Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC

ITC First Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders

Course Manual

For learners starting from November 2026

"Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting."
(Forest School Association)

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Circle of Life: Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders
Content Overview for Online Resources:

Welcome page for registered students:
Policies and Procedures

- Access to Fair Assessment
- Learner Appeals procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Learning Style, Assessment Methods and Plagiarism
- Extension and Special Consideration Policy
- Inclusive Assessment and Academic Integrity Policy (including the use of AI)

CLRs Reading list

- CLR Recommended Reading List
- Great FS texts
- Early Childhood Outdoors recommended books
- How to grow a Forest School from the Roots up

Course documents

- Course Manual
- How to set up a Forest School from the roots up
- CLR Forest School Handbook
- Online content overview
- Unit 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Workbooks (Nov 2026 New Qualification)

UNIT 1 Forest School Programmes and Practical Skills
Unit 1 Overview

- Workbook – Unit 1 Workbook Practical Skills
- Unit Guide – Unit 1: what you must include (tick it and send it with your unit)

Supporting Documents:

- Workbook – Unit 1 Workbook Practical Skills
- Unit 1 Peer signatures document
- Key Processes
- Basic Kit
- Equipment Supplier List

Tools and Crafts

- Basic Saw Use
- Coppicing Pruning Thinning Pollarding
- Drilling at Forest School
- Tool Maintenance
- Basic Knife Use and Fixed Blade Knife
- FSW: Safe Use and Storage of Tools

- Common Poisonous Plants at Forest School
- Uses of Timber
- Tool Progression Indicators (Bishops woods)
- VIDEO - Using Knives and secateurs with Marina – The Outdoor Teacher
- VIDEO – Tool Protocol & Knife sharpening with Ray Mears

Knots and Ropes

- FSA Guidance on Low Ropes (Feb 2025)
- CLR Knots and Swings
- Children's Swings – A Guide to Good Practice
- Ropes, Swings, Dens, Treehouses & Fires
- Ropes
- Using Ropes with all Ages – Maintenance & Safety -The Outdoor Teacher

Fire

- Building a Fire
- Back to Basics Scouts Full Edition
- Scouters guide Campfires Camp stoves
- Fire Principles
- Video – The Fire Circle Routine

Cooking

- FSA Guidance Note Food Safety (April 2025)
- Food Safety in the Outdoors
- Outdoor Cooking Recipe Cards
- Cooking

Practical Health and Safety

- Assessing Risks and Hazards Overview
- Emergency Plan & Procedures (Generic)
- Emergency flow charts
- Casualty Form
- Sample Weather Policy
- Daily Risk Assessment Check List
- Forest School Information: Ticks
- Blank Activity RBA (Editable)
- Blank Generic RBA (Editable)
- Blank Site RBA (Editable)
- Cooking with Fire RBA (Sample Risk benefit assessment)
- Generic Fire RBA
- Generic Ropes, Swings & Nets RBA
- Generic Tools RBA
- Mill Woods Site Risk Assessment
- Shelter Building RBA
- Tree Climbing RBA
  Using Fire Steels RBA
- Using Saws for Discs (Sample Risk Assessment)
- Wild food and Foraging Risk Assessment RBA (Sample Risk Assessment)
- Woodland Games (Sample Risk Assessment)

Plants

- Wildfood and Foraging Risk Assessment RBA
- Common Poisonous Plants that may be found at Forest School by Jon Cree
- Key List of Edible / Green Light Plants

Shelters

- Shelter building sheet
- VIDEO – Small Tarps for Shelter and play

Mud Play

- Making a Mud Kitchen

Songs

- MP3's and M4A's of host of songs!

Unit 2 – Woodland as a Learning Environment

Unit 2 Overview

- Unit Learning Outcomes – ITC Learning Outcomes: Woodland Learning Environment

Research Articles

- Trees and Wellbeing during Covid 19
- Valuing the Mental Health Benefits of Woods
- Unlocking the Forest
- The Natural Choice
- Nature and Well Being Act
- Environmental Dimension of Children's Well Being
- Benefits of green infrastructure
- Forest Trees and Human Health

Ecology and Management

- Woodland Ecology Session and Succession
- Permaculture
- Planting out Young Trees
- Working with the Woodland
- Woodland Legislation
- Woodland Management **Powerpoint**

Ecological Impact and Management Planning (Unit 2, criteria 5.1 and 5.2)

- 3 Year Woodland Management Session Plan
- 12 steps to making a Woodland Management plan
- Environmental Impact Template
- My Forest Site Survey Form
- Woodland Legislation – Bishops Wood

Useful Resources

- Coppicing, Pruning, Thinning & Pollarding
- Monitoring Forest School Sites
- Management Plan Template
- Management Plan Handout

Unit 3 – Learning and Development

Unit 3 Overview

- Workbook – Unit 3 Workbook: Learning and Development
- Outdoor Learning
- Out to Play Scotland
- Tree stories

Research

- A systematic Review of Forest School Literature
- Analyses of Nature Connectedness
- Access and Equity Report
- Attending 12 weekly sessions

- Childhood Experiences
- Forest School for Wellbeing
- Moments not Minutes
- Nature-based Early Childhood Review

FS Principles, ethos and Practice

- Forest School Principles and Criteria for Good Practice
- What is Forest School?
- Four Key Dynamic

Play

- Free Play in Early Childhood
- Learning Playing Interacting
- Loose Parts Play
- Play England Charter for Children's Play
- Playful Learning Guide
- Play in Secondary Schools Ideas & Inspiration
- Play - Government Report 2015
- Play: The Challenges we face at Forest School (Bob Hughes)
- Playwork Primer 2010
- The Return of Play Tim Gill July 2014
- Tina Bruce 10 Principles of Play

Effective Communication

- Effective communication
- Strategies People Use for Handling Challenging behaviour
- I Statements

Video: How we learn – The Brain
Presentation: The Brain
Presentation: Importance of play

Theories of Learning

- Children's development overview
- Learning Styles
  Learning Theories overview
  Schemas and Forest School
- Movement in Play

Useful Documents

- Primitive Reflexes
- Guy Claxton
- Embodiment - Dr Jennings
- Accelerated Learning - Summary
- De Bono - Six Thinking Hats
- More of Me - Full Report
- EYFS Chris Athey Schemas

Student presentations Examples

- Building Learning Power - Guy Claxton
- Forest School Highscope Presentation
- Forest School Steiner Presentation

- Friedrich Froebel 1782-1852
- Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences
- Guy Claxton: Building Learning Power & Forest School
- Howard Gardner
- John Bowlby's Theory on Attachment
- Montessori & Forest School Practice Presentation
- Piaget and Vygotsky
- Reggio Emilia and Forest Schools
- Steiner Presentation
- David Sobel

Social & Emotional & Spiritual Development

- Improving self-esteem and Emotional Intelligence
- The Wheel of Feeling Chart by Kailin Robbs
- Risk Handout
- Virginia Axline 8 Principles
- Risky Play (extract)
- Claire Samways L & D
- 5 Elements of emotional intelligence

Therapeutic Communication

- Therapeutic communication to Improve Behaviours of Challenging Children and Teenagers
- 4 Key Relational Needs – Margot Sunderland

Unit 4 – Planning and Preparation

Unit 4 Overview

- Workbook – Unit 4 Workbook: Planning and Preparation

Forest School History and Key Influences

- History of Forest School
- A History of Environmental Education
- Forest School and Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto by Jon Cree

