Editorial
Welcome to the February edition of NIFSA News. The Northern Ireland Forest School Association is a recognised charity promoting outdoor environmental education. Every month during the academic year, you will receive a copy of NIFSA News. It will contain news on newly qualified schools, useful websites, Forest School books, research and developments on the website and much more. We hope you enjoy it.

Clandeboye Forest School Academy
In recognition of the huge contribution Lady Dufferin and Trustees of the Dufferin Foundation are making for NIFSA, the Dufferin Foundation logo will be displayed on many NIFSA products and NIFSA website.

The Dufferin Foundation logo
Keep checking the NIFSA Facebook page and Forest School Awards website for more information.

NIFSA Hall of Fame
This month saw Judy Crabbe from Kirkiniola Primary School and Shona McCann from Riverside Special School achieve their Forest School Leader Level 3 Certificate.

Thanks go to Antrim and Newtownabbey and East and Mid-Antrim Councils for their continuing support.

Judy Crabbe and Shona McCann receive their Official Forest School plaque and Forest School Leader Lever 3 Certificates. Very well done.

NIFSA Membership Package
NIFSA is receiving hundreds of requests from schools and youth organisations to become Forest Schools. NIFSA wants to be able to support any organisation that wants to become one of our Forest School community. NIFSA is offering a Membership Package of £100 per academic year. The Package includes

Free Forest School Training Days
New organisations can undertake a 1-day training course to get them started delivering Forest Schools. Courses will be available across Northern Ireland in September and October 2018.

Existing members can undertake a 1-day CPD course. May 2018 dates to be confirmed.
Entry to the **NIFSA Nature Ranger Scheme** to encourage continuing Forest School activity.

**Learning About Forests** - become a LEAF organisation with other organisations from over 27 Countries

Be first to hear about funding through the **Forest School Awards** programme

**Directory entry** in the Forest School Awards website to promote your organisation

Manage Forest School activity with your own **Management Information System**

Train members of your own organisation in the **Forest School Leadership Level 3 Award for minimal cost**

Receive **NIFSA News** every month during term time

**Access to the Members Zone of the Forest School Awards website** - Forest School discussion sites, Forest School books, training and equipment, ideas for outdoor activities and links to related websites

Membership goes to support the training of new Forest Schools in Northern Ireland

**Discounts on books, training and equipment.**

And much more...

Go to **www.forestschoolawards.org** now and click on NIFSA Membership.

**Sign up for the 2018-19 academic year now and get the rest of this academic year free.**

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**Interesting websites with outdoor activity ideas**

**Forestry Commission – England**

[https://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning)

**Learning in your forest**

The Forestry Commission looks after more than 1500 woods and forests across England that provide amazing learning opportunities.

All our forests are different but many are open and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and all can provide classrooms without walls for schools and learners of all ages.

**Planning your visit**

Everything you need to know to help you plan your perfect visit. Discover our top 10 tips for teaching outdoors, some introductory activities, health and safety information and a map to help you find forest learning opportunities near you.
**Early years groups**
Teachers pack, lesson plans and supporting materials - perfect for your early years group.

**Primary groups**
Curriculum-linked lesson plans and supporting materials, and information about our Children’s University activities.

**Secondary groups and students**
Information about our apprenticeships, volunteering opportunities, graduate training and careers, and resources to help you with your studies.

**Lesson plans for schools and groups**
(Click on titles to take you to the lesson plan)

**Share**
We have created some great lesson plans to be used in the forest. They contain links to the national curriculum, but are just as appropriate for non-education groups such as Brownies and Cubs.

**Forest maths skills (PDF)**
Forests provide endless learning opportunities, and are great places for studying many aspects of the key stage 1 and 2 maths curriculum, including number, shape, symmetry, estimation and measuring.

**Literacy - A forest story study and performance (PDF)**
A visit to the forest with your class can inspire creative writing, imaginative language and vocabulary, as well as providing the backdrop for role play and performance. Suitable for KS 1 and 2.

