



Introduction to Forest School OCN Level 1



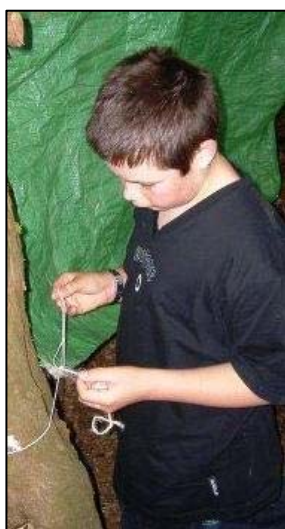
Course Information

What is Forest School?

Forest School is a long term, child-led, continuous learning process that takes place over a period of time using a natural space (not necessarily a Forest!). Forest School originates from Scandinavian educational approaches. The Forest School ethos focuses on approaches that maximise the emotional, social and developmental benefits of education. Practitioners use learning and teaching strategies which raise self-esteem, develop confidence, independence, language and communication skills.

Every Forest School will be unique, depending on the group, site and leader, however there are some key principles:

- **Forest School is a long term, repetitive learning process that uses a natural outdoor space.** It is a specific ethos of learning that focuses on processes rather than products and allows learners time and space to develop at their own rate. Learners develop a strong sense of space through repeated contact with the natural world (ideally woodland but not always) throughout the year and in all weathers.
- **Forest School empowers children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development.** The ethos encourages child-led learning and learning through play. Choice increases enjoyment, participation and motivation. Children are set up to achieve and supported to take appropriate risks through developing trust in themselves and in others.
- **Forest School promotes holistic, individualised learning and development.** It is for all ages and abilities and its ethos is fully inclusive. It is most effective in smaller than class size groups with a high adult to child ratio. The natural environment provides stimulus for all senses, all areas of development and all learning styles; visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.
- **Forest School encourages emotional growth, self esteem, confidence and independence.** It gives learners the time and space to be themselves, find peace and communicate with others in a safe and caring environment. Emotional literacy is actively practiced by adults and children within a Forest School.



- **Forest School is facilitated by qualified Level 3 Forest School Practitioners.** Receiving a nationally recognised Level 3 qualification in Forest School is essential for practitioners to link theory to practice and create the Forest School ethos. Training ensures practitioners provide safe, skilled and appropriate learning experiences. Practitioners build a trusting relationship and make careful observations of the group to then provide well planned, individualised support for each learner.
- **Forest School instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment.** The repetitive ethos builds a deep, instinctual connection to the natural space and reconnects all to their ancient heritage. Being in nature allows learners to observe real life, witness cause and effect and consider our roles and responsibilities towards it.

Forest School Training

Forest School is delivered by qualified practitioners. People from many different backgrounds train in Forest School; teachers, playworkers, rangers, ecologists, artists, learning support assistants, parents and conservation volunteers may all come to Forest School to provide meaningful outdoor learning experiences for the children they work with.

There are 3 levels of training. To provide 'Forest School' the practitioner must have completed a Level 3 Forest School Practitioners Award.

- Level 3 – Forest School Practitioner Award (180 hours)
- Level 2 – Assistant Forest School Practitioner (60 hours)
- Level 1 – Introduction to Forest School (30 hours)



Birchwood Learning - Training Provider

Birchwood Learning is a licensed tutor of the Forest School Training Company (FSTC) one of the leading providers of Forest School training across the UK. Birchwood Learning provides all levels of Forest School training alongside other specialist trainers. All Forest School training courses are accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) and are nationally recognised qualifications. FSTC is a member of the UK Forest School Training Network, and is key in the standardisation and development of Forest School qualifications in the UK. This ensures FSTC training is continually up to date with current UK practice.

FSTC training is delivered with the belief that learning should be hands-on, relevant and flexible to meet learners' needs. Training is designed to set learners up to achieve and given time to consolidate skills and knowledge.

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The OCN Level 1 Introduction to Forest School

OCN Level 1 Forest Skills will give candidates an introduction to and a solid foundation in **understanding the Forest School ethos**. It will develop practitioners' skills and ideas for outdoor learning opportunities and enable candidates to support an existing Forest School. The course content develops practical skills and theoretical understanding thereby increasing practitioners' confidence in working with children in a natural outdoor setting. Many practitioners find that the Level 1 course gives a good foundation before then going on to undertake the Level 3 Forest School Practitioner Award (the minimum qualification level to run a Forest School).

What does the qualification cover?

