

# Educational Foundation in Bøgely

## Introduction

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Bøgely is an independent kindergarten - a so called Udflytterbørnehave ('Move-out-kindergarten'). There are 66 children and 11 employees - an educational trained leader, seven teachers and three assistants. We are also an educational institution. We often have visit from abroad for experience and learning purposes.

We are part of a greater asylum company, The Asylum Company that is an umbrella organization of nine institutions located in different parts of Copenhagen. The Asylum Company institutions enter into a binding network. This means organized leadership networks, community leadership training, public employee day for all educational employees and various other more loosely coupled cooperating across the organization.

We each have an independent economy and is considered a separate legal entity. The children we receive are directed through the Copenhagen municipality.

Bøgely is the first kindergarten in the Asylum Company. The Asylum Company was born December 1, 1835 in Asylgade 11 in Copenhagen. Since then it was moved to Adelgade. Since the district had to be renovated the kindergarten was temporarily moved to the Asylum Company's colony in Raadvad. This happened on June 1, 1961. This move was made permanent in 1972, when the kindergarten became a permanent Udflytterbørnehave. Bøgely has a very long experience to draw on in the educational work. Bøgely's official birthday, is set at June 1, as this is where it saw its first light as an Udflytterbørnehave. The kindergarten could thus celebrate 50th birthday in 2011.

Bøgely has a special place in the hearts of many. We often get visits from old Bøgely children. A large part of them have since grown up and some will return to their childhood nursery, now as parents. We hear from many how Bøgely has characterized the living conditions of the children who have gone here. Many have a close relationship with nature, despite what they have grown up in the city. Even more have lifelong friendships that have taken their cue from kindergarten life in Bøgely. As a child, now in the 2nd grade, said it: "It's pretty cool to know each other for so long - the others (Bøgely children) always help out, if someone teases. You know how they feel. You can just see it in their eyes..."

Most of whom have been in contact with Bøgely, as children or parents, have been touched by the beautiful framing, nature, and what the house has created for the children in kindergarten. But without the staff's dedicated efforts, the Bøgely as we know it today, would not be the same. Much of the trained staff have been here for many years. They have contributed and continue to contribute, to the house, despite the long history, not stuck in the past, but moving over time towards the future.

# Manager's Report

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I have in the recent years worked to move the institution through a process from a traditional institution, working with 'rooms', to be an organization that opens up towards the future. Just like kids seize the moment, I would like to make the organization ready in several contexts to appear dynamic and organic, so it will be possible to modify and adapt the organization to the needs we see as the most prominent in time.

I am inspired by the social constructivist thinking, that there is no truth, but we each have our perception of reality. This means that we each have our own approach to what we see and experience - not possible to know if this can be shared with others.

We can work to tell and conceptualize our own view of what it is we see. We can investigate and try to put us into what others see and perceive from their point of view. We can try to coordinate different views and thus negotiate a common understanding of what we are experiencing.

In an everyday context, the parents, staff, colleagues and not least the child itself, all have different views on each child's needs.

We do not know, and do not always immediately understand other's perception of a given situation, because the understanding depends on the relation between the child and others. The child reacts differently in different contexts. What we can do is to try to coordinate and ask about understanding and expressing our own perception of the situation.

I am in my direction inspired by Karl Otto Scharmer's 'Theory U'. Theory U can be used and is used in many contexts. For me it is natural to use the Theory U. Among other things, it is about immersion and seizing the moment. When I look at what we as adults can learn from children, it is precisely to seize the moment and get carried away with no thought of time and place.

I use the Theory U in connection with employee talks. The sessions take place as a walk-and-talk conversation, where we move from the nursery into the unknown, to return with new perceptions of ourselves and surroundings. Similarly, we take the children out of their everyday life in the city, into the forest, where there is peace and undisturbed quite, where there is room for contemplation and new conquests, every day returning to the city with new insights and learnings of themselves.

# Parents Board Principles

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The fundamentals of the Parents Board principles in 2015 are based on the values of caring, humor, recognition, attention and commitment.

**Nature** is chosen by many parents with a clear expectation that among children and adults demonstrate a particular commitment around the use of the forest. It is thus expected that the forest is an integrated part of children's daily lives at Bøgely, where the focus is on stimulating their interest and build the children's knowledge through trips, themed courses and other outdoor experiences. In the parents' board, we find it important that children acquire knowledge about how humans are part of nature, how we affect it and vice versa. For example that waste does not disappear, how forest products are used and how pollution gets into the cycle of nature. Focus on nature is obviously an element in the recruitment of new employees.

