



**LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE FOR FOREST SCHOOL ASSISTANTS  
DRAFT PORTFOLIO**



**Submission deadline: 6th December 2023**

**TRAINING PROVIDER: THE HIVE**



## LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE FOR FOREST SCHOOL ASSISTANTS

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The picture on the front cover is portraying my daughter, Alma, in Morden Hall park, London, April 2023. Picture taken by myself.

## LEVEL 2 PORTFOLIO

### UNIT 1 - SUPPORTING A FS PROGRAMME: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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#### **Q1. Describe the Forest School ethos, principles and approach to learning and development**

*To answer this question, you need to write a short summary describing the 6 Forest School Principles, as well as explaining the Forest School approach to learning and how it supports holistic development.*

The Forest School ethos is based on the essential respect for the way children experience and learn about the world and more specifically the natural environment. This educational approach is therefore based on the experiences children can have in the natural world and on how adults can help the learning process without imposing a very strict and predetermined path. In order to better clarify what this entails, I will explain the six core principles of Forest school.

1. Forest school is a long term process with regular sessions of 2 hours or longer. Ideally this process should take place over at least two seasons. This would allow children to have the time to reflect on the new skills they learn and develop confidence in risk taking at their own pace.
2. Risk and vulnerability are key to developmental change and Forest school seeks to balance the risks for each learner and each activity, especially by encouraging the exploration of risk and challenges through play. In Forest school, risk does not include only physical risk but also social and emotional risk. The level of risk needs of course to be deemed acceptable by the learner. Activities need to be designed within the zone of proximal development (cf. Vigotsky XX).
3. Forest school is a holistic approach to learning and development - this includes social, physical, intellectual, creative, emotional and spiritual development.
4. Forest school takes place in a natural environment with trees, these settings are conducive towards a calmer attitude towards learning than the indoor classroom. These settings also help create a connection with the natural world and develop a sense of belonging and empathy for the natural world.
5. Forest school is a learner centered process. It is not cramming knowledge into a learner but about inspiring the learners in finding their own path and pace to development.
6. Forest school is led by qualified leaders which are trained to plan and develop forest school sessions guided by the above principles. Sessions need, therefore, to be flexible and based on the reflective practice of the fs leaders.

## **Q2. Explain how Forest School experiences can support learning and development**

*Summarise the key characteristics of play and its role at Forest School*

Play is at the centre of the activities proposed at forest school. The type of play endorsed in a forest school environment can have a structure and rules but these needs to be flexible enough to give children the freedom to express themselves in order to support the holistic development of the child.

I believe one the most difficult skills to master for a forest school leader is the capacity to guide an ongoing play experience without sounding imposing. In order to achieve this aim, forest school leaders need to let go of the need for end results and focus on the process of playing. I found very useful this quote by Loris Malaguzzi: “Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children than to the results they achieve in various fields of doing and understanding” (The Hundred languages of children by Loris Malaguzzi).

*Explain, giving examples, how play and choice are integrated into Forest School programmes*

In forest school, play is interconnected with choice because forest school sessions need to be free-flowing and child-led as much as possible. This means that a forest school leader needs to have a plan to roughly follow and be inspired by a theme for the day and some learning objectives in mind but these need to be flexible and do not have to constrain the direction of the session in a predetermined fashion. This is because, in order to follow the forest school ethos, the forest school leader needs to be open to the children own initiative and enthusiasm on the day of the session. Having a plan is important but this should give enough space to the children’s expression of choice in the type of games they like to engage in.

For example, if a group of children show a high level of energy at the start of the session, or some children are new to each other, it might be useful to start with some team games to channel energy into working together and learning some empathy skills whilst having fun. Examples: What’s my animal; Forest Fire Etc..

Creative and crafting play can be used when the energy level is focused, children need a break from intense locomotor play, after a meal or simply when the energy level is low.

*Describe how to develop a community of learning by meeting the needs of all participants, giving examples from your own Forest School experiences*

Meeting the needs of all participants to develop a community of learning means that FS leaders and assistants develop a programme of activities that is inclusive of different needs and preferences. This approach must take into account that children have their own pace and each have a different perception of risk. So, activities need to be tailored for each participant. It is therefore important to choose age appropriate activities and games to not run the risk of frustration in children. Creating a planning activities in the zone of “proximal development” as theorised by Vigotsky, ensures that children get a positive experience out of FS sessions, where they can learn something new with little guidance and not too much intervention from an adult.

Furthermore, as FS practice is fundamentally reflective, leaders and assistants are required to reflect and develop a frame of mind that allows learning and improving from the practice to take place constantly. For instance, in a session on whittling I assisted with, all children (2-4 years old) were enthusiastic and wanted to try the activity. However, not everyone completed it and fully enjoyed it, mainly because some children had more advanced fine motor skills than others. In these circumstances, it is important to not put any pressure on the end result and give children plenty of acknowledgement for trying a new activity a what they have learned about the tools used.

### **Q3. Explain the role of Assistant at a Forest School in relation to the Forest School ethos and principles**

*Describe the role of the Forest School Assistant mapping to the Forest School ethos and principles, and giving examples from your own Forest School experience*

The role of the FS assistant is to assist the FS leader in planning and delivering FS sessions. In particular, a FS assistant supports the FS leader in making sure all tools and equipment are in place to run the planned activities; in monitoring the standard and conditions of tool kits; informing the FS leader when items need replacing or repairing. A FS assistant should also be able to carry out a risk assessment for the site; make sure all the children and participants are engaged and observe safety guidelines during the activities.

