

Outdoor Learning or Forest School at Your School

Why Outdoors?

- Evidence shows that giving children the opportunity to discover, learn about and experience the natural world, helps to develop a sense of connection, belonging and responsibility as well as impacting positively on health and wellbeing and educational outcomes.
- Being outdoors results in higher levels of physical activity, better emotional, behavioural and cognitive outcomes and a greater sense of connectedness to nature.
- Children who learn outdoors have significantly less stress, reduced ADHD symptoms, more resourcefulness and creativity, enhanced sensory perception, lower rates of physical and emotional illness and obesity.

However schools often struggle with the difference between Curriculum Based Outdoor Learning and Forest School as a means of getting their children outdoors for learning. Here we try and support you in deciding which is most appropriate for your setting and requirements.

	Curriculum Based Outdoor Learning	Forest School
What it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum based Outdoor Learning is a class or ideally whole school involvement in outdoor learning that can be mapped against the National Curriculum • Using the outdoors to teach the National Curriculum ensures that children experience the benefits of being outdoors, but at the same time it protects teaching time • Teachers can link curriculum objectives effectively with enjoyable and motivating hands on, active outdoor learning • Sessions can happen regularly or as a when suits basis • <i>'Outdoor Learning is at its most potent when it is interwoven within the formal school curriculum'</i> - Institute for Outdoor Learning • Depending on your school site, can happen on the school grounds or local area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest School or Beach Schools (these follow the same ethos as Forest Schools, but use the coast as a platform for learning) is a very specific approach and has clear outcomes that are not curricular-led. Its ethos is to facilitate child initiated, explorative and discovery-based play and learning in a holistic way, through regular sessions https://forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/ • Because of the child-initiated and environmental-led approach, Forest Schools is not so easy to map against the National Curriculum. e.g. If a group decides to investigate 'how tall is that tree?' then it can meet National Curricular outcomes. However, in the Forest School approach, you would not plan for this • Depending on your school site, can happen on the school grounds or local area or you travel to a suitable woodland / outdoor site
Some Examples of Types of Activities (Not Exhaustive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pure National Curriculum subjects e.g. maths, English, science, etc. taught actively outdoors and with a hands on approach. See Trailblazer activities Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk) • Fieldwork - See Trailblazer Beach Studies Fieldwork and Trailblazer River Studies Fieldwork • Gardening and connecting with nature e.g. tree identification • Art using natural materials • Problem solving and den building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushcraft e.g. whittling • Connecting with nature e.g. tree identification • Problem solving • Den building • Fire lighting / cooking on a central 'dinner plate' size campfire • Individual / small-group fire lighting and cooking on fires • Using edged tools e.g. knives, bow saws, loppers, etc. • Rope swings

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire lighting / cooking on a central 'dinner plate' size campfire See Trailblazer Fire Lighting and Cooking 	
Qualifications / Training Required with Approximate Costs and Training Time Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal qualifications are required in addition to the relevant professional qualification (e.g. Teacher, LTA, etc) to be responsible for the pastoral care of the group. However, you do need to work to a risk assessment • We would recommend for basic fire-lighting that staff need to have demonstrated competency (e.g. as a Scout / Guide leader) or Trailblazer Fire-lighting workshop • Fire lighting is also covered as part of the Trailblazer training – Cost around £110 for 1 day Trailblazer course • To run the more technical outdoor learning activities (e.g. using edged tools , more complex fire lighting techniques), you should have either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level 3 Forest School Leader qualification https://forestschoollassociation.org/forest-school-qualification - Or an IOL Bushcraft Competency Certificate https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Members/Professional-Community/Outdoor-Learning-Practice/Bushcraft-PPG/Bushcraft-Accredited-Training. Costs around £320 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest School Leader Level 3 and Outdoor First Aid (with Paediatric certificate if required for the age group of students) • A Level 2 Forest School qualification is available to be qualified to assist a Forest School Leader • https://forestschoollassociation.org/forest-school-qualification • Training includes: plan, deliver and evaluate a six session Forest School programme for a group • 96 guided learning hours - for the Forest School Association FSA to recognise the qualification • Assessed by a portfolio of evidence and skills days to develop and assess practical skills and to discuss progress. • Cost around £2,000 for Level 3 FS qualification
Insurance Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff employed by Hampshire maintained schools are covered under their Hampshire insurance (including public liability) when the school and Hampshire Outdoors guidance are followed. Which includes ensuring the activity is submitted on EVOLVE as an adventurous activity when it involves edged tools or fire lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Hampshire maintained schools, qualified staff delivering Forest School and who are employed directly by the school are covered under their Hampshire insurance (including public liability). If you have any queries, please check with your insurance provider. Please ensure this is placed on EVOLVE as an adventurous activity • Non school employed staff running Forest School Sessions should have their own public liability insurance, minimum of £5m

And Finally...

If you feel that Forest School is the most appropriate route for your school then get in touch with the Forest School Association for more information.

<https://forestschoollassociation.org> For most teachers, we believe there are other appropriate alternatives.

At Hampshire Outdoors we believe that all outdoor learning is beneficial, and finding the approach that best suits your learners, school or nursery is most important. If you need any further help or guidance, please contact us on 01962-876218 outdoor.education@hants.gov.uk