## **Social skills**

We appreciate companionship and friendship high. In the kindergarten we are already working with the prevention of bullying. We focus on creating children who are able to say no, empathize with the feelings of others, be empathetic, caring and be good companions for each other. Children must familiarize themselves with it to accommodate each other's differences.

The children should, through daily activities, such as various theme weeks, learn how to manage conflicts and care for each other and be good friends. The aim is that children learn to recognize each other's experiences and give them the opportunity to create solutions to their conflicts. Caring and recognition comes naturally reflected in the way people communicate. Here it is important that both children and adults talk to each other, respecting each other's differences.

Part of this work is also about teaching the children to feel responsible for others, and to be part of a group. It is also important to learn a sense of responsibility for the smaller children. The parent board supports Bøgely's work with the many connections between the groups throughout the house.

The board supports that in Bøgely there is the possibility and openness towards playing with whatever the child is interested in - for example, that both "pegboard" and "football" is open to both girls and boys. The children should also be involved in chores at Bøgely, so they are truly a part of everyday life and "grow with the tasks."

## **Food**

The children are very fond of the special food days I Bøgely. Each group each has their own food day arranged by Bøgely. The children also love it when parents visit and cook for them. The Parents Board supports and very much appreciates the parent support such as these food days, birthday cake/food/fruit, and whatever else might the flavour of the day. We do however not believe that candy belongs in kindergarten.

## **The cooperation between kindergarten and home**

Open and constructive communication between kindergarten and home is an important prerequisite for a functioning "Udflytterbørnehave". Both e-mail and phone calls function well as good communication tools. The folders and the telephone is most essential communication channel for dialogue between home and kindergarten.

It is important that both staff and parents contact each other when things need to be clarified, small

as well as big. Both parties contribute with constructive proposals for a solution to any major challenges that might arise around the child.

It is expected that Bøgely informs parents if problems arise, so that parents can be involved in problem solving also in the home.

When Bøgely arranges planned activities and themes, this will be communicated to the parents in advance, and thus parents can support the pedagogical work from home.

### *Yearly events*

It is important to have a number of common, traditional events in Bøgely. The events are a good tool to create community between children, parents and staff and between the parents. The Board believes that it is important to preserve these very cozy traditions. At the same time developing new themes or concepts - old traditions can also be resumed. We encourage all parents with skills and competencies that can be used in kindergarten to sign these out, and we encourage Bøgely to use these competencies in the pedagogical work - where it makes sense.

## Mission and vision

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In Bøgely we continuously work to redefine the educational basis. It has been a process that has been going on for several years. It has been necessary to use this amount of time, as the process has sought to benchmark future trends and change the traditional ways of working in the educational world. At the same time, it was important to establish the change so that employees were able to take ownership of the process. It is a foundation that seeks to change a mindset of the individual, based on hundreds of years of experience. It is therefore a mindset and a conceptual world that is difficult to change over a short amount of time. Let alone a concept as 'living rooms', we all use and relate to, without relating to the term that comes from the 1800s with industrial Society.

We see a need for changing this thinking. We wish to relate to the pedagogical foundation with a clear sight on the future. This is natural as we work with children, that we seek to relate to the future ways and not the way of the past and what has been. Children live in the now and they point to the future. Adults live on a basis of a wide range of experiences, often pointing to the past. We want to learn from the children. We want to work towards an awareness to seize the now, letting us go towards a future we don't know, but dare meet with an open mind, open heart and open will.

Naturally we don't know the future. But we will, in the following make suggestions on what the present is characterized by and what trends we see, dominate the future. It can obviously only be ideas and guesstimates, but there are signs that characterize the time we live in more than others.

Society is characterized by large quantities of information, where we are faced with a myriad of choices and rejections. It is a society where the individual is constantly expected to move in and out of more or less binding networks. Where the possibilities of what can be done is more extensive than what resources allow. It is also a society where time is a limited resource in relation to the volume of information and opportunities. It is this society we want to prepare the children to take part in as active citizens. We want to prepare the children to take an active part in making choices amongst the amount of offers. We can do this by creating a framework for the kids where they practice making choices.