Forest School & Outdoor Learning Research

- The decline of Play – Peter Gray 2011
- Bringing children closer to nature 2019
- A marvelous opportunity for children to learn 2006
- My School, my Planet 2020
- Health, Place and Nature
- Leadership for embedding in the curriculum.
- Wellbeing benefits
- Take me Out
- UK Chief Medical officer 2019
- No Fear Growing Up in a Risk Adverse Society
- Student Outcomes & Natural Schooling Pathways to Impact 2016
- Summary of Research
- Transforming Outdoor Learning in Schools SCN
- Worcester Forest School Research Academic Journal
- Work on the Wild Side
- Breeze 2018 Report - impact on emotional well-being
- Therapeutic benefits

Preparation for Your Handbook

- FSA Handbook Guidance Notes
- Guidance Notes on the Handbook

Student Handbook Examples:

- Forest School Handbook - Amy
- Forest School Handbook - Lucy
- Forest School Handbook - Jane
- Forest School Handbook - LG
- Forest School Handbook – SD
- Forest School Handbook - ED

Ratios:

- National Guidance Good Practice Ratios & Effective Supervision
- Statutory Framework Staff Child Ratio
- NSPCC Ratios
- East Sussex Off-Site Activities & Educational Visits Supervision Ratio (Non-Hazardous)
- Early Years PG 23
- Brighton & Hove Offsite & Adventurous Activities Guidance V13

Presentations:

- Health and Safety in England
- Health and Safety in Ireland

Unit 5 – Forest School Programmes and Delivery

Unit 5 Overview

- Workbook – Unit 5 Workbook: Delivery

Introduction to Forest School Pilot Sessions

- Key Steps for Training and Guidance for Delivery
- Delivery Observer Assessment Sheet
- Setting up a Forest School
- Kit List for Forest School
- A practical Guide for Facilitating Reflection in the Outdoors

Planning Presentation

- Presentation: Nature Cycles and Nature Centric Models

Session Examples & Curriculum links

- Template 1 Long term
- Template 2 Pre-planning
- Example Session 1
- Example Session 5
- FS and Example Irish Curriculum Links
- Trees mind map

Downloadable Observation Resources

- Observation and Reflection Guidelines
- Observation and questions
- Template 1 Observation
- Template 1 Example
- Template 2 Example

Evaluation

- Measuring wellbeing workshop by Jon Cree
- Template 3 Leuven Scales
- Mood imagery - Erasmus
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire
- Warwick Edinburgh Well-being scales

Forest School Level 3 Programme Leadership
Key Processes, Dates and How to Send Your Work

Guided Learning and Home Study:
The Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders is an ITC-accredited qualification carrying 18 credits at Level 3, made up of 5 units. The Total Qualification Time is 180 hours. This is your Guided Learning Hours (10 days of training) plus home study (about 2 hours a week) to complete your workbooks and run 6 pilot Forest School sessions. You have one year to complete the training.

Suggested order and timing:
- Unit 1: straight after Part 1. Write up everything you can, and complete your three risk benefit assessments (site, activity and generic).
- Unit 2: by Part 2.
- Unit 4 (your Forest School Handbook): before your pilot sessions start. Allow extra time if you are writing a handbook from scratch.
- Unit 3: during and after your pilot sessions, as several questions draw on them.
- Unit 5: after your pilot sessions.
- Your Key Processes and Dates sheet gives the exact dates for your cohort.

Your final deadline is 12 months from the last day of your initial training week

Step 1. Send Unit 1, your three risk benefit assessments and your Peer Signatures Document to Judy (judy@circleofliferediscovery.com) after Part 1.
Please send work in as you go – don't leave it all until the end.

Step 2. Judy marks your work and sends you feedback, usually within 3–4 weeks. If she asks for additions, highlight them in a different colour and resend the whole unit within 10 days.

Step 3. Once Unit 1 has been approved, prepare your 6 pilot sessions (see Guidance for Planning and Delivery on the next page).

Step 4. Run your 6 pilot sessions. Provide a session plan and evaluation for every session, observe at least 3 participants and show how your observations shaped your planning. Take photos, and make sure your observer completes the Delivery Observer Assessment Sheet (Unit 5).

Ongoing: Send each remaining unit as soon as it is finished, and all work before your final deadline.

How to send your work:
- Use your Unit Guide: tick every "You must" box before you send a unit.
- Send each unit whole and finished, with the Student Declaration signed and dated.
- Send everything as email attachments, not links (links expire). Large files: save as PDF or use WeTransfer.
- Subject line: Unit number – your name – your cohort (e.g. "Unit 2 – Sam Smith – November 2026").
- Attach your ticked Unit Guide to the same email, and send it to Judy.
- If the name on your certificate needs to differ from the name you registered with, tell us early – the awarding body needs evidence.

Frequently asked questions:

1. **Expectation of marking time:** We aim to return your work within 3–4 weeks, unless you need to change or add anything. We cannot promise a turnaround time for work sent after your deadline.
2. **Extensions:** Please read our Extension and Special Consideration Policy. If you need more time, email Judy before your deadline. You can have **one free 2-month extension** for any reason. A further paid extension (12 months, **£160**) is only for serious circumstances such as illness or bereavement, agreed case by case. Extensions already agreed with you stay as agreed.

3. **Your Forest School Handbook (Unit 4, criterion 2.1):** Your handbook must be your own work. ITC is clear that submitting an existing handbook or a "group" handbook is not appropriate, even if you share a site with another trainee.

   You don't need to write everything from scratch. If your site already has a Forest School Handbook, you can review and develop it: show your changes in another colour, and sign and date it to show you have reviewed it.

   All session plans and risk benefit assessments must be your own and suitable for your group.

4. **Pilot sessions**: If you are running your sessions at the same site with a fellow FS trainee you will need to plan and lead 6 pilot sessions each. These cannot be shared between two of you. You can however assist each other at the sessions.

5. **Extra help:** If you have any additional needs, please tell us before the course starts or as early as possible, so we can put support in place. You can also show your learning in other ways, such as voice notes, photos, mind maps or a conversation with your tutor.

Your own work and AI: All your work must be your own, in your own words. AI tools must not write your answers for you. Please read our Inclusive Assessment and Academic Integrity Policy, which explains what is and isn't allowed.

Key policies (in your online resources): Extension and Special Consideration; Inclusive Assessment and Academic Integrity; Appeals; Complaints.

Guidance for Planning and Delivery of the Introductory 6 - week school programme

1. You are required to plan and facilitate a minimum of 6 consecutive Forest School sessions for the same small group of children or young people. ITC strongly recommends a group of 8 to 16.

2. Each session should be at least 2 hours long, with as much time on site as possible, a week between sessions, and mostly the same group of young people throughout.

Getting Ready! You will need:

1. A signed-off Unit 1 Practical Skills workbook
2. A current Outdoor First Aid Certificate (you are required to have an appropriate first aid qualification that matches your practice).
3. A current DBS for all adults (police check)
4. Your Forest School Handbook (Unit 4)
5. All your risk benefit assessments
6. An overview of your sessions and the first session plan

Your group:

- Your group may be from your school, youth organisation or home school. You will need some background information on the young people to help you plan appropriately and consider any additional needs.
- You will need to have parental and medical consent and permission to take photographs. Consider where you keep this information to comply with Data Protection Act.
- You will need to be able to communicate what Forest School is with the parents, volunteers and organisation and what the aims are of this programme.

