



## Network Newsletter

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## Coordinator's Comments

### Fresh Starts and New Beginnings

As we begin a new year, I tend to reflect on what happened last year, and the perfectionist in me is never happy. I find myself questioning, asking 'What if...?' and 'Could I have done things better?', so I have made a conscious decision that this year will be different.

After a challenging couple of years, in life and education, we deserve to give ourselves a break and look forwards instead of backwards. Although spring is a little way off yet (I am hoping for some snow first), a new year hails fresh starts and new beginnings.

I have so many plans for this year, both personally and professionally, but I am also not going to put pressure on myself to achieve everything. If the pandemic has taught me anything positive, it is to approach life with enthusiasm and hope, but also to recognise that plans may need to change and that is okay.



### Join Us

If you are not already a member of the Suffolk TA Network, please join via the following link:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UyUudcf3sEGK8GkwZaFwVhZAzV7zulGsO\\_6uPBfMz5UQkZBNOJRR0hUMehYMzFHOTdYTENHRIFDSi4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UyUudcf3sEGK8GkwZaFwVhZAzV7zulGsO_6uPBfMz5UQkZBNOJRR0hUMehYMzFHOTdYTENHRIFDSi4u)

Simply click on this link or copy it into the URL bar on your browser and complete the Microsoft Forms document. You will then receive the half-termly newsletter and other correspondence.

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## Forest School Training at Suffolk Wildlife Trust

By Emma Keeble, Wild Learning Officer  
and Forest School practitioner and trainer

As a Wildlife Trust, we are hugely passionate about connecting young people with nature and have seen first-hand that spending time outdoors has a huge benefit on physical and mental health and well-being as well as empowering a connection to and sense of guardianship for the natural world.

Time outdoors promotes positive physical well-being through increased physical activity, helping to reduce levels of obesity. This in turn, has a huge impact on a person's happiness.

Time spent outdoors is also attributed to having an impact on anger (a reduction), having a restorative effect from stress and mental fatigue, creating positive moods and enhanced mental health, enhanced feelings of wellbeing and satisfaction with life, enjoyment and stimulation of the senses and finally, relaxation (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2009).

Spending time in woodlands can have a positive effect on social interaction, confidence, physical activity, stress relief and allow for a more diverse range of play opportunities than found in other settings. Physical outdoor activity has also been linked to positive cognitive functioning that includes concentration, memory and language (RSPB, 2004).

I work as a Wild Learning Officer and Forest School trainer with Suffolk Wildlife Trust. My role is very varied and hugely rewarding as we work with such a broad range of participants and see first-hand the benefits of nature connection on people of all ages.

One of my highlights currently is our Forest School training provision. We train participants in three levels of Forest School accredited by the Open College Network West Midlands. These three levels are:

Level 1 which is an introduction to Forest School ethos and principles. This is a two-day course aimed at those wishing to gain an understanding of what Forest School is and to understand the main principles as denoted by the Forest School Association. It can also be used as a first step for those considering undertaking Forest School Leader training at a later date.



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Our Level 2 Forest School Assistant course is a 4-day course designed for individuals wishing to assist with the delivery of a Forest School programme. It is designed to prepare participants with the skills to effectively support a Forest School Leader in the delivery of Forest School sessions and looks at the Forest School approach to learning and a positive attitude to taking risk. Practical skills include safe lighting, management and use of a campfire in a Forest School setting, safe use of a range of hand tools and a variety of games and activities. Along with identification of woodland flora and fauna, and sustainable use of a woodland within the context of Forest school.

In order to lead Forest School, facilitators have to have a Level 3 Forest School Leader qualification. This is an eight-day course split out as a week-long course in either the spring (March 2022) or the summer (August 2022) with the addition of a 3-day weekend in May or September respectively.

The Level 3 course is designed to develop leadership, facilitation, practical and teaching skills to enable participants to understand the principles and ethos of Forest School and to plan and deliver Forest School programmes. It is designed to meet the needs of early years practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants, youth workers, adults and professionals in training to become a Forest School Leader. The course covers the Forest School approach to learning and holistic development, positive attitudes to risk taking and the importance of play. As with the Level 2, practical skills include safe lighting, management and use of a camp fire in a Forest School setting, outdoor cooking, safe use of a range of hand tools and a variety of games and activities.

