

FOREST SCHOOL



A natural way of learning



WHAT IS FOREST SCHOOL?

Forest School began in Scandinavia in the 1950's as a way of teaching children about the natural world through first-hand experience outdoors. It is now an important part of the Scandinavian school curriculum, particularly in Denmark and Sweden.

In 1993 Bridgewater College in Somerset introduced Forest School to Britain. Since then it has developed into an education programme that is available to children, young people and adults all over the UK.

WHY IS FOREST SCHOOL IMPORTANT?

Children now spend far less time outdoors than their parents and grandparents did. This is partly because of the increase in traffic, the loss of open spaces where children can play freely, and concerns about children's safety. In addition, increased use of the computer, TV and video games means that many children are spending more of their leisure time indoors.

FOREST SCHOOL PROVIDES A CHALLENGING BUT SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHICH ENABLES CHILDREN TO:

- be physically active
- be creative
- take risks
- work both independently and with others
- develop confidence and self-esteem
- learn about the natural world



WHO IS FOREST SCHOOL FOR?

Anyone. Although Forest School was originally developed with very young children, it is appropriate for every age group - for babies of 6 months upwards, pre-school children, primary school children, young people in secondary and further education, and adults.

And because of Forest School's inclusive ethos it particularly welcomes children, young people and adults with special educational needs or disabilities.



WHAT HAPPENS AT FOREST SCHOOL?

A typical Forest School session will last for about 2 hours. The children play games to help develop their confidence, teamwork and physical skills. Depending on their age they are taught simple woodcraft skills to help them make and build a variety of things - from a simple stick person right up to a full size shelter. They will take part in activities that help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of the natural world. Finally, the session will usually end with food cooked on a campfire.

WHERE IS FOREST SCHOOL HELD?

Forest School can take place *anywhere*. Some are run in woods and forests. Some take place in local parkland or on school grounds. Forest School activities can even take place in concrete yards that have been adapted by adding logs and other natural materials.



WHO RUNS FOREST SCHOOL?

Forest Schools are run by specially trained Forest School leaders. All leaders have to be qualified first-aiders and must be CRB checked before they can lead Forest Schools. A thorough site survey and hazard and risk assessment is always carried out before a Forest School session takes place.



THE BENEFITS OF FOREST SCHOOL

Recent studies into the benefits of Forest School in England and Wales have found that Forest School can have a very positive effect on children's confidence, language and communication skills, motivation, concentration, physical skills and their knowledge, understanding and respect for the natural world.*

Therefore Forest school can be a valuable means of supporting:

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

ECO SCHOOLS

SEAL

(Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)

EYFSC

(Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum)

*Forest School Evaluation Project: A Study in Wales (April to November, 2003) *New Economics Foundation*.
'Such enthusiasm – a joy to see' : An evaluation of Forest School in England (October 2005) *New Economics Foundation*



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT:

***INTRODUCING FOREST SCHOOL IN YOUR OWN SETTING**

***STAFF INSET**

***STAFF and FAMILY TASTER SESSIONS**

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