**English language lesson plan (KS2) (PDF)**
Forests provide plenty of inspiration to enable children to compose poetry and write stories. A forest visit also provides numerous topics suitable for non-fiction reading and writing.

**Forest School Book of the Month**
We have added loads more books in the Book Section. Please take the time to have a look.

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**Home of the Forest School Awards**
Supported by The Dufferin Foundation
Bringing The Forest School Approach To Your Early Years Practice

This easy-to-read series provides an introduction to some of the most important early years philosophies and shows how they can be incorporated into your setting. Each book provides:
* an outline of the background to the approach
* clear explanations of the relevance to contemporary thinking
* suggestions to help you plan a successful learning environment
* examples of what the individual approach can look like in practice.

These convenient guides are essential to early years practitioners, students and parents who wish to fully understand what each approach means to their setting and children. How has Forest School helped to change attitudes about risk and challenge in the early years? What are the benefits of using this approach for children's development, health and overall wellbeing? Bringing the Forest School Approach to your Early Years Practice provides an accessible introduction to Forest School practice. It identifies the key issues involved in setting up, running and managing a Forest school environment and offers clear guidance on resources, staffing and space required for successful play and learning outdoors. Including links to the Early Years Foundation Stage and a wide range of case studies, the book covers:
* The beginnings of Forest School and how practice has developed
* Child centred play and learning that allows for risk taking and challenge
* Planning for children's individual needs, learning styles and schemas
* The learning environment
* The role of the adult including health and safety and children's welfare.

Full of practical advice, this convenient guide will help practitioners to deliver new, exciting and inspiring opportunities for the children they care for.

Purchase the book now from No Alibis

Tel: +44 (0)28 9031 9601
Email: david@noalibis.com
http://www.noalibis.com/default.asp

Specialist training providers

NIFSA is also sourcing specialist trainers to compliment Forest School Programmes.

NIFSA recommend that all Forest School Leaders that regularly go outdoors should hold a paediatric first aid qualification.

Emergency care NI are a local Northern Ireland first aid training company. They are a dedicated small team of first aid trainers. They are currently delivering first aid training to primary schools / pre-schools. The course they deliver is the 6 Hour Emergency first aid at work. This can be delivered over one day or in two sessions of three hours. The cost to deliver this course is normally £650 for up to 12 teachers. They give a discount of £150.00 to friends of NIFSA. If you only have a small school why not join with another local school to keep costs down for groups over 12 why not double your numbers to 24 for an extra £300 as they simply bring in another trainer. This cost includes certification valid for 3 years an Emergency first aid at work booklet and an individual hygiene CPR face shield keyring. All our courses are delivered in a fun informal manner. References from other primary schools available if required. Training also includes a free parent life skills evening duration 90 minutes.
Looking outside the window as I write another NIFSA News I thought of this activity. Leave a plastic tub outside in the garden and immerse a leaf in some water. Leave for a few hours and you will be left with a beautiful solid nature tree decoration!! The detail the ice brings out is fantastic.

This month the LEAF (Learning About Forests) function has been added.

The Membership function has been added.

See Front Page of this month’s NIFSA News.

Working in partnership with The Dufferin Foundation, NIFSA is exploring the possibility of delivering a Forest School Family Weekend Retreat at the wonderful Clandeboye Estate. Keep following the NIFSA Facebook page for further information. Registered Forest School Families will receive information via e-mail and will have top priority for bookings.
Introduction

The programme was initiated in 1999 by the Forest in Schools programmes in Norway, Sweden and Finland in cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and rolled out in the spring of 2000. Today, the Learning about Forests programme is coordinated by FEE at an international level. The Learning about Forests programme is well-recognised internationally, with over twenty countries from around the world participating. The programme aligns itself with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the Global Action Programme (GAP) and the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA) runs the LEAF programme nationally in Northern Ireland. Through Forest School training the programme reconnects the next generation with their environment, educating them to be more conscious of protecting it and instilling in children a sense of ownership of the natural world that surrounds them. The programme looks at all the functions of forests, ecological, social, economical and cultural.