As a trainer it is so rewarding seeing our trainees progress through their training journey and going on to share their experiences and expertise with the groups they work with.



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### Level 3 trainees from August 2021

A few comments from students on their Forest School training with Suffolk Wildlife Trust:

'so many ideas to take away and activities to do with the children...everyone should do this course!'

'I learnt so much about myself and the importance of holistic teaching'

'I feel I have a much better understanding of how to teach children in the forest and that it's okay to let children take the lead and assess their own risk'

'this course has given me so much confidence to try new things'

As a practitioner I have facilitated Forest School sessions with a number of different groups. Currently, I am working with two groups of home educated children in two age categories, 6-11-year olds and 11-16-year olds. Following in the wake of the pandemic, it has become even more apparent that what our children so desperately crave and thrive on is time spent with their peers engaging in fully immersive activities and experiences. Forest School gives them just that. At Forest School every need is catered for. Our group is very diverse in ability, needs and experiences; however, over the past 9 months (we were able to resume sessions with them in April 2021) we have seen them grow from strength-to-strength both collectively as a cohesive community and individually. Their self-esteem has skyrocketed as they have been able to follow their interests, assess their own risks, learn new skills and take part in shared experiences. Our younger group have followed their interests in natural history, wanting to know more about plants and animals of the woodland, identifying and naming trees and berries, experimenting with natural dyes and colour mixing, wild foods and foraging.

Whilst the older group have honed their fine and gross motor skills in their woodwork and tool use, experimenting with physics and engineering to build rope ladders, catapults and tree platforms, they also LOVE food so a lot of those sessions focus on fire and cooking and that sense of community and sharing that comes from sitting around a fire eating.

The benefits of Forest School are huge and so wide-reaching. It's a pleasure to be part of that journey with our participants, be that on our courses or during the delivery of our Forest School sessions themselves. There is no doubt that we all benefit from it!!

SEE PAGES 5 & 6 FOR EXAMPLES OF HOW FOREST SCHOOL  
CAN WORK IN EYFS AND KS3/KS4.



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# What might Forest School look like in EYFS & KS3/KS4?

Forest School and EYFS by Jo Reed, School Governor, STEM advisor, Suffolk Wildlife Trust Volunteer, previous nursery owner and retired KS1 teacher.

Forest School has major and multiple benefits for both children and their practitioners in the EYFS. Every child can develop into a “unique child”: constantly learning, becoming increasingly resilient, capable, confident and self-assured – as stated in 2021 EYFS guidance. It is an inclusive approach. Each child has this beautiful outdoor space to explore, to play with their own ideas or to link with their peers to develop co-operative play. A stick can be a mark-maker, a wand or a fishing rod - Forest School is full of open-ended opportunities! Creativity is about the process: allowing imagination, expression and independence to guide and lead their learning. Children are given time and space to engage deeply with their environment, the seasons and the resulting changes and with a wide range of natural materials. They can practise skills and are encouraged to play within a safe, child-led setting where they can think about and manage any risks individually (but with well-informed adult input). Scaffolding and modelling by the practitioners supports their learning towards the next step in their learning journey. All areas of learning can be covered within Forest School, but particularly the Prime Areas and Understanding of the World. To physically experience the unevenness of the ground as you walk down a steep slope or trying to stay upright on a balancing rope, kicking through the piles of crisp, autumn leaves or simply feeling the warmth of sunshine on your face on a cold, winter's day – such sensory experiences will easily be incorporated into perfect conditions for new learning, new challenges and each child will respond according to their own needs and interests.

EYFS practitioners are more relaxed in Forest School, following their children's leads. They can take time to play with children, to develop new ideas, to reflect on individual children as well as the group, evidence progress through photographs or video. Time to reflect and plan for the next session or the next challenge ensures that no learning opportunity is missed – creating for each child their own unique learning journey within the context of the natural world, a world where anything and everything is possible.



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## My Forest Schools Experience in a KS3 / KS4 Special School

By Charlie Zakss, Wild Learning Officer, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

I was lucky enough to be invited to run a series of sessions at a special school in Ipswich, with a small number of KS4 students with varying needs, including ADHD and Autism.

We worked in their school grounds as this was a space familiar to the students - a small but happy space, with 3 beautiful beech trees, 1 oak tree, some small hedges, and a log circle. This also meant we were able to bring in plenty of adult help to assist the students.