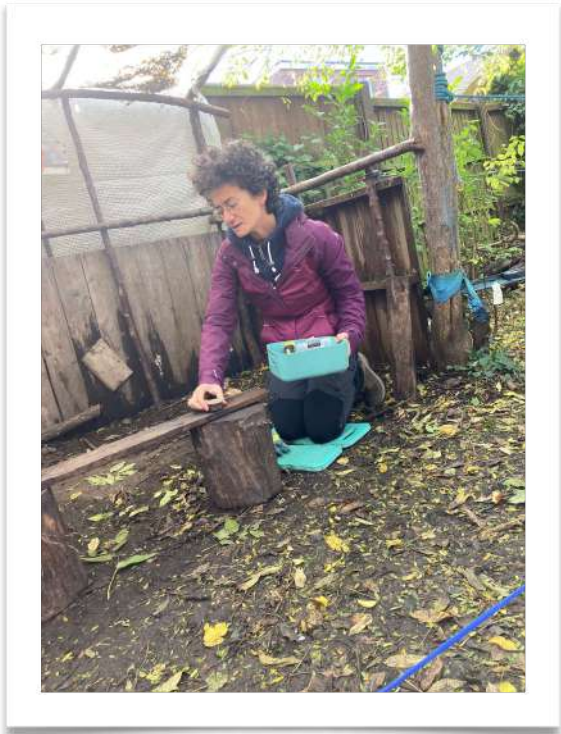
For example, in my forest school experience, I prepared all the kindling wood, logs and shavings needed to demonstrate the activity of lighting a fire to early years children (2-4 years old). I also made sure that during the demonstration all children were not trespassing the fire circle and they were all sitting around it. I also stepped in and led some activities under the fs leader guidance.

*Summarise your experience of assisting with the planning and delivery of 3 consecutive Forest School sessions.*

All 3 sessions summarise below were delivered at the Little Forest Folk nursery in Morden. This forest school nursery offers full-time childcare in a forest school setting for children from 2 to 4 years old.

1. The first session was on whittling and how young children can, with some help, handle a sharp tool in order to create a pointed stick. The tool used was a vegetable peeler. The idea was to initiate little children to woodwork without thinking of the end product or result. The focus was on mastering the technique needed to shave off the bark from a stick with a veg peeler. Before the session, the forest school leader and I discussed and agreed to focus on making children confident in using the sharp tool and carefully explaining safety rules. We decided to not emphasise what the finished stick should look like. To start with, I prepared the sitting area with log stools and enclosed the whittling station by laying down some logs. We then gathered the children around the station, asked them to sit on the stools and to not enter the whittling area until they were called in. They were also asked to enter the whittling zone via a specific entrance path. This was to ensure that children would respect their turn and would not abruptly enter the whittling zone while another child was trying the activity. I foraged some small wooden sticks and placed them in the whittling zone with two knee pads and a first aid kit. The forest school leader first demonstrated the activity to the children by kneeling down on a knee pad in the whittling zone in front of the children. She then called in the first child to try the activity. The child kneeled down with the forest school leader behind him looking over his shoulder and making sure the child was holding tight one end of the stick in one hand and the veg peeler in the other hand. I was then asked to lead the same activity with the next child coming in the whittling zone. I first held his hands while he was holding the stick and the tool and then left him to try on his own. Showing them the right movement of the blade shaving away from the stick was crucial to help them master the technique. The activity ended when all the children had a go at whittling.





*Explaining how to create a numbers learning resource with material available.*

2. The second session was on fire lighting with a flint and steel fire starter. The activity was designed as a first-time fire lighting experience for your young children, for them to learn how to light a fire with some cotton wool and a fire starter. We did not plan to use the cotton wool to start a fire in a fire pit, so every time a child had a go at lighting the cotton wool, we would put it out straight afterwards with a fire glove. I prepared a fire circle with log stumps placed around a 'fire station' enclosed by a ribbon. In the 'fire station' I placed a big flat stone brick in the centre as the base for the activity, two kneepads, one fire starter, some cotton wool, fire gloves, a bucket of water and a first aid kit. The children were asked to sit around the 'fire station' and the FS leader explained to the children the path to follow when they would be called in the 'fire station' to try the activity. They were told to not cross the ribbon but to go around it and follow the path.

Firstly, the FS leader gave a demonstration of the activity. She explained what the fire starter is made of and how to start a fire with the tools available. She also explained that we will have to put out the fire straight after the cottonwool catches fire. After the demonstration, she called in the first child to try the activity under her guidance. In the meantime, I made sure that all the other children were seated, observing and waiting their turn. After a few children had tried the activity, the FS leader and I swapped tasks and I went in the 'fire station' to guide the remaining children in completing the activity safely.





3. The third FS session was planned as a sequence of activities reflecting on autumn and why leaves fall from trees. We sat in the woodland in circle and the FS leader started by reading the book *We are going on a leaf hunt* by Steve Metzger. The kids were then asked to think about autumn, what changes we observe in nature and why leaves fall. After gathering some ideas on why this happens and drawing some parallels to animals who hibernate, the FS leader led the children to 'discover' that some trees go to sleep in winter and send all their nutrients to their roots where they are stored until next spring, when warmer temperatures and longer days trigger the trees to 'wake up' from their sleep.

We then went foraging for fallen leaves and I helped with making sure children were only foraging fallen leaves and explained that we do not take leaves still attached to the trees' branches as these are still useful to them. After foraging, we spread the leaves collected in our walk on a tuff tray and I showed the kids the different shapes, colours and textures and how we identify the type of tree by looking at the leaves. The FS leader showed how to create a collage with some paper and glue. The children were then asked to create their own collage with the leaves they foraged.



A standing up wolf and Rapunzel



A fox hunting under a night sky



A wolf and a butterfly



A forest

*A Summarise your experience of assisting with the evaluation of the 3 consecutive Forest School sessions, showing how observations and evaluations inform future session plans*

1. The FS leader and I evaluated the whittling session described above and agreed that it went smoothly with no major issues. However, we noticed that some of the sticks used for whittling were wet and this made the task more difficult, especially for the younger children who need to master their fine motor skill. We also forgot to ask children which was their dominant hand. Next whittling sessions or similar sessions about working with wood will take into consideration these two overlooked factors.
2. The FS leader and I discussed the session on fire lighting and were impressed about how empowering it was for the children to be able to make sparks with the fire starter and then light the cottonwool. There was one child who actually wanted to touch the flame with his hand but I caught his hand on time and explained why we should not get too close to any flames. Another child expressed frustration at the fact that we put out the flame quickly straight after they lit the cottonwool. In order to address this, I thought that next time we could have a fire pit where to add the lit cotton wool for the children to see how a little spark can become a big fire and then have a story around the fire. This would make the activity more complete and manage frustration about putting out fire.
3. The children enjoyed the session on leaves foraging and collage making as it was well planned and had a theme linking up the different activities. It was a wet day, so it was very helpful having collected some leaves beforehand as this gave a wider selection of leaves to choose from. I was impressed about how well the children engaged in the discussion about why leaves fall and all the different ideas they came up with. Also, I noticed that some children were frustrated about using the glue for the collage and I felt they had a perfectionist approach to creating the collage. I suggested that maybe it would be worth planning a conversation about how important mistakes are as they are our precious allies in the learning process. Also, highlighting more often that nobody is perfect, not even teachers or adult alike!

