



IFSA Members' Code of Conduct (May 2022)

The purpose of this code is to support our vision of 'quality Forest School for all' by empowering our members to participate, share and inspire people through their contact with Forest School. Following this code is one-way IFSA members support the IFSA's articles of association.

IFSA Mission Statement:

To bring Forest School practitioners together to inspire inclusive, playful learning for all, in nature.

To build resilience and relationships, through our connection with each other, and the natural world, while inspiring creativity and supporting wellbeing.

1. Celebrate and promote the Forest School philosophy

- 1.1. It is important for clarity that all IFSA members have a unified understanding of the Forest School philosophy. Members should define Forest School clearly to others using the definition adopted by the Irish Forest School community in 2017. You can view [principles and criteria for good practice](#) further down this document.
- 1.2. Members should celebrate and promote quality Forest School work across Ireland and beyond.
- 1.3. Members should work together to improve understanding of Forest School and its benefits to wider audiences.

2. IFSA membership responsibilities

- 2.1. IFSA as an organisation may be judged by the conduct of individual members, directors, and regional groups. All members should conduct themselves in a way that reflects the [vision, aims and values](#) (see further down this document) of the IFSA and which promotes the work of IFSA.
- 2.2. Members should ensure that their Forest School practice is always within Irish or UK laws, following the principles and criteria for good practice

guidelines of the Irish Forest School Association, and does not bring the IFSA or Forest School into disrepute.

- 2.3. The logo of the IFSA belongs to the association and should not be used in any way by individual members unless the member has been given specific permission from the IFSA.
- 2.4. Modified IFSA logos can be used by those granted permission to use them but must only be used in the circumstances prescribed by IFSA.
- 2.5. Members are encouraged to participate and contribute to the ongoing work of the IFSA, for example through consultations, local groups, and AGMs.
- 2.6. Members should use their membership benefits appropriately for the mutual benefit of all IFSA members. Individual members should safeguard the benefits of their membership, and not transfer these benefits to others.

3. Sustainable Practises & Care of the Environment

- 3.1. Forest School aims to reconnect people to nature for the mutual benefit of people and the planet. Members should have an awareness of environmental issues and demonstrate a commitment to caring for our environment. Members are encouraged to broaden their understanding of environmental issues such as climate change, habitat loss, ecosystem restoration, native ecosystems, native woodlands, the importance of native flora & fauna and general care for people, place and planet.
- 3.2. Members should share ideas and support each other to develop sustainable and ethical practices.
- 3.3. Members are encouraged to educate themselves on sustainable and ethical harvesting practices and ensure they have permission of relevant landowner before foraging/harvesting etc.

4. Duty of Care to Fellow FS Practitioners

- 4.1. It is the aim of the **IFSA** to promote a culture of care and compassion among our fellow forest school community, to have respect for fellow forest school leaders, whatever the interaction or relationship might be, whether as volunteer leaders, assistant facilitators, or project co-hosts, we believe compassion, respect and care for individuals is highly important.
- 4.2. When setting out to work with fellow forest school leaders, please put in place clear structures for how your relationship will work and interact, so clear boundaries and modes of communication are set from the start, including if a member of staff or volunteer wishes to leave the workplace.

- 4.3. To foster warm, welcoming, and respectful environments that allow us to question and challenge discrimination and inequalities, navigate conflicts peacefully and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

There are some excellent organisations working in the area of peaceful conflict resolution, if you would like to look into this further:

The Centre for Nonviolent Communication: <https://www.cnvc.org/>

Centre for Conflict Resolution: <https://www.ccrchicago.org/>

Conflict Resolution Network: <https://www.crnhq.org/>

Restorative Circles: <https://www.restorativecircles.org/>

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1. The **Irish Forest School Association** is open to all groups and individuals on condition that they keep to the rules and regulations as detailed in the **IFSA Constitution** from which this document is drawn. It is the responsibility of all members and supporters of the **Irish Forest School Association** to always enforce this policy.
- 5.2. **Irish Forest School Association** welcomes all people irrespective of gender, race, culture, colour, creed, sexual orientation, age, class, religion, political belief, or disability. We will not tolerate any form of prejudiced, aggressive, or offensive behaviour. We want all friends of the **Irish Forest School Association** to be treated with equal respect.

6. Complaints

- 6.1. It is a requirement of IFSA membership to agree to adhere to the **IFSA Code of Conduct** for the duration of an individual's subscription. A member who, following investigation, is found to be in breach of this code of conduct may, as an ultimate sanction, have their membership revoked.

Next steps: Once this policy is approved, a Grievance Procedure will be developed for approval.

Vision, Aims and Values of the Irish Forest School Association

(<https://irishforestschoollassociation.ie/about/>)

The Irish Forest School Association was founded in 2016 to support the development of Forest School learning in Ireland. Our members comprise practitioners (that is trained Forest School leaders), researchers, teachers, early years' practitioners, and organisations and individuals interested in innovation, creativity, education, play, science, environmental awareness and care, and the outdoors.

Mission and Vision of IFSA

Using member input from the Conversation Cafe event in April 2018, the IFSA ACORN agreed an organisation mission statement and set priorities for the work of IFSA:

- To bring Forest School practitioners together to inspire inclusive, playful, learning for all, in nature.
- To build resilience and relationships, through our connection with each other, and the natural world, while inspiring creativity and supporting well-being.

Secondly, we agreed that a key role for IFSA is to continue to make links with other organisations who share our vision for a better and more sustainable world where humans can live more harmoniously with each other and with nature. We see this kind of networking as an important way to support you, our members, on the ground.

A practical definition of Forest School is as defined by IFSA in 2017 and 2013:

FS is an opportunity for the same group of learners and leaders to spend a sustained period outdoors, once a week, in a wooded environment, ideally year-round. A regular routine is followed that is learner-led and facilitated by trained leaders. Learning is holistic and closely related to developmental stage and regular curricular requirements. There must be a high ratio of leaders to learners, everyone must be suitably dressed and a risk/benefit approach to health and safety is followed by all. (IFSA, 2017)

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. (IFSA 2013)

Principles and Criteria for Good Practice

(<https://irishforestschoollassociation.ie/key-features-of-forest-school/>)

Regular sessions

Forest school is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation, and review links each session.

Woodland setting

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

Community

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

Holistic development

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

Opportunity to take risks

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

Qualified practitioners

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