

What is the Recognised Provider Scheme?

- The FSA Recognised Forest School Provider Scheme has been created as both a benchmarking and professional development tool. The scheme sets the professional standard for Forest School provision and recognises that an individual or setting's provision is in line with [all six core Forest School principles](#).

What are the benefits of being a Recognised Provider?

- You can demonstrate the FSA recognises that your school or organisation's Forest School programmes are in line with the six core Forest School principles.
- You will be able to refer any senior leaders, supporters, governors, etc. in your organisation to the standards for Forest School (as defined by the FSA, the professional body for Forest School in the UK) when negotiating and agreeing the terms of your Forest School provision.
- Your school or organisation appears on our online, [searchable map of Forest School Providers](#) validating your Forest School practice. You will be able to use (in accordance with FSA guidelines) the FSA logo on your materials. You will also receive an e-badge and certificate to display on your website and on other marketing materials to publicise your recognition.
- You have access to the network of other Recognised Providers, giving you an opportunity to reflect on and develop your practice through the online community and annual face-to-face meet ups at the FSA National Conference.
- As soon as you have met our criteria, up to 4 individuals including yourself, staff, volunteers and/or trainees will receive the full individual membership benefits of the FSA. As members, you will have use of the password protected membership area of the FSA website, including access to resources, webinars, as well as a range of member discounts on products, e.g. -5% on Birnbeck Insurance, courses, conferences and books.
- Your Forest School provision represents the scheme which promotes the FSA's purpose of working toward quality Forest School for All and the professional body for Forest School.

Who is the scheme for?

- This membership type is for individuals or organisations, from sole traders and freelancers to nurseries, schools, special schools, charities and CICs, or any other settings offering Forest School provision working with children, young people and/or adults.
- Ideally, applicants need to have been facilitating Forest School experiences for at least six months prior to applying. If this is not your case, e.g. you have valid prior experience, please contact us to discuss your potential application: applications@forestschoolassociation.org
- The individual/organisation which applies must have at least one Forest School Level 3 qualified Practitioner. The person completing the application form should be a Level 3 qualified Forest School Practitioner.
- During the application process we ask to examine the practice of all Level 3 Forest School Practitioners who have planned and facilitated Forest School within the last 12 months.
- Applicants must have at least one long term group and only long-term provision should be included in the application. You can check the FSA's definition of 'long-term' on the application form [page 11](#)[1].
- The scheme is not exclusive to UK-based providers, but overseas providers will need to demonstrate that all the FSA benchmarks are met, including having an appropriate Level 3 Forest School qualification from a UK-based Awarding Organisation (see below fees for overseas applicants.)

What evidence will I need to supply in order to complete the application process and meet the benchmarks?

- Before paying, please examine the Evidence Checklist at the bottom of this document and consider whether you can supply all of the evidence that we require and that the evidence you provide will meet our benchmark standard.
- You can find further detail in the [application form](#). We do **not** recommend, however, that you start filling in the application before your video consultation, but that you note any areas of challenge or uncertainty about the benchmarks that you might like to discuss with the Scheme Coordinator.

What doesn't the scheme offer?

- 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 six 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 because Forest School programmes work in a variety of situations and locations - not just schools. Instead, it refers to the philosophy – the ethos which links to the six Forest School principles.

How can I apply for the scheme?

