

Outdoor Learning Approaches



Forest School

The modern incarnation of Forest School is based on a Scandinavian model of preschool outdoor education that encourages children to explore a wooded site, take risks and learn skills as diverse as tool use and firecraft. Activities should be child initiated, allowing the children to explore the woodland and make choices about their own learning. The practitioner's role is to observe and support the natural curiosity children have for the world around them, enabling the children to decide what they are interested in and what they want to do. There is no place in true forest school sessions for learning objectives and curriculum links. Visit www.forestschoollassociation.org for more information.



Curriculum Linked Outdoor Learning

This approach involves a skilled practitioner selecting a curriculum area and utilising the special nature of outdoors to deliver content in an exciting and engaging way. An example of this would be an outdoor maths session that includes collecting and sorting leaves using different criteria, or a history topic on the Vikings brought to life in the woodland. In these examples, the practitioner already has an idea of the outcomes, and so this approach cannot be described as child-led.



Environmental Education

The practitioner teaches the children about the natural world by planning and leading activities such as nature walks, species identification, pond dipping, taking surveys of fauna. These adult-led activities, which deepen and engage children's interest in the natural world, are hugely important as we face challenges to nature in the future, but they do not fit the forest school definition above.