We will also prepare children to qualify the choices they make. Every choice we make has consequences. Not only for the individual, but also for the environment. The surroundings we see as both the people around us, but also as the nature we are part of, that we have a responsibility to take care of.

We are facing a time, where there will be an increasing scarcity of resources. It is therefore important to us that children experience themselves as part of a greater whole. That they are aware of the environment they live in and are a part of. We work to sensitize the individual to make choices that are right for the individual, taking into account the community. We will also work with the choice relating to the environment. The consequences of a given action must be prepared and qualified.

We will sensitize children about the resources offered by nature and the importance of what nature's influence can have on the human being. We will work with time as a resource. We will give children the opportunity to immerse themselves in the nature and in the playful game. We will also work to give the children a consciousness of the importance of being calm and be able to focus on the depth in order to create space for creativity. We will create space for contemplation both figuratively and in real meaning.

## Organizing the educational work

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In Bøgely we work with an open house. The children have their permanent wardrobe space where they keep their things and they often eat in the same groups. The whole house is open to the children. This means that children have the opportunity to play and live where they want in the house.

We have tried to gather certain functions of the small space as a part of the room. In this way, we try to create a better overview for the children so they know where to go if they want to play with something specific.

In the Squirrel's group room they have costumes. There is a small corner where there is an opportunity to role-play in the form of a small store, father-mother-and-children and so on. There is also various drawing gear, so you can sit and draw, play with modeling clay, cut in magazines or other activities where there is a need for fine motor skills.

In the Badger's group room there are various kinds of construction toys, in particular the possibility of working with the gross motor senses. There is also a grapple room with pillows, mattress and ribs. In this room there is also the opportunity to make major structural play in the form of railways or walk on a line and make circus arts.

In the Fox's group room there is a library and story corner. Here there is ample opportunity for taking a quiet respite from the more noisy activities. It is also more fine motor activities such as Lego and making strings of beads, bracelets and so on. But the opportunity to play with dolls in the dollhouse or unfold on stage is also here, that is if the kids do not pull the curtain to cozy up with a book.

We also have a nice workshop where all materials are collected. This is where we make lanterns for lantern festival, larger images or other creative activities. This space is only open during the adult-driven activities. When the house is this open, it requires planning by the staff. Our open structure means that the staff moves around in the entire house. The adults are where the kids are.

Every week we meet for a planning meeting where we decide what activities to do throughout the week. This is where we create an overview of the possibilities. We decide how the children should be mixed and

which activities should be initiated. For example, we can plan a trip for the oldest children, or plan a creative activity for a small group of children in the workshop or we can decide that all the girls and the female staff go on a tour together. We also mix the staff so that staff competence is continuously optimized.

## Reflection and Methodical Systematic Educational practice

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We work systematically with the development of in the pedagogical work. We spend much of our daily lives to reflect individually and together.

It is a requirement for the staff, we have hired that they are able to reflect on their own and others' practice. Most of the conversations that take place between the staff in the everyday work-life, contains reflections about individual children or groups as well as working methods.

For an outsider it may look like the staff is just being present, but often the staff is observing individual children's behavior or the relationship between several children. To the untrained eye the playground can seem daunting, but the experienced staff has seen what is going on in the relation between the children.

At team meetings the progress of each child is being reviewed and this work is systemized and put in a chart as preparation for meetings with the parents.

Staff meetings are attended by all employees once a month. Here strategies are formed as well as agreement on the development plans for the children, who we believe, need extra attention. In the same way we work with the children as a group or some of them, depending on where we see a need for action.

Periodically we work with more structured projects for groups of children. As part of the internal working process we plan the objectives in writing. There are goals set for what we want to achieve and subsequently we make a written evaluation in assessing achievement of objectives of the course.

In the first months after the summer vacation our general focus is the children who are just starting in Bøgely. During the winter period the main focus is the middle children, while in spring it is the oldest children. But the focus is constantly moving in relation to the staff assessment of the group of children and their particular needs.

In the recent year the staff has worked with vision strategies. The existing culture and action towards visions have been evaluated at seminars. It is a time consuming process working with cultural change and basic assumptions. There will be times along the way, where the staff will fall back into familiar patterns of action before the next step can be taken. We are aware of that. Therefore it is important to us to seek the time for contemplation in the process to renew and transform the educational work systematics in a proper manor. It is an important and fundamental process in the educational work and this has to be visible to users. It is therefore fundamentally important and widely accepted by the group of parents that we devote work days to do this important work.

