

## Forest School Association (FSA)

### Preamble: FSA Recognised Forest School Provider Scheme (V11)

#### What is the Recognised Provider Scheme?

- The FSA Recognised Forest School Provider Scheme has been created as a benchmarking and development tool that sets the minimum professional standard for Forest School provision.
- As a Recognised Provider, the FSA will be recognising that an individual or setting is providing Forest School (FS) experiences in line with all 6 core Forest School principles.
- To be a Recognised Provider you must adhere to all 6 principles including Principle 1: long-term. Long-term is defined as any programme that runs for:
  - a minimum of 2 hours per session, for 24 consecutive weeks (or the equivalent of 2 full school terms) within 1 year, covering 2 seasons with the same core group of participants; or
  - a minimum of 2 hours per session, for 12 consecutive weeks (or the equivalent of 1 full school term) in each of 2 years covering 2 seasons with the same core group of participants.
- The recognition scheme involves an initial, informal Zoom or Skype consultation to support applicants with the application process and then the applicant must submit a completed application form with supporting evidence files.

#### Who is the scheme for?

- This membership type is for freelancers, schools, nurseries, pre-schools or other settings offering FS experiences.
- This membership type can apply to an organisation or, in the case of a sole trading freelancer, an individual.
- We suggest that applicants need to have been facilitating Forest School experiences for at least 6 months prior to applying. Some practitioners with relevant past experience may be able to apply after they have undertaken 6 sessions (in this case please contact us to discuss: [salixeducation@gmail.com](mailto:salixeducation@gmail.com)).
- The organisation which applies must have at least one Forest School Level 3 qualified member of staff.
- Client groups can include children, young people and/or adults.
- The person completing the application form should be a Level 3 qualified practitioner.
- Applicants must have at least one long term group (see above).
- Through the application process we ask to examine the practice of all level 3 FS practitioners who have facilitated FS under the banner of the applying organisation, over the last 12 months.

- Although this scheme has been developed for UK-based FS providers, international providers are welcome to apply. If you are providing FS overseas you may apply but you will have to demonstrate that all of our benchmarks are met, including having an appropriate Level 3 qualification from a UK-based Awarding Organisation. Please note that there is an additional administration fee of £45 for international applications to cover the additional time it takes to look at your evidence in the context of your own country.

## **Why become a FSA Recognised Forest School Provider?**

- Your school or organisation goes onto our online, searchable map of Forest School Providers accessible to the Forest School community and the general public.
- Up to 4 individuals (staff, volunteers and/or trainees) in your organisation are eligible to receive individual membership of the FSA which gives them access to the FSA website, a vote at our Annual General Meeting and other membership benefits. If you wish to add more than 4 individuals, an additional fee of £20 for each individual will be payable.
- Under strict guidelines, you will be able to use the FSA logo.
- You will have full use of the FSA website including the password protected membership area.
- You will also have access to a range of Member Discounts e.g. 5% discount on Liability Insurance from Birnbeck Insurance; on products; courses and conferences; books.
- Presence in a network of other Recognised Providers, giving you an opportunity to reflect on and develop practice.
- You can demonstrate to others that the FSA recognises your school or organisation as providing Forest School programmes for children, young people and/or adults in line with the 6 core Forest School principles.
- Validation relating to your FS practice.
- You are provided with an e-badge and certificate to display on your website and on other marketing materials to publicise your recognition.
- You may find it useful to be able to refer to the minimum standard for FS criteria, as defined by the professional body for Forest School in this scheme, whilst negotiating and agreeing what your FS provision will look like with senior leaders in an organisation.
- The scheme promotes the FSA's purpose of working toward quality Forest School for All.

## **What the scheme cannot offer you:**

- Becoming an FSA Recognised Forest School Provider does not provide full quality assurance (QA). Instead, the recognition acknowledges that you are following the Forest School ethos and all 6 principles as endorsed by the FSA.
- It is not possible for a school or organisation to become a 'Forest School.' The name does not refer to an actual place. Instead, it refers to the philosophy – the ethos which links to the 6 Forest School principles. Forest School programmes work in a variety of situations and locations (not just schools). Therefore, it is not possible for schools to become 'a Forest School.' However, schools can provide Forest School programmes for their pupils. Qualified practitioners carefully facilitate programmes which are uniquely tailored to the

needs of the individuals within the group and have the fundamental aim of building participants' self-esteem, confidence, independence and creativity.