The first week, the students were a little shy and nervous. This was completely out of their comfort zone, and they weren't long back from being locked-down due to Covid-19. I too, was a little nervous, as I hadn't worked in this space or provision, and I had no idea what to expect. I didn't want the session to be easy or "boring" for these older students, but I didn't want to make tasks too difficult, so they were unable to achieve. Succeeding is so important for us all, but especially these students, many whose confidence had been knocked even further in recent times. A flexible Forest School approach was perfect.

We started our sessions with drumming, games, and a gentle introduction to tools. This broke this ice, impressed the 'cool' kids, and captured their imaginations. The following few weeks, we learnt to name our trees, how to work as a team with the bow saws, loppers, hammers, and various drills. We made forest school name badges, ladybird homes for all the ladybirds they found and learnt how to light a fire using fire steels and natural tinder. These were new skills for all the students and really tested their determination, persistence, and team skills.

The magic of the Forest School experience meant that every child, and adult, relaxed, forgot about the rest of the world, and connected with these lovely trees and importantly nature. We laughed, smiled and had so much fun. We never wanted the sessions to end. Most importantly, we learnt the importance of never giving up, however hard things can be and we learnt how satisfying it is to succeed as a result.

PLEASE EMAIL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS:

[EMMA.KEEBLE@SUFFOLKWILDLIFETRUST.ORG](mailto:EMMA.KEEBLE@SUFFOLKWILDLIFETRUST.ORG) AND CHECK OUT

OUR OTHER CPD COURSES:

[WWW.SUFFOLKWILDLIFETRUST.ORG/CPD](http://WWW.SUFFOLKWILDLIFETRUST.ORG/CPD)



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# Meet our Champions

## Meet Emma, Suffolk TA Network Champion for South Suffolk



Hi everyone! I am super excited to be taking on the South Suffolk TA Champion role. I can't wait to meet you all – virtually and in person! I am hoping that 2022 brings with it lots more capacity for face-to-face networking and empowerment for our growing TA body. I believe strongly in the power of networks

and the positivity they can bring to our positions in schools. I hope very much that, as the network moves forward this year, we can further forge a network that supports us all and provides a space for fulfilment, growth and development. Bring it on!

## Meet Justine, Suffolk TA Network Champion for West Suffolk



Although I had heard of the TA Network, I had not really looked into to it. My SENDCO had put a flyer on my desk with a post-it saying “What do you think!” Both of us are advocates for the roles we have in our school and the support we offer to our students. I did sit with it on my desk for a few weeks before I looked into it. I felt it was a great opportunity to support the work

Abi and the team are doing. I also felt it would be great for TAs to be able to network and get together for support and advice. Sometimes we need others, not just the people we work with, for support and help and this is a fantastic chance to be able to do this. I have always enjoyed meeting other TAs and HLTAs in other schools and talking about the different aspects of the role and how they might do things. I feel this role brings this all together.

AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY STILL EXISTS FOR AN EXPERIENCED TA OR HLTA FROM NORTH SUFFOLK TO BECOME OUR THIRD AND FINAL SUFFOLK TA NETWORK CHAMPION TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT AND DEVELOP OUR WORK WITH TEACHING ASSISTANTS ACROSS THE COUNTY.

PLEASE EMAIL ME: [SUFFOLKTAN@WESTBOURNE.ATTRUST.ORG.UK](mailto:SUFFOLKTAN@WESTBOURNE.ATTRUST.ORG.UK)



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# The Importance of Play for Children with Special Educational Needs by Georgina Durrant

Over the course of the pandemic there's been a lot of concern over children with special educational needs missing out academically and whilst this may be true, I strongly believe that we need to focus on the fact that children have also missed out on play. Playing with friends, playing outside, playing with grandparents, playing at their friend's house...the list goes on. And whilst play might be seen as something trivial, it's actually imperative for children's well-being and their development of important skills. I'd go as far as saying that, for young children, play is the mechanism for learning.

Play is everything. It's squishing play dough and in turn developing those important fine motor skills that help children learn how to write. It's walking and balancing on the equipment in the trim trail and learning how to take risks and finesse their gross motor skills. It's falling out with a friend over sequins and learning those really important social skills and language/communication skills.

Play also doesn't come naturally to all children and by supporting them with playful activities we are helping them to play successfully with others, developing their social skills.

