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#### Who We Are

Forest School Camps (FSC) is an educational charity run entirely by volunteers. It aims to provide opportunities for children from all backgrounds to experience living on the land under canvas and to encourage individual resilience and self-reliance. We work to engender a sense of responsibility for each other within a small community close to nature.

The organisation now has extensive experience in outdoor activity camps and its expertise in open-air education is widely recognised.

#### Origins

The origins of Forest School Camps go back to the early 20th century when an experimental school was first established in the New Forest and then eventually settled in Whitwell Hall in Norfolk. It was founded with the aim of encouraging a 'simple but spiritual way of life for children and adults with an emphasis on creative and intellectual interests' and of creating 'a child-centred environment where children could take responsibility for their own lives and their own learning.'

The school closed for the duration of the Second World War and never reopened as a school. However, a two week camp at the end of the summer term had always been part of the outdoor curriculum and this camping tradition started again in 1947 under the aegis of former pupils and staff. The traditions and momentum the school had generated passed on to the new camping movement. It grew rapidly and, by 1967, there were 27 camps a year being run all over the country. Forest School Camps continued to develop and expand to the present day remaining true to the founder,

Ernest Westlake's, teaching: the primitive approach, the learning by doing and the respect for life.

FSC's philosophy has always been an amalgam of compatible ideas drawn from 19th and 20th century experimental educationalists, and from Quakerism, the Woodcraft movement, North American First Nations and other agencies which promoted inclusive, simple living close to nature with a loving concern for individual welfare as well as a deep commitment to democratic ideals.

#### Now

FSC is still administered and staffed by volunteers, many of whom are former campers who continue to be involved as adults because being part of FSC remains a very important element of their lives. There are now about 30 camps of varying sizes and lengths run between March and October in Wales, Scotland and England taking about 1500 children.

The administration of FSC reflects the same attitudes that are promoted on camps. Decisions are made at Council open to any staff member who wishes to attend through consultation and consensus. A variety of committees divide the day-to-day work of running camps, sorting equipment, enrolling children and staff, finding new camp sites and all the other myriad of jobs which need to be completed in the annual round of getting us into the field.

The approach to education still focuses on learning by doing, encouraging exploration, resourcefulness, teamwork and mutual respect for each other and the environment. Campers learn to live with basic facilities: we cook on wood fires and do not have running water. Mobile phones and the internet are not part of camp life.

Although we may be cold, wet and often dirty, campers return year after year for the life-changing experiences and the sheer fun of living with FSC.

Forest School Camps as an organisation has changed over the decades in order to ensure the health and well-being of children and staff. We now have to account for the data we hold and there are many written policies where things might have been taken for granted in earlier years. Staff are informed about these policies when they train. Any member of staff who has not camped with FSC for 10 years needs to retrain to make sure they are up to date with these policies.

A First Nation American belief is that we will only be in touch with nature if we 'sit and sleep on the earth'. This feeling for the wholeness of life on our planet is expressed in some of our rituals and the names we give things at camp. Many of the traditions have developed out of organisational expedience, such as rally (a meeting with everyone sitting in a circle to discuss what is going to happen through the day), the clans and the structure of the day. Other traditions have grown out of the philosophy underlying FSC and some arose out of the sheer pleasure of being FSC and just having fun.

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

FSC is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our members and eliminating unlawful discrimination in the provision of our services. The aim is for our child and adult campers, staff, trustees, associates and anyone involved in the organisation in any capacity to be inclusive of all sections of society. We aim to provide equality, fairness and respect for all throughout our organisation.

### Sustainability

A new collective has been formed to assess the impact FSC has on the environment and to minimise it wherever possible. It aims to use the information to adjust how FSC interacts with the natural environment aiming for a net-zero carbon footprint and a light tread across the land. It is also involved with re-wooding and creating new wildlife habitats to give back to the land it uses. FSC aims to teach children about sustainability and their individual responsibility and to empower them to use their new knowledge in their daily lives.