Staffing:

Consider your ratios (legally and based on the children's needs and activities). ITC recommends at least 2 adults if you are working on a school site, and at least 3 if you are working elsewhere, with enough competent adults to carry out your emergency plan. Other adults can be any suitable adult.

Your Forest School Site:

You will need an outdoor site with trees! This can be attached to a school or nearby land. You need to have the permission from the landowner and for any particular activities e.g. fire lighting. Sometimes the trees will need to be checked for their safety.

Forest School Handbook:

You will need to have completed your Forest School Handbook before beginning your introductory sessions. Please follow the Forest School Association Guidance or other documents we provide.

Risk Benefit Assessments:

You need to comply with Health and Safety at all times. You will need to have a site risk assessment in place, do a daily risk assessment each week, and activity or generic activity risk assessments that are signed by you.

Insurance: You must have insurance to cover you. This may be done for yourself or your organisation, or through the school you work with – check that any current insurance covers Forest School Activities (Fire-making, tools, etc.)

Emergency Bag:

It is good practice to carry an emergency bag that contains a first aid kit, medical details, emergency procedures and any other equipment. Make sure this is visible.

FOREST SCHOOL PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

- Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.
- The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
- A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/ manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.
- Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
- Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

- Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education
- Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive,

linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

- Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
- Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
- Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Principle 5: Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

- Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification.
- There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
- Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
- Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.
- Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
- The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

Principle 6: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

- A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
- The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.
- Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.
- Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.

- Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
- Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into ‘scaffolding’ and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

Activity: **Assessed by:**

Date : **Next Assessment due:**

Benefits of the Activity					
Hazard and to whom (children/adults)	Likelihood	Hazard Severity	Risk factor	Control measures to reduce the risk	Residual risk factor

Risk Assessment scoring- Scores of 8 and above cease activity or reassess the control measures

Likelihood		Hazard severity		Risk Factor (likelihood x hazard severity)	
1	Very unlikely	1	Minor injury, scratches, bruises, burns etc.	1-3	Low
2	Unlikely	2	Moderate injury, cuts, grazing, burns etc.	4-7	Moderate
3	Likely	3	Serious- Person requires hospital treatment or time of school/work	8-12	High
4	Very likely	4	Significant, risk of death or loss of limbs/ eyesight etc.	13-16	Very High

Daily risk assessment check list				
Assessed by:				
Date				
Site				
Group				
Activity				
Fire				
Cutting tools				
Games				
Rope work				
Tree felling				
Other				
Weather conditions				
Wind speed				
Risk of environmental injuries, hypothermia/heat stroke				
General site condition. Litter/animal faeces				
Canopy layer risk of falling branches/ dead trees				
Shrub layer, risk of eye hazards				
Ground layer, trip/slip hazards. Poisonous plants/ fungi				
Location identified on SSRA. Grid ref and/or postal address post code				
Mobile phone available and best location identified				
1st aid kit available				
Water available				
Any other hazards identified				

Activity: **Assessed by:**

Date : **Next Assessment due:**

Benefits of the Activity					
Hazard and to whom (children/adults)	Likelihood	Hazard Severity	Risk factor	Control measures to reduce the risk	Residual risk factor

Risk Assessment scoring- Scores of 8 and above cease activity or reassess the control measures

Likelihood		Hazard severity		Risk Factor (likelihood x hazard severity)	
1	Very unlikely	1	Minor injury, scratches, bruises, burns etc.	1-3	Low
2	Unlikely	2	Moderate injury, cuts, grazing, burns etc.	4-7	Moderate
3	Likely	3	Serious- Person requires hospital treatment or time of school/work	8-12	High
4	Very likely	4	Significant, risk of death or loss of limbs/ eyesight etc.	13-16	Very High

Site Risk Assessment Location: **Assessed by:**

Date : **Next Assessment due:**

Site Location grid reference:

Benefits of using the Site					
<u>Hazards and risks</u>. Consider these things: Boundaries, Tree Layer, Shrub Layer, Field Layer Trees likely to be climbed, Water areas, ponds/ditches, Buried hazards such as barbed wire and old metal/broken glass etc. Public access, dog walkers, Forestry work/vehicles, Access to emergency services, Known poisonous/hazardous species, such as snakes, ticks, wasp/bees nests, hazardous plants, Any other hazards....					
Hazard and to whom (children/adults)	Likelihood	Hazard Severity	Risk factor	Control measures to reduce the risk	Residual risk factor

Risk Assessment scoring- Scores of 8 and above cease activity or reassess the control measures

Likelihood		Hazard severity		Risk Factor (likelihood x hazard severity)	
1	Very unlikely	1	Minor injury, scratches, bruises, burns etc.	1-3	Low
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3	Likely	3	Serious- Person requires hospital treatment or time of school/work	8-12	High
4	Very likely	4	Significant, risk of death or loss of limbs/ eyesight etc.	13-16	Very High

SITE APPRAISAL FORM

(adapted from Scottish Forestry's forms including Guidance for Landowners)

When commenting, you may wish to rank each consideration from 1 (very poor) to 6 (excellent) Remember that many things are not permanent; think about how easily changes could be made to improve an aspect for security, wellbeing or learning.

As you complete the forms, consider what elements require a discussion with the landowner or manager.

ACCESS - In terms of access it is important that the group can enter and leave the site with relative ease. For example, if the ground is too tricky to negotiate then it may be necessary to look elsewhere.

CONSIDERATION	Comment
Is the site within **walking distance** or will it is necessary to request that parents drop off and pick up children from the woods?	
Look for **safe parking/drop off and assembly points including for emergency access** within or just out with the greenspace. Consider other access to the woods too, e.g. by walking or by bicycle. • Are there any locked gates, etc.? • Do neighbouring landowners need to be consulted regarding access arrangement?	
Think about the **network of paths:** Does this exist? If not, how easy is it to walk across the area, especially for pre-school children, or staff/parents with buggies?	
Think about the **ground cover** – leaves, grass, needles, heather. Or is it very boggy, or have too many "inhibitor" plants such as brambles and nettles? Remember this will change with the seasons. Will thinning be needed in the summer?	

Boundaries – are there natural boundary features within the area you want to be, e.g. a line of trees, a hedge, path, etc? Will you need a marker system to identify boundaries?	
Think about a **designated place of safety** in the event of a serious incident. Is this going to be your setting or another facility that is nearby?	
Is there a **suitable gathering place or shelter** where equipment is put and snack is organised? Is the shelter natural or man-made or will you need to provide temporary shelter such as a tarp, tipi, parachute or tent? Will this need to include a place for a child to nap?	
Are **public toilets nearby** and are these suitable? Informal toileting options – seclusion, ability of the site to cope with human waste or will you need to take all away? Will you need to erect a toilet tent or hang a tarp for privacy or do nature features offer this? Do you need a place for nappy changing?	

SITE CHARACTER - This is how the place feels. Ideally it should have a feeling of "wildness" about it. Do remember that even small places can feel wild and isolated for a young child.