If you're looking for play-based activities to support children with Special Educational Needs, I've written a whole book of ideas called '100 Ways Your Child Can Learn Through Play' published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, which is available from any major bookshop.

Georgina Durrant is a former teacher/ SENDCO and private tutor for children with Special Educational Needs.

She founded The SEN Resources Blog [www.senresourcesblog.com](http://www.senresourcesblog.com).

You can also find her on twitter [www.twitter.com/senresourceblog](http://www.twitter.com/senresourceblog) and Facebook [www.facebook.com/senresourcesblog](http://www.facebook.com/senresourcesblog)



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# Come on, get involved!

Peer

Buddying

## Be Part of the Pilot

Do you want to network with other TAs? Do you feel you could commit to 3.5 hours across a half term? If so, consider joining our peer buddying pilot.

You will:

- Attend a free 90-minute online buddying skills training session delivered by a certified coach and consultant (you will also get to meet your new buddy)
- Attend a 30-minute online session with your buddy and a member of the Suffolk TA Network to agree on an area of focus
- Attend one 60-minute or two 30-minute sessions with your buddy via phone, online or face-to-face, developing a specific area of classroom practice/intervention/SEND knowledge
- Attend a 30-minute online session with your buddy and a member of the Suffolk TA Network team soon after the last buddying session to evaluate the scheme.

**If you are interested in taking part in the pilot or would like further information, please email [jclegg@morlandprimary.com](mailto:jclegg@morlandprimary.com).**

## Calling all budding film stars - we need you!

Come and be part of our exciting new project. Would you be able to share your top tips with others? We are looking for volunteers to take part in our new Suffolk TA Network YouTube channel. The videos will be created by TAs for TAs, offering a new way to share your knowledge and experience with others. If you would like to be involved and would be happy to make a short video sharing your top tips on a subject, based on your experiences, that might help others, please contact Carolyn at [suffolktan@springfieldjuniors.net](mailto:suffolktan@springfieldjuniors.net). Further details will be provided alongside any help and support needed.



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## Behaviour Training Sessions

These sessions are being delivered by Eileen Allpress from the Ipswich Associate Research School. They will cover what the EEF says about behaviour interventions, effective classroom strategies and changes since COVID.

### Focus on behaviour in EYFS, KS1 & KS2

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> January

Morning – 9.30-10.30, Afternoon – 13.30-14.30 or Twilight – 16.30-17.30

### Focus on behaviour in KS3 and above

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March

Morning – 9.30-10.30, Afternoon – 13.30-14.30 or Twilight – 16.30-17.30

To find out more information and to sign up for one of these sessions please email me: [suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk](mailto:suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk)

## NETWORK INFORMATION SESSIONS

Come and listen to a range of speakers provide bite-sized introductions to their work and how it is relevant to TAs in Suffolk, while sharing experiences with staff from other schools. Speakers will be confirmed soon.

<u>Morning</u>	<u>Afternoon</u>	<u>Twilight</u>
<b>Wednesday 2nd March</b> 9.30-10.30	<b>Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February</b> 13.30-14.30	<b>Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March</b> 16.30-17.30

To find out more and to book a place on one of these sessions, email me: [suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk](mailto:suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk)



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## Dyscalculia Training



This course will give an overview of Dyscalculia as a specific learning difficulty, best practice regarding assessment procedures and a range of teaching strategies and recommendations.

This course should enable participants to:

- Understand the distinct profile of Dyscalculia and where it lies on the Maths Learning Difficulties continuum
- Know the signs highlighting an at-risk profile
- Understand some approaches and strategies which best support students with Maths Learning Difficulties, including Dyscalculia.

**Choose from one of three sessions on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February:**

**Morning 9.30-10.30, Afternoon 13.30-14.30 or Twilight 16.30-17.30**

To find out more and to register for one of these sessions, please email me:  
[suffolktan@westbourne.atrust.org.uk](mailto:suffolktan@westbourne.atrust.org.uk)



## Suffolk TA Network 1<sup>st</sup> Annual TA Conference



We are really excited to announce that our first annual TA conference will be held on National TA Day, **16<sup>th</sup> September 2022, at Trinity Park Conference & Events Centre, Ipswich.**

This year our theme will be Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and we are thrilled to be delivering this in collaboration with Suffolk County Council Education Outreach Service for Speech, Language and Communication and NHS speech and language therapy services in Suffolk.

Please keep an eye out in the next newsletter and your email inbox for further details.