*Use your observations of one participant over 3 consecutive sessions to assess the impact of Forest School on their learning and development*

June (not her real name) is a 3 years old girl, who started forest school nursery at Little Forest Folk (Morden) just a week prior to the start of my volunteering time at this nursery. So, she was not very settled yet and she is by nature very shy and cautious about trying new things. During my first day at the nursery, I noticed June seemed sad and always asking when her mum would have picked her up. She tended to be always near her teacher and did not engage in any play with the other children. I offered to play with her but she did not feel like it.

During my second visit, I approached her again and this time I gave her a little cuddle and told her how happy I was to see her again. She went off to pick a book and asked me to read it for her. We sat together and read many books. After a while I suggested that maybe we could join the other children who were playing hide and seek. She did not feel like playing with the other children, so I asked her if she wanted to do some painting and she accepted. We spent together the whole morning until lunch time. After lunch, we had a fire lighting session but she did not take part in it.

During my third visit, I noticed she joined in and engaged in a game led by the Forest school leader about guessing an animal she was thinking of. June was actively engaged in the game and I was so pleased to see that she started opening up and engaging with more than one person/adult and especially with the other children. After lunch, she participated in the leaves foraging session and showed a strong interest in trees identification during our foraging walk. She also enjoyed creating her own collage with leaves. Being in constant contact with nature and playing in it is undoubtedly helping June to build up her confidence. Her ability to engage and socialise with there peers has visibly improved over the 3 consecutive sessions I observed her. Moreover, she started showing an interest in getting to know more about nature and forest school craft activities which will empower her further.



#### **Q4. Reflect on your own Forest School training**

*To answer this question, you need to summarise your development and the learning you gained whilst training to be a Forest School Assistant*

My learning and development through forest school during the last 5 months was a steep curve as I was not working professionally with children at the time I started my training. I have a 5 years old daughter and my experience with kids was limited to her and her friends. Five months later, at the time of writing this report, I have been volunteering for almost two months now at the same forest school nursery I assisted with my 3 initial sessions. It has been an inspirational journey, as I am now thinking of getting employment in forest school in early years.

My initial five training days at Stave Hill Park gave me a lot of ideas to develop in the sessions with children; it also gave me the confidence needed to use forest school tools and how to explain the safe use of them to children. My main weakness was my lack of confidence in guiding a child in the safe use of tools, which are usually considered “dangerous” for children to handle. It was inspiring to realise that the safe use of tools can be incredibly empowering for children, even at a very young age. My lack of confidence in this context was due to lack of experience. Once I started volunteering at Little Forest Folk (Morden), I soon started to gain more confidence and it is now a pleasure to see the light in children’s eyes every time they manage to create something with their own hands. I noticed that as I gradually gained more confidence, I became less tense in showing and guiding them. Being calm whilst running these activities is very important as children do sense very quickly stress and anxiety in adults.

I was very pleased to see that I was able to create a positive relationship with a child, who I had just met and I think I am generally very good at one to one learning activities. However, leading group activities is different and my experience at Little Forest Folk is giving me the opportunity to learn how to catch children’s attention in a group setting and develop further my ability to engage them in group activities and games. My long standing passion for nature and wildlife in general was and still is one of the main drives of my interest in forest school. I am a qualified gardener and horticultural therapist and I am a strong advocate of the benefits of being immersed in nature. My overall forest school adventure so far gave me the confidence and the chance to share my enthusiasm for nature and wildlife in early years contexts. Looking ahead, I will work on improving my communication skills for early years. For most of my adult working life I dealt with older children and adults, so it is important for me to find an effective and appropriate language to engage younger children, if I want to work within this age range.

## LEVEL 2 PORTFOLIO TEMPLATE

### UNIT 2 - SUPPORTING A FOREST SCHOOL PROGRAMME: PRACTICAL SKILLS

#### Q1. Define and compare the structure and biodiversity of native broadleaf and coniferous woodland ecosystems.

*To answer the question, you need to describe the vertical and horizontal ecological structure of **British broadleaf woodlands**.*

Vertical layers	
Below ground	This layer is the not visible soil layer under the woodland floor. It is made of inorganic matter deriving from the rock bed, water, air and organic matter. The organic matter is made of 10% organisms, 10% roots and 80% humus. The organisms are bacteria, saprophytic and mycorrhizal fungi, nematodes, protozoans, arthropods and others.
Ground	The woodland ground is typically covered with debris made of decaying leaves and wood. This provides a moist habitat for the growth of fungi, mosses and ivy. It is also an area rich with a diversity of invertebrates such as springtails, woodlice, millipedes, gastropods and other species.
Field	The field layer depends on the amount of light that can penetrate through the canopy. In this layer we can find herbs, grasses, ferns and wildflowers such as lesser celandine, primroses, bluebells, bramble, herb Robert, wood anemones, wood sorrel, red campion, cowslips, cow parsley, wild garlic, oxeye daisy, dog rose, deadly nightshade, common dog violet, foxgloves and others.
Understorey	The understorey is the layer just below the canopy. The three species that dominate this layer in a British broadleaf woodland are hazels, hawthorns and rowans. It also comprises the saplings of the trees which will grow to make up the canopy. This layer is very important for small birds, who often build their nests here.