# Standing Camps

Most of our Easter, Whitsun, and Summer camps are standing camps, meaning that they are based at one site. Small camps have between 25 and 35 children on them, and large camps between 60 and 70. Children are divided into groups two ways: one by age into Elves, Woodlings, Trailseekers, Trackers, Pathfinders and Way Wardens; and one vertically, across all the age groups, into clans. At standing camps children acquire basic camping skills, learning to pitch a tent, to look after their possessions and to keep them dry. They learn to gather and cut wood, to make fires and to cook food. The clans take turns in the kitchen under the supervision of the Caterers to prepare the food for the whole camp.

Other activities during the camp may include swimming, woodcraft, exploring, night walks, country dancing, camp fires, organised activities and games. A two to four-day hike, which takes place during the camp, consolidates their newly learned skills. The end of camp is marked by two major events: Merrymoot and Lodge Common Council.

Singing is a vital part of all camp life both as impromptu additions to daily activities and around every campfire. Songs are shared and passed from generation to generation and camp to camp. FSC is currently revising its songbook to be more reflective of its membership and modern changes in attitudes and sensitivities.

#### **Inclusion Camps**

FSC strives to be inclusive: many camps are organised that are suitable for disabled children or those who require extra staffing support. In addition we aim to integrate disabled campers into as many of our camps as possible throughout the programme, providing the right staff and support are available to meet their interests and needs. FSC is more than happy to advise parents, carers or guardians which camp would be the most suitable for a particular child.

For more information please contact us at inclusion@fsc.org.uk





### **Activity Camps**

Activity camps are smaller than standing camps, usually with 15 to 25 children. Some mobiles are strenuous, others are easier: see the camp descriptions for more details. However, these are camps for more experienced FSC campers who have attended two or more standing camps. This applies even if children have camped with other organisations - our standing camps impart the basic FSC philosophy essential for activity camps.

# Walking Mobiles

Lightweight tents, cooking stoves, fuel containers and billies are needed. A tent should have a flysheet, a sewn-in groundsheet and should ideally weigh less than 1.5 kg per person sharing it. Campers will normally be expected to supply at least one of the above items. The Camp Chief will supply a complete specialised kit list and will advise parents/guardians what to buy (or borrow). When packing for walking mobiles, all kit (with some space left for food) must fit inside a rucksack. Strong, waterproof walking boots with Vibram soles, or similar, are essential; they must be comfortable and be well walked-in

# **Canoeing Mobiles**

All kit must be packed into several small waterproof bundles. Kitbags (maximum size 80cm by 30cm diameter) and a small frameless rucksack are best; anything larger will not fit into a canoe.

FSC has a strict policy that life jackets or buoyancy aids are worn when children are canoeing, sailing or rafting on camp. FSC will provide them. It is FSC's policy that buoyancy aids when narrow-boating are not worn.

# Cycling Mobiles

All kit must fit inside bike panniers and saddle bags (leaving some space for food!).

### **Associate & Family Camps**

Parents and supporters who become Associate Members of FSC receive news of FSC's activities annually and are eligible to attend weekend camps especially for Associate Members and their families. The annual subscription is £10 per family.

Associate Camps allow new campers with no FSC background to get a taster of FSC life and to decide whether camping with FSC is for them. For those who camped with FSC as children, former staff members and active members of staff with small children, they provide a continuing link to camp and an opportunity to introduce their families to FSC camping and to be part of a lodge.

Current Associate Members and FSC staff are all welcome at family camps with or without their children. Current Associate membership or active FSC staff status is required in order to apply for the camps. There is no age limit, upper or lower, and the camps are particularly suitable for very young children who may be camping for the first time.

Supervision of children is the responsibility of the adults who bring them, and there is no organised travel, allowing us to keep the fees to a minimum. Adults and children share in the communal cooking (clan), with food and cooking equipment provided by the camp. There are many of the usual FSC activities like rally, singing around the campfire, games, walks, and whatever the site and our ingenuity can produce.

Forms for Associate Membership can be found on the Downloads page of the website. Application for membership closes between 1st January and 1st February each year. Associate Camp enrolment is now an online process and members will receive details of how and when to apply for camps in an email that will be sent out in January at around the same time as the programme. Please read this carefully. Camps get booked up quickly so don't delay in applying. Places are allocated on a first come first served basis.

