

Forest School and 14-19 Learning Pathways in Denbighshire 2006 - 2009

Report by Sarah Wilson,
Denbighshire Forest School, September 2010

Funded by the Forest Education Initiative (FEI) and supported by
the NE Wales FEI cluster group Impio.

Summary

- 16 Forest School Learning Pathways Link Courses were delivered over four years, including seven year-long programmes and involving over 100 KS4 pupils from 4 high schools and 2 special schools.
- Forest School was found to be a highly effective and engaging way of delivering much of the Core of Learning within 14-19 Learning Pathways.
- Additional benefits included opportunities for accreditation and work experience.
- Participation in Forest School programmes generated an interest amongst students in land and woodland based employment.
- Lack of key life skills was identified as a major limitation for students wishing to pursue this interest.
- Recommendations and 16 detailed case studies are included.

Contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 What is 14-19 Learning Pathways?
- 1.2 How is this relevant to FS?
- 1.3 Background to Current Project

2. Aims

3. Methods

- 3.1 Programme Delivery
- 3.2 Project Report
- 3.3 Project Finances

4. Results

- 4.1 Summary of Forest School Link Courses
- 4.2 Summary of Outputs with respect to Project Aims

5. Discussion

- 5.1 Overall Project
- 5.2 Forest School & 14-19 Learning Pathways
- 5.3 Accreditation and Forest School link courses
- 5.4 Forest School & the development of Land-based Vocational Learning Pathways
- 5.5 Recommendations for future

Tables

Table1: Summary of Learning Pathways Programmes

Table 2: Summary of OCN Programmes

Appendices

1. Case Studies:

- CS1 Plas Brondyffryn, Tir Ysgol, 06-07
- CS2 Plas Brondyffryn, Tir Ysgol, 07-08
- CS3 Plas Brondyffryn, Tir Ysgol, 06-07
- CS4 Plas Brondyffryn, Main School, 06-07
- CS5 Plas Brondyffryn, Main School, 06-07
- CS6 Tir Morfa, 05-06
- CS7 Tir Morfa, 2006, short
- CS8 Tir Morfa, 06-07
- CS9 Tir Morfa, 07-08
- CS10 Tir Morfa, 08-09
- CS11 Rhyl High School, 05-06
- CS12 Rhyl High School, 06-07
- CS13 Rhyl High School & Blessed Edward Jones RC, 07-08
- CS14 Dinas Bran High School, 07-08
- CS15 Prestatyn High School, 2008
- CS16 Plas Brondyffryn, Main School, 08-09

2. Forest School Skills Ladder ~ a new approach to evaluations

3. Guidance Notes for Forest School Leaders:

- 14-19 Learning Pathways
- ASDAN Awards
- John Muir Award
- Open College Network (OCN)

Available digitally on request:

Basic Forest School Practical Skills, OCN L1, Sample Forms:

- Forest School Leader Evidence Sheets
- Summative Assessments and Certificates
- Student Worksheets

Table 1: Summary of 14-19 Learning Pathways Programmes delivered by Denbighshire Forest School (2006-2009)

Case Study / School	Date	Year group	School staff	Dys /Yr	No pupils	Group profile	Program aims / achievements	Awards / gained
1. Plas Brondyffryn Special school	06-07	KS4	5-7	15	7-10	Severe Autism / Severe Learning Difficulties / Challenging Behaviour	New experiences / engagement / soft skills; (materials for ASDAN)	(ASDAN)
2. PBD	07-08	KS4	5-7	15	7	Several classes		
3. PBD	08-09	KS4	5-7	15	7			
4. PBD	06-07	KS4	2 or 3	15	10	Autism /various learning difficulties and behaviours	New experiences / soft skills / engagement; (materials for ASDAN)	OCN Entry (ASDAN)
5. PBD	07-08	KS4	2 or 3	15	10	Single class		(ASDAN)
6. Tŷ Morfa special school	05-06	Yr 9 &10	2 or 3	30+	9		Pilot of year programme; all round Forest School experience; History and geography targets; Healthy Eating and John Muir; pilot of OCN;	2x OCN L1 John Muir
7. TM	06	Yr10	2 or 3	10	10	Moderate Learning Difficulties Some challenging behaviours	Taster of Forest School for Year 10; materials for Art curriculum in school	n/a
8. TM	06-07		2 or 3		9	Single class	all round Forest School experience for year 9 including Healthy Eating and John Muir;	2x OCN L1 John Muir
9. TM	07-08	Yr 9 &10	2 or 3	30+	9		OCN in year 10	OCN L1 John Muir
10. TM	08-09	Yr 9 &10	2 or 3	30+	8		work experience in years 10 &11	
11. Rhyl High	06	Yr10	none	15	5*	Alternative Curriculum/ Risk of exclusion / Challenging Behaviour;	Pilot OCN workbooks; engagement / soft skills	2x OCN L1
12. RH	06-07	Yr10 &11	none	30	6*	Some learning difficulties	engagement / soft skills; chance of accreditation	OCN L1
13. RH & Blessed Edward Jones	07-08	Yr10 &11	none	30	5*	Several classes		
14. Dinas Bran High	07-08	Yr10	1 or 2	30	6	Alternative Curriculum/ Risk of exclusion / Challenging Behaviour;		
15. Prestatyn High	08	Yr10	2 or 3	6	10	Some learning difficulties Several classes	completion of specific ASDAN challenge; new experiences / engagement / soft skills	ASDAN
16. PBD	09	KS4	2 or 3	6	10	Autism /various learning difficulties and behaviours Single class		