Canopy	This is the highest layer which contains the oldest trees in the woodland. Native trees we can find in this layer are: oak, ash, beech, birch and hornbeam. Bigger birds usually build their nests here.
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Horizontal layers	
Rides	A ride is a linear trail designed for access by the woodland management team. It can have some tall grasses either side of the trail, some shrubs like blackthorn and brambles gradually making space for taller woodland trees.
Banks	Banks are a sign of ancient woodland. These earthwork structures were built in the past with the purpose of marking property boundary or woodland management to keep away large animals, like deers, from young trees and coppiced trees. These banks host a variety of species. There is also a list of ancient woodland indicator plants such as: wild service tree, bluebell, primrose and herb paris.
Hedges	Woodland hedges are predominantly made of hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple and hazel. They are often intertwined with dog rose, brambles, honeysuckle and ivy, to name a few. They provide excellent wildlife habitat to hedgehogs, nesting birds and overwintering invertebrates.
Edges	This is where the thick woodland canopy ends and more light is available for a greater number of species to thrive. In the layer we can expect a diverse range of wildflowers like those found in the understory, grasses and small shrubs. This habitat is ideal for butterflies, blackbirds, robins, blackcaps, frogs and toads.
Glades & water	Glades are openings within a woodland, and can either be coppiced or left as grassland and scrub. Glades and rides should link up to create wildlife corridors, get more light into the understory, increase biodiversity and create wildlife corridors.
Aspect & topography	There can be upland and lowland broadleaf woodlands. Upland woodlands tend to be unenclosed and grazed by livestock or deers. They tend to be dominated by oak (usually sessile oak) and birch, but also rowan, juniper, aspen and willow. Lowland woodland tend to be enclosed with defined hedges. Many are ancient woodlands and pedunculate oak is the most common species where oak is the dominant in the canopy.



To answer the question, you need to describe the vertical and horizontal ecological structure of **British coniferous woodlands**.

Vertical layers	
Below ground	This layer is the not visible soil layer under the woodland floor. It is made of inorganic matter deriving from the rock bed, water, air and organic matter. The organic matter is made of 10% organisms, 10% roots and 80% humus. The organisms are bacteria, saprophytic and mycorrhizal fungi, nematodes, protozoans, arthropods and others. The Ph of the soil in a coniferous woodland is typically acidic due to the continuous fall of needles from the trees which make the soil acidic.
Ground	The woodland ground is typically covered with debris made of decaying needles and wood. This provides a moist habitat for the growth of fungi, mosses and lichens. It is also an area rich with a diversity of invertebrates such as springtails, woodlice, millipedes and other species.
Field	The vertical field layer is mostly non existent in a coniferous woodland due to the very dense horizontal structure which does not let in enough light. Coniferous woodland were mostly planted after WWI for production of timber, so space is maximised for this purpose. Most species of conifers (with the exception of larch) are evergreen and this is a second reason why not much light reaches the field layer. This means that at field level a coniferous woodland hosts less biodiversity than broadleaf deciduous woodlands. However, when light conditions improve due to the thinning of the canopy layer or the height of the trees, plants like ferns and heathers start to appear. In the native Caledonian forest of Scotland a rare orchid called creeping ladies tresses can be found at field layer.
Shrub	Usually not present due to factors explained above. However, when thinning of trees in the canopy layer takes place, the light conditions improve and species like holly and rhododendron appear. Usually, however, only plants which thrive in or can tolerate acidic soil condition will be able to grow here.

Understorey	Usually not present due to factors explained above. When light conditions improve new coniferous saplings of the future mature trees can be found in this layer, or saplings of broadleaved rowan and beeches, which tolerate acidic soil.
Canopy	The conifers native to the UK are Scots pine ( <i>Pines sylvestris</i> ), Yew ( <i>Taxus baccata</i> ) and Juniper communis. The majority of conifer species were introduced and naturalised for timber production like Douglas Fir, Corsican Pine, Sitka Spruce and Larch. So, most of coniferous woodland in the UK are non-native and they are plantations of trees introduced from North America. However, in Scotland, Northumberland, Cumbria and in small pockets of Chilterns, North and South Downs some special coniferous woodland grow. They are characterised by an open woodland canopy and dispersed trees. In these native coniferous woodlands, some broadleaf trees can also be found like birch, willow, rowan and aspen. Native coniferous woodlands are also considered a natural habitat for red squirrels.

Horizontal layers	
Rides	A ride is a linear trail designed for access by the woodland management team. In coniferous woodlands, rides have usually ferns, tall grasses, brambles and small shrubs on either side of the trail where light penetrate the thick canopy layer.
Banks	Usually non-existent in a coniferous woodland.
Hedges	Usually non-existent in coniferous plantation.
Edges	Usually edges are defined by the presence of low growing shrubs and climbers such as rhododendron and brambles, which thrive in acidic soil. Edges can act as habitat and corridors for species such as dormice.
Glades & water	Glades are openings within a woodland. In a coniferous plantations, they are created by the felling of trees for timber production and the gradual replanting. In these openings ferns and shrubs can appear over time after the felling of trees. Conifers are not coppiced as most of them do not respond well to coppicing.
Aspect & topography	There can be upland and lowland coniferous woodlands.

## Q2. Identify 10 woodland flora and fauna for your own site, detailing the characteristics for each species

To answer this question, you need to produce detailed identifying traits for 24 species across a range of flora and fauna, to include:

### Trees (2)

Tree name	Description
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> (Elder)	Native tree that can grow up to 15 m in height and live for 60 years. Mature elder trees have grey-brown, corky and fissured bark. Leaves are compound pinnate leaves with 5-7 pairs of leaflets with serrated edges. In winter, the green twigs have an unpleasant smell and they are hollow or have a white pith inside. The little, white and highly scented flowers appear in large umbels clusters. After pollination, they develop into small, purple-black sour berries. Flowers are used to make cordial.
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Ash)	Native tree that can reach 35 m in height. The bark is pale brown to grey and fissured in mature trees. In winter it is identifiable by its velvety twigs and black and opposite buds. Leaves are pinnately compound with 3-6 opposite leaflets. In autumn, they fall when they are still green. Flowers appear typically before leaves in spring and they grow in spiked clusters at the tips of twigs. After pollination, flowers develop into clusters of winged fruits.