CONSIDERATION	**Comment**
Traffic noise, including that from air or rail transport or industrial operations	
Mix of trees: young, mature, different species	
Mature trees, especially those with limbs suitable for low level tree climbing and for rope swings and structures	
Young trees for coppicing and shelter building	
Shrubs for hiding, den building, hanging things on	
Stumps for standing on, using as a table, mixing potions in	
Fallen trees for climbing on, walking along	
Open canopy and cover – glades of light	

Variety of plants and fungi	
Availability of sticks and other loose materials on the ground	
Presence of stones, rock outcrops	
Multi-sensory variety: sights, sounds, smells, shapes, colours	
A variety of places: enclosed, open, to hide, roll, sit, have physical challenge, be quiet, a good view, etc	
Evidence of wildlife. Opportunities to watch wildlife.	
Presence of water, e.g. stream, river, loch, bog/wetland, ditches, sea, etc. and safe access to it.	
Terrain– ideally a mix of flat and sloped areas with dips and hollows.	
Think about the site aspect (north or south facing) and when the sun reaches the slope or whether it is in shade during your session.	
Are there historical or archaeological remains on the site or nearby, e.g. old walls, buildings, ditches, tracks. Are there any restrictions around these places?	
Ability of the site to cope with the frequency of your visits and numbers in your group so that environmental impact is minimised.	

POTENTIAL HAZARDS - Think about whether these are manageable and the level of risk posed. What can be done to enable visits to go ahead? Bear in mind the risks may also be seasonal. Think about "heads, shoulders, knees and toes" when looking for hazards at different levels in the woodland canopy.

CONSIDERATION	**Comment**
Litter – including drug paraphernalia and sharp objects	
Standing dead trees or dead wood in trees. Do you need an aboriculturalist to check your trees and provide advice? Check with your council or the landowner if they can advise	
Water – location, feature, ease of access. Will this require measures to	

prevent young children from accessing unsupervised?	
Steep drops	
Animals, e.g. excessive midges, ticks, livestock, dogs and dog mess, nesting birds, use of wood by ponies and riders	
Quantity and type of potentially harmful plants – ask owner or environmental professional for advice here, if needed	
Security of the area – think about whether structures and children's creations are likely to remain or be removed/destroyed. How important is this? Are crime prevention measures in place if needed?	
The amount and type of: • Passers by • Other users – who else uses the site and is it appropriate for children to be playing there? • Degree of seclusion needed – consult your local crime prevention officer, if necessary	
Power lines and electricity substations: location and possible ease of access by children	
Site work by landowner: tree felling, footpath improvement, grass cutting, spraying, timber operations and their aftermath. How frequently are these likely to occur?	
Wifi and mobile phone connectivity. Note location of any blackspots.	
Nearby industry which may create pollution (noise, air, land, water, etc.)	
Location of nearest GP surgery and hospital	

Landowner's permission

Once you have identified a suitable site, you need to find out who owns or manages the land and to get in touch.

The information from the site appraisal forms can be used to note the key points that need discussing with the owner or manager. For example, there may be some maintenance work needed prior to the site being suitable or a matter that requires clarification. It is important that you engage positively and proactively with the landowner or manager and explain clearly and fully what you hope to achieve by using their woodland.

Forest Kindergarten groups have a responsibility to treat the woodland environment with care and respect. There may be matters that have not been identified in the site appraisal which the landowner knows about. It is important to avoid any conflict with any other planned activities on the land. You need to go through the matters raised in the site checklist below. You need to ensure that the landowner is fully aware of your intentions and has the detail in writing so that you have a shared understanding of the agreed expectations.

- With the right to use a woodland, comes the responsibility of caring for it. Whilst at the Forest Kindergarten, the staff and children can be, at the very least, extra eyes and ears:
- Report immediately any concerns: overflowing litter bins, vandalism, lots of dog mess
- Discuss the stewardship work your group could do. This may be planting bulbs or trees, creating habitat piles and so on
- Make connections with any volunteer groups that use the woodlands
- Do a two-minute litter clean up every visit
- Follow the 'Leave Less Trace Nature Play Principles' The Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland (OWLS) organisation has *Guidance for Landowners*. You can download this from their website. It also has information about the 'Leave Less Trace Nature Play Principles' which are useful for developing a nature play ethic. It also has information about actions Forest Kindergarten groups and landowners can take to minimise the impact of the sessions.
- **Insurance** If you work in a local authority run early learning and childcare setting, then you will need to check what your local authorities' policies and guidance about insurance for outdoor and woodland activities. Private or partner provider settings will need to check their own insurance. You will have to also ensure that you have all of your activity and site risk benefit assessments in place.
- https://www.owlscotland.org/home/

SETTING UP A FOREST SCHOOL: THINGS TO CONSIDER

You (see Lead Person below)

You are the most important person in you Forest School - without you it can't happen. Do you have what you need to feel confident and safe - risk assessments in place? Emergency policies and procedures? Equipment to stay warm and dry? Confidence to lead your helpers? Confidence to support the children's learning when it is risky or the play theme is on the edge?

Staff preparation

As with anything that's new there is always a certain amount of apprehension. Plan well, address concerns, but most importantly remember that getting into the woods is worthwhile and benefits the children.

School/setting/teachers:

Is the school on board - will it support you when, for example, parents are difficult? Are you working within setting policy? Do the teachers, TAs and MDAs understand why you're doing Forest School? Is there somewhere you can store/dry/wash equipment

Frequency of woodland visits

Ideally, the children need regular and frequent visits over a period of time. Some nurseries take the whole class to the woods. Others take a group and have blocks of sessions that ensure all children get an opportunity to visit the woods during the course of the year. Some make the sessions opt-in by children.

Parents:

Do they understand why Forest School is being run? Do they know when so they can send the right gear? Have they a leaflet with dates to keep? Can you meet with them and talk it through? When will they have opportunity to ask questions? Can they come along and join in? How will you manage complaints about mud etc.? How can you reassure them that the children are safe? How can you reassure them that this is in their child's best interests?

Helpers and supporters:

Volunteers? staff? teachers? TAs? If you are the leader you need overall say so at the Forest. Will this

be easy with the helpers you have?
Are the helpers adhering to school policy (as well as Forest School policy) CRB? Helper leaflet?
Having a consistent core group. Older volunteers?

Children:

Who? Why that group? What age? What ratio will you need? Can they walk to the woodland? Iis the site suitable for the age group?

Ratios

Follow your local authority & School/nursery guidelines. Risk assess how many adults should accompany children keeping a balance between safety and too much adult presence to hamper the freedom that children need to become independent learners. A minimum of two staff members is strongly recommended regardless of group size.

Management:

Does the route to the wood work? Is it within an acceptable walking distance for the age of the children? Can the children get on the bus in their overalls? Can you manage to get latecomers to the session?

Transport

If possible try and find woodland that is within walking distance of your setting. If this is not possible, then consider asking parents to drop children off at the site and pick them up from there. In this situation, consider whether a staff car is needed for emergency purposes. If this is the case, check that the car insurance includes ‘business purposes’ and ensure the insurance company knows about the possibility that children may be transported. Appropriate car seats will also be required. Include these details in your risk benefit assessment.

Environmental impact:

What will be the impact of your visits to the woodland? How will the environment change? What will happen to areas of mud? Bluebells? To animal homes? What about the impact of your voices? Can you rotate the site so that the most heavily used areas have a break? Do members of the public/ other Forest Schools use your site? How will you protect wildlife from their visits? Recognising the ecological impact of everything you do - soap, rope, equipment,

Woodland:

Do you have the land owners permission? Are the trees suitable sizes for the activities? What are the affordances of the space for you? Will parts of it be unusable at particular times of year? What flora and fauna do you need to look out for? If cutting wood is this being done with respect for the trees? Impact on top and subsoil

Equipment:

What do you need? How will you get it to the woodland? How will you decide what you need each

visit?

The lead person (Scottish Forest Kindergarten Trainer Manual)

Have a lead person for each woodland visit. This staff member ensures the planning and preparations have been undertaken to make each visit run smoothly. If this job is rotated then put together a checklist of what needs to happen.

