

Principles of Forest School

Forest School is a unique way of building independence and self - esteem in young children.

Forest Schools originated in Sweden in the 1950's when a retired soldier started to teach youngsters about nature and the natural environment through songs, stories and hands on experiences. This idea gradually spread throughout other Scandinavian countries including Denmark where Forest Schools have become an integral part of the education system.

Bridgwater College Early Excellence Centre have incorporated Forest School philosophy into their Early Years programme since 1995. Studies have found enormous benefits of giving children Forest School experience.

The combination of freedom and responsibility has been particularly beneficial to children with little confidence, or those with challenging behaviour. Children are set small manageable tasks and given genuine praise. This helps to increase self-esteem and life long learning skills. In this way children are given a good foundation for future learning experiences.

The experience is mainly fun and often child led. Children are given the freedom to splash around in puddles; collect twigs; examine objects; make dens and explore. The high adult : child ratios mean that children can safely experience types of activities that are often prohibited, such as finding out about fungi and berries, observing mini-beasts or lighting fires.

Ideally children should attend Forest School sessions throughout the year, when they will experience all weathers and the changing seasons.

The Forest School programme allows children to grow in confidence and independence. The children discover their abilities without fear or criticism.