### Plants (2)

Plant name	Description
<i>Allium ursine</i> (Ramsons)	Bulbous perennial with a pungent garlicky smell. Leaves are long, pointed and oval in shape with entire edges. Flowers are small, white, star shaped with 6 petals. They grow in clusters held high on a single leafless stalk. It reproduces through bulbs, bulbils and very occasionally seeds. Not to be confused with lily of the valley, which is poisonous. The leaves of the latter one grow on stems while the wild garlic leaves grow from the base of the plant.
<i>Ficaria verna</i> (Lesser celandine)	Small, low growing perennial. Leaves are glossy, dark-green and cordate with long stalks. Flowers are yellow star-like with 8-12 petals. One of the first flowers to appear after winter. They are an important food source for bumblebees and other pollinators.



### Insects (2)

Insect name	Description
<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i> (Seven-spot Ladybird)	Red with 7 black spots. They usually live in herbaceous layers and live up to one year, overwintering in leaf litter and plant debris close to the ground. The female lays her eggs and after they hatch the larvae grow for a month before entering the pupal stage, from which the adult ladybird will be born.
<i>Papilio machaon britannicus</i> (Swallowtail)	Large and pale yellow wings with black veins and blue edges. It is a rare and protected species in the UK. They like to live in fen vegetation.

### Mammals (2)

Mammal name	Description
<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i> (Wood mouse)	Native woodland rodent. Brown fur with pale and whitish abdomen, large black eyes, big ears and long and hairless tail. They are omnivores. Females produce litters up to 6 times in one year. They usually live up to one year and are an important food source for many predators such as weasels, stoats, foxes and owls.
<i>Vulpes vulpes</i> (Fox)	Native predator. Red fur, pointed ears and bushy tail. They are highly adaptable predators. In a woodland habitat, they feed on birds, beetles, rabbits, rats and other animals.

### Birds (2)

Bird name	Description
<i>Carduelis Carduelis</i> (Goldfinch)	Native small bird with a distinctive red face, a black cap and black around the eyes. The wings are black with bright yellow patches. Juveniles are pale brown in colour. They have a powerful beak used to extract eat seeds especially from plants like teasels and thistles. Most goldfinches spend the winter in the UK but some migrate as far south as Spain.

Erithacus rubecula (Robin)	Native small bird with a distinctive red chest and a brown and white belly. Juveniles are brown all over with mottled golden flecks. They love eating earthworms, seeds, insects and beetles. Usually, they overwinter in the UK but they have been spotted migrating as far South as Spain.
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### **Q3. Describe how you would manage the ecological impact of running a Forest School programme on your own site**

*To answer this question, you need to describe the impact that running regular Forest School sessions would have on your site and the measures that could be put in place to minimise and remedy this impact.*

The most important principle guiding the management of the ecological impact of running regular forest school sessions on a site is to leave no trace and leave the site as it was found. However, for daily forest school sessions like those provided on the site where I volunteer in Morden, the aim of leaving no trace cannot be achieved. The site is an enclosed woodland area created on purpose for a forest school nursery. This, however, does not mean that no attention is paid to the sustainable management of the woodland.

For instance, beyond the compacted soil paths where children run and play, there are interspersed patches of enclosed areas where children cannot go. These areas are simply enclosed by colourful, very visible ribbons and every morning forest school leaders and assistants run through the rules of forest school, which include the rule of not trespassing in these enclosed patches, important for wildlife.

A further intervention can be the creation of bark chipping paths which can limit the compaction of the woodland floor caused by the continuous walking and running through. Bark chipping paths offer also shelter for a variety of insects, which would improve the biodiversity of the woodland. This would also limit the risk of slipping when soil is wet or waterlogged.

There is also the risk of children harming plant species and wildlife in general. This risk will be minimised by everyday reminding of another forest school rule, which encourages young participants to be more responsible for the protection of plants and wildlife. It is part of the forest school ethos to instil from a young age a deep respect for nature.

A mitigation practice will be also to plant new trees and ground/field layers plants, build bug hotels and in general create wildlife friendly habitats, which will create a richer biodiversity.

#### **Q4. Summarise the role of risk assessment at Forest School**

*To answer this question, you need to define the terms 'hazard' and 'risk' with reference to Forest School and explain what a risk assessment is*

In forest school, teaching children to learn to take risks in a safe way is central to the forest school ethos. A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm and the risk is the likelihood of the hazard causing harm to somebody.

Risk assessment in forest school is a very important tool in the hands of teachers and practitioners used to minimise risk, i.e. the likelihood of a possible hazard.

In forest school, there are different types of risk assessments. First of all, a site risk assessment needs to be carried out before deciding if a fs activity can take place in a specific woodland site. This include an assessment of the environment, the stability of trees and other factors. Secondly, once established that forest school activities can be run in the site, practitioners will carry out risk assessment everyday before the start of the activity, looking for potential hazards that can appear over night, like fallen branches, slippery paths, tripping hazards, animal faeces, glass etc. This also include checking weather forecasts on a daily basis. Thirdly, during the session, practitioners will keep on monitoring the site for possible hazards. Furthermore, for each fs activity, practitioners will carry out a risk assessment and a risk benefit assessment.

#### **Q5. Describe the risk assessment process for a Forest School site**

*To answer this question, you need to carry out a site risk assessment and a risk-benefit assessment related to ONE activity at Forest School*

The site risk-assessment process at Little Forest Folk nursery (Morden) include a pre-session risk assessment, which will be completed everyday on arrival and an ongoing dynamic risk assessment, which will take place throughout the day.

During the pre-session risk assessment, fs leaders check the site for fallen branches, glass, slippery paths, animal faeces etc. Any such items would be collected using plastic bags and disposable gloves. All members of staff are aware of the pupils to teachers ratio and will meet the requirements agreed. Weather conditions need to be checked the day before. If high winds or thunderstorms are expected, it is not advisable to carry out fs sessions. The presence of poisonous plants and fungi needs to be monitored regularly. In my site, there are foxgloves seedlings which appear spontaneously from time to time. Children and staff need to be aware to not touch these plants and if possible enclose the area where they grow with a visible boundary. After a storm, stability of trees needs to be checked.