Example checklist:

- ✓ A rucksack or buggy with the essential (and other) equipment has been checked and is ready to go
- ✓ Daily risk benefit assessment completed
- ✓ Weather forecast checked
- ✓ Appropriate ratios of adults to children have been organised
- ✓ Agreement from nursery manager that it's fine to go
- ✓ List of children and volunteers (see registration form)
- ✓ Provision for snacks, drinks and infection control has been made
- ✓ Volunteers have been welcomed and briefed
- ✓ The children and adults have suitable clothing and footwear
- ✓ Rules or expectations shared with the group
- ✓ Site check undertaken
- ✓ Base established in woods

Whilst on the visit:

- Ensure everyone knows behaviour expectations and boundaries.
- Do head counts.
- Base is established at the site.
- Jobs are assigned as needed. The person overseeing snack should not do the litter pick or any picking up of any dog mess.

Back at nursery/school:

- Thank volunteers and have informal conversations with parents/carers as usual about their child.
- Any follow up paperwork completed.
- Check equipment, dry and store until next visit. Repair or replace any equipment as needed.
- Ensure any accidents, near misses, first aid and incidents are recorded on appropriate forms and that relevant people are informed as required. Update risk benefit assessments. Follow up
- Set aside time the following day to review session with children, e.g. through big book planners, photos, creating story books or other methods. Think about what worked well and what would be even better.
- Integrate the experience into the wider life of the nursery – every week.
- Back link the experiences to the Curriculum and integrate possible lines of development into the

plans for the nursery/school – could be indoors, outdoors or on the next woodland visit.
- File or upload the observations and make reflections.

EQUIPMENT TO TAKE (FROM SCOTTISH FOREST KINDERGARTEN MANUAL)

Always take the following items with you:

- Mobile phone, with relevant phone numbers pre-loaded and fully-charged
- Suitable first aid kit which matches levels of training, the environment and the advice of your setting or local authority
- A list of participants, including any medical conditions and allergies (do they need medication and how will it be administered?)
- Emergency contact details and procedures
- Bottle of water, clean enough to drink
- Emergency snacks or food
- Tissues

Other useful supplies There are no rules here. Below is a list of common items that you may wish to take or trial:

- Bags for rubbish
- List of expectations that have been agreed and shared with everyone
- Toilet equipment – depends on approach to toileting as to what you will take
- A whistle (check children know the calling sound)
- High-visibility vests for adults to wear, especially if walking near roads in the dark
- A mat to sit on or portable seat
- A few simple resources, e.g. magnifiers, field guides, white sheet, etc.
- A fully-charged tablet, iPad or similar
- Hand wipes
- *Spare clothing*

Adapted from the advice contained in Education Scotland document *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland* (2011)

Example of an equipment list

Contact arrangements

- Fully charged mobile phone for each staff member with relevant phone numbers, that has reception on site
- Daily off-site register completed & details left with administrator/ manager
- Daily site check form

Litter/dog mess management

- Heavy duty bin liner bags
- Sturdy gloves for adults and children
- Plastic bags for small quantities of rubbish created by the group
- Dog mess bags
- Dog mess marking system
- Litter pickers

Miscellaneous items

- Spare clothes
- First aid bag
- Sunscreen/insect repellent
- iPad or tablet
- Any necessary medication for a specific child - follow your setting policy for administration & storage

Snacks and drinks

- Warm flask of drink on cold days
- Spare drinking water
- Snack plus extra!

Shelter

- Bothy bag, tipi or tarp system
- Fleece blanket (for warmth)
- Space blanket (emergencies)

Hand hygiene bag

- Plastic bag for paper towels
- Bottle/canister of warm water, soap, paper towels
- Hand wipes for emergency use
- Alcohol rub (for adults)
- Tissues

Toilet bag plus portable toilet/potty

- Toilet paper in plastic bag
- Biological waste bags
- Travel potty or toilet
- Tarp or other means of ensuring privacy

Learning items

- Magnifying glasses
- Nature ID charts
- Rope/hammock/other
- Other specific items

Children's backpacks

- Snack
- Drink
- Portable seat
- Spare hat, gloves, etc.

Children's clothing and resources

- The children need to be involved in the preparations and have every opportunity to develop confidence and independence. Each child can carry:
- Their own drink and snack. The children should put any unwanted food, drink and litter back in their back pack or bag or put it in a bin. Avoid collecting rubbish as an adult but encourage each child to take responsibility.
- A portable seat – important for insulation on cold, damp ground
- Extra clothes such as a hat, gloves, etc., if these are not being worn.
- Their own treasures that they find.
- A fully-charged tablet, iPad or similar

Adapted from the advice contained in Education Scotland document - Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland (2011).

Equipment: Have your kit ready. It is also important to stress which equipment may vary according to season and children's interests and which are stock items.

Flag up: Prior to leaving for the session, the leader should ensure the administrator/manager at the centre has details of group including the adult's mobile phone numbers, the route travelled to and from the site, the grid reference and other site information.

Resources for learning: As much as possible, advocate the use of nature and naturals materials found within your woodland site. Nature is the main resource! However, a few magnifying glasses, identification charts and other props for investigating and discovering can be an asset.

General principles for what to wear:

- Aim to keep temperatures even across the body.
- Ensure you are wearing layers of clothing. It's the air trapped in and between the layers that insulate and provide heat.
- Avoid wearing denim jeans which get cold and heavy when wet.
- Cotton is not a good base layer for this reason in winter.
- Wool jumpers or synthetic fleece work well underneath a durable wind and waterproof jacket and dungarees.
- Wear thick socks, gloves and hat. Mittens keep hands warmer than gloves with fingers.
- Wear sturdy waterproof boots or wellies. These should be large enough to let a child wear thick socks and sole inserts to insulate. There should be wiggle room for the toes.
- Wear clothing that fits properly and is not too small or too big.

Good features to look for in outdoor clothing:

- Soft fleece collar with an adjustable hood on jackets
- Zip should have a flap on the inside to protect the child from being hurt when the zip is closed. Or show the child how to pull up a zip carefully!

- Jackets should cover the waistbands of trousers.
- The trousers should cover the boots and have elastic or similar at the legs so that water is not let in even if the child jumps in puddles.
- Detachable hood that will come off if it gets caught on something.
- Machine washable. Some outdoor clothes should not be put on a spin cycle. Wash outdoor clothing as little as possible.
- Wool socks are best as they absorb moisture and stay warm when damp
- Children's boots should be sturdy and have heels for a better grip.
- Wide-brimmed rain hats like sou'westers ensure that rain runs over the back of the collar.
- Wide-brimmed sunhats are needed for sunny days. Baseball caps are not ideal as the neck can get burned. Have ones with a cloth that protects the neck.

Visibility helps:

Black, brown, green, grey and other earthy camouflage colours are not good for children from a safety standpoint. A child who is lost is very hard to spot in such colours. It also makes it easier for you to keep track of the child when outdoors. Remember to follow the *Highway Code* for walking in a group and expectations around being visible to traffic.

Bring extra socks and plastic bags. If a child steps in a puddle, you can replace their socks and put a plastic bag between the sock and the wet shoe.

DOGS

Dogs are often encountered both on and off a lead. Through role play and acting out, children can learn appropriate behaviour around a dog. Practitioners can make a pretend dog using a piece of string and a stick to symbolise a dog on a lead. The children can then be taught how to keep themselves safe by following the Blue Cross advice.

