



Volunteering at Children of the Forest Information and Person Specification

What is Forest School?

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting. Activities on offer can include physical games, den building, tree climbing, bug hunting, arts and crafts, campfire cooking, bushcraft such as firelighting and whittling, woodland management, music and drama. However, none of our activities are forced and children are free to choose how to spend their time. We Look After Ourselves, Look After Each Other, and Look After the Forest. For more information see our website www.children-of-the-forest.com and the Forest School Association <https://forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

About Children of the Forest

Lewis and Gemma are both former school teachers turned forest school leaders who have created Children of the Forest Children of the Forest has served children, families and schools in the local community since 2017. We also train adults in forest school practice and create The Forest School Podcast. We are Forest School Association Accredited providers, which means we offer forest school of a high standard closely following the FSA's principles. We have experience of running all kinds of forest school programmes, from pop-up sessions on school fields, to festivals, to our own Forest Kindergarten. You can find out more info at our website <https://children-of-the-forest.com/>

Safer Recruitment

All volunteers are subject to Safer Recruitment procedures including application form, interview and DBS clearance.

What are the benefits of volunteering?

Volunteers will gain invaluable experience of and insight into Forest School, alongside passionate, experienced practitioners and our wonderful, well-established groups of learners, in a very special woodland.

You may already be Forest School trained, you may be considering it, you may be part way through your training and want more experience, or you may just love or be curious about working with learners in nature. Volunteering can be viewed as a long term kind of training and on-the-job experience, which can be invaluable in furthering a career in the outdoors. You will also feel the rewards of giving back to children and the natural world. There is possibility of receiving training appropriate to the position such as First Aid and / or Food Hygiene. Travel expenses will be covered, up to £5 per day.

What is the time commitment involved?

We have volunteering opportunities available at the following sessions:

- Free to Learn Home Ed Group, ages 5-12, Wednesdays during term time 9.00-3.30
- Free to Learn Home Ed Group, ages 5-12, Thursdays during term time 9.00-3.30
- Little Acorns Toddler & Carer Group, ages 0-5, Fridays during term time 9.00-12 and / or 12-3
- Holiday Community, ages 5-12, three consecutive days during Easter & Summer school holidays 8.30am-3.30pm

Volunteers can assist at as many of these sessions as they would like. We ask for a minimum commitment of one school term or equivalent (13 weeks), so that our learners have stability and security in those present.

What do volunteers do?

Volunteers are there as an extra pair of hands before, during and after a forest school session.

This could include:

- playing games with the learners, when invited
- joining in with group circle time and group activities
- supporting children, including those with additional needs
- helping with giving out / packing away resources
- helping to set up activities and tidying up
- helping with bushcraft or woodland management
- being a friendly face for learners to talk to
- sharing their own interests and skills with the group, if they would like to
- learning new skills alongside the group, such as nature identification, bushcraft skills, tool use, crafts, songs and campfire cooking
- reflecting after a session with Gemma & Lewis, sharing observations and thoughts

Volunteers will be asked to:

- Read the Children of the Forest company handbook, policies and procedures and adhere to these
- Become familiar with Children of the Forest's approach concerning play, risk and behaviour support, and use the same approach
- Gain a DBS certificate (Children of the Forest will pay for and arrange this if necessary)
- Commit to volunteering for a minimum of one school term, for the days and times agreed
- Behave in a way that is appropriate to working with children and in the Forest School ethos
- Observe confidentiality at all times

Volunteers will not:

- Be asked to administer First Aid if they are not qualified
- Be asked to use tools or work with fire, or supervise learners doing so, unless they are confident and fully briefed / trained
- Be asked to plan any parts of a session, unless they would like to

Other practical information:

- Sessions happen in all weathers except dangerously high winds - we have shelters for rain, but our site is entirely outdoors. Part of our site is on a slope, it can be muddy. Volunteers will need appropriate outdoor warm clothing and waterproofs and sturdy footwear. Volunteers will need to bring their own lunch and drinks.
- Our site is 3 acres of private woodland, located at EX15 3FJ. Unfortunately there is currently no public transport.

Volunteer Person Specification

Essential:

- Aged over 18
- DBS certificate, subscribed to the 'Update' Service (this can be arranged if you do not hold this and your application is successful)
- Enthusiasm for working with children, including those with additional needs
- A warm, non-judgmental and empathetic approach
- Good communication skills with children and adults
- An enthusiasm for the outdoors in all weathers
- A general understanding of the benefits and aims of forest school
- A strong team working ethos and ability to work collaboratively with staff and volunteers
- A flexible and positive attitude
- Willingness to learn
- Driving license or ability to arrive at sessions independently and reliably

Desirable:

- Forest School experience
- Relevant teaching experience / experience of working with young people
- Knowledge of child development
- Bushcraft skills
- Ability to play a musical instrument
- Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate
- Experience of working with special educational needs
- Current First Aid certificate with Outdoor, Paediatric speciality.

What is the application process?

If you are interested in applying, please fill out an application form and email it back to us at childrenoftheforest@outlook.com.

We will then let you know if you have been selected for interview, and contact your references. If this is successful, we will invite you to a trial session and apply for your DBS clearance if you do not already hold this. If this is successful, then the volunteering arrangement begins.