



THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
BRATISLAVA  
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

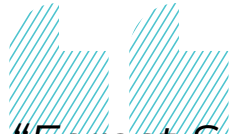
25 years OUTSTANDING  
EDUCATION

# FOREST SCHOOL GUIDE





# WHAT IS FOREST SCHOOL?



*“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.”*

Forest School Association



There is a growing awareness of the need to help young people appreciate the outdoors and natural environment. One of the possibilities is the development and implementation of Forest Schools. Over the last few years, a considerable number of schools now provide this style of outdoor learning.

In this booklet, we would like to outline what a Forest School is, explain why it is beneficial for children and provide some information on how you and your child can get involved.

During the 1990s, Forest School was introduced in the UK, partly inspired by the outdoor pedagogical practices which were already well-established in Scandinavian countries. Forest School practitioners and training centers gained momentum throughout the 2000s in various forms and structures, before the Forest School Association (FSA) was formally established in July 2012.



# FOREST SCHOOL ETHOS AND PRINCIPLES – HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The FSA aims to promote best practice and has provided six guiding principles.

1 Forest school is a long-term process and planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements.

2 Forest school takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of the relationship between the learner and the natural world.

3 Forest school aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.





4

Forest school offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

5

Forest school is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

6

Forest school uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

## **1. Sessions are delivered on a long-term basis**

Forest school meetings should be regular and long enough for children to feel safe and secure in the forest and have enough space for observation and self-reflection.

## **2. Sessions should be risk-aware**

Forest school activities are meaningful and allow children to take a risks despite the fact that they use tools such as knives and axes and learn to be safe around the fire.

## **3. Forest School is invested in the holistic development of the participants**

Holistic means 'whole' – and Forest School is about practitioners enabling the development of the whole person. This includes:

- Emotional development
- Spiritual development
- Intellectual development
- Social development
- Physical development
- Communication and language development

## **4. Forest School should take place in a natural wooded environment where possible**

Part of the forest school is awareness and appreciation of the natural world. Sessions take place in a natural environment, ideally under the trees, with the possibility of using natural materials for activities.

## **5. Forest School sessions need to be run by an appropriately trained individual**

The FSA states that practitioners should hold a Level 3 Forest School qualification, which equips them with the skills required to provide excellent quality sessions.

## **6. Forest School is learner-centered with learner-based outcomes**

Learning in Forest School is intended to be a cooperative process between the practitioner and the participants through a system of observation, reflection, and communication.







## AT BISB WE PROVIDE:

- Children with the opportunity to succeed, developing their confidence and self-esteem through hands-on outdoor learning experiences in a woodland environment.
- A variety of resources and experiences, encouraging independent and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.
- Sessions that are 2 1/2 hours long and are run by a qualified Forest School practitioner, these sessions are planned around a theme and include natural crafts and lessons about nature.
- Sessions are at either Dubravka forest or the Maples Forest School area and these are linked to the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 Curriculum.

## OUR MISSION

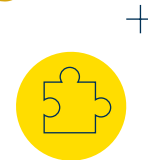


We provide Forest School in an idyllic woodland setting, where children develop skills, confidence, self-esteem. Through outdoor learning sessions we provide accessible innovative outdoor education that is play-based and child-led.

Learners also gain a respect for nature through many small interactions and noticing changes around them through the seasons. Providing students with an opportunity to appreciate the wider, natural world encourages a responsibility for nature conservation in later life.

## OUR OBJECTIVES AND THE BENEFITS OF FOREST SCHOOL AT BISB ARE:

- To develop personal and social skills.
- To develop creative and imaginative skills.
- To identify and manage risks.
- To develop problem solving strategies.
- To understand the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.
- To increase self-esteem and self-motivation.
- To use tools safely.





