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**Level 3 Forest School Leader**

**General Training Information**

**What is Forest School?**

Forest School is a unique philosophy and approach to outdoor play and learning. It involves using the environment and natural resources as a setting and stimulus for learning. Forest School practitioners use teaching and learning strategies that aim to promote confidence, independence,  empathy, social skills, self-esteem and intrinsic motivation.

**How Forest School is different**

Unlike one-day events and many environmental and outdoor/ adventurous activities, Forest School works with children/ young people in the outdoors over an extended period of time and aims to promote their holistic development. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Leaders, together with other staff who are well versed on the Forest School principles and ethos.  At Forest School there is a higher than normal staffing ratio and learners are introduced to  responsible risk taking and encouraged to participate in engaging, motivating and achievable  activities. The learning during Forest School sessions is principally child-led and based on  observations by the leader and other adults which lead to appropriate interventions in order to  develop the learning within and between sessions. The Forest School approach focuses on the  ‘process’ of learning rather than the ‘product’ and in this way all learners can achieve success;  building confidence and self-esteem. The outdoor environment, particularly woodland, provides  many opportunities for learners to explore their own preferred learning styles whilst building a  long-term relationship with the natural world.

**The training**

The Forest School Leader Award is a Level 3 qualification (A Level standard). Verified by Liminalis  Ltd., and accredited by ITC First, the training provides the practitioner with the skills and knowledge to risk assess, set up and manage a Forest School site. It equips them to plan and safely facilitate challenging, learner led, Forest School programmes with a range of client groups in line with the Forest School ethos and principles. The training covers 5 units of study worth 18 credits at Level 3, requiring the completion of a portfolio of evidence and a group and site-specific handbook.

**Entry criteria**

To do the course you must:

✓ Be aged 21 years or over (by the end of the course);

✓ Be a qualified teacher, play-worker, youth-worker or support worker (to Level 3 equivalent)  OR an appropriate Level 2 with at least 2 years’ experience of working with your chosen  client group in a leadership capacity;

✓ Hold a current DBS certificate;

✓ Have access to a group with whom you will run a 6-week ‘Introduction to Forest School’ Programme.

A person smiling at camera

Description automatically generated**Your tutors: Charlotte Atkinson** is an experienced headteacher and a qualified Level 3 Forest School practitioner and trainer. She has experience of leading Forest School sessions with children aged 2-11 years. She is a Forest School Association (FSA) endorsed trainer and trainer assessor. Charlotte provides training, guidance and support in setting up and running Forest School as  well as practical delivery of sessions and support with bid-writing and site design.

**Sarah Allington** is an experienced Level 3 Forest School practitioner working with children and young people from toddlers to teenagers including those with a range of additional needs. Sarah holds the FSA’s recognised provider status for her Forest School sessions which is a benchmark for quality Forest School provision. She is a founding member of a small charity which promotes access to quality Forest School for children and families. Sarah is training to become a Level 3 Forest School trainer alongside Charlotte and this course will be co-delivered.

A person squatting in water

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**Course Content**

The Forest School Leaders Award consists of 18 ITC credits contained in five units of study:

**1. Forest School Programmes: Practical Skills –** This unit covers aspects of how to use the outdoor environment for learning and how to teach a range of practical woodland skills to others.

**2. Forest School Programmes: The Woodland Environment -** Understanding the structure, diversity and management of a wooded area.

**3. Forest School Programme: Learning and Development -** Looking at theories of learning and how to support holistic development. Discussing the importance of play and how to raise self-esteem in learners.

**4. Forest School Programmes: Planning and Preparation -** Covering elements of the preparation needed to establish your own Forest School, including policies and procedures, risk and  communication.

**5. Forest School Programme: Delivery –** Aimed at delivering and evaluating Forest School sessions.

**Venue***:* a beautiful, privately owned woodland in the village of Ashdon near Saffron Walden in North Essex.

**Estimated Course Commitment**

Part of the course involves identifying a suitable site, establishing and running 6 Forest School  sessions. This includes creating a specific Forest School handbook for your site and group of  learners. In addition to the taught element (approx. 96 hours), the course involves approximately  84 hours of self-directed learning. This includes research, practical assignments and a completion  of course portfolio including written assignments, photographs and other evidence of your  learning. The course takes approximately 12 months to complete.