Register your interest now by clicking on LEAF in your MIS.

The Forest School Awards have been developed by NIFSA to support schools and other organisations in becoming qualified Forest Schools.

It is supported by local Councils, companies and Government Agencies in Northern Ireland.

Organisations supporting the Forest School Awards are:
Calls for new applications in March/April 2018

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Schools selected for training 2017/18

Rosstulla Special School

Pupils visit Loughshore in Jordanstown. Teacher being assessed for Level 3.

Ballycraigy Primary School

Pupils visit Sixmilewater. Above pupils build an animal shelter.

Belfast City Council

Winners will be announced in April 2018.

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

Schools selected for training 2017/18

Beechlawn School

Students from Beechlawn visited Hillsborough Play Park. Pupils working out the age of a tree.

Downshire Primary School

Pupils from Downshire Primary School visiting Hillsborough Play Park. Here they are colour matching.

Rowandale Integrated Primary School is the final school selected by the Council for Forest

Home of the Forest School Awards

Supported by The Dufferin Foundation
School training in academic year 2017/18. They have been using the beautiful Moira Demesne Camouflage game at Moira Demesne

Mid-Ulster Council

Schools selected for training 2017/18 were –

Dungannon Primary School

Pupils from Dungannon Primary School visiting Ranfurly House in Dungannon. Here they receive their NIFSA Nature Ranger Certificates.

St Patrick’s Primary School, Dungannon

Pupils from St Patrick’s Primary School visiting Ranfurly House in Dungannon. Here they are making a tree.

Gaelscoil Aodha Rua

Den building at Ranfurly House.

Schools selected for 2018/19 academic year are:

a) Bush Primary School
b) Moy Regional Primary School
c) Windmill Integrated Primary School

Congratulations to all of the above.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Winners selected are:
1. Victoria Primary School using Bashfordsland Wood & Oakfield Glen, Carrickfergus
2. Moyle Primary using Dixon Park Larne
3. Millquarter Primary using The People’s Park Ballymena

Congratulations to all of the above schools.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Balcas

Balcas is sponsoring the training of 2 schools involved in a shared education programme. Schools will be invited to apply for 2018/19 academic year.

Watch out over the coming months for new Balcas resources to help you learn about forests.

Public Health Agency

The Public Health Agency of Northern Ireland are sponsoring 10 schools in 2017/18 that have shown a strong interest in becoming a Forest School. A huge thank you to Hilary Johnston from the Public Health Agency.

Carrick Primary School, Lurgan

Pupils from Carrick Primary School have a wonderful wooded area in their school grounds. Here they are on a scavenger hunt.

Mercy Primary School, Belfast

Pupils from Mercy Primary School have an area of mature woodland in their school grounds. Here pupils make some 3D shapes.

St Joseph’s Nursery School and St Peter’s Nursery School, Bessbrook

A shared education initiative between these two nurseries in County Down. Making a tree.

St Oliver’s Primary School, Belleek

Home of the Forest School Awards

Supported by The Dufferin Foundation
Using the school grounds at St Oliver’s Primary School. Collecting sticks to make a picture.

**Mill Strand Integrated Primary School – Portrush**

Making homes for their characters

**Killowen Primary School – Coleraine**

Scavenger hunt

**Maghaberry Primary School – Moira**

2D shape exploring

**Friends Preparatory School – Lisburn**

Making animal shelters

**Mossgrove Primary School – Newtownabbey**

Making a tree with natural materials

**Rathcoole Primary School – Newtownabbey**

Making creative writing dens.
Signature Project – Shared education Projects

**Moneynick Primary School and Duneane Primary Schools**

Pupils from both schools find a fairy door

**St Comgall’s Primary School and Antrim Primary School**

Pupils from both schools explore Antrim Castle Gardens and make maps with grid lines.

