

## **“Getting your class outdoors” programme**

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](mailto: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 Clondeboy 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.





## 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 develop 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 is recommending 4 practical sessions over 2 days approximately an hour each session (not taking into account journey time). Maybe an opportunity to have lunch or snack outside between sessions.

### 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

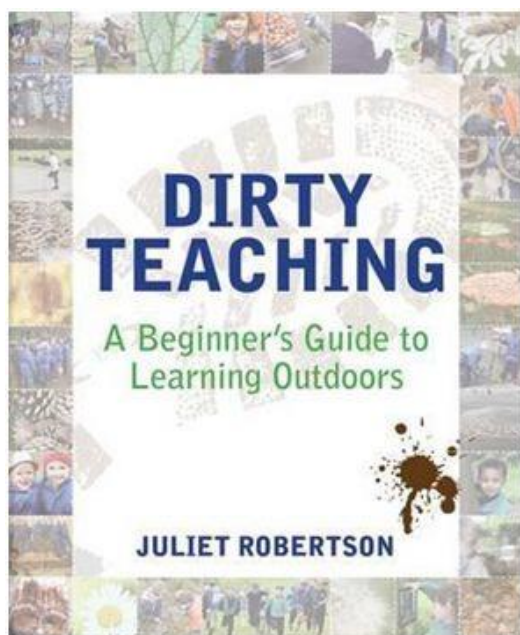
Forest School Starter Kit Bag  
65 litre rucksack (1)  
Paediatric First Aid kit for 30 (1)  
Balls of coloured wool (2)  
Junior hacksaws (8)  
Potato peelers (8)  
Tent pegs (10)  
Clothes pegs (100)  
5ft bamboo canes (40)  
1mx1m tarpaulins (30)



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

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

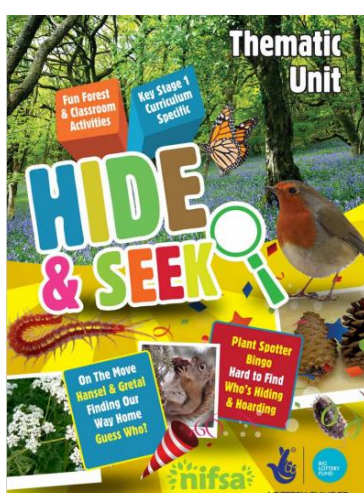
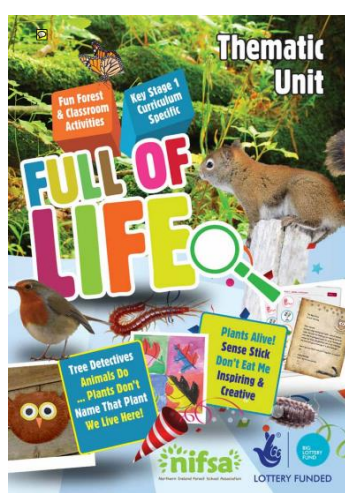
Forest School Publication (this may vary but is an example) –



**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 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 Awards website – lesson plans, research papers, social media links are all added to the Forest School Awards website on a regular basis
- Development of new programmes and initiatives. NIFSA are always working with the sector to see what new areas can be developed.
- On-line training – NIFSA will host regular on-line training sessions. Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer activity ideas etc.
- Monthly Forest School Community Network. If you are looking for new ideas, make new Forest School partnerships then the monthly on-line forum is the place for you.

## Clandeboyne Visit

Your class will have the opportunity to spend a morning at our permanent Forest School site in Clandeboyne Estate, Bangor, County Down. Our experienced and qualified staff will demonstrate some Forest School activities for you all to enjoy. **(Transport not included).**



Home of Clandeboyne Nature Rangers and nestled in 600 acres of native woodland, this really is an amazing experience for the children.

## Installation of seating

NIFSA can install seating in a circle around a camp fire area. This is the ideal location to spend quality time reflecting on a session or explaining what that day's activities will be. See below for an example.

Seating using decking installed at Moneynick Primary School.

Seating can vary depending on requirements for example: logs instead of planks etc.

