



English Forest School

A Typical Session



We meet at the entrance to the site wearing suitable clothing for the session ahead. On time... in we go!...it's been raining, our boots crunch on the gravel, the birds chirrup above, and the stream flows steadily. **The children know the routine**, they put their bags down and gather to greet each other, hopping over the stones, testing their waterproofs in puddles, checking how their beans have grown ... finding that old stick from last week.

Before each session the site has been checked for **safety** and equipment is ready for the planned activity.

We call a circle meeting. First up is to break the ice. The 4Elements Galicia mascot, **the famous Mr Chicken** is great at this - everyone loves a talking teddy :-)

"Are you cold?" he clucks, "Noooo" everyone replies.

"Are you wet?" Of course not, they are all wearing the right gear!

"Are you happy, are you sad?"

We are checking in, giving everyone a chance to “arrive”, not just latecomers but also ordinary people with their heads in the clouds!

We pass Mr Chicken around, prompting a chance for introductions, to become part of the session, to see if we are all here, to “count” our group.

“1, 2, 3, 4...15, 16! “Hooray! All here!”

Our leaders have both the direction and the language they aim to explore readied in their minds. They aim towards this in a very open way as they also understand the importance of letting children decide their own way, allowing for new English expression to naturally emerge.

That said, our activities are more often than not embraced. **Each child’s approach is different and that is respected.** They are free to explore, to engage or not...or ask for our help.

Language and activity are flexible and considerate.

We use English as the main language of communication. The leaders are all native level English speakers.

Routines include saying our names and something about ourselves, how we feel, talking about the Forest School values, commenting on the weather and adjusting our clothing, movement and song.

English Forest School Rules

1. Respect the **people**
2. Respect the **nature**
3. Respect the **things** and...
4. **Stay together!**

That is more than enough to set the tone, all children can identify when they are straying from suitable behaviour. They quickly become aware and embrace the cooperative atmosphere.

The leaders (not always the adults) introduce an activity.

We have a huge, ever growing range of **activities**, nearly all related to the natural environment of the site. For example, finding and peeling a greenwood stick...

“Is it a brown, brittle & dry stick? Or is it a green, flexible stick?”

The language develops naturally and is limitless...

“Is it spiky, mouldy, soft, smooth?” and so on...

A simple stick can be a million things and we allow space for these reflections to be expressed and/or internalised.

Julia Donaldson's Stick Man is one of our favourites, as it perfectly illustrates how a stick can be so much more.

We nurture meaningful experiences for life-long impact: we strongly believe that **children should experience mud and dirt, the sting of a nettle and the scratch of a bramble.** Children should fall over when trying out new terrain. Children should uncover new worlds right under their noses, observing and even carefully handling insects and other small creatures. They should know that some plants smell nice while others can do you harm. They should be able to differentiate the birds in their garden, the trees they see every day, the effects of the weather.

At 4Elements Galicia, we understand the **importance of appropriate risk-taking.** Our leaders guide learners through activities that encourage them to push their boundaries and discover their own limitations. By taking on challenges in a mindful and intentional way, learners are empowered to become self-determined and confident. We believe that this approach not only fosters **personal growth**, but also encourages teamwork and a willingness to embrace new opportunities.

As the session comes to a close, we might gather round the campfire to hear and see an English storybook read aloud. We like to relate the book to the activity of the day, thus reinforcing the language they used while exploring. We conclude with a review and reflection, checking in on the experiences and emotions of each person, sharing and recognizing individual insights.

All of a sudden the session is over. **Time has flown.**

The children gather their things, ready to show and tell their parents and carers all about their adventures. They are usually hungry!