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## Research Corner

### LBL Reflections - Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning

Learning Behaviour Leads reflect on applying [EEF Guidance on Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning](#) in the classroom.

I started working as a Learning Behaviour Lead (LBL) in September 2021 and, although I wasn't completely sure what was expected of me at the start, the one thing I did feel was the full support of my SLT and the reassurance I got in every training session.

As part of my role, I was asked to support a child in year 3, who was struggling in school, for 1 hour and 30 minutes each morning (the child was on a part-time timetable). I realised that something I needed to do was slowly introduce cognitive learning and I found out that maths was one of this pupil's favourite subjects. So, we started off by doing only 10 minutes for the first week, then upping it slowly to build up his cognitive load. As the weeks went on, I could see the trust building, he was more willing to open up and talk about things. He also started meeting me at the main gate and stayed with me to do gate duty and then came into the school building. We would then make drinks, have 15 minutes of downtime and be ready to complete maths work in the classroom for 45 minutes. At the moment this pupil does sometimes struggle with this, but he isn't becoming dysregulated anymore or walking out of the classroom.

All the training I have received so far from Ipswich Opportunity Area has been so powerful and inspiring that I can already see, in only 8 weeks, what an impact it has had and how it has made me reflect on how I cope or deal with certain situations.

By Amanda



**THE KNOWLEDGE OF TASK**- What have I done like this before? What can I identify?

**THE KNOWLEDGE OF STRATEGIES**- What can I use to help me? What resources can I use?

**THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF**- I need to be able to do this to learn how to be able to use these skills later.

These are displayed in my room. Talking them through with pupils helps them gain an understanding of improving their own skills. It helps them self-regulate and monitor their own learning, and be able to have some control over it. By breaking down these steps, they can challenge themselves. It encourages independent learning skills.

By Caz



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## Looking for something to listen to? Check out SENDcast

The SENDcast is a weekly podcast focusing on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) launched by B Squared.

It is a new way to keep up-to-date with policy changes, best practice and to improve your knowledge around SEND.

With over 75 episodes and 56k downloads, it's proven to be a great free resource for both schools and parents.

Some of the latest episodes include:

- Connecting and Communicating with students with autism with Tessa Morton
- Neurodiversity in Schools: A Whole School Approach with Fintan O'Regan
- What is Grief? with Alison Knowles

The SENDcast has won two awards this year: Teach Primary Awards 2021 (free resource) and Best Educational Podcast 2021 (SEND focused).

Listen to the award-winning podcast here - [www.thesendcast.com](http://www.thesendcast.com)

HERE'S WHAT OUR LISTENERS HAVE TO SAY:

"I ABSOLUTELY CANNOT RECOMMEND THIS PODCAST ENOUGH – NOT ONLY AS A SENCO, BUT AS A TEACHER." @EYFS\_Y1\_ADVENTURES

"HUMOROUS, STRAIGHT-TALKING, DEEPLY PRACTICAL AND EYE-OPENING THOUGHTS AND ADVICE MAKE @THESENDCAST A COMPELLING LISTEN." PENNY RABIGER, SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



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# Resource Review

## Resource Review by Julie Clegg

I recently watched the talk 'Strategies for supporting children with poor speech and language skills', by Wendy Lee, Consultant Speech and Language Therapist, LINGO, which featured in the [6th Virtual SEND Conference](#).

Looking at this video, I feel this is a fantastic opportunity for all TAs to access some more CPD to support pupils with speech and language needs within the classroom. This is ever so more important now, with rising numbers within classrooms where the numbers are now 7.6%, which on average is 2.3 in each classroom.

The video lasts for 46 minutes and within this time Wendy explains the types of needs children have with their speech and language and how to implement strategies to support the inclusion of these children.

I have found the video particularly useful and effective by using Wendy's practical approaches, such as simplifying adult talk, visual prompts, check it out... and implementing these within the classroom. I now get told, "they are so calm and engaged with you!!!"

There are other websites, author mentions and YouTube videos that allow you to explore the subject further.

**Content: 9/10**

**Accessibility: 8/10**

**Overall: 9/10**

*Our members currently have free access to this talk until the end of February. Please email me: [suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk](mailto:suffolktan@westbourne.attrust.org.uk) for more information.*

## Do you have something to share?

Email me with your idea and you could be in the next edition.

## Disclaimer

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