



What is Forest School?

Forest School is all about getting out into the woods to explore and learn. It was developed in Scandinavia in the 1950's - using a woodland setting as an outdoor classroom as a way of helping young people learn about the natural world. In the 1980's it spread through Denmark as part of their early year's education. Forest School was introduced to Britain in 1995 by Bridgewater College, Somerset. The majority of Suffolk Wildlife Trust staff are trained to level three as fully qualified Forest School leaders.







Forest School uses the natural resources in the woodland and the children's interests to stimulate imaginative activities; children can saw wood, whittle sticks, help to light fires, leap into puddles, climb trees and build shelters.

The child led and child centred activities help children to take risks safely, take care of themselves and others and take responsibility. It leaves lots of room for personalised learning opportunities - children are allowed time and space to explore their own evolving learning interests
eg. study a bug, build a den, climb a tree, hunt for animal tracks and signs.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Forest School runs for a minimum of 6 weeks and ideally spans the seasons with the children visiting their local reserve, woodland or local green space for around 1.5 to 2 hours each week. Whilst Forest School is child and activities are tailored to the children's interests and abilities, we offer a menu of activities around a theme for each session. Each session follows the children's interests and needs, encourages personalised learning and is very flexible.

The programmes are designed to give children a varied experience of the woodland through experimental and hands on tasks and activities. A typical Forest School programme for early years and KS1 is shown overleaf, although it is subject to change depending on the children's interest and how they respond to the woodland environment.

The six week programme for early years and KS1

<p>Week one: Exploring the woods Find the base Practice safety games Collecting activities Free play</p>	
<p>Week two: Textures and touches Meet a tree Rope mobiles Soil painting Free play</p>	
<p>Week three: Animals of the woods What lives in the woods Footprint trails Free play</p>	
<p>Week four: Survival Survival trail Shelter building Free play</p>	
<p>Week five: Special places Tree faces trail Journey sticks Whittling Free play</p>	
<p>Week six: Sounds and celebration Woodland orchestra Free play</p>	

Forest School is suitable for all ages. The above programme is based on early years and KS1. We run Forest School sessions for any age and ability including special schools and Pupil referral units. Tasks and activities are tailored to the needs and skill set of the group.

Outcomes

Research has shown a powerful effect on children's confidence, self-esteem and independence as well as an increase in social interaction and physical skills.

Forest School learning objectives

- Build learners self esteem and confidence
- Become independent learners
- Stay safe and establish boundaries for risk taking
- Show creativity, innovation, motivation and problem solving tailored to individual learning styles