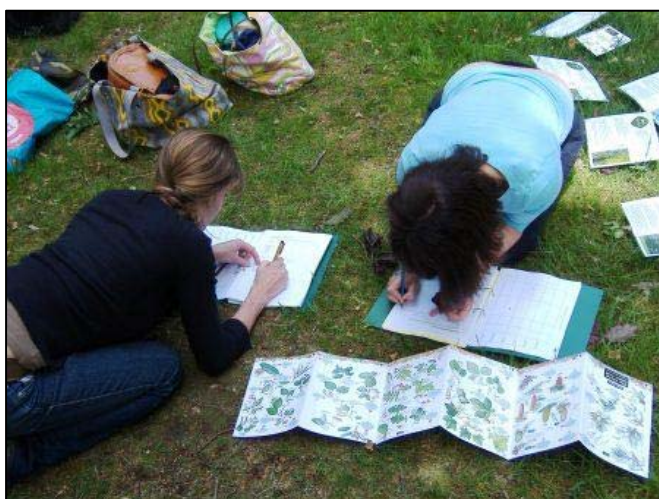
The course is designed to develop practical outdoor skills and theoretical understanding in a range of subjects to provide learners with a solid foundation to the philosophy behind Forest School. The topics covered during the course include;

- Understanding Forest School ethos and its benefits.
- Holistic Development.
- The importance of play and the role of the adult.
- Observing a Forest School Session.
- Risk management and assessment.
- Woodland ecology and environmental impact.
- Woodland species identification and uses.
- Using knots and shelter building.
- Creative activities using natural materials.



Who is the qualification designed for?

The Level 1 training course is designed as an **introduction to the Forest School ethos** and basic skills. It is appropriate for anyone over the age of 16 with an interest in working with children in the natural outdoor environment. No previous knowledge of Forest School or outdoor learning is necessary as the course is designed to be an introduction. The qualification may be particularly relevant to parents or volunteers supporting an existing Forest School run by a Level 3 Forest School Practitioner.



How is the course delivered?

The OCN Level 1 Introduction to Forest School carries 3 credits at Level 1. Level 1 is the equivalent standard of a D-F grade GCSE and 3 credits refer to 30 hours of learning time.

Birchwood Learning delivers these 30 hours via a 2 day intensive training course and a visit to an established Forest School at a later date. There is a small amount of written coursework to independently complete to evidence learning, this is submitted after the training days and visit has been completed.

1. Attend the 2 day intensive training course (please see website for forthcoming dates and locations).
2. Visit an established Forest School (led by a qualified Level 3 Practitioner). Learners need to arrange their own visits after the training course. In Norfolk there is a list of experienced Forest School Mentors who are able to support students visiting their

Forest School for a small charge. Information on this service will be given to learners during the training course.

3. Complete all sections in the workbook and submit evidence by the course deadline (usually 2-3 months after the start date).

The 2 day Intensive Training Course

Birchwood Learning runs Forest School Training across Norfolk at many different locations. Some of the venues we have used include; Holt Hall Field Studies Centre, Whitlingham Country Park, Hickling Broad Nature Reserve, the University of East Anglia and Houghton Hall Estate. All venues have access to appropriate indoor and outdoor spaces. Indoor facilities will be a training room with access to hot drinks and toilets. Outdoor spaces will be a woodland environment. Birchwood Learning runs training all year round and outdoor course components will go ahead in all weathers (unless deemed dangerous).

FSTC offers Forest School training across the UK, please visit their website for details of current courses. www.forestschoolltraining.co.uk

We can come to you!

Birchwood Learning offers organisations, schools or clusters private training courses at a reduced rate. Many organisations or school clusters see this as a more cost effective system when they have a large group of people needing training. Each cohort can be a maximum of 16 practitioners and the course can run from the most convenient and appropriate venue for your staff. Please contact us for further details.

What do our past students say?

"This was very enjoyable and informative training. I will now feel more confident to use my new found skills with the children." – Teacher

"An educational, fast flowing and inspiring couple of days." – W.C. Environmental Educator

"It has been a brilliant course. It has made me question my own practice... I am motivated to develop the outdoor environment in school." – M.H. Teacher

"The most interesting course I have ever been on!" – R.S. Teacher

"This was an excellent course which completely convinced me of the value of outdoor learning, the connection with child development and how it could be translated into school."
– M.C. Freelancer

How to book your place

To view Birchwood Learning's current course availability and costs please view our website or contact us.



How can I prepare for OCN Level 1 Introduction to Forest School?

Ensure you have appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear for a woodland environment. Full waterproofs are recommended all year round in our sometimes unpredictable climate! In cold weather lots of thinner layers will keep you warmer rather than a few thick ones. In warmer weather long trousers made of light fabric are more appropriate than shorts to protect from scratches, nettle stings, ticks etc. Footwear should be functional, comfortable and cover the whole foot e.g. walking boots/shoes. The outdoor practical components of the course are hands-on, so getting muddy or covered in leaves is often inevitable!

No prior knowledge of Forest School is required for the Level 1, however if you do wish to do some research, the following websites may be of interest:

- Forest School Training Co - www.forestschoolltraining.co.uk
- Norfolk Forest School - www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/go/forestschoools
- Forest Education Initiative – www.foresteducation.org
- The Institute for Outdoor Learning - www.outdoor-learning.org
- Children and Nature Network - www.childrenandnature.org

Contact Us



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