

“Getting your class outdoors” programme Basic package

The blended learning programme to design, develop, deliver and evaluate your own sustainable outdoor learning programme.



For further information and to register for the programme please contact: Danielle Morrow, Forest School Awards Manager at danielle@learningwithoutwalls.net

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA) is an independent charity encouraging children to play and learn outside.

NIFSA was established in 2008 and since then we have:

- a) Written and accredited the only nationally recognised Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification available in Northern Ireland.
- b) Trained and accredited over 200 teachers to achieve their Forest School Leader qualification.
- c) Registered over 400 nurseries and schools on our website.
- d) Established a permanent Forest School at Clondeboye Estate in Bangor.
- e) Compiled hundreds of lesson plans, research papers and website links, all available for our members.
- f) Regularly held conferences and training events.
- g) Directly contributed to thousands of children engaging with our natural world every month.
- h) Established a free Forest School Family programme to continue learning outside of school.
- i) Regularly sit on professional committees to advise on learning outdoor issues.



Going through all the safety rules at the Loughshore in Newtownabbey.

Why a blended learning approach?

Covid19 has had a huge impact on everybody's life. NIFSA had been engaging in a six-week schools engagement programme. During 2019-21 this has not been possible. Schools have been interrupted for long periods of time and there is no guarantee that life will get back to normal soon.

NIFSA carried out a survey in June 2020. Over 200 respondents replied. Mainly nursery and primary schools. Over 99% wanted to do more outdoor learning and they identified on-line training as a way forward. See [NIFSA Learning Outdoors Survey June 2020](#)

What will the blended “Getting your class outdoors” programme look like?

On-line content

Each session will last 40 minutes and participants will have the opportunity of continuing afterwards for an informal discussion.

- Session 1 - Introduction to NIFSA, “Getting your class outdoors” programme, Forest School Awards website and “Why should your class learn outside?”
Practical discussion – what is involved in the Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification.
- Session 2 – Theory - Assignment 1 – “Benefits of learning outside”
Practical discussion – Identifying your site – examples of Forest School sites
- Session 3 - Theory - Assignment 2 – “History of Forest Schools”
Practical discussion – Risk assessments – things to consider
- Session 4 – Theory - Assignment 3 – “How does learning outside fit with national strategies”
Practical discussion – Some typical sessions
- Session 5 – Theory - Assignment 4 – “Evaluation of your Forest School”
Forest School Handbook and Lesson Plans
Practical discussion – Some more typical sessions



Measuring the age of a tree in Crumlin Glen.

Practical content

A NIFSA member of staff will work with your school to organise a visit and deliver a practical outdoor session. This will only be undertaken when it is safe to do so. NIFSA have a Covid19 risk assessment and procedures policy – [NIFSA Covid19 procedures](#)

Site advice

During that visit, NIFSA can give advice regarding your outdoor learning area. Our staff have many years' experience helping to developing school and park grounds.

Forest School Kit Bag

Your organisation will receive their own Forest School Starter Kit Bag (See below for contents. Contents may vary slightly). This will enable your organisation to get started immediately on their "Getting your class outdoors" journey.

Practical sessions

Our NIFSA member of staff will take out one of your classes to demonstrate the procedures and ethos of learning outdoors. NIFSA will work with the appointed teacher and their class over one day. Two sessions will take place over that day. Approximately an hour on-site for each session.

Observational assessment

To achieve the Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification, the member of staff must show competence and confidence in delivering an outdoor session with their class. NIFSA will arrange to undertake this assessment, once all the theory work has been completed. Additional members can be assessed. If members of staff can be assessed on the same day there will be no additional charge (an additional Open College Network NI registration and certification fee will be charged. See below for costs). If additional days are required by NIFSA to undertake the observational assessment an additional £80 per day will be charged.

Accreditation

Once a member of your organisation achieves the Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification, the organisation receives a metal plaque. This shows that they have achieved Official Forest School status and are now part of the ever-growing community of Northern Ireland Forest Schools.