**CASE STUDIES HAVE SHOWN  
THAT CHILDREN CAN:**

- Develop self-regulation skills
- Cope with and learn from failure
- Build resilience (the skill of coping with risk and failure)
- Gain a sense of achievement
- Increase motivation and concentration
- Improve problem solving
- Expand their vocabulary and communication skills
- Feel empowered and have new perspectives
- Build positive relationships with adults and peers
- Have overall improved wellbeing and mental health





*“The benefits of Forest School are linked to the long-term regular sessions, and echo the holistic development aims in the six guiding principles. Research has shown that children can benefit in a multitude of ways ranging from confidence to social, emotional, intellectual, physical and language development.”*

Murray & O'Brien, 2005



# FOREST SCHOOL AT BIS BRATISLAVA

## MEET THE FOREST SCHOOL LEAD



Daniela Kollarova  
FOREST SCHOOL LEAD



During the Forest School sessions in the Dubravka forest, children are building dens, climbing trees, building fires and learning about the plants and local wildlife in the natural world around them. The children are watching how tiny buds and shoots are forming and beginning to open and bloom; they are learning about the life cycles of plants and what plants need to grow. Through the seasons they are observing what the nature brings to the animals life, birds, insects, plants and trees. All the sessions are connected to the school curriculum and they are compiled under the guidance of highly experienced Forest School practitioner.

## → WHAT HAPPENS DURING FOREST SCHOOL SESSIONS?

- Sessions are running in a woodland area - Dubravka, the Willows garden or the Maples Forest School area.
- Durations of lessons is from 1 to 2.5 hours.
- Lessons are for small groups of children 6 to 10.
- Some sessions involve the use of tools as a: hack saws/grinding fire lightener, cooking or heating pan.
- All children will be given the opportunity to experience a year of Forest school.
- Qualified Forest School leader needs to have a First aid training.
- Children will travel by bus to the Dúbravka forest, which is located near the school.

## → WHAT IS THE ADULT/CHILD RATIO ON THE BUS AND IN THE FOREST?

- **Nursery** – ratio 1:3
- **Reception** – ratio 1:5
- **Year 1** – ratio 1:6



## → WHAT FIRE SAFETY PRINCIPLES DO WE USE?

- ! Fires will only be lit in the designated areas.
- ! Children are seated in a log circle, 1.5 meters away from the fire circle.
- ! Fires will only be lit by an adult; children may be allowed to feed the fire under 1:1 supervision.
- ! Fires will always be supervised by the Forest School Leader .
- ! There will always be a bucket of water.
- ! The children will be taught and reminded of the log circle rules from their first visit to Forest School:
  - Stand behind log
  - Step over and sit down on log
  - Stand up, turn around and step over the log.








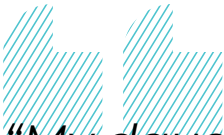


## → | WHAT ARE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES DURING COOKING AND EATING?

- Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink.
- All food is stored in airtight containers.
- Staff are aware of any special dietary needs or children food allergies. the Forest School
- Food will be cooked correctly.

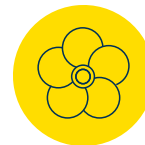
## → | ARE THERE FIRST AIDERS ON THE SITE?

- The Forest School Leader has permanently updated First Aid Training.
- A First Aid kit and asthma pumps (if need it) is kept on the site as well as a First Aid burns kit.



*“My daughter loved eating marshmallows and enjoyed being outside with her friends. She loves trees and has fun playing in the forest.”*

Parent, British International School Bratislava





## → WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE CLOTHING FOR FOREST SCHOOL?

At British International School Bratislava we believe that there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes!

Sessions will take place in most weathers, so come prepared wearing lots of layers, waterproof coats and trousers, warm hats, scarves and gloves and some waterproof wellies or walking boots.

What does your child need? Come rain or shine we will endeavour to use the wooded environment for sessions. Therefore it is essential that on the days that your child will participate in Forest School sessions they bring with them a change of old clothes (be warned that they may get muddy!), wellington boots and a waterproof coat. In addition to this it will be helpful for your child to have pair of waterproof trousers or an all-in-one suit to ensure that their focus is on enjoying themselves!

Dressed properly, children can enjoy their experience outdoors regardless of the weather. Learning how to dress appropriately is part of the experience.