There is a broad awareness that these days are well spent in terms of improving the quality of the educational work in the institution.

# Aesthetics as educational framework

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To create opportunities for contemplation, we have worked with the impact of the rooms. Every time we have created new spaces, we have taken the aesthetic impact into consideration. We work with smaller spaces in the greater room.

On the playground the hedges and level changes are used as division. They give the kids the opportunity to "disappear" in the great room. The equipment is all made out of natural materials and has been created with the vicinity of the forest and with the colors of nature in mind. With the equipment the kids can immerse themselves in specific play-related universes.

It is important for us to preserve the experience of not constantly being monitored. This also means that the adults will need to navigate in, and be invited into, the children's universe to keep up with what is happening among the children.

Indoors we have worked with the rooms as well. We continuously work closely with an interior designer. Drawing on her professional resources in conjunction with the staff's professional resources, we have succeeded in creating aesthetic experience space.

Aesthetics are important for the perception of oneself. By working with color schemes and shapes, we have the ability to change the spaces and their meanings. We can concretely see what it means to the children to move in the aesthetic space because they take good care of the things and the surroundings (things are rarely destroyed, the walls are rarely drawn on, etc.). As adults, both parents and staff, we sense the importance of moving in space where colors and function are integrated into a whole. The professional color scheme of certain space has changed the use of these spaces.

The colors seem soothing. They have created a new universe for the kids to play in, this has also challenged the staff to be more creative in the decoration of the spaces, more than is often seen in other kindergartens. It is our opinion that the sense of space, light, colors and furnishings characterize the individual. And it helps to create more whole persons when the interior design is based on a professional initiative.

Indoors we work to create space in the room. We create oases in the great room with space for smaller groups. We consider the room's function and location in the house. We work to create space for contemplation by dividing the rooms by function and collect toys for a specific purpose, which is easily accessible. At the same time we take into account that some spaces are better suited for settling down than others. We are conscious of quality in terms of materials and functions.

It is an organic process to work with interior design. Therefore we are continuously working to optimize each room with the economic and creative possibilities we have. We are constantly trying to maintain the spirit of an older house, which at the same time has to work optimally in a post-modern time.

# Cultural expression and values

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An important part of a child's upbringing and education is the meeting with different cultures and cultural values. Here in Bøgely we are aware that there are many ways to express creativity aesthetically.

We sing together almost every morning on the bus, songs about the season or a song which is a story in itself. We also listen to music and often create a disco on the playground where we turn the music up high, sing along or let the children dance "stop dance".

We have a richly equipped workshop where we can paint, and it is possible to draw when we are indoors. Either they draw from their immediate imagination or from a bound task from an adult. We read aloud and listen to stories with the children on the bus or at lunch.

There are children in the institution who, in their own home, speak a language other than Danish, and where one or both parents have a different ethnic background than Danish. This provides an ideal opportunity to talk about other languages. We have as an example sung the "birthday song" in Swedish, and "Master Jacob" in French "Frere Jacob". The children also play with other languages. For example a few girls sang our "Lantern Song" in a homemade English version, or the children invent a new language and new words.

When the children are on vacation or longer trips, we encourage them to send us postcard. This gives us the opportunity to talk about other countries or regions.

An important part of the culture in Bøgely is the many traditions throughout the year. These annual events provide the children with a vantage point in the year and a sense of belonging and recognition. They remember how it was done last year and in that way they also sense the ownership with the other children and adults.

Our traditions, which we prepare for every year, include a picnic in September, a lantern festival in October, Lucia and Christmas tree felling and a Christmas party in December and New Year's reception in January. In addition, we through Grandparents' visitation and picnic days in the midsummer and hunting for Easter eggs at Easter time, as well as summer party.

We rarely have the opportunity to visit cultural institutions in the city, but we know that for a large part of the children this characterizes their weekend and holiday activities.

Approximately once a year we have a cooperation with an artist in Bøgely. We have over the years been visited by a hats theater where the children have helped to shape the piece and the story. We have made music with 'Überlyd' where the children have helped to sing, make music and record music. We have been visited by the multi-artist Carl Quist Moller, who played music and told stories so vivid that we all still remember it. When we had our anniversary, we invited a jazz orchestra to play. It was such a huge success for both children and adults that we are aiming to make it into a tradition.

