



## The Woodland Nursery

WE SPEAK TO **TRACY PASKINS**, OWNER AND FOUNDER OF THE WOODLAND NURSERY, AS SHE TELLS US ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF SENDING YOUR CHILD TO A FOREST SCHOOL

The battle cry of “muddy puddles” fills the air as a group of 2 to 5 year olds come charging out of a multicoloured bell tent and head for the trees. Decked out head to toe in all weather waterproofs these children are clearly very excited and eager to get outside and even the steady pitter patter of raindrops falling through the tree canopy can not dampen anyone’s spirits (even the accompanying adults). A rainy day at this nursery is a bonus and as one little girl happily tells me “rain helps me to make the cakes” and by cakes, she means MUD cakes which she immediately busies herself with making at the nursery’s mud kitchen.

This is The Woodland Nursery in



South east London, one of the growing number of outdoor nurseries, where children learn through play, all year round. Children as young as two and a half are busy tree climbing, stick whittling, log balancing, den building, storytelling, mud cake making, running, jumping, rolling down hills, leaf collecting, bug hunting, knot tying, mud painting and much more. Open camp fires are the norm as well as

using tools and being out in all weathers.

People such as Robert Baden-Powell (the founder of the Scouts), Leslie Paul (who established the Woodcraft Folk) and the McMillan sisters (who opened the UK's first open air nursery school and training centre in Deptford, London) can all be said to have helped to lay the foundations for what is

known as Forest School today. The movement was kickstarted in the UK by Bridgewater College, which established the first Forest School in Somerset in the early nineties after some of their nursery staff visited Denmark and were blown away by the emphasis Danish

schools gave to outdoor learning. On their return to the UK they set up a Forest School in the college and the rest, as they say, is history.

With this kind of learning however, there will be an element of risk. There has been a lot of research into this area of children's development and it is now widely agreed that children

need to take risks in order to equip them with the skills required to manage unavoidable risk in later life. Forest School recognises the importance of risk taking and encourages children to take managed risks like tree climbing, using real tools (saws and knives etc), lighting fires and sliding down mud slides so that the children

can take risks, without being at risk.

So, if your little ones love getting muddy, exploring nature, and running, jumping, and shouting then perhaps it's time to dig out their wellies and galoshes and discover a Forest School nursery near you.

[www.thewoodlandnursery.co.uk](http://www.thewoodlandnursery.co.uk)



## FREE Forest School Taster Sessions

The Woodland Nursery is an Ofsted Outstanding outdoor nursery for 2½ to 5 year olds based on the Forest School approach.

We are currently holding free taster sessions at our locations in Blackheath & our new site at Lesnes Abbey Woods. To find out more, please visit our website.

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