**Rasharkin Primary School and St Patrick’s Primary School**

Pupils from both schools chill out with hot orange juice.

**IMPORTANT:**

Always be kept up to date about the Forest School Awards by completing an expression of interest form.

Visit [www.forestschoolawards.org](http://www.forestschoolawards.org) and go to Become a Forest School

**Forest School Starter Kit Bags**

Winners of the Forest School Awards also receive a free Forest School Starter Kit Bag. This consists of a 65 litre rucksack with first aid kit, tarpaulins, tent pegs, bamboo canes, potato peelers, collecting tubs, balls of wool etc. All the things you need to start your own Forest School programme. You can purchase the Forest School Starter Kit Bag separately for £150.

NIFSA work in partnership with Samuel Cotter of Cotters Crazy Prices based in Newtownards and Bangor. Samuel sources all the equipment

Home of the Forest School Awards
and gives a very generous discount. If you are thinking of purchasing any equipment give Samuel a call on 028 9147 2924.

St Comgall’s and Antrim Primary Schools receive their Forest School Starter Kit Bag.

Each month we will look at a new activity you can do using the materials from your Kit Bag – this month – age of a tree.

At about chest height, wrap a piece of wool around the girth of the tree. Mark the length in centimetres. The age of the tree is the length divided by (2 (really 2.5 but hard to work out on the spot). For example – 100 cms = 50 years of age. This of course is only an estimate as different species of tree grow at different rates.

How can my school/organisation become a Forest School?

There are a number of programmes NIFSA offer to schools/organisations.

a) Apply on-line and when funding becomes available you will be notified. We cannot guarantee to secure funding for everybody but if you are not in you cannot win.

b) A 6-week programme that has everything the Forest School Awards offers. Cost £1,500. Schools have obtained Awards for All and Shared Education funding to support this.

c) An intensive 1 day course – the Forest School Distance Learning Programme. A 1 day training course to cover all the essentials of obtaining the Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification. Cost £300.

https://www.forestschoolawards.org/cgi-bin/main.cgi?page=Distance Learning Forest School Programme&vat=1506192017

Since January 2017, NIFSA has 24 qualified Forest Schools 66 new Forest Schools, engaged 10,128 pupils in outdoor activities and registered 54 Forest School Families.
NIFSA is working closely with Garvagh Peoples Forest.

Training commenced for the 20 Forest School Leader trainees in Garvagh Forest in February.

Trainees relax with some tea and coffee in Drumlamph Woodland.

Research publications have been added to the Research Section of the Forest School Awards website. Please take the time to read them.

Forest School and its impacts on young children: Case studies in Britain

As Forest School has become more widespread throughout Britain an understanding is needed of its impact. This paper outlines a two-phase evaluation project undertaken in Wales and England from 2002 to 2005. The evaluation was undertaken through a partnership between Forest Research and the New Economics Foundation. A methodology was developed to explore the impacts of Forest School on children and this was then used to track changes in 24 children at three case study areas over an 8-month period. The research highlights that children can benefit in a range of ways. Six themes emerged from the data of the positive impacts on children in terms of confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, physical skills and knowledge and understanding. Two further themes highlight the wider impacts of Forest School on teachers, parents, and the extended family. Contact with the natural environment can be limited for children and young people in contemporary society due to concerns about safety outdoors and issues of risk and liability. Forest School provides an important opportunity for children to gain access to and become familiar with woodlands on a regular basis, while learning academic and practical skills. The constructivist theory of learning seems to be particularly suited to the Forest School approach as children make meaning from their direct experiences. The participatory action research approach taken in this study promoted reflective practice amongst the stakeholders involved and provided them with a sense of ownership of the study, as well as an opportunity to learn from each other.