



Learning Without Walls Newsletter



September Edition 2018

Editorial

Welcome to the September edition of the new Learning Without Walls Newsletter. This replaces the old NIFSA News and reinforces the partnership between NIFSA and The Dufferin Foundation.

What is Learning Without Walls?

The Learning Without Walls initiative is the vision of Lady Dufferin and the collaboration of the Dufferin Foundation and the Northern Ireland Forest School Association (NIFSA).

Children are suffering from nature deficit disorder, a term used by Michael Louv in his book "Last Child in the Woods". Evidence is showing that children are suffering from serious mental and physical health issues because they are not spending time outside.

The Learning Without Walls initiative is a series of programmes designed to get children learning outside in the natural environment with their schools, youth groups and families – Clondeboye Nature Rangers, Forest School Awards and Forest School Families

Clandeboye Nature Rangers



Richard McMeekin, Manager of Clondeboye Nature Rangers relaxing in Eagle Wood, Clondeboye

The Clondeboye Nature Rangers is an after-school club for North Down. Every day pupils are picked up from selected schools and brought out to Clondeboye Estate. Here they change into their outdoor clothes and spend the afternoon exploring nature and learning new skills. All of it outside for the whole afternoon! Parents pick up their children at 5.30.



Lorraine Brown, Assistant Manager at Clondeboye Nature Ranger prepares blackberries to dye some clothing

Forest School Awards

The Forest School Awards is the outreach programme for the Learning Without Walls initiative. The Awards have been going since September 2016 and have supported hundreds of teachers and dozens of schools.

The Forest School Awards are supported in five Council areas – Belfast, Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Lisburn and Mid-Ulster. Every year selected schools are chosen to participate in a 6-week Forest School programme in their local parks.

Home of the
Forest School Awards



Supported by the
Dufferin Foundation



Teachers can gain their Forest School Leader Level 3 qualification to get Forest School accreditation for their school.

To register for a Forest School Award please visit www.forestschoolorawards.org and click on "Become a Forest School".



Brian Poots of NIFSA taking a Forest School session in East Belfast.

Forest School Family



A family explore Eagle Wood at Clondeboye Estate

The Forest School Family is all about inspiring families to spend quality time together out in our wonderful natural environment. It is free for families to register. They receive a copy of the Learning Without Walls Newsletter every month for activity ideas. If they download six photographs of family activities together they will receive a personalised Forest School Family Certificate.



Click the qr code above to register as a Forest School Family

Residential weekends at Clondeboye Estate are planned for the future. Watch this space.

The launch of Learning Without Walls

At the beginning of September, visiting lecturers and students from Trinity College, Dublin and Queen's University, Belfast actively engaged outside with 130 pupils from local schools in Bangor.

The pupils began by building "creative writing dens" using tarpaulins, bamboo canes and clothes pegs. They then went on a journey through Clondeboye Estate and collected an interesting natural object from their travels. Associating a word with that object, each group had to compose a story back at their den. A fantastic and hugely rewarding day.

Home of the Forest School Awards



Supported by the Dufferin Foundation





Lady Dufferin giving some ideas for the group to begin their composition

NIFSA Statistics 2018-19

Every month we will give you an update on the impact Learning Without Walls is making. This month 6 new schools became accredited Forest Schools.



Emma and Louise from Rathcoole Primary School receiving their official Forest School plaque



Emma from Mercy Primary School receiving her official Forest School plaque

In September we have 15 new schools and organisations registering to become a Forest School and we have actively worked with over 500 children outside.

Forest School Family Activity

Use the natural objects found in the park or forest to make a map of the park you are in.



Put out a boundary to mark where your map will go.



Use natural materials to make your paths, trees and other interesting features.

When you have made your map, take a picture of it and upload it to your Forest School Family site.

When you upload six photos you will receive a personalised certificate for your family.



Training with Learning Without Walls

All training events are normally free for NIFSA Members to attend.



NIFSA/IFSA Conference – Autumn Gathering

6th October – Clondebroy Estate

The Irish Forest School Association (IFSA) was founded in 2016 and is delighted to be partners in this celebration and to jointly share our experience and build our connections on the island of Ireland. Joan Whelan, the Chairperson of the IFSA, says: 'Forest School is a form of outdoor education, suitable for everyone from 0 -100, in formal or informal education settings. It's about holistic learning over time, at the learners' pace, in the natural setting. And yes - it happens in cities and parks too!'

Workshops will be facilitated by Lucy O Hagan of Wild Awake & Phoenix Forest School, based in Dublin's iconic Phoenix Park, who has just returned from four months living wild with ancestral skills teacher Lynx Vilden; Artist Maree Hensey, who invites participants to engage in an immersive, process based experience outdoors; James Hunter, drystone waller and stonemason for the estate since the 1980s and George Little, who will lead a session on papermaking in the forest and who has been a director of NIFSA since the beginning.

Check out the event at www.irishforestschoolassociation.ie or on our Facebook page or by email to info@irishforestschoolassociation.ie

Home of the
Forest School Awards



Forest School Awards One-Day Registration and Training Event

Demand to become a Forest School is growing faster than the Forest School Awards can currently accommodate. To satisfy this demand within Council areas that are supporting the Forest School Awards, NIFSA are running one-day registration and training days for any organisation that wants to get involved. They are free for organisations based in these Council areas.

The events will be held in local Council Parks –
Woodvale Park, Belfast – 13th October

Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey – 20th October

Carrickfergus Town Hall – 3rd November

Moira Demesne – to be rearranged

The events all begin at 9.30 and will aim to finish at approximately 2pm.

The events will get you registered on the Forest School Awards website and provide all the information required to get you started on your forest school journey. Please register using the Diary on the Forest School Awards website.



Happy teachers and youth leaders at the Ranfurly House, Dungannon one-day registration and training event on 29th September

Supported by the
Dufferin Foundation