# Nature and natural phenomena

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Nature is a continuous theme. It is the thread that goes through everything we do in Bøgely. We are right in the middle of nature every day. Whether we are inside, at the playground or in the forest, nature has left its mark. Even the bus ride through the forest makes everyone breathe more quietly. It is a beautiful sight to look out over the plain by Hjortekæret, looking for the heron by Stampedammen or keeping an eye at the swans in Raadvad.

Once we have left the city and turned off towards the forest, is a different silence of both children and adults. There is very little interference in our everyday life and nature endows one with a stoic calmness with its large trees, open spaces and small ponds that cannot fail to affect most people.

With a location so close to the forest with large protected trees on the playground, we constantly feel part of something bigger. With the sky as our roof and the forest as our walls an environment is created where we can deal with the weather and seasonal change. The light affects us. Even on dark days and days with very cold weather or even rain we dress accordingly, so we can be outside.

The changing seasons are carefully followed, we talk about it daily e.g. in connection with what clothes to wear and how much. Are there any leaves on the trees? What color are they? Is there frost in the grass? Are there wasps now? Should we have sunscreen on? Can we have bare feet in the sandpit?

When you are outside a lot the outdoor life feels different. You learn quickly, to sense if you are cold or too hot. Children move a lot. Often they freeze less than adults. During summer the leaves cover large parts of the playground, so it is always possible to find shade. On windy days it is always possible to seek shelter somewhere. If it rains, you can seek shelter in the playground and under the roof of the shed. In any case, one can always change clothes if needed.

Nature is also the meeting with small things. It could be taking care of the plant, you have brought at "plantedag" (planting day), seeing it grow or die. Watering it or forgetting it. It's the sensory experience in touching the herbs, smelling it and tasting it. Climbing in the beech hedge, tasting the newly sprouted leaves and getting lost from everyone else. It is about throwing snow, tobogganing and building a snowman. Tasting book from the beech and learning that acorns cannot be eaten even though they look like nuts. It is also to learn the difference between a titmouse, a blue tit and nuthatch when they drop by the bird table or studying a caterpillar in all conceivable ways.

Sticks, stones, grass and leaves are important playground equipment and can be used for everything. A stick can do it out for a gun. A stone can be a diamond and plants of all kinds are used as food. Branches and bigger sticks are used as balance beams or to build caves. Children can collect things and be particularly fond of a fine stone with a nice color or a stick that has just the right length. They hold firmly to the "treasures" and fill their pockets and backpack, so mom and dad can enjoy them.

On top of all these nature experiences we are fortunate to have Dyrehaven (Deer Park) as our closest neighbor. It is therefore obvious that we use it as a target for many of our trips. Nature in Dyrehaven is very varied. We have the opportunity both to go in the forest, on the plains of marsh and by the water. On top of that there are deer. The children learn the difference between a sikka, a doe and a stag.

But the children also get familiar with the various tree types, plants, birds and insects. It's not often that we hear about parents who have been taught about nature from their children or parents who have strayed around in Dyrehaven, and have lost direction, after which the children have taken over and have led the way. Many of the favorite sites have their own names for example. Goldseekers slope (Guldgraverskrænten), the Dragon Tree (Dragetræet) or the Climbing Tree (Klatretræet).

By means of the close relationship with nature, children receive a close relationship with life and death and the year and the cycle of life. It's natural for kids to see a dead animal since a lot of deer is shot in autumn. These are often transported past kindergarten. We sometimes hear the shooting. Often the children raise their heads and say, "Well, Peter Jæger (Peter the Hunter) shot a deer" after which they continue playing.

But also a dead butterfly or a spider can create the basis for a lot of talking about anything and everything. The children often find animals and insects on the playground that they would like to look at and learn about. Therefore, we have various types of magnifying glasses and amazement boxes where children can explore their catch further.

They can see when snail is crawling up the glass and puts slimy trails or they can put beetles, frogs and woodlice in a box and "decorate" it with leaves, gravel and the like. We like to find non-fiction books and help the children to look up and find out what animals they have caught and read more about them.

## Personal skills

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In adolescence the child learns many of the strategies it uses later in life. Preschool is therefore a very important period of the child's life. It is not always easy to develop, both physically and mentally, in such a short time. There will be crises and there will be great conquests.