## How do you apply for the scheme?

1. Digest the information in this preamble document.
2. Visit the Recognised Provider page on our website:  
<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/join-the-fsa-as-a-school-and-organisation-member/>
3. Examine the quick reference 'self-assessment checklist' to check your practice meets what we consider to be the minimum standard appropriate for FSA Recognised Forest School Providers. If you have any doubts you can read through the full guidance alongside each question in the application form available on the above webpage.
4. Once you are content with committing to all the scheme's benchmarks, scroll down the webpage above to the online form and notify us of your intention to apply and make your initial payment. Choose your preferred method and pay us your one-off application fee of £100 or £55 for existing members (which includes your first year of membership free). If you have more than 4 level 3 Forest School practitioners you will be liable for an additional fee of £20 for each additional practitioner.
5. Await contact from our Development Officer who will liaise with your setting to arrange a mutually convenient time for a Zoom or Skype consultation.
6. Undertake informal Zoom or Skype consultation with the FSA.
7. Following that chat you may find it helpful to refer to the online Teachable resource which offers short video explanations for each of the main questions in the application form. The content for a question includes information about the benchmark and also how to evidence it. The resource is free and is available by visiting: <https://forest-school-association.teachable.com/p/fsa-recognised-fs-provider-scheme>
8. Fill in your application form and compile your evidence. As an indication, participants in our pilot phase suggested that it takes on average 2 days to complete the application and compile the associated evidence, with a range of between 4 and 48 hours. The length of time can vary considerably depending on a number of factors such as your site, your staff, the format of your sessions and the clients you work with.
9. Upon completion of your application form, arrange for it to be checked alongside all of your compiled evidence: is the evidence you have given for each question adequate in robustly showing your practice meets our benchmark? Has our requested file naming convention been used throughout? Does each answer state the correctly named evidence? Have all boxes been checked? Is the information provided accurate?
10. Once you have the thoroughly checked application form, save a Word version of it and return it to us via Dropbox (instructions can be found on page 2 of the application form) along with your supporting evidence. This must be done within one month of your Zoom/Skype consultation.
11. Look out for emails from us requesting additional evidence and respond. Most applicants have one month and a single opportunity to provide additional evidence requested by the Development Officer after their initial assessment of evidence. If this deadline passes, or if applicants fail to provide all additional evidence in one email, they will be liable for an additional administration fee of £45.

## What happens once I have submitted my application?

- The FSA aim to examine your application form and supporting evidence within one month of receiving it. If the FSA need to deviate from this timescale, due to annual leave, sickness or capacity, we will endeavour to inform you.
- Having examined your evidence we will inform you about the outcome. There are four possible outcomes:
  1. Your application and supporting files provided us with all of the evidence we needed to document that your practice meets our benchmarks so we add you to the map of FSA Recognised FS providers immediately.
  2. There are a few minor evidence gaps. The FSA will request that you provide the missing evidence, giving you up to one month to respond. If this deadline passes OR evidence gaps are not addressed within a single email, applicants will be liable for an additional administration fee of £45.
  3. There are numerous minor evidence gaps. The FSA will offer you to two choices: i) pay £45 to cover the additional assessment time that will be required and provide all of the missing evidence in a single email within one month or ii) wait until 4 months have passed, pay and submit a brand new application form and associated evidence. Please note that if you choose the first option and the one month deadline passes OR evidence gaps are not addressed within a single email, applicants will be liable for a further additional administration fee of £45.
  4. There are one or more major evidence gaps. In these situations the application will be deemed unsuccessful. The FSA will provide you with the reason(s) for declining your application. If you wish to reapply in future you may do so after a period of 4 months has passed. You will pay the full application fee again, complete a new application form and gather a new folder of supporting evidence.
- Three of the above outcomes require applicants to undertake further work, will result in a delay in being added to the map of FSA Recognised FS Providers and, in many cases, additional charges. This is why it is important to double check prior to submission that you have provided evidence that your practice meets every one of our benchmarks.
- In any cases where additional evidence is requested, upon receipt it is added to the assessment queue along with all other applications. The FSA aim to examine additional evidence within one month of receipt and will advise you if timescales are likely to be significantly longer.
- Please note we have an internal review panel (comprising of a group of FSA Directors) for the scheme to review any aspect of an application should we need to do so. If we seek advice from this Working Group we do so in a way that does not make reference to your trading name, your name, your geographical location or your sex. In cases where we need to disclose this information to the Working Group we will seek your permission first.

## What costs are involved?

- The assessment process and ongoing administrative maintenance of the scheme (including assessing evidence at annual declaration) requires significant FSA staff time. There is therefore a cost to providers wishing to become recognised by the FSA.
- The Recognised Provider Scheme has 2 associated costs 1) a one-off charge relating to the application process and 2) an annual charge for membership as a Recognised Provider.
- The one-off application charge of £100 (£55 for existing members) is payable before your application evidence is examined and includes your first year of membership for free.
- The subsequent annual charge relating to membership for a Recognised Provider is charged on a sliding scale according to the nature of your organisation. This annual charge will be due at the year anniversary of your becoming a Recognised Provider and annually thereafter. Annual membership fees are as follows:
  - sole traders (includes membership for only one level 3 practitioner) £55 per year.
  - organisations with between 1-4 Level 3 qualified staff £75 per year.
  - organisations with over 4 Level 3 qualified staff £75 + £20 for each additional level 3 person, per year.
- Please also refer to the additional administration charges of £45 mentioned in other sections of this document.