Who let the dogs out? (Game)

The purpose of this game is to practice what to do if a dog off a lead bounds up. An adult is the dog inside the circle of standing children. Everyone says 'Who let the dogs out?' and the adult has to go up to a child and go 'Woof. Woof. Woof-Woof!' The child should follow the Blue Cross advice and:

- Stand still
- Make no noise
- If you are carrying food or toys, drop them away from you
- Fold your arms
- Look away from the dog
- Move away slowly. Never run.

(https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/be-safe-dogs)

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES AND GETTING LOST

You will need to ensure your missing child procedures include reference to the protocol when off-site and are practised regularly. In theory a child should not get lost, given adequate supervision and frequent head counts. However, many children of all ages do fear getting lost, or being left behind. It is important to practise strategies such as:

- Being able to say their name and setting.
- Hugging a tree — so they do not wander.
- Ways of keeping warm.
- Ways of attracting attention: being seen & heard.

How children react when lost or separated from a group is linked to their development.

For example, toddlers around the age of twelve to thirty-six months may not even be aware they are

lost. They are prone to wandering around and have little or no orientation skills. They often hide when scared and will not be judicious about where they lie down to sleep.

In early childhood, as children grow and develop, their curiosity about the world means they can be easily distracted. They will be aware of being lost and may become afraid, trying to find their way home. They are mobile and can cover significant distances but may not recognise landmarks in unfamiliar places.

Between the ages of three and six children need simple and clear strategies for action, that improve their sense of security. They need to understand why to do something in a particular way.

The following games can be played to help children learn what to do when lost, which is to:

- Find a tree to hug and be their special tree;
- To build a nest of sticks and other material to sit on;
- To decorate the tree and nest with natural items but also things in their pockets or bags.

Children must know and be reassured that adults will always come looking for them and will not stop looking for them until they are found.

FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

(FROM THE ITC INDICATIVE CONTENT, UNIT 4, CRITERION 2.1)

FS Handbook should include the following documents (with reference to appropriate legislation) – please note, this can be cross referenced from other assessment criteria. Your handbook must be your own work: you can review and develop existing documents, but submitting an existing or "group" handbook is not appropriate.

1) **Contents**
2) **Declaration of review date**
3) **Declaration the Handbook has been read by all supporting adults with a regular role**
4) **Vision statement** for your own Forest School reflecting the Forest School Ethos and Principles (to include the pedagogy of Forest School and the role of play and choice)
5) **Policy statements and procedures** which arise from them, to include the following (not limited to):

Environmental Behaviour

- Ecological Impact
- Landowner`s Agreement
- Woodland Management

Equality

- Including Prevent Duty where appropriate

Health & Safety

- Accident & Emergency
- Cooking including food hygiene
- COSHH
- Extreme Weather
- Fire
- First Aid
- Insurances and insurance limitations
- Manual Handling
- Risk Management
- Risk Assessments
- Risk Benefit Analysis

- Tools
- Transport
- Welfare inc. clothing, PPE, toileting, food & drink

Safeguarding

- Anti-bullying
- Confidentiality
- Child/vulnerable adults protection
- Data Protection and personal data handling/ ICO
- DBS
- Disclosure/accusation
- Lost or missing child
- Social Media
- Staff, ratios, roles and responsibilities
- Visitor Protocol

Forest School Risk Benefit Assessments appropriate to client group including individual/special needs and should include (*not limited to*):

- Camp fires
- Camp fire cooking
- Collecting Natural Materials
- Den Building
- Ropes
- Site
- Tools
- Weather

Stakeholders *i*nclude:

- Landowner/land manager
- Management Team
- Neighbours
- Organisational Partners
- Other site users
- Participants
- Parents/Carers
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Any other interested parties

12 STEPS TO MAKING A WOODLAND/SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. **FIND A WOOD OR OUTDOOR SPACE** – could be part of the school grounds.

If you haven't got a site, then base it on somewhere you'd like to work.

Do the Site Appraisal Form

2. GET PERMISSION FROM THE OWNER /MANAGER

Check if there is there an existing management plan or an idea of what the owner/managers objectives are? Ensure your plan aligns with this and the law!

3. CHECK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS/RESTRICTIONS

These are put in place to protect particular species or habitats, such as TPO's LNR'S NNR's National parks SSSI's etc.

https://magic.defra.gov.uk/ for UK.www.npws.ie/protectedsites/county for Ireland.

Any historical features for protection or consideration?

4. START TO WRITE THE PLAN.

You could use the management plan proforma…

(If there is any existing plan or any environmental designations, ensure your plan fits in with this.) Eg. Management plan for Mill Wood, Park Lane, Laughton, East Sussex. Location – part of Laughton Greenwood Community Woodland. Managed by Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC. Marina Robb 07*********. This is a 10-acre mixed broad leaves and coniferous woodland. It is surrounded by 200 acres of other similar woodland. It is used primarily as a forest school space for training and working with various groups approx. 100 days per year. It has a permanent group shelter, compost toilets and storage shed. It has no environmental designations but shows some ancient woodland indicator species such as English bluebells and wild service trees. The purpose of this plan is to ensure the woodland remains a sustainably resource for running groups for educational, wellbeing and therapeutic work.

5. **SKETCH/DRAW A MAP OF THE WOODS/WILD AREA** -Show any paths, fences, water features, hazards etc. Consider areas of impact such as shelter building area, fire site etc. Can you involve the young people in mapping?

6. **SURVEY THE TREES- CHECK FOR SAFETY**- Are there any dead, dying or dangerous trees in the areas where the children will be spending a lot of time. Also compile a list of tree species, quantity/percentage etc. type of tree i.e. Standard, sapling, coppice, veteran. Approx age/height

7. **DO AN ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT** – Consider what the positive and negative impacts are when working with groups in this area. How can you reduce the negative impact and ensure it remains sustainable in the long term.

8. **DO A BASIC SURVEY OF FLORA & FAUNA**- bug hunts, bird spotting, simple id skills and games. 20 species minimum.

9. INPUT DATA YOU HAVE COLLECTED AND PLOT ON MAP WHERE RELEVANT

Depending on how much information you've gathered you may need more than one map.

10. THINK OF IDEAS TO HELP IMPROVE/MAINTAIN THE BIODIVERSITY

Such as planting trees or allowing more 'wild areas.' Perhaps buying in firewood to ensure not overusing of deadwood. If you are in a school field perhaps bird boxes, hedgehog boxes and or habitat piles, fencing off or zoning areas, ponds, boggy wetland areas, bird hide, feeders, path creation, tree/hedge planting. Consider Biosecurity, i.e. not introducing invasive species and or disease

11. MAKE A 3 YEAR PLAN BASED ON THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

AND YOUR IDEAS TO IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY. This could be done seasonally, eg. Year 1 spring.... summer...autumn...winter... Year 2....

12. **MONITOR AND RECORD WHAT YOU ARE DOING.** - Keeping a log of the different species and what's happening throughout the year, taking photos from fixed points can be really useful in terms of monitoring impact over time and at different times of year.

CONSIDER WAYS IN WHICH THE CHILDREN /YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE INVOLVED

Useful websites

Other useful websites

ISPOT - for help with ID, RSPB, Woodland Trust – resources to help with identifying trees Local Wildlife trusts Contact local fungi, invertibrates, mammal, bird groups for advice/help on surveying.

UK- Forestry commission www.forestry.gov.uk
Ireland- National Parks and Wildlife Service www.npws.ie

VERY IMPORTANT!!!