The ongoing dynamic risk assessment will take place throughout the session and will consist in an ongoing monitoring of the site and children safe play throughout the day.



### Risk-benefit assessment related to one activity at Forest School

Activity	How will young people benefit from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	Precautions in place to reduce the risk of injury	Risk rating: L/M/H
Whittling, Wood carving and use of knives, axes, saws, billhooks and drills	Learn to handle sharp tools safely; improve fine motor skills, concentration, creativity and dexterity; increase in confidence and independence, sense of empowerment	Cuts, general injuries from sharp tools	Pupils and teachers, tutors	All participants required to wear cut resistant gloves on the helping hand; FS leader to show learners how to whittle and carve safely; learners always to be instructed to hold the tool in their dominant hand; safe zone to be clearly demarcated for the activity and learners observing the activity to keep outside of the tool zone; participants to always use good quality equipment; fs leader always supported by an assistant for direct supervision of all participants; first aid kit kept close to the tool zone at all times	Medium

## Q6. Summarise the process and safety considerations involved in applying the following practical skills with a FS group

*Using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and clothing for Forest School*

Process	Safety considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPE such as fire gloves, cut resistant gloves need to be worn every time a learner or a teacher is carrying out a forest school activity which has a high to low risk of getting burned or cut. Fire gloves are mainly used to handle hot metal handles and tools. Cut resistant gloves are worn on the helping hand for protecting it against cut during whittling or wood carving activity using sharp tools.</li> <li>• High visibility vests must be worn by little children at all times.</li> <li>• Appropriate clothing such as waterproof trousers and jackets, waterproof boots and hats must be worn according to the season and weather conditions. It is advised to dress in a number of different layers, this allows for adjustment dependent on temperature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gloves need to have a comfortable and tight fit, if they are too large, movement is hindered. A good grip is important for the correct use of tools.</li> </ul>

*Checking, cleaning, maintaining and storing tools and ropes at Forest School*

Process	Safety considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tools must be kept clean and dry. They need to be cleaned straight after use otherwise mud and dirt can cause rust and it will be more difficult to clean.</li> <li>• Before storing, all metal parts need to be oiled to prevent rust.</li> <li>• Tools need to be kept in a dry room, preferable in racks. Sharp tools need to be stored all together in dedicated section.</li> <li>• Edged tools should be protected with plastic guards and sheaths.</li> <li>• Edged tools need to be sharpened regularly using the correct type of whetstone for sharpening each tool.</li> <li>• If saw blades are blunt, it is not worth sharpening them. They should be carefully removed from the saw, broken in half and disposed of safely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools must always be checked and sharpened regularly. Blunt tools make working with them more difficult.</li> <li>• When sharpening tools, never touch the edge to check for sharpness.</li> <li>• It is advisable to carry out sharpening not in the field.</li> </ul>

*Using different hand tools for Forest School (choose 2 hand tools)*

Process	Safety considerations
<p><u>Using a billhook, bow saw and a sheath knife to make a mallet</u> [The process below is designed for children from 10 years old. For younger children, it is best to use a vice bench to hold the wood]</p> <p>To make a mallet we will use a billhook, a bow saw and a sheath knife. A bow saw will be used to create two grooves into the log: one for the handle and one for the end of the mallet. A billhook will be used to carve out the handle of the mallet and a knife to smooth the surface of the handle.</p> <p>The first step requires the fs assistant to prepare a ‘blood circle’ where the fs leader and the participants will use the tools. The fs leader will position a log (approx 10 cm in diameter) on two or more tree stumps (depending on the length of the log) or other type of support, which allows to create a work surface elevated from the floor. The fs leader will kneel and demonstrate how to saw by holding the log with their spare hand put across the saw to steady the wood being sawn. This protect the non-sawing hand. The fs assistant will hold the log at the other end. The fs leader will start by creating a little groove on one end of the log for the handle part and another groove where the mallet will be cut off from the log. After demonstrating it, the fs leader will then ask at least 2 children to hold the log in place on the stumps and will pass the handle of the bow saw to the first child kneeling opposite. They will both start sawing through the groove with the fs leader holding the other side of the bow saw. They will saw through the wood until the blade sinks into the wood and is not visible, then they will gradually turn the log and saw the other sides again until the blade is not visible. This way, they will leave the core of the log for the handle. Afterwards, they will saw through the second grove to cut off the mallet from the rest of the log. Different children can have a go at sawing until the task is complete.</p> <p>The second stage is about carving off the handle with a billhook and the help of another mallet. The fs leader and the assistant will first demonstrate. The assistant will position the log on the stump with the end of the handle section facing up. They will then put the billhook blade on the section of the wood to be carved off from the handle, leaving the core of the log for the actual handle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always ask a child which is their dominant hand.</li> <li>• Make sure the log is hold into place by enough hands and strength.</li> <li>• Make sure the tools are in good working order. Sharp tools are safer than blunt ones.</li> <li>• Make sure other participants observers do not get in the ‘blood circle’ without being prompted to do so.</li> <li>• Always replace the safety cover over the bowsaw blade when not in use.</li> <li>• When sawing be mindful of clothing and keep sleeves out of the way.</li> </ul>

While the assistant is holding the billhook in place, the fs leader will use a mallet to hammer the billhook blade into the wood up to the groove, created previously.

After demonstrating, the fs leader will invite two children to come into the blood circle, one to place and hold the billhook and another one for hammering it into the wood. They will turn the log and redo the same action until they carve the whole handle. In order to refine the handle from splinters and sharp edges, children can be shown also how to use a sheath knife to chisel off smaller woods bits, always away from their bodies.



Set up at Stave Hill park. Training days.