**Course Programme**

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| ***The 6-day initial training*** | The initial element of the training comprises a combination of  practical and theory. Learners will need to come prepared for both  indoor and outdoor learning every day and in all weathers. Each day  will commence at 9am and finish at approximately 5pm. | 19th-21st and 25th-27th March  2024 |
| ***Interim tasks*** | Learners will need to work on some introductory assignments,  practice their practical skills and consider where and when they will  run their ‘introduction to Forest School’ programme and who with. | Before Practical Skills Assessment Days |
| ***The 3-day Practical Skills Assessment  Days*** | Learners will be assessed on their practical and tool skills, as well as  their leadership and group-working skills. This element of the course  will also include a personal tutorial session. | 11-13th June  2024 |
| ***Outdoor First Aid Training*** | In order to qualify as a Level 3 Forest School Leader, learners will need  to hold a 2 day Outdoor/Forest School First Aid course which will equip them with the skills and strategies needed to care for the infants, children and adults involved both in indoor and outdoor  activities. | TBC |
| ***Handbook and***  ***initial session***  ***plans/ RAs*** | Learners will need to write/ update a set of policies and procedures  for running Forest School. They will need to plan their introductory  session and produce relevant risk assessments for this. | Before start of  introductory  programme/  tutorial |
| ***Tutorial*** | A one-day group tutorial on coursework portfolio | Date TBC –  autumn term  2024 |
| ***Introduction to***  ***Forest School***  ***Programme***  ***(6 sessions min.)*** | Learners will need to plan and run a short Forest School Programme  with a small group of approx. 8-16 children/young people in their own setting. Each session needs to be a minimum of 2 hours in length and  run with the same group of learners over consecutive weeks.  Learners need to be accompanied by at least one other adult (on site)  or two adults if they are leaving the grounds of the school/setting. | During autumn  term 2 2024 or  spring term 1  2025 |
| ***The assessment of  Forest School***  ***delivery*** | Learners will be observed delivering a session working with their chosen client group. Session plans, evaluations and risk-benefit assessments will be assessed at this point. | TBC – during autumn  term 2 2024 or  spring term 1  2025 |
| ***Coursework***  ***Portfolio*** | Learners will need to complete a coursework portfolio for the five areas of learning: Learning and Development, Practical skills,  woodland environment, planning a Forest School programme and  delivery of a Forest School programme. The evidence comprises written work, photographic evidence, practical demonstration and assessments. | To be worked on throughout the training. Hand-in of portfolios 12  months after  start date: 19th  March 2025 |
| ***New Forest School Leader Skills***  ***Development Day*** | An optional day for new Forest School Leaders (or those who have recently completed their training) to attend to practise and improve  their practical skills for working with learners at Forest School. | To be arranged – summer/autumn term 2025. |

**Teaching Methods**

During the face-to-face training days a variety of teaching methods are used including:

* Presentation with follow up discussion for many of the theoretical aspects of the course,
* Instruction/ demonstration with opportunities to practice for many of the practical/ skills-based elements of the course.

**Resources**

During the initial 6 days and 3 practical skills days we provide all the necessary tools and safety equipment for use by the learners. We ensure that they are appropriate and in good working condition. Learners need to come with a pair of safety boots, outdoor clothing (including waterproofs) and a camera (optional but recommended). We provide a journal, a course file and reference material or sources for all the theoretical topics covered that participants can refer to for their learning and written assignments. We also provide a library for learners to access during the face-to-face sessions.

**Assessments and Coursework Portfolio**

The assessments which take place during the training:

* Tutor observations during face-to-face training days.
* Interim assignments (normally four written assignments completed between the initial training days and practical skills days)
* Practical Skills and Peer Assessment (during the practical skills days)
* Interim tasks (in preparation for running your introductory programme)
* Delivery Assessment (of your Forest School Leadership during your ‘Introduction to Forest  School’ programme)

Learners have to complete a coursework portfolio containing evidence for the five units which  includes a number of written assignments and a site and group-specific handbook of policies and  procedures. Feedback from the interim assignments, personal tutorials during the practical skills  assessment and a group tutorial at the end of the course assist learners with the writing of  assignments. Further support is available via email.

**First Aid**

Before you can qualify as a Level 3 Forest School Leader you must also hold a relevant Outdoor/Forest School First Aid (OFA) Qualification. This is a 2-day course which equips you with skills and strategies to care for the infants, children and adults involved both in indoor and outdoor activities (a standard 1 day Paediatric First Aid or First Aid at Work certificate is not sufficient). If you do not have this qualification, there are a number of first aid providers that offer the course and a course that you can book onto in June in Ashdon (dates TBC). Typical costs are £120 per person.

**Delivery Assessments**

Participants on the course are assessed for their skills in leading Forest School sessions. This assessment takes place at your Forest School site. An additional charge of £75.00 plus 45p mile is levied for participants working outside a 50-mile radius of the training venue.

**Course Costs**

**£945** for the full course which includes enrolment and accreditation fees with ITC First, verification by Liminalis Ltd, one year’s FREE membership of the Forest School Association (FSA) and Suffolk’s local FSA group, a copy of the FSA's book, 'Growing a Forest School from the roots up!' (RRP £29.99) and the provision of a course file, journal, training resources and support. Course costs include refreshments on all training days but exclude meals and first aid training.

**Interested?**

If so, please return the attached ‘Expression of Interest’ form to

sarah@natureoflearning.co.uk You will then be told if you have been accepted on the course and will be sent a pack of registration and consent forms and an invoice for the course fees. These must be returned by (and the course fees must be paid) in order to secure your place on the course. Please note that places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

**Tutors:**

Charlotte Atkinson and Sarah Allington

**Accrediting Body:**

ITC First (https://www.itcfirst.org.uk/)

**Support:**

Sarah Allington 07944164983 [sarah@natureoflearning.co.uk](mailto:sarah@natureoflearning.co.uk)

Charlotte Atkinson: 07879 653488 head@charlottesforestschool.co.uk