In general, there are several release processes in a preschool child's life. There may be periods of time where the child can be experienced as quite impossible and where none of the parents' good intentions turn out to be good enough seen with the child's eyes. These periods of time, repeated throughout preschool can be compared to puberty. The experience and the reaction patterns are the same. As an adult, there are very few who can remember anything other than their last puberty. In reality the children undergo many of the same phases earlier in life. It is important to set the framework, where the child is being taken seriously and being listened to. From a child's perspective, it is extremely serious.

During preschool life, it is not uncommon for children to relate to life's big questions, such as why are we here? Are we alone or is there someone in the universe? Does God exist and if so, where is he? It is also not uncommon that the child experiences his first love, which may / may not be reciprocated. The emotions are in such periods as strong as they are in later life. Many children also experience loss and in some cases loss is missing the other parent when undergoing a divorce.

In Bøgely we focus on each child's skills and it is our task in cooperation with parents to support and guide the child to where it is now and together support it, where it's going. It is not always that we see the same sides of the child when it is in preschool or when parents at look when at home. It is therefore important that we share the concerns and victories, so that we can give the child the best opportunities to develop.

Each child will master different skills at different times. Therefore, we start with the individual child and support it in its development of specific expertise. Our starting point is where we experience the child has its strengths. Sometimes we divide the children into different groups. It is not always that the children have the same age. We might divide them based on the skills that we see the child must have help to develop.

In Bøgely we are aware of each child's strengths and use it in the work of the children's group, so the children complement each other, thus helping each other to develop personal skills.

An important part of child development is the ability to master the body and its many opportunities for development. The child is a whole and if the child has mastered and is familiar with their own body, then the learning ability and the child's cognition, logical and abstract senses simultaneously be strengthened.

Children in Bøgely are moving all day long and both fine and gross motor skills are tested constantly. In the beginning when the child starts in Bøgely, it is fighting it to keep up. It climbs hassled into the bus and tend to slip on the playground often. It faces many challenges when it comes to taking clothes on and off and need more help.

We have a clear goal that the child should be encouraged to become self-reliant. It should even try and experiment with, for example. Taking clothes off and putting them on. We help, guide and support the child

when needed. We constantly encourage the child to challenge himself and to try new things, as a way to move their borders. It's ok that something is difficult.

We want to teach the child that it pays off to fight for what they want to. It is a great victory for the child when it can take off the rain pants themselves or finally have the courage and motor skills to climb up to the top bar on the climbing frame.

## Social relations

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One of the foremost tasks we have as a kindergarten is to work with the children's social skills and develop each child to function in a group. It is a unique opportunity that we have as an institution, because there are so many children gathered alongside competent adults who are trained to help children on their way.

Many Bøgely children arrive as children of families where in many cases they have one or two siblings that have also been a Bøgely child. In the kindergarten, the children are a part of a larger community of children, where they have the opportunity to be part of a special children's culture guided by adults.

Children face many challenges during their everyday lives here in Bøgely. Be it in terms of finding a place in the bus, helping a buddy to put the belt in place, asks a friend for help to take a rebellious boot or get help from an adult. But it's also about making choices, taking into account the community. We want to help the children qualify their decisions, and teach them about the consequences of their actions for themselves and the environment. We want to teach the children to take responsibility for their own actions, so that they learn to reflect in the social community.

It is important for us to teach them how to be a good friend, and how to help others. We expect that they learn to respect each other and that they learn to respect differences. Not all need to be best friends, but everyone should keep a respectful and proper tone.

We help children when they have conflicts with each other. We do this by listening to what the problem is. We spend time talking about the possibilities of action that open up when you look at each other and address a conflict. In this way we help children to get ahead in the game.

## Socializing in the nature

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When we go on trips, we make pedagogical considerations in advance about whom to bring, and for what purpose. This applies both for children and for adults. It may be that we plan for a longer course for a group of children with certain chosen adults because we want to work with a specific focus. By working this way, we can draw on specific skills from the adult group when there is a need for it. The educators likewise make many good and useful observations in the forest. E.g. how does a child react to the unpredictable? How does it react when it gets tired and cold? How does it make contact with other children?