Carving out the handle from the log



Myself chiselling the handle with a sheath knife



Diversity of finished mallets



Using a range of knots for different applications at Forest School (choose 2 knots)

Process	Safety considerations
<p><b>How build a fairy house frame using medium size branches, clove hitch and lashing</b></p> <p>First of all, we will collect 4 medium size branches of a meter length. We lie them down on the floor one next to another, making sure they are lined up on the bottom end side - this way at the end of the process they will stand up nicely at the same height. We then tie a clove hitch on the top side of the first branch and we start doing some lashing by going under a branch and then over and again under. We do this back and forth a few times. Then, we secure the lashing with some frapping in between the branches. To close it off we use another clove hitch. The structure is ready to stand up now.</p> <p><b>How to build a rope swing</b></p> <p>First find a good size branch of a healthy looking tree on which to throw over one end of your rope. Then, make a loop on one end and put the other end in that loop and pull tight. The rope will tighten around the tree branch on one end. The other end of the rope will be used to create a seat for the swing with a log. At this end we will tie another large loop, then make an 8 shape through which we will insert the log and tighten it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying attention to your surroundings and space available when handling long branches, which could accidentally hit others around you.</li> <li>• Make sure the branch used for hanging up the rope is solid and big enough to support weight.</li> <li>• Make sure the rope is in good conditions and the log is solid and thick enough to support weight.</li> </ul>

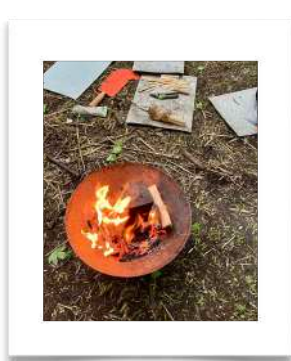
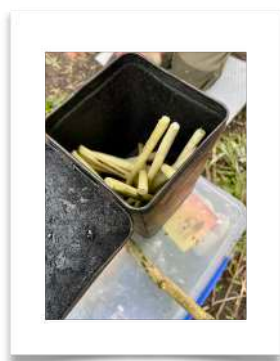


Fairy house created at Stave Hill park during my training days.

*Making craft items using woodland materials (choose 1 craft)*

Process	Safety considerations
<p><b>How to make elder &amp; willow pencils</b>  <b>[This activity is great for a wide age range. For early years children though, it would be advisable to use a veg peeler instead of the a sheath knife]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harvest some willow (0.5 to 1cm in diameter) and elder (1 to 1.5 cm in diameter).</li> <li>• Light a fire with dry firewood.</li> <li>• Pierce two hole in the top of an old tin. Put the tin on the fire and let burn off any glue or paper. Take the tin off the fire and let it cool.</li> <li>• Cut the willow into lengths to fit in the tin. Peel the willow from the bark, put it in the tin and put the lid on.</li> <li>• Put the tin on the fire. After few minutes, smoke will come out of the holes in the tin. When the smoke stops, take the tin off the fire and let it cool. In the tin without oxygen, the willow will be heated and transformed into charcoal instead burning to ashes.</li> <li>• While you wait for the tin to cool down, use a pair of secateurs to cut a length of elder for the wooden part of the pencil.</li> <li>• Use a palm drill to push in the pith about 2cm at one end of the piece of elder. This is where you will insert the piece of charcoal as the lead for the pencil.</li> <li>• When the tin is cool, open it with fire gloves and find charcoal.</li> <li>• Sharpen the elder stick with a sheath knife to make it look more like a pencil.</li> <li>• Take a piece of charcoal that is about the same width as the hole in your elder and insert it the hole.</li> <li>• The pencil is ready to be used on paper or cloth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When lighting a fire, always use all the precautions needed for this task (more in next section below).</li> <li>• Always use fire gloves to remove the hot tin from the fire.</li> <li>• When using a knife to sharpen the end of the pencil, always work away from your body.</li> </ul>

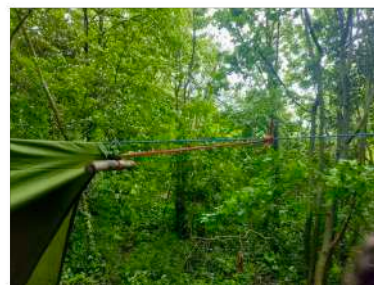
*Stave Hill Park. Training days. Crafting a willow & elder pencil*



*Erect temporary group shelters using tarpaulin/natural woodland materials*

Process	Safety considerations
<p><b>Erecting a rain fly shelter with tarpaulin and paracord</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firstly, we will find two trees on which to tie our ridge line.</li> <li>• We will start by creating a ridge line with a paracord at above head height. In order to do it quickly and to undo it quickly at the end, we will use a secure ridge tie.</li> <li>• To make a secure ridge tie, we create a loop at one end of the paracord and go around the first tree twice with the paracord. We will insert the loop in the bend, put a stick in the loop and pull tight. In this way, at the end we will be easy to disassemble the shelter by pulling out the stick.</li> <li>• We then take the paracord over to the second tree and we make a second knot. We will go around the tree once and we go under the ridge line creating a first triangle and put it back over the top creating tension to make the ridge line taut. We go around the tree another time and cross under the paracord again, creating another triangle. We will then make a bite and insert a stick in the loop. Pull tight.</li> <li>• We will throw the tarpaulin over the ridge line and tie the central eyelets on the tarp to the ridge line with two prussic knots and two sticks, one for each side. This way the tent can slide easily if needed.</li> <li>• We will hammer down 4 tent pegs to the ground at 45 degrees angle in a square configuration, where we will tie the paracord coming from the four corners of the tarpaulin.</li> <li>• We will use a guy line hitch knot to secure the four paracords to the peg tents.</li> <li>• This set up is ideal to let rain slide away on the sides of the tent. The knots chosen are very good for a quick and secure set up.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear the area of work to set up the shelter from slipping and tripping hazards.</li> </ul>

Rain fly shelter. Stave Hill



Prusik knot on ridge line. Detail. Stave Hill Park.