Note: Becoming an Associate Member or attending a family camp does not give your child any priority on the waiting list to attend any of our main camps.





# **Skills & Conservation Camps**

Join us for activities ranging from coppicing, hedging and pond management to path laying, building bridges, constructing compost toilets and stiles, even repairing and renovating farm buildings. We recently built an island! No special qualifications are needed and it's a great opportunity to try your hand at something new or to hone existing skills. We also enjoy good food, good company and starry evenings around the fire.

These camps run on similar lines to small standing camps and make a good introduction to FSC for newcomers. Children under 18 are welcome with their parent or guardian; families bringing younger children are asked to include at least one adult per child. Supervision of children is the responsibility of their parents or guardians.

There are no camp fees except a small contribution to cover food, usually about £5 per day. There is also no organised travel, so attendees make their own way to the site. Full location details are sent out in advance and most sites are not far from public transport and a friendly lift.

Weekend camps run from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Bring your normal kit for camping, plus old clothes, work boots and gloves. Enrolments are normally managed in the four weeks before the camp, during which time we contact those who have previously shown interest in attendance.

For more information and to enrol please contact the FSC SaCCs secretary by email: conservation@fsc.org.uk



#### **Campers**

All children who wish to camp with FSC must be registered before they can apply for a place on camp. Registrations for all but Inclusion or Supported Enrolment children are now online. All children who camp with FSC are youth members until they are 18. When youth members reach the age of 18, FSC hopes to welcome them back as Staff or Waywardens.

#### The age groups are:

Group	Age on 01/09	School Year
Elves	6.6 - 8.11	1, 2 & 3
Woodlings	9.0 - 11.11	4, 5 & 6
Trailseekers	12.0 - 13.11	7 & 8
Trackers	14.0 - 15.11	9 & 10
Pathfinders	16.0 - 17.11	11 & 12

#### **Enrolments**

The allocation of camp places is subject to a number of quite complicated factors concerning both the mix of applicants and the availability of places. Members are placed ahead of newly registered applicants and priority for first-time places is given to siblings of existing members and newly registered Inclusion and Supported applicants. Children who are registered but who have previously applied unsuccessfully for a camp place are also given priority over completely new members. Most potential new campers will not be placed in the first year they apply. For new applicants, a child is most likely to be allocated a camp place when they are still Elf age. Please check the age range of campers for each camp when applying.



# **New Campers**

Each year there are children who are camping for the first time. Staff are aware of this and make every effort to ensure that new children feel at home and secure. Camp is a caring community where everyone tries to be alert to each individual's hopes and fears. The camp organiser will send more information about individual camps and is the first contact to ask for further information about camp as needed. Usually, there is a Precamps Meeting during April in London for parents, quardians and sponsors whose children are enrolled on Spring. Whitsun or Summer camps, particularly for the first time. This event is an opportunity to meet some of the staff of the camps and to find out more about FSC. Full details of the meeting are sent with offers of camp places.

# **Camper Support**

No child should be unable to camp for financial reasons. FSC offers assistance with camp fees for one camp a year for families who cannot afford to pay the full amount. This may include parents who are students,

on benefits or a low income and those whose circumstances change. In order to apply for fees support, please tick the box on your online application. FSC can also provide help with equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, waterproofs, etc. If you would like kit support please contact your camp organiser.

#### Insurance

Forest School Camps takes responsibility only for the activities listed in the programme. Forest School Camps insures for its liabilities in law. While all possible care is taken to avoid accidents, Forest School Camps does not insure for personal accident or for loss or damage to personal property. Those who are not already insured for personal accident and for all risks in respect of personal effects may wish to make their own arrangements.

If the camper does not live in the United Kingdom permanently we may need to check their insurance cover before they camp.

### Travel to Camp

Most children and some staff arrive together at camp travelling by train or coach from London (unless otherwise specified in the camp description). This journey is called 'Escort' and is the beginning of the camping experience. If possible, children should travel on Escort and full details are sent out before camp.

