



# Forest School Assistant Award OCN Level 2



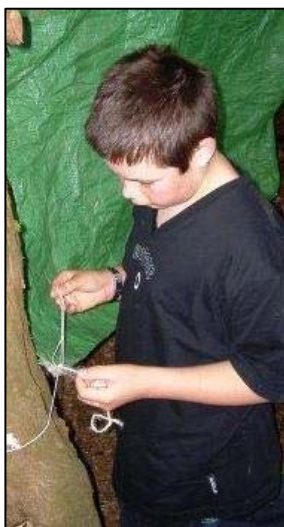
## Course Information

## 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.

## Contact Information:



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**The OCN Level 2 Forest School**

## Assistant Award

OCN Level 2 training is designed for those practitioners wishing to be qualified as assistants at Forest School. It will develop practitioners' skills and ideas for outdoor learning opportunities and enable candidates to fully support an existing Forest School. The course content combines practical skills and theoretical understanding to build practitioners' confidence in working with children in a natural outdoor setting.

### What does the qualification cover?

This OCN course carries a total of 6 credits at Level 2 and consists of 2 units;

- Practical skills for the Forest School Assistant.
- Supporting learning and development at Forest School.

### Practical skills

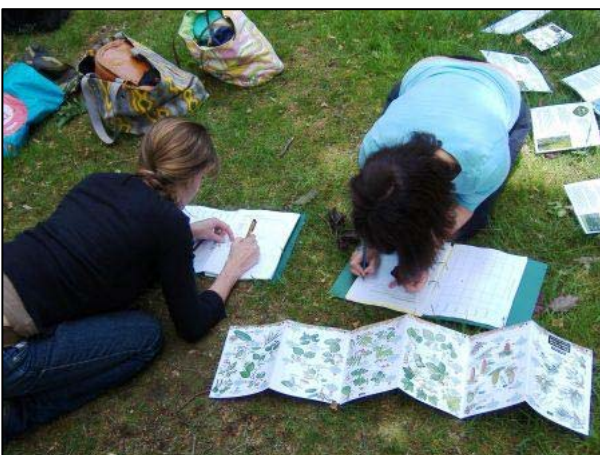
Working safely and practically within a natural environment is key to the effectiveness of Forest School. Woodlands are dynamic systems, rich in learning opportunities and resources. This unit develops skills and understanding to use the potential of woodlands effectively, safely and sensitively to support learning and development within a Forest School context. Topics covered include:

- Introduction to woodland ecology.
- Woodland species identification and observation.
- Environmental impact.
- Health and safety.
- Risk assessment and management.
- Using tools at Forest School.
- Knots and lashings.
- Shelter building.
- Fire lighting and management.
- Using natural resources for learning.

### Supporting learning and development

Forest School supports holistic development and is particularly effective at building confidence and self esteem in children and young people. The philosophy of Forest School is rooted in learning theories, psychology and neural development. Its ethos is formed through a combination of the natural physical environment and the safe, open and trusting community created by the supporting adults. This unit gives an introduction to some of the theoretical components that underpin the Forest School ethos. Topics covered include:

- How Forest School supports learning and development.
- The importance of holistic development.
- The role and benefits of play.
- Self confidence and emotional development.
- Understanding and managing behaviour.
- The role of the adult in supporting learning.
- Assisting with the planning and delivery of 3 Forest School sessions.
- Observing and reflecting on individuals development.



### Who is the qualification designed for?

The Level 2 training course is designed for anyone wishing to be qualified as an assistant at Forest School. It is appropriate for anyone over the age of 18 with experience in working with children or young people. No previous experience of the practical skills or theoretical content is necessary; however students will need access to support an existing Forest School to complete the training. The qualification may be particularly relevant to learning support assistants or helpers, working alongside an existing Forest School Level 3 Forest School Practitioner.



### How is the course delivered?

The OCN Level 2 Forest School Assistant Award carries 6 credits at Level 2. Level 2 is the equivalent standard of an A-C grade GCSE and 6 credits refer to 60 hours of learning time.

Birchwood Learning delivers these 60 hours via a 3 day intensive training course and 2 day practical skills assessments. Candidates also must support an existing Forest School for 3 sessions and there is a small portfolio of written coursework for each unit to independently complete to evidence learning.

1. Attend the 3 day training course (please see website for forthcoming dates and locations)
2. Support an established Forest School (led by a qualified Level 3 practitioner) for at least 3 sessions. Learners need to arrange this themselves after the training course.
3. Complete all sections in the practical skills workbook and answer the short essay questions for the learning and development unit.
4. Attend the 2 day practical skills assessment (usually 3-6 months after the course start date) and submit written coursework.

### The 3 day 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](http://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

*"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 2 Forest School Assistant Award?

All information, materials and equipment will be provided during the training course. However students will be required to provide their own safety boots and outdoor clothing for use during the training. Safety boots are those with a steel or Kevlar toe cap and are indicated as safety wear with a CE mark. These are required as the training course involves using bladed tools and also possibly moving heavy items around the woodland.

Ensure you have appropriate outdoor clothing 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. 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 2, however if you do wish to do some research, the following websites may be of interest:

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

It is also recommended that students investigate established Forest Schools (led by a Level 3 practitioner) that they may be able to support after the training course to complete their qualification.

### Contact Us



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