

Forest Kindergarten

A natural approach to learning in the early years

**Care Strategy Steering Group –
Operational Meeting**

24th January 2017

Forestry Commission Scotland

“Learning outdoors is about engaging young children in many different ways, using a multi-sensory and experiential approach”



Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland (Education Scotland, 2011)

Forest Kindergartens are unique, as they offer young children regular opportunities to learn through play within their local woodland and/or natural setting.

Children visit the same site, throughout the year, in almost all weather.



Forest Kindergartens



The Forest Kindergarten approach

Regular play opportunities in woodland or natural setting

Using stimulus offered by nature

All year round in almost all weather

Carefully selected real tools and resources to challenge thinking

Free play and child centred

Promoting creativity, imagination and problem solving skills

- “Opportunities for outdoor learning are improving across all sectors...
- ...Outstanding examples were noted in forest kindergartens.
- Staff would benefit from a clearer understanding of how outdoor learning allows children to experience more challenge through investigation and exploration of the natural world”

Forestry Commission Scotland

Forest Kindergarten Training Courses

- 3 day course for early years practitioners
- Supplementary skills courses – fire, ropes and tools
- 1 day course for Heads and Managers
- Pilot course – Training the Forest Kindergarten Trainers

- Team building
- Relationship to national curricular guidance and care standards
- Research findings
- Site appraisal
- Games and activities to ensure children's engagement and safety
- Access to FK kit, sample policies, procedures and planning
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Learning for Sustainability
- Activities for engaging colleagues, parents and community
- Embedding FK into policies and procedures
- Risk assessment
- Observation visit to FCS Forest Kindergarten
- Practical session – setting up a FK site, demonstrating games and nature experiences
- Information on additional support and ongoing FCS support

“The Care Inspectorate supports care service providers taking a positive approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. This means moving away from a traditional deficit model that takes a risk-averse approach, which can unnecessarily restrict children’s experiences attending registered services, to a more holistic risk-benefit model. For example, we encourage services to use risk assessment to support children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities such as woodwork using real tools, exploring nature and playing in the mud and rain. We do not expect written risk assessments to be carried out for daily play activities.”

Forest Kindergartens are:



Child centred



Child led

Benefits for Children...

- Freedom to explore using multiple senses
- Real world context
- Develop a caring attitude towards the environment
- Motivation and concentration
- Language and communication
- Health and wellbeing
- Confidence, perseverance, self esteem
- Knowledge and problem solving skills
- Social skills
- Enjoyment!

Benefits for Families and Early Years Staff...

- New perspectives and confidence
- The ripple effect

Thank you