When coaches are used for Escort, there will be one or two specific meeting points, usually service stations on motorways, where children can join the Escort party along the route. The camp organiser will communicate where the meet-up points are when travel is arranged.

If travel is by train, campers may arrange to join the escorted party at any station where the train stops. Those doing so are asked to purchase their own tickets to and from the destination (a travel refund will be made).

#### Medical

All campers should be fully protected against tetanus well before camp.

Ticks are becoming more common on most sites. In areas where ticks are known, campers are encouraged to wear long sleeved t-shirts and long or waterproof trousers tucked into socks to minimise risk of tick bites and tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease. Wearing insect repellents containing saltidin or citriodiol, which are available at chemists or outdoor suppliers, is also encouraged. Some insect repellents specifically mention that they are active in repelling ticks. All camps are provided with tick removers. More detailed information on this topic will be provided by your camp organiser and will be available on the website.

On camp, all participants will be exposed to the elements, including mosquitoes. Campers should bring adequate, high protection sun-cream, sun hats which provide effective cover and insect repellent.

Campers under the age of 18 should not bring any alcohol to camp. It is against the law for children under eighteen to buy cigarettes or tobacco, or to smoke in public places. All FSC camps discourage smoking. Illegal drugs are not tolerated on any FSC site and parents/guardians should prevent their campers from bringing illegal substances to camp. If it is discovered that a child has brought illegal substances to camp, FSC reserves the right to send the child home and to refuse to enrol them on future camps.

#### **Mobile Phones**

In life outside camp almost everyone owns a mobile phone and uses it constantly for communication, photography and the internet. At camp we have traditionally managed to do without phones to escape to the beauty of the surroundings and the friendships we make in the field. This has always been one of the things that makes camp that bit more special. We thus ask all children to leave their phones at home. If they are needed to arrange pick up at the end of camp their phones can be looked after by a staff member. We also encourage staff to leave their phones behind wherever possible. Sharing photos of camp on social media is also discouraged so it is best to avoid taking photographs on smartphones.

# Equipment

Reasonably priced equipment is available from several high street camping shops—it is not necessary to invest in the best or most expensive equipment for camp, but it must be fit for purpose. Very cheap discount equipment often does not stand up to the rigours of camp life and may leave campers cold, wet and unhappy. A tent meant as a 'toy' will not be suitable. Ideally, campers will bring a 'two-person' tent with a double skin. All children should practice erecting their tent before they travel to camp.

# **Packing**

Children should be involved with packing their own bags so they recognise what they are bringing. They should bring no more than three bags and each of these should be labelled with name, home address and camp name/number. It is useful to line all bags with bin liners to ensure clothing and equipment is kept dry. Anything brought to camp may get wet, dirty or lost. Leave precious things at home. If travelling on Escort, each child will also need a bag for their lunch supplies.



### Camp Kit List

Campers should be well-prepared for all weather conditions since they will be living outdoors. The kit list below is a guide to help parents and guardians ensure that campers are equipped appropriately. There is more detailed information on the website.

#### Clothing

- Waterproof (not just showerproof) jacket & trousers
- 2 warm woollen jerseys or fleeces
- 3 warm tops (sweatshirts etc.)
- 6 light tops (t-shirts etc.) (10 for a fortnight)
- 4 pairs of trousers/jeans (6 for a fortnight or for under 10s)
- Shorts/dresses/skirts \*
- 2 pairs of thick socks (4 for a fortnight or for under 10s)
- 6 pairs of light socks (10 for a fortnight)
- Underclothing
- Pyjamas
- Swimming costume
- Sunhat
- Warm hat and gloves

FSC experience has shown that the under tens need extra underwear, socks and two pairs of pyjamas (three for a fortnight). Waterproofs should be large enough for the jacket to fit comfortably over several layers, and the trousers to fit over wellingtons.