## How many applications does my business model require?

- If you are a freelancer with one level 3 Forest School practitioner who applies standards to all aspects of their work you need to submit a single application which results in a single map pin entry on the FSA website.
- If you are an organisation with one level 3 Forest School practitioner and one site: where the level 3 practitioner applies standards to all aspects of their work you need to submit a single application which results in a single map pin entry on the FSA website.
- If you are an organisation with one level 3 Forest School practitioner and multiple sites/business units where the level 3 practitioner applies standards to all aspects of their work you need to submit a single application which results in a single map pin entry on the FSA website. If you want each business unit/site to have its own map pin entry on the FSA website you may pay for and submit individual applications.
- If you are an organisation with one site and multiple level 3 Forest School practitioners, all of whom use the same handbook you need to submit a single application (because we assess all practitioners as part of the application process anyway and Risk Benefit Assessments/Communications/Woodland Management approaches are likely to be consistent between practitioners) which results in a single map pin entry on the FSA website.
- If you are an organisation with multiple level 3 Forest School Practitioners and multiple sites/business units you need to submit different applications for each site/business unit. This results in a separate map pin on our FSA website for each business unit and also offers a reflection/development opportunity for every site. The first unit to apply in a chain will be charged £100 and for each unit thereafter the charge would be £55. If your business units share a Senior Leadership Team and the same Forest School Level 3 Practitioner, and you

are content with fewer map pin entries on the FSA website, you may be able to make a case for 'chunking' your business into fewer applications, but you would need to discuss this with us before making any applications. Please contact Nell Seal via [salixeducation@gmail.com](mailto:salixeducation@gmail.com)

- Please note where we use the term 'Business Unit' we mean a relatively autonomous division of a large company that operates as an independent enterprise with responsibility for a particular range of products or activities.

## **Will I still be a member of the FSA?**

- 'FSA Recognised Forest School Provider' is a membership type in its own right. As soon as you have met our criteria you, and up to three other colleagues, will become an FSA member and your annual membership fee will be levied annually thereafter.
- At the point of applying you may already be an individual member. It is FSA policy not to offer refunds on membership fees so, depending on when you apply, you may have a period of a few months when you have concurrent memberships running.
- Existing FSA members receive a discounted application fee of £55.
- You may choose to plan your application so that it coincides with the expiration of your individual membership. If that is the case, please be aware that if you let your individual membership lapse and you have a period of not being a member you will not receive membership benefits for that time.

## **What are my responsibilities after recognition?**

- All FSA Recognised Forest School Providers are expected to abide by and observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- We expect all FSA Recognised Forest School Providers to work to promote the six Forest School Principles and objectives of the Association.
- All Recognised providers must keep us informed about changes to their practice, staffing and contact details.
- We expect FSA Recognised Providers to only facilitate Forest School sessions to the standard outlined in their application form. The FSA will not continue to recognise providers who begin to facilitate Forest School experiences that do not meet our benchmarks, for example shorter sessions.
- FSA Recognised Providers must only use the words 'Forest School' to refer to long term Forest School programmes which adhere to the 6 principles.
- In order to remain an FSA Recognised Provider, the FSA will request that they complete an annual declaration which asks questions about CPD, staffing and changes in practice. Wherever criteria are no longer met providers will need to declare this. If some criteria are highlighted as no longer met we will work with providers to support them in reaching the standard again so that they are able to remain an FSA Recognised Forest School Provider. We will remind you about your upcoming annual declaration 81 days, 51 days and 28 days ahead of your renewal.
- If annual declarations are submitted late or are incomplete the FSA will remove a provider from the online map until the matter has been resolved.

- There is an expectation that once providers reach the standard to become FSA Recognised they support other providers by sharing information and good practice should this be requested.

## Is there any support to help me through this process?

- An FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal) will be available for phone or Skype discussions as you go through the application process. Email: [salixeducation@gmail.com](mailto:salixeducation@gmail.com)  
Skype: nellseal
- An online Teachable resource is available to applicants at no additional cost. The resource is a series of short videos relating to each of the main questions/benchmarks and is designed to help you submit an application that evidences all benchmarks are met. You can find it at: <https://forest-school-association.teachable.com/p/fsa-recognised-fs-provider-scheme>
- Once FSA Recognised you will be invited to join a closed Facebook group where you can ask questions. This may be helpful for any areas of continuous development you have been asked to address and also in relation to the annual declaration process.
- In the event of you being dissatisfied with any element of the process there will be a chain of investigation as follows: Development Officer > FSA Chief Exec > Op Recognised FS Provider Scheme Working Group > Board of FSA Trustees. In the first instance please address your concerns to the FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal via [salixeducation@gmail.com](mailto:salixeducation@gmail.com)).

## How do you ensure applicants are getting a fair and consistent assessment?

FSA Trustees who sat on the Recognised Provider Scheme Development Working Group agreed an approach to standardisation:

- One in every thirty applications will be verified by both the Development Officer and the FSA Projects Officer to check that decisions about benchmarks are fair and record keeping is thorough.
- A separate one in every thirty applications will receive an assessment visit to check that standards outlined in the application are upheld in practice.
- As stated in a previous section, in the event of you being dissatisfied with any element of the application process there will be a chain of investigation as follows: Development Officer > FSA Chief Exec > Op Recognised FS Provider Scheme Working Group > Board of FSA Trustees. In the first instance please address your concerns to the FSA Development Officer (currently Nell Seal via [salixeducation@gmail.com](mailto:salixeducation@gmail.com)).