- Check that you have read and understood the contents of this pre-application information.
- Review your practice against the Evidence Checklist found at the bottom of this document to ensure your practice meets our benchmarks (further detail available on the [application form](#) if you wish).
- Register to attend one of the half-termly [Recognised Provider Webinars](#) we hold. You cannot proceed with an application unless you have attended and actively engaged in one of these webinars. The main Level 3 Forest School Leader at your setting will be the person who completes the application; this person needs to attend this initial webinar and the video consultation that happens later in the application process. If you have other colleagues or Leaders who also wish to attend the webinar/video consultation, they may.
- Attend and engage in the [Recognised Provider Webinar](#) you booked on to and decide if you wish to apply.
- Visit the [Recognised Provider page](#) on our website, scroll down to the online form and complete it to notify us of your intention to apply. You must tell us about the webinar you attended. Please also make your initial payment.
- Wait for the Scheme Coordinator to contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time for a video consultation.
- Attend your informal video consultation with the FSA to discuss i) the benchmarks in relation to your practise and ii) the application process.
- Fill in your [application form](#) and compile your evidence in electronic format using the correct file naming convention.
- Make sure that someone in your setting checks through your application form and compiled evidence.
 1. Does the evidence you have provided accurately, adequately and robustly show how your practice meets our benchmark?
 2. Has our requested file naming convention been used throughout? Does each answer state the correctly named supporting evidence?
 3. Have all boxes been checked and declarations been made?
- Save a Word version of your application form and submit it to us via Dropbox (instructions can be found on page 2 of the application form) along with your supporting evidence. You have one month from the date of your video consultation to supply the evidence.
- If we require any additional evidence or clarification, we will email you to request this. Please keep an eye out for emails and respond within one month.
- You will have a single opportunity to provide additional evidence or clarifications as requested by the assessor team after their initial assessment of evidence.

How long will it take to become FSA Recognised?

- Depending on how efficient you are in responding to communications throughout the application process, how robust your evidence is for each and every benchmark and how busy the FSA are with assessments, it can take as little as four months to get onto the map of FSA Recognised Providers.
- Various successful Recognised Providers have suggested that it takes two days on average to gather and compile all the evidence and complete the application form. The length of time may vary depending on your site, your staff, the format of your sessions, the clients you work with and any changes to your policies, procedures, planning or practice that need to occur in order to meet our benchmarks.

What happens once I have submitted my application?

- The FSA aims to examine your application form and supporting evidence within six to eight weeks of receiving it. If the FSA needs to deviate from this timescale, due to sickness, incapacity or annual leave, we will inform you.
- Having examined your evidence we will inform you about the outcome. There are four possible outcomes:

1. Your application and supporting files provide us with all of the evidence we need to document that your practice meets our benchmarks, so we add you to the map of FSA Recognised Forest School 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, we will request an additional administration fee of £45 to cover our time.
 3. There are numerous minor evidence gaps. The FSA will offer you 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. If the deadline passes, or evidence gaps are not addressed within a single email, a further additional administration fee of £45 will be requested.
 - ii) wait until 4 months have passed, pay and submit a brand new application form and associated evidence.
 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.
- Outcomes 2-4 above require applicants to undertake further work, which will result in a delay in being added to the map of FSA Recognised Forest School Providers and, in many cases, additional charges. This is why we request that submissions are double-checked by someone in your setting prior to submission to ensure that you have provided evidence to support each and every one of our benchmarks.
 - In cases where additional evidence is requested, upon receipt it is added to the assessment queue along with all other applications. The FSA aims to examine additional evidence within 6 to 8 weeks of receipt and will advise you if timescales are likely to be significantly longer.
 - Please note we have an internal review panel for the scheme (comprising FSA Trustees, FSA Registered/ Endorsed Trainers and other FSA Recognised Forest School Providers) to review any aspect of your application, should we need to do so. If we seek advice from this Working Group, your name, organisation/trading name remain anonymous and no details of your geographical location or sex are shared. In cases where we need to disclose identifying 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 and assessor time. There is therefore a cost to providers wishing to become recognised by the FSA.
- The Recognised Provider Scheme has 2 associated costs, these are:
 - 1) a one-off charge relating to the initial application process. This fee of £100 (£55 for existing FSA members) is payable before your application evidence is examined and includes your first year of membership for free. This initial fee covers the time and administration processes involving the informal video consultation to support applicants with the application process. Regardless of whether your application is successful or not, this fee needs to be paid and will not be refunded.
 - 2) an annual charge for membership as a Recognised Provider. The annual charge will be due on the anniversary of your becoming a Recognised Provider and annually thereafter. The ongoing annual charge maintains your membership of the FSA as a Recognised Provider and is charged on a sliding scale according to the nature of your organisation, 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 more than four Level 3 qualified staff £75 + £20 for each additional Level 3 person, per year
- International applications: 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 within the context of your country.
- Please also refer to the additional administration charges of £45 mentioned in other sections of this document, e.g. for late submissions, for multiple responses and additional support for evidence queries.