### SPRING AND SUMMER CLOTHES:



AUTUMN AND WINTER CLOTHES:



*All items must be named.*

*Your child will not be able to go to Forest School without the appropriate clothing.*







## → WHAT IF THEY GET COLD, WET, AND MUDDY IN THE FOREST?

Supporting your child – self-care for independence (reassure children that it is ok to be muddy, wet).

In fact, playing in muddy puddles does offer some important health benefits.

### **NEWS FLASH – IT IS HEALTHY TO PLAY IN THE MUD!**

Happy children are muddy children – there is a friendly soil bacteria called *Mycobacterium Vaccae* which stimulates your immune system and causes your brain to release serotonin, which is your “happy hormone.”

Muddy children are healthier children – scientists are saying that we are “too clean” nowadays and this is leading to a rise in child illnesses and allergies.

Muddy children are relaxed children – researchers have found out that by playing outdoors children are less stressed and anxious than their indoor based friends.

Muddy children are leaders – experimenting and trying new things, being adventurous and thinking about what is happening while playing in the mud builds character, encouraging children to think beyond the square and develop confidence in themselves.

## → WEATHER POLICY

Staff will stay informed of the weather conditions via the Weather app.

**We will not go to the forest if there are:**

### ! High Winds

High winds can be dangerous in woodland because of the dangers of falling branches and damage to shelters. We monitor the forecast and our site closely.

### ! Electrical Storms

Electrical storms can be dangerous in a woodland due to lack of indoor shelters and risk of electric shock from lightning, both direct and through tree roots.

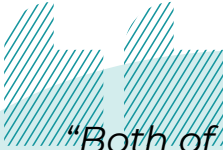
### ! Snow and Ice

Forest School classes may also be canceled if the temperature is below  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and snow and ice make the roads too dangerous for travel.


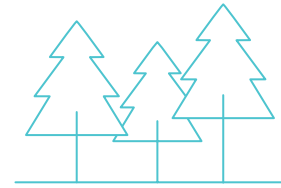





→ WHAT DO BISB PARENTS SAY ABOUT FOREST SCHOOL?




*"Both of our children love Forest School and Ms. Kollarova. They enjoyed observing and learning about nature, making fire, camping, and of course s'mores and other treats! Thank you!"*



*"He loves it! Also travelling by bus is a genuinely nice and exciting experience for the children. My son likes to explore nature and to learn new things. And children learn a lot during forest school."*



*"He loves everything outdoors, so it is a wonderful way to channel his interests into learning about The World Around Us."*



*"He knows that the red signs on the trees are important as we need to follow the signs not to get lost. He enjoys it a lot!"*









**For parents who would like to relax in the forest with their children, we would like to recommend how to start forest bathing.**

Forest bathing, also known as forest therapy, is a slow, mindful immersion in nature. During a two to three-hour period, we move through the forest or other natural areas and connect with the environment. The guide uses “invitations” (voluntary activities) to invite all the guests to engage all their senses and “take in” the forest. Forest bathing is not a hike, and it is not a plant identification walk. This contemplative practice is deeply grounded and has many health benefits.



### TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

- Turn off your devices to give yourself the best chance of relaxing, being mindful and enjoying a sensory forest-based experience together with your children.
- Slow down. Move through the forest slowly so you can see and feel more.
- Take long breaths deep into the abdomen. Extending the exhalation of air to twice the length of the inhalation sends a message to the body that it can relax.
- Stop, stand, or sit, smell what is around you, what can you smell?
- Take in your surroundings using all your senses. How does the forest environment make you feel? Be observant, look at nature trivial (small) details.
- Sit quietly using mindful observation; try to avoid thinking about your to-do list or issues related to daily life. You might be surprised by the number of wild forest inhabitants you see using this process.
- Keep your eyes open. The colors of nature are soothing, and studies have shown that people relax best while seeing greens and blues.
- Stay as long as you can, start with a comfortable time limit and build up to the recommended two hours for a complete forest bathing experience.





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