

Comparing Forest Kindergarten and Forest School

| | Forest Kindergarten | Forest School |
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| Time | 40 hours | 180 hours, plus 16 hour first aid |
| Cost | £365-414 | Typically £850-£1000, plus first aid |
| Qualification Level | <p>Scotland SCQF Level 7, National Workplace Award</p> <p>England, Northern Ireland & Wales Vocational Qualification, Level 3</p> <p>European Qualification Framework, Level 5</p> | <p>Scotland SCQF Level 8</p> <p>England, Northern Ireland & Wales, Level 3 - 18 Credits.</p> <p>European Qualification Framework, Level 5</p> |
| Requirements | <p>Have access to a natural space and an early years group to take outdoors.</p> <p>Currently work with or have some training in working with early years children.</p> <p>Promotes the rights of the child.</p> | <p>At least 21 years old.</p> <p>Qualified teacher, play worker, youth worker, support worker OR have two years' experience of working outdoors with children.</p> <p>Hold paediatric first aid.</p> <p>Have access to FS site and students. To deliver a minimum of 6 sessions with the same participants in order to observe impact over time.</p> |
| First Aid | Good practice suggests a basic (8hr) first aid, ideally paediatric should be held all by ELC practitioners. | 16hr Outdoor or Forest School specific first aid. |
| Why? | To be able to make frequent use of natural places for regular sessions with their children. | To run a Forest School programme, with small groups of students, over longer term, in forest/woodland environment. |
| Who? | Early years practitioners already employed in an early learning and childcare setting, who wish to build their skills and knowledge around taking young children off-site, into natural spaces and lead frequent sessions. | Anyone who wants to become a Forest School Leader, able to set up and run a Forest School programme, who meets the criteria above. |
| Ages of participants | Early years children - 0-7 years old | Typically 5 years to adult |



| Pedagogy and Approach | | |
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| Core theme | A sustainable, rights-based approach to child-led play and learning in local, natural spaces, focussing on place, people and pedagogy. | A specialised, long-term programme of learning in forests/woodland, concerned with the holistic development of the students through learner-centred activities informed through observations by the Forest School Leader. |
| Core skills of educator | Develops existing understanding and skills of the early years practitioners around child centred learning and a variety of outdoor/nature-based pedagogies. | Understands the research underpinning the Forest School ethos in relation to physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as play and theories such as Dweck's Growth Mindset. |
| Reflective practice | Develops existing reflective practice, applied in the context of the outdoor, natural environment. | Reflective practice amongst participants and practitioners is a key component to help recognise achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for future sessions. Practitioners are also encouraged to evaluate each session and refer to RBAs, adding any new hazards observed in the moment. |
| Taking a risk benefit approach | Gains a further understanding of risk benefit analysis and how to dynamically risk assess. | Covered in the course. |
| Policies, procedures and paperwork | Forest Kindergarten is an embedded provision within an early years and childcare setting. Forest Kindergarten policies and procedures will be developed around existing practice and policy in off-site excursions. | Creates a comprehensive handbook containing policy documents and procedures, e.g. environmental policy and emergency procedures. |
| The site | Can 'pop up' on any natural sites. Early years practitioners will develop an awareness of and practical policy around managing any site they use. | Will often take place at the same woodland site over a period of months and years, meaning that the FSL has responsibility for managing the woodland environment. |



| Specific Activities | | |
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| Fires and cooking over a campfire | Not covered. Stand alone courses available, but not required. | Covered in depth through the course. |
| Bladed tools | Not covered. Stand alone courses available, but not required. | Covered in the course. |
| Climbing trees, boulders, logs etc | Covered in the course. Stand alone courses available, but not required. | Covered in the course. |
| Environmental care | Care for environment is covered. Stand alone courses available, but not required. | Fauna and Flora ID including woodland management |
| Erecting temporary shelters using tarps and knots. | Accessing and setting up temporary sites which include simple shelter, toileting, hand hygiene and providing snack outdoors. | Covered in depth through the course. |