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/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 applications@forestschoollassociation.org
- 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/ activities.

How will becoming a Recognised Provider affect my current membership of the FSA?

- If you are already an individual member, you will not receive a refund on any outstanding membership fees, so, depending on when you apply, you may have a period of a few months when you have concurrent memberships running. However, existing FSA members receive a discounted application fee of £55.
- If your individual membership lapses between applying and becoming a Recognised Provider member, you will not receive membership benefits during 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
 - work to promote the six Forest School Principles and objectives of the Association
 - support other providers by sharing information and good practice
- FSA Recognised Providers must only use the words 'Forest School' to refer to long-term Forest School programmes which adhere to all six principles.
- You should keep us informed of any changes in your staffing, contact details or practice that mean you no longer meet our benchmarks. The FSA will not continue to recognise providers whose provision does not meet our benchmarks, e.g. shorter sessions.
- You will need to complete an annual declaration which asks questions about CPD, staffing and changes in practice. Wherever criteria are no longer met, the FSA will work with providers to support them in reaching the standard again 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. Late or incomplete annual declarations will lead to your status being removed from the online map until the matter has been resolved.

Is there any support to help me through this process?

- The Scheme Co-ordinator (currently Nell Seal) is available for phone or video discussions as you go through the application process. Email: applications@forestschoollassociation.org 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. 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 share support and ask questions of other providers. 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: Scheme Co-ordinator > FSA Chief Exec > Op Recognised Forest School Provider Scheme Working Group > Board of FSA Trustees. In the first instance please address your concerns to the Scheme Co-ordinator (currently Nell Seal via applications@forestschoollassociation.org).

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

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

- One in every thirty applications will be verified by both the Scheme Co-ordinator 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.

Evidence checklist

All applicants must provide:

Forest School staff & planning

- Recognised Level 3 Forest School qualification certificates for all Leaders
- First Aid qualification certificates for all Leaders (current, gained face-to-face, 16 hours, includes scenario-based face-to-face learning outdoors, relevant to the ages you work with)
- Evidence of your planning for two recent consecutive sessions
- A complete set of observations for all participants from in one of the above sessions
- CPD log (relating to FS practice) for all Leaders

Forest School sessions

Evidence that your sessions are:

- a) a minimum of 2 hours per session, weekly or fortnightly, across a whole year (can be academic year) and with the same core group of participants, or
- b) a minimum of 2 hours per session, for 12 consecutive weeks in each year over 2 years, covering 2 seasons with the same core group of participants

Risk

- Site risk assessment
- Completed daily site check
- Three examples of risk-benefit assessments
- Your approach to dynamic risk assessment

Handbook

Copy of your operational handbook, presented as a single file, that includes an explanation of the 6 principles; useful information about the role of supporting adults in Forest School; Health and Safety policy; emergency planning procedures (that cover first aid, lost children and injury/illness of FS Leader); safeguarding policy; confidentiality information; your approach to behaviour in Forest School; how you deal with instances of bullying in Forest School, complaints policy and sustainability/environmental policy.

Site

- Document that shows how you conserve and manage your woodland space (to include site location, environmental impact assessment, overall management objective, management plan, basic species list, monitoring and enhancements to ecology of the site)
- Declaration that you care for your woodland sites and have formal landowner permission

Communications

Evidence that you share the 6 FS principles with i) parents/carers and ii) supporting adults in session, prior to Forest School sessions starting.

We look forward to receiving your application!