#### Footwear

- Wellies
- Sturdy shoes or boots
- Light shoes or trainers

#### Equipment

- lightweight tent (we advise all campers bring a 1-2 person tent)
- groundsheet
- sleeping bag (two recommended for Easter)
- sleeping mat
- rucksack
- Ordnance Survey map (1:25000) \*
- compass ('Silva' type recommended) \*
- water bottle

#### Miscellaneous

- cloth draw string bag containing:
  - plastic mug
  - deep plate
  - knife, fork and spoon
- sponge bag containing:
  - flannel, soap, and shampoo
  - toothbrush and paste
  - comb/hairbrush
- towels (two, medium size)
- torch and spare batteries
- penknife
- notebook and pencil
- paper and stamps (for writing home)
- plastic bags/bin liners (for keeping things clean and dry)
- sunblock
- insect repellent
- musical instrument (nothing valuable!) \*
- 'dressing up' clothes \*
- materials for making things (e.g. embroidery thread) \*

#### \* These items are optional

All campers will receive further guidance on suitable equipment from their camp organiser. Any camper who is unable to provide all the necessary equipment should contact the camp organiser and ask for an equipment request form at least two months before camp.



### Some FSC Words Explained

Camp Chief: this person's/these people's names appear in the programme. They are in overall charge of the camp. If parents need to speak to anybody about the camp either during or after camp they should contact the camp chief whose details will be on the pre camps circular. Before camp, all communications should go through the Organiser.

Organiser: this person's name appears in the programme. They will be the first line of contact for campers or their parent/carers after a camp place has been offered and accepted. They administer the camp before it starts ensuring paperwork is complete and, initially, dealing with any queries or problems. They do not necessarily attend the camp.

Escort leader: this person is responsible for supervising the group of children in the Escort Party whether travelling by coach or train and they travel to the campsite with the group.

Group chief: Each child will be in a group depending on their age (see table above) and there will be a number of staff assigned to each group. The whole group camps close together and activities like Hike are organised around the Group. The Group Chief is the member of staff who supervises the whole group of children and staff.

Caterer: The people filling this role are responsible for providing the food for all the campers and providing daily menus and recipes. They supervise the 'kitchen': they do not cook the meals. Clans prepare, cook, serve and clear up all the meals except on hike.

Mentor: This is a member of staff who volunteers to support a particular family whose children might not otherwise manage to get to camp. They help with organising paperwork and equipment and will camp with the child/children for at least the first time they camp.

Escort: this is how most children get to camp as a group - usually by coach from a pick up point in London and then at least one additional point (usually a motorway service station) on the way to the site.

Consent Forms: This is a very important form sent out by the organiser which must be completed by an adult with parental responsibility for the individual camper. Each camper must have one. Because a signed consent form is an absolute requirement set by FSC's insurers, no child is permitted to camp unless the Organiser has received the completed form two weeks before camp starts.

Health and Return Journey: This form is the most up-to-date record of the camper's state of health and parents/carers must list any allergies, medication or possible issues affecting their camper. It is also confirmation of parental expectation of the camper's journey home plus confirmation of their contact details during camp. It is completed just before camp starts and is handed over to the Escort Leader or the Camp Chief.

Pre Camps Circular: This is written by the Camp Chief(s) and will be sent out by the Organiser about three weeks before camp is due to start. It describes the sort of camp the Camp Chief intends to run and includes detailed information about travel and the site. It also contains emergency contact details.

#### **FSC Staff**

Many staff have grown up with Forest School Camps and others have joined hearing about it through word of mouth. All staff have been trained in childcare and child protection. If a member of staff has not camped for 10 years they will be asked to retrain to make sure they have been updated on any new FSC policies.

All FSC staff are required to have an up to date enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before they can be enrolled on our camps (this is standard procedure for anyone working with children or vulnerable adults). We continue to also operate our own internal procedures to ensure the suitability of our staff, over and above the information obtained from DBS checks. We keep the process of DBS checking our staff under regular review. At camps where parents and guardians are responsible for their children (Associates, Skills and Conservation) there may be adults who do not have a current DBS check.

