions but was quickly shamed into working by Dom who encouraged me to ‘stop being lazy’ and get some logs. It took about an hour or so to construct the lean-to which involved the children being with Mick, Millerton and Martha at different times lifting logs/sticks, chopping things with axes and cutting things with saws. There was a lot of effort put in to keep the children interested and within a reasonable radius of about 20 metres so that an eye could be kept on them. There were a few strays at times but the staff seemed quite aware when someone wasn’t near enough and brought the child back into the mix by assigning them a task. Millerton was cutting a piece of wood with a saw and trying to recruit both Junior and Dom into helping him with it although both abandoned him and I leaned down to hold the piece of wood he was cutting. He said ‘you’ve got to have eyes in the back of your head eh?’ and, on cue, there was a scream from Eva. She was about 15 meters away with Junior and Dom and she appeared to have jumped across a wee burn, falling and hurting her wrist. Dom was making the situation worse by hysterically laughing at this and the staff worked together to bring them back into one cohesive group. After some discussion and inspection of the wrist/arm, Martha agreed to take Eva back to the bungalow and the boys stayed with Mick, Millerton and me. The children agreed to take me to see ‘the chair’ along with Mick. The chair is about 100 metres from the den across a boggy area. It’s a seat that is on the top of a metal frame and attached to a tree, apparently it used to be used for grouse shooting. We spent about 25 minutes there while various combinations of children and adults went up and sat in the chair. We raced back to the den on the promise of some cake and hot chocolate, with the children easily beating me and Mick. Millerton had prepared the hot chocolate, which was universally assessed as terrible by the group because he had forgot to bring milk. The brownies were good though. After a few pictures of everyone we checked over the site and then started to make our way back through the forest and then took a slightly different route back to the campus.

At one point on the way back, Junior was up ahead on his bike; ahead of me walking and chatting was Mick and Dom – I couldn’t hear what they were talking about, but the tone was chilled, and they often turned and looked at each other as they chatted and walked. Behind me, a similar situation was in play between Millerton and [one of the children] who were reminiscing about fun things that they had done before ‘do you remember when we sat on that log and it snapped!’ The sun was shining, and it felt like a nice moment. A few minutes later, Dom got me in one of his headlock hugs and Millerton had to intervene and talk to him about personal space (something that had been discussed in the meeting this morning about Dom).

Dom, Junior, Me and Millerton got our waterproofs off in ‘the bunker’ and I helped Millerton put everything away where it should be. Back in the Bungalow, Martha had the Tea on the go and smelled good – I felt quite hungry having been out doing some physical activity. Surprisingly to me, Junior wanted to go out and play at this point rather than have some time on his Xbox (he’s been really focussed on getting time on his Xbox the other times that I’ve been there). [One of the children] and Eva had their baths before Tea with Dom and Junior to get theirs afterwards. At the dinner table everyone described their ‘magic moment’ from the day – mine was the chilled part of the walk back, when everyone seemed really content in the moment.

After tea and clearing up, Eva’s wrist was still sore and Millerton said he’d prefer to take her to the hospital to get it checked – there wasn’t any swelling or redness or anything, but she is a very slight girl and he wanted to have a doctor look at it. However, he had to go over to Bungalow 3 because something was going on there involving Simone so another member of staff would arrange to take her to get it checked. Before I left, [the other children] were in the lounge watching TV and appeared pretty chilled out. I said good bye to everyone and thanked the staff for today, which I really enjoyed.