Cambridgeshire Forest School – Learning outside the Classroom

Forest School practice

Forest School is an innovative approach to outdoor education and learning. During regular Forest School sessions, children and young people progress their learning and development through leading their own explorations in woodlands or wild spaces. They engage with the natural world using all of their senses, exploring the environment and developing a deep respect for nature.

If you’re not already familiar with the Forest School approach, this video clip from Teachers’ TV (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=742f94888&x-yt-cl=84503534&v=bAB_OTMwNOs&feature=player_detailpage%20) makes a helpful introduction.

The impact on children’s learning and development

Evidence from research suggests that Forest School sessions impact positively on children’s learning and development, increasing self-confidence, emotional resilience, independence, motivation to learn, teamwork and social and communication skills. These effects are usually seen back in the school classroom or early years provision, building a positive attitude to learning and increasing personal development potential. Progression has also been observed in children’s language, literacy, physical stamina, problem solving skills and knowledge of the natural world.

The origins of Forest School practice

Forest School originates from a Scandinavian approach to learning that highlights the importance and value of children having contact with nature from an early age. Supported by staff trained in the approach, regular Forest School experiences give children the opportunity to learn to assess risk and take part in age-appropriate experiences such as climbing, investigating and exploring the natural environment. Forest School can also contribute to children’s health, helping to support physical exercise and mental well-being and establish healthy behaviours for the future.

Our Forest School vision
Since late 2016, local authority officers from the Early Years and Outdoor Education Services have been working together to consider how to support settings and schools to implement regular Forest School sessions for their children.

We would like Forest Schools to be available for all children and young people to enhance the curriculum, accelerate achievement and bring learning to life. The Forest School ethos provides children and young people with a sense of responsibility as they explore, make discoveries and investigate new mysteries.

Available across Cambridgeshire and the East of England, Forest School sessions will support cross-curricular learning and help develop essential skills that are often transferred back into the classroom. Those taking part in sessions often see an increase in confidence, resilience, motivation, social skills, problem solving and the promotion of independent learning.

A vast woodland is not required! Grounds and natural spaces are utilised to connect children with their local environment.

To hear more about future Forest School professional development events, including conferences and network evenings, please contact us and we will add you to our mailing list.

**Forest School events**

- **Our annual Forest School Conference 2019** will be held on Saturday 27 April 2019 at Wildawood Forest School. The conference is open to early years practitioners, teachers and other professionals who have a passion for Forest School. Delegates will have the opportunity to listen to inspiring keynotes and choice of two workshops. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

- **Termly Forest School Network evenings** are held at various locations across Cambridgeshire, giving all those who have an interest in Forest School the opportunity to share good practice. The next Network evening is held on Tuesday 19 March 2019 at Girton Glebe Primary School.

- **Forest School Qualification training:** Cambridgeshire County Council has been working with huathe to develop a unique way of offering Forest School qualifications in the county. This unique model of training will be ideal for those working in schools and/or settings that may wish to complete different levels of qualifications but still train with their immediate colleagues. This will ensure that everybody receives the same messages and work towards a consistent understanding of the Forest School ethos. [Find out more here.](#)
Services available from Early Years Service

Support packages available for schools and early years settings:

- Support to begin your Forest School journey, e.g. identifying a suitable woodland/wild space, starting your action plan, developing risk benefit assessments
- Reflection on current Forest School practice to further develop quality
- Bespoke team training to develop Forest School knowledge and skills

Settings with early years membership can purchase a Forest School bundle. Please see details on page 10 of the annual Early Years and Childcare Training Programme.

Support for schools is available on a pay-as-you-go basis. Full details are available on page 17 of the annual Early Years and Childcare Training Programme.

The programme can also be accessed [here](#).

If you are interested in hosting a network or wish to support the Forest School vision, please let us know, contact details below.

For a full list of the products and service we offer, and a list of prices please contact the Early Years Service.

**Useful links**

**Contact**

Early Years Service
Email: earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 706133

If you like to receive information regarding Forest School events and training, please email Amanda.Bennett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk to be added to the Forest School distribution list.