Also ensure you familiarise yourself with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in the UK and the Wildlife Act in Ireland as these are the underpinning legislations for nature conservation and biodiversity in each country. Particularly in relation to the protection of birds and their nests, bats as well as certain fauna and flora and the introduction of invasive species.

When foraging resources. The 4 ‘F’s. Flowers, fruit, fungi and foliage are generally what you are allowed to forage although not in some cases. Check local areas and also seek permission from the land owner.

Environmental impact assessment

IMPACT MATRIX

	AREA IMPACTED ON					
ACTIVITY	Ground layer	Field layer	Shrub layer	Canopy layer	Footpaths, Nesting birds, Dead wood Etc.	Management notes to reduce impact
Eg. Fire lighting						

WOODLAND(SITE) MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR .....

Woodland/Site Name and location.....Address/Postcode/what3words

Owned by..... Phone no.....

Managed by..... Phone no.....

Existing management plan..... (Include any Environmental designations or Historical features.) Is it a Public or Private site?

Type of site/woodland .....Size acres/hectares

Any infrastructure such as paths, shelters, toilets. Also Ponds/Streams or other water features

Comment on previous, current, and future use

Map of the site

Map of the wider area (if relevant)

TREE SURVEY

- Involve the students with ID skills

List the trees/hedges and bushes either as an estimated % or listing individuals. Also describe what rough age/height/condition that the trees etc. are. Eg. Dead, Veteran, Mature, Sapling, Standard/Coppiced/Pollarded

Tree/shrub Species	Number of trees/shrubs	Rough age/height/condition	Management notes. Is a tree safety assessment required? Any signs of disease?

FLORA AND FAUNA SURVEY

- Involve the students with ID skills

What plants and animals live here? bug hunts, bird spotting, simple id skills and games. 20 species minimum. This could also include wildflowers, butterflies/moths, mosses, mammals, reptiles or anything living wild there.

Birds	Mammals	Fungi	Wildflowers	Minibeasts	Etc.

Environmental impact assessment

	AREA IMPACTED ON					
ACTIVITY	Ground layer	Field layer	Shrub layer	Canopy layer	Footpaths, Nesting birds, Dead wood Etc.	Management notes to reduce impact
Eg. Fire lighting	x	x			x	Only build the fire in one designated place or use a fire pit etc. etc.
Bug hunting						

POSITIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

To help maintain and improve the site as well as reduce the negative impacts we have on the land we intend to .....

[Ideas to help improve or maintain biodiversity. Must be in keeping with existing management plans such as planting trees or allowing more 'wild areas'. Perhaps buying in firewood to ensure not overusing of deadwood. Maybe bird boxes, hedgehog boxes and or habitat piles, fencing off or zoning areas, ponds, boggy wetland areas, bird hide, feeders, path creation, tree/hedge planting, litter picking, the list goes on!]

3 YEAR PLAN BASED ON THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND YOUR IDEAS TO IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY.

This could be done seasonally, eg. Year 1 spring.... summer...autumn...winter... Year 2....

YEAR	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter	Notes
1					
2					
3					

Additional Maps to show specific things/data

Map 1.1 Bird and bat box locations

Map 1.2 Wildflower area

Fixed point photography ETC.

MONITORING AND RECORDING

We will monitor this by.....

Keeping a log of the different species and what's happening throughout the year, taking photos from fixed points can be really useful in terms of monitoring impact over time and at different times of year.

WOODLAND VISITS — A QUICK SUMMARY

- Find a suitable wood that your setting can use on a regular and frequent basis. Complete the site appraisal form.
- Seek permission to use it and get agreements in place about management and access.
- Check that you and the owner/management have appropriate insurance in place.
- Do a risk benefit assessment of the area you will be using.
- Work out how the group will get to the woods: walking; parent drop-off; public transport or minibus.
- Inform and involve parents. Find extra adults to assist with the sessions. Remember that 1- to-1 informal approaches often work well. Make sure they know what to expect.
- Prepare the children.
- Set up systems and routines for the woodland visits.
- Ensure everyone knows their role. Have a designated lead person for each visit.

Do a site check prior to each visit and remember to dynamically risk assess throughout the session. Have alternatives and cancellation procedures in place if forecast is particularly poor.

Going to the woods

- Keep a close eye on all children and their well-being and engagement.
- Let the children have freedom to play, explore and discover independently. There is no need for structured activities unless it particularly fits with something the children have been interested in or there's a special event.
- When it comes to risky activities, trust your children. They will rarely do anything beyond their ability if they have been given time and space to assess and consider what they can do. You know your children. You know the importance of free play and the value of meaningful, sensitive interactions with children.
- The more you visit the woods, the greater your own and everyone else's ability to read, assess the risks involved and respond appropriately to what's happening.
- Avoid putting a child into a risky situation such as helping them up a tree. Also have the expectation they can get themselves out of anything they get into! Sometimes help will be needed.
- Occasionally accidents will happen, and this is an inevitable part of childhood. Ensure that you have policies and procedures to deal with this.

Follow up interests back in the nursery and vice versa.
Ensure on-going dialogue between staff and with children and parents to find out how the visits are going and to manage concerns raised.
Enjoy the experience and have fun ☺.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Our communicated message is made up of:

Words: 7%
Tone of voice: 23%
Facial expression: 35%
Body Language: 35%

The more honest we are, the more our tone of voice, facial expression, and body language will 'match' our words, the clearer the message will be. ' Mixed messages' come about when our body language betrays the insincerity of our words, e.g. trying to be nice when we are feeling irritated.

Honesty and authenticity, together with clear direct language is key to effective communication.

Tone of Voice – 23 %	
Authoritarian/non-assertive	*Assertive messages*
Shouting (loss of control) Angry tone (reacting, loss of power) Sarcastic (afraid to confront directly) Pleading (no expectation of obedience) Threatening (untrusting) Jolly (dishonest) Over-friendly (sugaring the pill)	Level Ordinary Matching true feeling Matter of fact Trusting Clear enunciation of words even

Facial Expression – 35%	
Authoritarian/non-assertive	*Assertive messages*
Pleading eyes (asking permission) Searching looks (giving responsibility to young person) Forced smile (placating) Angry eyes (threatening) Raised eyebrows (lack of trust) Tight – lipped (without true feeling) Wrinkled nose (disgust) Keeping eye contact (inviting argument)	Clear gaze Open look Serious expression Expression of true feeling Direct look Looking away after sending message

Body Language – 35%	
Authoritarian/non-assertive	*Assertive messages*
Hands on hips (aggressive) Towering over (threatening) Gesticulating (loss of control) Shaking head (disbelief/given up) Praying hands (pleading) Arms folded (protective of self) Remaining with child (expectation of resistance)	Touching child Relaxed Still Nodding head Turning away Moving away Disengaging after sending message

STRATEGIES PEOPLE USE FOR HANDLING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR/SITUATIONS:

1. Level your voice just under the level they are using, slow your words slightly.
2. I understand you are angry. I really do. I can see you are angry. (Shows understanding)
3. I know this is hard and you are fed up with it, but finish this and we can have a break" (Acknowledging feelings)
4. "*If it was down to me, I would love to play games all day but……*" (Your job is ….)
5. "*You can't choose your groups now, but next time we will give you the option*." (Offering an alternative)
6. You need to calm down so we can talk about it.
7. *"Hey Jake, what's going on?"* (Takes attention away)
8. Go and talk quietly to someone, find out what's going on – (Don't discuss issues concerning one person in public as seen as humiliating.)
9. Go up, use person's name, I want you to calm down, the situation is looking a bit crazy. Speak calmly and firmly.
10. Can you take some time out?
11. O.k, this is my fault, I wasn't clear about…..sorry. (Take ownership of issue is often surprising).
12. I wont accept; I don't allow; I don't let; I'm not happy about this; I don't like what I am seeing here, or what I am hearing here, I don't accept; I'm not prepared to; I never allow; I wont let you. (Statements of self-respect, take ownership……..best followed by disengagement).
13. "*I am under pressure at the moment and have to get this done….*" (Describe your own feelings).
14. It upsets me to see others being treated badly.
15. When you go past the boundary, it distracts me from the game as I get worried you are going to get lost.
16. It's important that everybody feels safe in this session, so we can all get on and work together. So I can't allow anyone who hurts others to stay in the group because it's my job to make sure everyone is safe. (Avoid lecturing as often perceived as patronising).
17. "*No put downs, thanks*"
18. "*I do not agree with that comment*"

19. I believe being gay is a positive lifestyle.

20. Put what's happening in terms of Policy, where we are, why behaviour is inappropriate, consequences if continue, get caught.

21. Can I see you one to one. (Saves face).

22. Rough play is fine, but not if it leads to someone getting hurt. The only way I can allow it is if you all make sure you play safely.

23. "*I would love to forget about it, but I always make a rule that people tidy up their own mess, however I am willing to help you.*"

24. "*Yes we can play some games, once we have finished this activity*" (Turning no to yes).

25. I trust you to get on with it yourself; I know you will take care of this; I think you can do this. (Statements of trust)

26. I expect you to take care of the equipment, I expect you to listen when I am delivering information about using tools safely. (Statements of expectation)

27. If safety is at risk, "No!"

28. Mediating, "What's happening, etc'"

29. If all else fails, "*It's your choice*."

30. "*Hitting is not acceptable. Hurting people is never o.k.*"

31. "From now on you don't put sticks in the fire, got that? Thank you."

32. "*Out here we treat each other and the environment with respect."*

33. "*I think it's important that we consider others and that we can feel we can relax and feel safe here."*

34. "*I am not sure what to do, not sure I can do this on my own*" (Be vulnerable)

35. "*I feel upset/hurt/angry when…."* I statements.

36. Engage in conversation with them about the issue and get them to recognise what they have done and maybe it is not working.

37. "*You didn't like being excluded; you didn't like being lectured, that's difficult for you, that was disappointing."* (Acknowledging)

38. You don't like sawing in this way? That's the rule though, you can continue if you do it the right way. (Acknowledging)

39. Engage them in finding a solution.

40. You finished on time, well done (Acknowledging)

41. You did the best you could even though it was difficult, takes courage. (Affirming)

42. Well done (Congratulations)

43. I really appreciate you helping me (Appreciating)

44. I noticed the way you comforted him (Describing effect on another)

45. I think you've worked hard on this. (Sharing a positive opinion)

46. You've been really quiet, I've enjoyed myself. Thanks (Effect on me)

47. Fantastic! Bet you are pleased (Enthusing)

48. I like the way you thought about that (Approving)

49. I really valued what you said about (Valuing)

50. Are you pleased with it? Feel you are making progress? (Self-assessment)

51. I feel really happy when I see you are getting on with it (Describe the works effect on you)

52. You managed to play rough without getting hurt – fantastic (Admiring)

53. I really admire that you kept your cool, even though he was provoking you. (Describing the behaviour)

Key Considerations:

1. Stay Calm – young people need to see you are reacting in calm way

2. Clear accurate information - gives young person a greater understanding; a wider perspective, context.

3. Clearly state the boundaries - We can confront unacceptable behaviour more effectively if we can give messages which are in a tone of voice which is clear, serious and authoritative.

4. Reframe – change the words you use e.g. lazy is laidback; loud is outgoing

5. Emotional Flooding - When a young person is overwhelmed with feelings the young person is less capable of using logic or reason. Sometimes acknowledgement is all the child needs to feel better.

6. Look before you Leap – observe and consider your strategy before you act.

7. Identify hints and use gut feeling – watch mood of group & people, may be better to change activity, rest or eat something.

8. Consider why – what happened before session/ what's going on in their lives, gives you compassion if nothing else.

9. Walk away – sometimes walk away to collect yourself is good approach, get support from staff. Be aware that not more than two people respond to young people at same time.

10. Pick your issues – choose most important one, they need to feel good about themselves too.
11. Redirect/guide to alternative activities – find ways for them to release their feelings and make choices on how to act with their feelings.
12. Solve problems/negotiate solutions.
13. Express feelings – let them know negative feelings are o.k., that everyone has them.
14. Calming activities – they often know what will calm them down.

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UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

These are the specific Articles which the approach advocated in this approach to organising woodland visits. The wording has been taken from the Scottish Government (2008) *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child — A Guide for Children and Young People*.

Article 3: If any decision is being made by any organisation about a child's well- being, then the child's best interests must be considered.

There is sufficient evidence from research that suggests that children benefit from frequent regular time in a natural setting. It can have a restorative effect, lowering stress levels and providing an opportunity for children to be physically active as they play in the woodlands.

Article 4: The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected and to create an environment where children can grow up safe.

A safe environment is more than addressing health and safety issues in relation to woodland visits. It is about providing healthy and safe places to grow through play. A place that is free from the stresses and strains that some children experience in their lives. It helps children and their families perceive woodland environments as safe and healthy places to be which can be used for many purposes such as recreation, work and rest.

Article 12: Children have the right to speak up and have their opinions listened to and taken seriously by adults on things that affect them.

The children need to be consulted and involved in all aspects of the woodland visits from planning and preparation to the play activities in the woods. The course aims to encourage participants to ensure ongoing dialogue about the routines and practice as it becomes embedded in the life of the setting.

Article 28: Children have the right to an education.

The woodland visits are every bit as important as any other aspect of pre-school provision. All Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes may be covered through woodland visits. Participants are expected to observe, reflect and extend children's learning through play.

Article 31: Children have a right to play.

Pre-school aged children learn best through opportunities to freely play. This is the main purpose and activity at the woodland sessions.

FORAGING FOR WILD FOODS IN IRELAND & UK

Seasonal plants

Autumn

-Elderberries (not raw), Hawthorns, Blackberry, Hazelnuts, sweet chestnut, Rosehips

Spring

-Nettle, Cleaver, Dandelion, Wild garlic, Bramble leafs for tea, Beech leaves, Hawthorn leaves

Tapping birch trees

Summer

-Chickweed, dandelion, Rose flowers, Herb Robert

Winter

-Conifer needles for tea (be aware of YEW trees), birch bark and branches for tea.

Become familiar with poisonous plants & mushrooms, teach children to say “hello”, wave and don’t touch, Try to encourage awareness and respect, not fear.

SAY YES TO WILD FORAGING!

safety & collection guidelines

1. YES - I have an adult or mentor with me
2. YES - I got permission to forage in this area
3. YES - I am 100% sure what this plant is
4. YES - I know which part of this plant is safe to eat, what season to harvest & how it should be prepared
5. YES - I looked around to make sure this plant is not growing in a polluted area
6. YES - I only harvested what I needed and left the rest
7. YES - I only picked the part of the plant that I will use
8. YES - I know if this plant is rare or endangered
9. YES - I thanked the plant and surrounding environment
10. YES - I took notes and observations in my wild foraging journal



WILDER CHILD