Resources provided

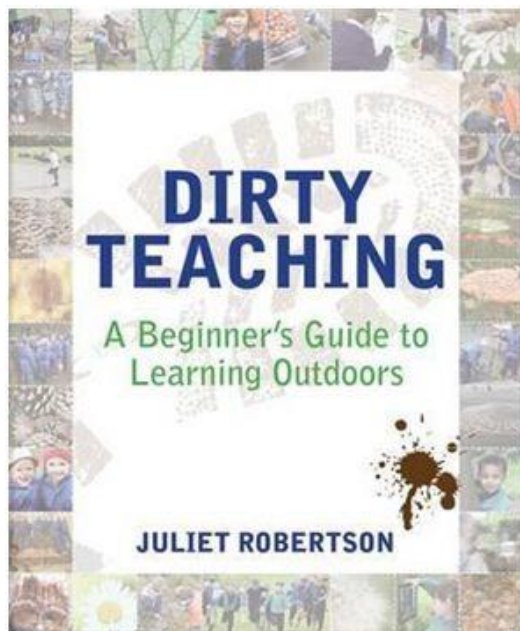
Forest School Starter Kit Bag
65 litre rucksack (1)
Paediatric First Aid kit for 30 (1)
Balls of coloured wool (2)
Junior hacksaws (8)
Potato peelers (8)
Tent pegs (10)
Clothes pegs (100)
5ft bamboo canes (40)
1mx1m tarpaulins (30)
High vis jacket (1)



Deirdre Doherty at
Millstrand Integrated
Primary School receiving
their Forest School Kit Bag

Whistle (1)
Boundary flag set (1)
Evaluation faces set (1)
Collecting boxes (6)

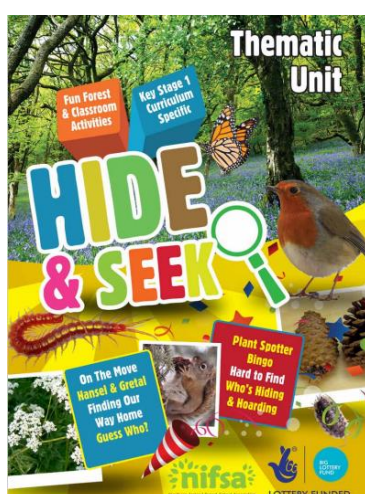
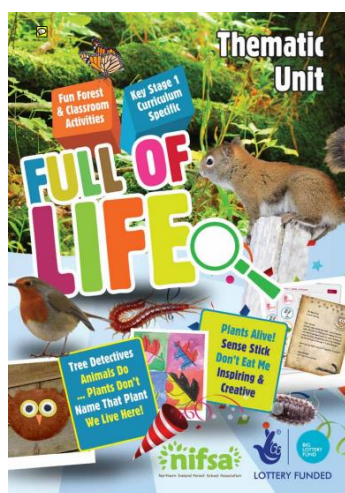
Forest School Publication (this may vary but is an example) –



Dirty Teaching : A Beginner's Guide to Learning Outdoors

One of the keys to a happy and creative classroom is getting out of it and this book will give you the confidence to do just that. Drawing on academic research, Juliet explains why learning outdoors is so beneficial and provides plenty of tips and activities to help you integrate outdoor learning into your teaching practice, providing a broad range of engaging outdoor experiences for your students. There is no need for expensive tools or complicated technologies: all you need is your coat and a passion for learning - oh, and you'd better bring the kids too! Topics covered include: forest schools, learning outside the classroom, outdoor education, nature activities, caring for the environment, play in schools, investigative play, urban outdoor activities, problem solving, creative thinking and strategies for supporting curriculum objectives. For all primary practitioners who want to shake up their usual classroom routine and discover the benefits of teaching outdoors.

NIFSA Publications –



The children will use the forest to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of learning areas. The theme allows the teacher a wide variety of opportunities to connect the learning from the Forest School setting to other opportunities within the classroom.

Registration and certification with awarding body

NIFSA will register one member of your staff with Open College Network NI. Any additional members will be charged £45 to cover registration costs.

Megan Hagan from Whitehead Primary School receiving her Forest School Leader Level 3 Award and school plaque



Official Forest School Plaque



Dundonald Primary School receiving their official Forest School plaque.

NIFSA membership

When you sign up you will automatically receive NIFSA Premium Membership and all the benefits that come with that.

On-going support

Signing up for the “Getting your class outdoors” programme is only the start of your outdoor learning adventure. NIFSA provide continuing support to help you –

- Forest School NI website – lesson plans, research papers, social media links are all added to the Forest School Awards website on a regular basis
[Forest Schools in Northern Ireland \(forestschoolsni.com\)](http://forestschoolsni.com)
- Development of new programmes and initiatives. NIFSA are always working with the sector to see what new areas can be developed.
- CPD training – NIFSA will host regular on-line and practical training sessions.
- Regular communication. If you are looking for new ideas, make new Forest School partnerships then the regular communications will keep you up to date.