On our walks in the forest, we utilize opportunities to expand the children's social skills. The first part of the trip is always on a row where the children walk in pairs. Here they can sometimes choose a buddy. Sometimes the adults choose the pairs. This can create openings for new friendships, and children can get the opportunity to be put together with a child that is not usually the favorite friend. We can also pair the children across age, so the elderly can help teach the younger. In this way, the younger ones find someone

to look up to, and the older children learn to be considerate of the younger children.

When we go for walks in the forest, it can also be an ideal opportunity to put the kids together with other children in the same age and interest. We sometimes bring the youngest children on a trip where the pace and experiences are organized at their level. On the way we can meet the needs of this group when they need to make a stop and wonder on the road. By grouping children at certain ages, we open an opportunities for them to find likeminded friends with similar interests. We are also happy to gender-segregate groups, which can be a particular focus that the educators keep in mind.

An example of a trip could be a bunch of kids walking out to the shelter on a winter day. They all have backpacks and lunch boxes, as they have to eat when they get there. But as they also have to keep warm while they eat, they also have to bring each their log to make a small fire. They each carry their log on the trip and learn to play an important part of a particular community.

Another example is an organized process with a group of children who need to be better companions. They may go on a number of organized trips with the same teachers. The children are put to various challenges that they need to solve together. It may be that they are two to share a map where they must find the way. But it may also be that they have to succeed moving through the landscape, ending up really tired, but also feeling that they jointly managed the task. We also use the trips to talk about what's going on in the group and on how to be a good friend.

## Body and movement

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Research suggests the importance of movement in relation to learning. Especially children need to use their body while learning. Most children move themselves a lot during the day. If you study a child's pattern of behavior, you will be surprised how much each child is in motion every day.

At Bøgely we are fortunate with the location we have. We go for many walks in the surrounding nature, the playground is arranged in a way that makes it necessary to move a lot. And since we are surrounded by nature and great plains, the children at Bøgely establish a natural force in moving and movement. It functions as a natural part of our everyday lives.

It rarely takes a long time, from when we receive the children from the nursery, to when they change motile. The playground itself is a challenge. There are different levels that constantly need to be overcome, and play equipment that challenges their gross motor skills.

Since we spend so much time outside, we often bring out play equipment that challenges the fine motor skills of the children. It may be in the form of paper and color or it may be in the form of construction toys. Similarly, when we are inside Bøgely, we have the opportunity to challenge the motor control of the children in the tumbling room and their fine motor skills in the workshop and with activities round the house. We use slopes to climb on, and sometimes we bring out rope into the forest. With ropes we can create challenges in the form of fields where the children must balance on a rope while holding on to a second rope. For example, you would need to pass a stream by walking on a rope, or you have to pull yourself up a field. But sometimes you may also need to roll down a slope, or we are on an "off road" trip that goes through a hilly landscape.

# Inclusion and Community

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At Bøgely we work with inclusion in our everyday life and in projects. Usually, we aim to create an atmosphere for the children that make them feel part of the community. We consciously focus on the community and talk a lot about friendship. We have seen a change in children's culture in the context of structural change.

Earlier when we were dividing the children by age, we had a group of the youngest and two groups with the oldest children. We learned that the youngest were embraced and accepted by the older children, but they were still a group on their own. Similarly, there was less cooperation between the other two groups.

Or, like a couple of young men put it, when they were visiting their former kindergarten and had to step over the threshold of one of the other rooms: "Dare we go? It is after all enemy country. We only came here, when we watched movies." They could also tell about how the Badgers controlled the area by the ship while the Foxes controlled the area around the castle. And so they met on "the plain" in front of Bøgely to battle.

The boys do not battle there anymore, but just a few years ago they did. Neither they, nor we, knew why until recently. But this reveals how strong the tradition is from generation to generation, or rather how strong children's culture is without the adults necessarily having any insight.

Following leaving the house open for the children to move around as they please, we have learned that their culture has changed. They play together despite gender and age. The youngest are looked after and included in the community. We work consciously with group formations on trips and in projects. We work on creating friendships and communities both physically and by turning that into words.

Some children need something extra to be able to participate in the community. Therefore we have created the possibility that we can work more with these children. We do this by differentiating our work. Some children need more breaks or fewer distractions when they need to get dressed. Some children need to know in advance what we have planned for the day.

Some children participate periodically in a 'plus group'. Here we work with children who need extra stimulus. The 'plus group' is flexible and doesn't necessarily include the same children over a longer course. As a parent you will be informed if your child participates in the course of 'plus group'.

