



Forest Education Initiative

Sheffield and South Yorkshire FEI *Forest Schools Newsletter*

Forest School Taster Event in the Winter Garden.

As it turned out it was extremely fortunate that we chose to hold the recent Forest School taster sessions in the apparently inappropriate setting of Sheffield Winter Garden. As the rain pounded on the glass high above their heads the children from the 13 schools that attended the sessions were absorbed in a whole range of woodland activities. The event, which was organised by **South Yorkshire Forest Partnership** and funded by the Forest Education Initiative in conjunction with Sheffield Children's Festival, aimed to promote awareness of the Forest Schools concept to teachers and the general public.

There was a wide range of activities on offer, led by trained Forest Schools leaders from Sheffield Wildlife Trust, Archimedes Training, Sheffield Rangers and officers from Sheffield Trees and Woodlands section, reflecting the vast range of skills and experiences that children are introduced to in their Forest Schools sessions.

Although originally the concept of Forest Schools was aimed towards younger children the benefits of the programme are now being realised by teachers and leaders of all ages of children, from the Foundation aged children from Sir Harold Jackson school to the secondary pupils from Chaucer. The schools taking part were, Sir Harold Jackson, Birley Spa, Reignhead, Pipworth, Westbourne, Gleadless, Hunters Bar, Springfield and Hinde House. In addition, children and staff from Meynell, Southey Green, Chaucer and Wisewood Primary came along to demonstrate what they had been learning in their very own Forest school sessions back in school.

'These were really lovely activities, enjoyed by all', wrote Mrs Smith from Sir Harold Jackson, whilst Dave Atkinson, from Gleadless, was particularly impressed with the level of involvement of his Y4 class. 'They are a difficult class but were all engaged in the activities all the time', he commented.



Woodland art and craft



Learning new skills



Treasure trails

*To find out more about
Forest School Activities
go to*

www.foresteducation.org.uk



Storytelling activities



Woodland art and craft



Learning to use tools safely



Cooperative games

Forest Schools take off in North Sheffield schools.

As one of the final activities of the Together We Can North Sheffield EAZ, Penny Rea, the coordinator, was able to offer Forest School leadership training to a group of about 10 staff from partner schools. This training, conducted by Archimedes Training on Wood Lane, was enthusiastically taken up by teachers or support staff from Wisewood Primary, Chaucer, Southey Green and Parson Cross schools and Forest School activities have now been incorporated into the teaching and learning programmes of these schools. In addition Penny was able to access study support funding to introduce Forest Schools activities to children at Meynell school. The confidence and sense of fun with which these children approached the demonstrations was testament to the success of the work that their leaders had done with them over the last term in their Forest Schools settings. You don't need to have a forest to run a Forest school. David Wright from Wisewood takes his Y4 class weekly to a site on nearby Loxley Common whilst Gill Lemm from Southey Green walks the Y1 children along to Parson Cross Park. The Meynell children have been using their own school grounds.

Every Child's Future Matters

is a recent report by the Sustainable Development Commission which concludes that it may not be possible to deliver the aims of ECM at all unless the environment becomes one of its key considerations. One of the key judgements under the 'Achieve and Enjoy' heading is -

*'Children as young as three can benefit from learning about the environment—in the environment. Authorities such as Gloucestershire and Worcestershire use the Danish education programme **Forest Schools** in their early years services. In one evaluation teachers reported that the children had significantly developed their vocabulary and communication skills as a result of the programme.'*

Looking to the Future.

This is only the beginning for Forest Schools in our area. We believe that, through the leadership training programme, with its emphasis on health and safety considerations, the Forest Schools concept has a key part to play in reintroducing outdoor activities to all schools. It is only through the training of staff in schools that this can become embedded and sustainable. Don't let your children miss out. Consider training as a Forest Schools leader. See the back page for an opportunity.



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The innovative Forest School process originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s but only put down roots in the UK in 2002. Since then, the concept has grown steadily, with careful tending from the Forest Education Initiative which now coordinates training courses leading to recognised Forest School Leader qualifications, and awards Forest School status to providers. Peter Machan, a Sheffield head teacher for many years, now works as Education Officer for the South Yorkshire Forest through which he discovered the 'joined up' approach of Forest School learning methods. Peter is now passionately spreading awareness of Forest Schools throughout the network of schools in South Yorkshire, with great success. "From both educational and environmental perspectives the whole idea of Forest Schools is just brilliant," said Peter, "The method has been an integral part of Danish education system since the 1980s, so there's plenty of evidence to show that it works – especially for young people who find it hard to achieve in traditional classroom settings. It also nurtures a sense of care and respect for the green environment which is crucial at this difficult point in the planet's history."



Shelter building



Storytelling activities

See more images of this event on www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk.

The Next Step

If you are interested in delivering some kind of Forest Schools activities there are a range of training courses available to suit your experiences and needs. The OCN Forest School Practitioners Awards start from entry level NVQ and continue up to the OCN Level 3 NVQ which is designed for you to set up and run your own Forest School.

Undertaking Forest Schools training will enable you to motivate and inspire groups and individuals to enjoy the outdoors in a safe and nurturing environment whilst providing a unique learning experience.

In order to give you a taste of what Forest Schools have to offer you we are running a free

Forest schools activity day for teachers and support staff

on Tuesday 13th November at the Centre in the Park, Norfolk Park. This will be a hands-on day to give you a chance to have a go at some of the sort of activities which Forest Schools training offers. To book your place please e-mail peter.machan@syforest.co.uk giving your name, school and contact details.

A Training Opportunity

For teachers and staff who already know that they wish to undertake the training we have booked a **5 day level 2 course with Archimedes Training**, the leading training agency in the North of England, to take place in the woodland at High Green Primary School on the week beginning Monday 3rd December. This will be adequate to enable teachers to confidently run their own Forest School on their own school site or in a local woodland or to enable support staff to work alongside the teacher. Places are strictly limited.

Please ring me on **0114 2571199** to book your place or find out more.

**Have you looked at the Fuelling a Revolution website recently?
If not go to
www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk
to find stacks of new teacher's resources and childrens' activities.**

Other Woodland Education News

Children and families had a great time at the start of the holidays taking part in woodland activity days in Ecclesall Woods. The story trail led by well-known Shonale was especially enjoyed.



A Tree Planting

Opportunity for your School Grounds.

In conjunction with the Woodland Trust we have again been given the opportunity to plant 30 native trees in school grounds and do some related games and activities with classes in 14 schools in Sheffield and Rotherham.

Is your school interested?

If so e-mail peter.machan@syforest.co.uk or ring **0114 2571199**.

South Yorkshire Woodfair 2007

Following last year's fantastically enjoyable event this year's Woodfair will again be held in Endcliffe Park on **Saturday, October 6th.**



Woodland Workout is a fantastic new programme of physical and discovery activities that can be used in your local woodland or school grounds. It can be downloaded from the

FEI website - www.foresteducation.org