# Becoming FSC Staff

If you are over 18 and you think FSC sounds like your sort of organisation, do give us a try. We can't offer much in the way of money - just expenses - but the good company of like-minded adults of all ages keeps many people coming back year after vear. Some of our best staff are recruited by children returning from camp and urging their parents to join in the fun. We provide training in practical camping skills and also make sure that each camp has a balance of new and experienced staff so that each person can continue 'learning by doing'. If you enjoy the open air, the company of children and being part of a community, come along to a weekend training camp, find out what's involved and see whether you enjoy it. Parents often have muchneeded experience in child care, whilst younger staff have more energy for games and activities. Training camps last for two or three days (generally over a bank holiday), and run alongside a regular camp. Before being offered a space on a training weekend, we require trainees to have completed an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, standard procedure for anyone working with children or vulnerable adults.

For more details on the process of applying to be a member of staff with FSC go to www.fsc.org.uk/applying-to-staff or email new.staff@fsc.org.uk

#### Stores

FSC equipment is kept at Haddenham in Cambridgeshire. Every year, Stores send out around twenty tonnes of equipment and when it is collected and returned, it is unpacked, inspected, repaired and repacked. Stores depend on volunteers just like the rest of FSC, even if it is only for one weekend a year. These work weekends are also an opportunity to learn new skills and to partake in the all-singing, all-dancing fun that is FSC.

Stores needs many hands for every work weekend. All FSC members are very welcome to attend. 16-17 year-old Pathfinders need the written consent of their parent or guardian in order to attend (the form is available on the FSC website). Children aged 15 and under must be accompanied by a parent/guardian, for the duration, as these work weekends are not staffed camps.



There is no charge and reasonable travel expenses can be paid. Escort is usually arranged from London Kings Cross every month, and there are regular attendees travelling from all around the country who may be able to offer lifts or arrange a pick up from Ely station.

Since 2021 FSC has been in the middle of a huge project to rebuild and reorganise the buildings at Haddenham as many of our buildings have become very dilapidated. Donations towards this project will be hugely appreciated.

If you would like to make a donation please go to www.fsc.org.uk/donate where there are details of how to donate, or contact the donations officer at donations@fsc.org.uk

#### Fenwood

In 2005, FSC purchased an 8.5 acre field as an extension to its existing 1.5 acre Stores Centre at Haddenham. The site was named Fenwood and, in 2006, dozens of volunteers planted the bare field with several thousand trees. The site has become an important wildlife refuge in an otherwise quite barren farming landscape. The created woodland hosted its first children's camp in April 2019 and it is used throughout the year by staff attending work weekends. The stores site and its adjoining woodland have four dedicated weekends each year during which our members manage the trees and fences and maintain the buildings.

Help is always needed to ensure that the woodland matures into a valuable resource for FSC to camp and train in, and the barns and workshops continue to support the equipment vital to the running of our annual programme.

#### Contacts

All our workers are voluntary and help Forest School Camps in their spare time. While every effort is made to deal with enrolments and correspondence promptly, some delays are unavoidable. Please only write to or email our officers; do not try to telephone them.

Chair chair@fsc.org.uk

Camper Support (Financial) fees.support@fsc.org.uk

Children's Committee children@fsc.org.uk

Donations Officer donations@fsc.org.uk

Enquiries Officer enquiries@fsc.org.uk

Enquiries about Children's Enrolment children@fsc.org.uk

Inclusion Enrolments inclusion@fsc.org.uk

Skills & Conservation Camps Secretary conservation@fsc.org.uk

Camper Details camper.details@fsc.org.uk

Haddenham Stores Conveners stores@fsc.org.uk

Associate Members Secretary associates@fsc.org.uk

People of Colour Committee poc@fsc.org.uk

New Staff Enquiries new.staff@fsc.org.uk

Staffing Committee staffing@fsc.org.uk

Supported Enrolments supported.campers@fsc.org.uk

FSC Website www.fsc.org.uk

Forest School Camps is a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity: Company Number 937722, Charity Number 306006. Registered address: Forest School Camps, Hill Row Causeway, Haddenham, Ely CB6 3PA

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