There may be many reasons for the children to exclude each other. It is our job to guide the children to be open to each other and find the cause of a possible expulsion. Most often it develops because of a fear of the unknown: "I have not played with you before, so I would rather say no." Or: "She may say no to me, so I choose to say no first."

Therefore, we work to the motto "Knowledge creates friendship". So when the table must be set, or when the children are told to hold hands while walking together, they are often paired randomly to extend their knowledge of each other. Phrases like "at Bøgely we are all friends" and "this game we can all play" rubs off on the children. They pass on a culture of inclusion.

At times we do have groups that are not functioning optimally and therefore we experience exclusion. We use energy to get these groups to work. We do this over time by having the children in the group walking together in the forest, working together in joint activities to strengthen the sense of community and create friendships.

This does not mean that you should not play in pairs and have a best friend. But at Bøgely, we wish to work on creating a lasting culture of inclusion where children help to include each other and where there is room for small groups within the community.

# Language Stimulation

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We are constantly working with the language in the kindergarten. Language stimulation takes place as an integral part of our daily life. We rarely have families where Danish is not the primary language in the home. However, we do have a growing number of children who either have gone to a foreign kindergarten or have a parent who speaks a language other than Danish.

When we ride the bus in the morning, the children sit and talk quietly together. On the ride to the kindergarten, one of the adults will grab the microphone and tell the children which activities to expect during the day. Together with their friends the children talk about what they want to do during the day and what they don't want to do. Then we sing a song or two together in the bus. When we introduce new songs, the teacher will always explain words in the song that might be difficult.

During the mealtime, the children sit in small groups at the tables. They have the opportunity to chitchat. Round most tables, there is also an adult. The children who need extra language stimulation are usually sitting close to an adult. We may start a shared conversation on a topic in the whole group at the table, or we might tell a story or read a book.

We very often sing songs with image support that works well as great examples, when we are on the playground. When we gather round the fire, an educator might bring laminated lyrics with images on them, and we bring the language stimulation to the playground.

When we are on tour, we talk about what we see and experience, and bring things home from the forest, so that all the kids have the opportunity to look at and talk about it at home. Most days we send out an email to all parents, briefly describing what we have done during the day. This allows parents to ask about their child's day and start a dialogue with the child about what it has experienced during the day.

We have two educators particularly educated in the language field. They can be attached to a child if the child needs special support. Among other things, the educators are trained to perform language assessments by the 3-year old and 5-year olds, if there is a need for this.

## Cooperating with the parents

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For a child to have the best prerequisites for a good development and well-being, it is important that the adults around the child have a sensible communication. In an outdoor kindergarten as Bøgely, parents are not in the kindergarten every day, and we meet the parents briefly by the bus in the morning and the afternoon. This means that parents can experience it as difficult to keep up with the child's everyday life in Bøgely.

We are well aware of this, and we therefore try to keep communication very close between home and Bøgely so that the parents at home can still keep up with life in Bøgely. We write a short email every day, talking about what has happened during the day. These emails are complemented by a longer monthly newsletter that is based on more educational thoughts, derived from our work with the children on a daily basis. On Bøgelys website we place pictures for the parents to log on and view the pictures.

During the year, we organize various parent-events such as Lantern Fest and a Summer Party. It is important that parents show up for these events, as this is a great opportunity to meet other families and have a chat with the staff.

A close cooperation with the parents is an important factor. All parents are therefore invited once a year for a formal meeting, to talk about their child. Parents can then meet the two educators from the child's group. This is an invitation and opportunity to talk about the child's well-being and development in the institution, as well as challenges.

We will always contact the parents if there is something we feel is important to discuss, and we will also call if we see it necessary. Parents should not hesitate to call Bøgely, if they have any concerns or anything they would like to discuss with us. This also applies if there are changes or turmoil at home, if there is a move on the way, if there is illness or death in the family, or if anything that is out of the ordinary. Children sometimes perceive more than we adults think they do, and turmoil at home can cause great concern for the child that often reverberates in the institution.

Bøgely has a Parents Board. It consists of five parents, three employees and a manager. The Parents Board meets approximately four times per year to discuss general issues and educational principles. For more information about the Board's work, please see the website. <http://boegely-raadvad.dk>