*Building, lighting and managing a campfire*

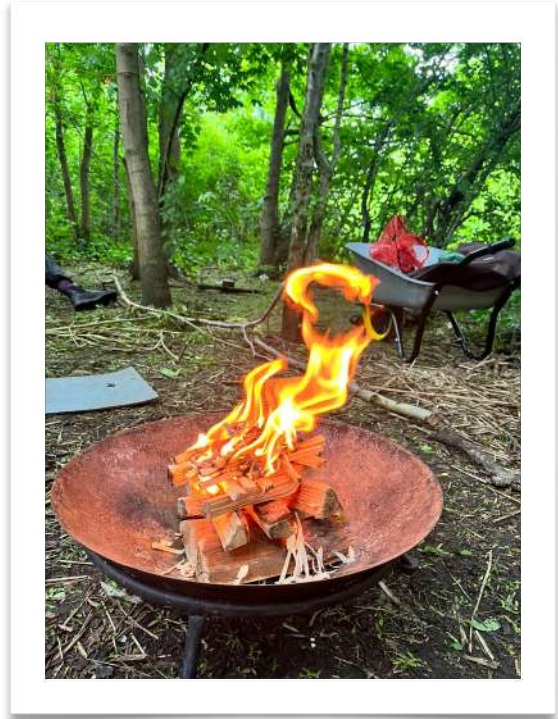
Process	Safety considerations
<p>Before building a fire in a woodland for a forest school session, we need to assess the site and choose the right place, considering factors like escape routes in case of emergency, what is above you, low tree branches for example can catch fire so it is best to find a little clearing or make sure the branches of trees are high enough.</p> <p>We also need to examine the ground condition and soil type. If leaf litter is present, it needs to be swept away. Peat soil can catch fire underground as it is flammable. So, it is important to establish the type of soil underneath is not flammable.</p> <p>If weather conditions are very dry and windy, we might consider not to light a fire as it can spread quickly.</p> <p>We will follow national regulations and be aware that smoke can travel a long distance and in urban areas can enter into buildings, causing nuisance to residents. For example, fire needs to be at least 10 m from any structure or any building. In urban areas, it is also advisable to seek permission from residents and local authorities.</p> <p>After choosing the right place, we will start creating a fire circle by enclosing the fire area with some logs or ribbons. Children will sit at least 2 m away from the fire in every direction. We can use a fire pit or build the fire on the ground creating a rock edging around it, and making sure to not use porous rock as they can explode under intense heat. We will also establish some clear entry and exit point into the fire circle and the direction of movement in and out of the circle. There should also be some easy escape routes in case of emergency. The fs leader will explain to the children to not enter the circle unless invited in and to follow the designated routes. They will also explain the whole process and why safety measures are important to follow. A fs assistant (or more than one depending on the number of children) will supervise the children and make sure nobody approaches the fire circle if not prompted to do so.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First aid kit, bucket with water, fire gloves, fire blanket to be kept near fire at all times.</li> <li>• Participating learners instructed to not throw objects into the fire.</li> <li>• Participating learners instructed about safety measure in place.</li> <li>• Participating learners instructed to how start a fire safely.</li> <li>• Direct supervision maintained at all times.</li> <li>• Environmental consideration taken into account before choosing the right site.</li> <li>• At least one tutor with current first aid qualification present at all times.</li> </ul>



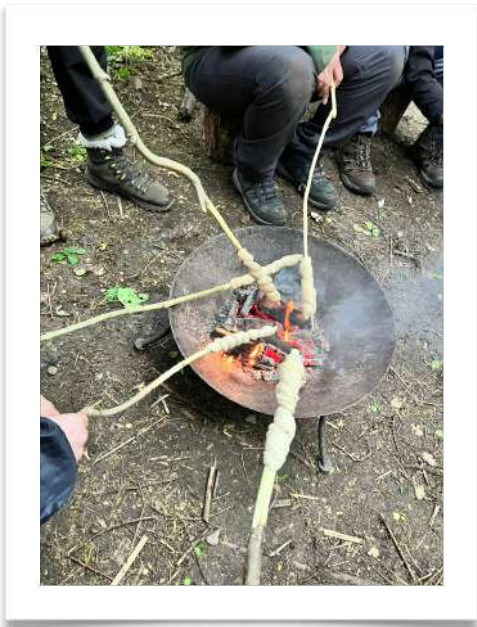
<p>The fs assistant prepares all the safety equipment to be laid around the fire pit: fire blanket; basket of water; fire gloves; first aid kit. They also prepare the wood beforehand and lay it close to the fire pit at easy reach: big logs, kindling and shavings.</p> <p>The fs leader will create a pyramid in a waffle like structure with bigger logs at the bottom and gradually adding smaller kindling and shavings on the top. They will use a cotton wool and a fire starter to light the fire and explain to the children the three elements that keep the fire going: oxygen, heat and fuel. After the fire builds up, we can add some logs to keep it going but considering how long should the activity last in order to not waste wood resources.</p>	
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*Extinguishing a fire and leaving a site safe*

Process	Safety considerations
<p>The fs leader will slowly pour water in the fire pit to extinguish the fire, which needs 15-20 min to die down completely. So, we will stay on site until any remaining embers are fully extinguished. If we use the site on a regular basis, we will not disperse the fire debris in the surrounding wood because this in the long term will change the soil composition and the habitat for wildlife. So, the debris needs to be disposed of off site. If the activity is carried out seldom, it is acceptable to disperse the debris in the wood making sure we do not leave any trace.</p> <p>Children can be invited to pour a glass of water each into the fire pit under supervision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sure water is poured in the fire pit slowly. If poured down all at once, the fire pit can crack.</li> </ul>



*Building a fire at Stave Hill park.  
Training days.*



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### Online resources

[https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-06/KWT%20Land%20Mgt%20Advice\\_Sheet%2010%20-%20Woodland%20management%20-ride%20and%20coppice.pdf](https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-06/KWT%20Land%20Mgt%20Advice_Sheet%2010%20-%20Woodland%20management%20-ride%20and%20coppice.pdf)

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/broadleaved-woodland/>

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/ancient-woodland-restoration/how-to-identify-ancient-woodland/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/hedge-and-woodland-edge-habitats>

<https://woodlandwildlifetoolkit.sylva.org.uk/advice-types-broadleaf>

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