*started with around 10, but numbers settled to around 6 by start of spring term.

Table 2: Summary of OCN Programmes delivered by Denbighshire Forest School (2006-2009)

Case Study / School	Date	No. Days	Level	Unit(s)	Writing where?	Evidenced whom?	Comments
CS 4 Plas Brondyffryn special school	06-07	15	Entry	??	School	students	Old workbook in school worked well with some simplifications.
CS 6 Tir Morfa special school	05-06	30+	L1&E	PWO & WIW	FS	Students	FSLs struggled to get students to complete old workbook in 10 wks despite excellent prior practical achievements, due to very low student literacy. FSLs scribed for many.
CS 8 Tir Morfa	06-07	30+	L1	PWO & WIW	School	Students	Old workbook completed in school to meet existing Literacy targets~ increased motivation from FS spilled over into Literacy, but too little time to do all writing
CS 9 Tir Morfa	07-08	30+	L1	BFSPPS	School	Students & FSLs	New workbook completed partly by FSLs and partly in school to meet existing Literacy targets~ increased motivation from FS spilled over into Literacy
CS 10 Tir Morfa	08-09	30+	L1	BFSPPS	School	Students & FSLs	New portfolios completed partly by FSLs and partly in school to meet existing Literacy targets~ increased motivation from FS spilled over into Literacy
CS 11 Rhyl High	06	15	L1	PWO & WIW	FS	Students	Successful pilot of OCN at FS. Old workbook extremely unpopular, partly because they were considered insulting, partly poor student literacy skills. FSLs scribed for many.
CS12 Rhyl High	06-07	30	L1	PWO & WIW	FS	students	Old workbook extremely unpopular, partly because they were considered insulting, partly poor student literacy skills. FSLs scribed for many.
CS 13 Rhyl High & Blessed Edward Jones	07-08	30	L1	BFSPPS	FS	Students & FSLs	New portfolio ~ Even this minimum amount of writing was unpopular: FSLs scribed for many. Summative Assessments / certificates used to manage behaviour and improve motivation.
CS 14 Dinas Bran High	07-08	30?	L1	BFSPPS	FS	Students & FSLs	New portfolio ~ Even this minimum amount of writing was unpopular: FSLs scribed for many. Summative Assessments / certificates used to manage behaviour and improve motivation.

PWO = Practical Work Outdoors
 WIW = Intro to Working in Woodlands
 BFSPPS = Basic Forest School Practical Skills

1. Introduction

1.1 What is 14-19 Learning Pathways?

The 14-19 Learning Pathways is a Welsh Assembly initiative which gives young people the right to choose what and how they learn. In practise, each County has a network which puts forward a range of "Link" courses from which young people can choose, including opportunities to gain Life Skills as well as accreditation.

See Appendix 3 for information on Learning Pathways

1.2 What is Forest School?

Forest School is an educational process based on raising self esteem during repeated visits to the same woodland. Combining all the resources of the outdoors with a framework of pedagogies which place the student firmly in the centre, Forest School is gaining recognition across Wales.

Forest School has been shown to benefit people of all ages and abilities. However, attention has tended to focus on the ability of FS to engage those most excluded from mainstream education, including students with complex learning needs and behaviours.

For these reasons, FS programmes would appear to be highly suitable vehicles for the delivery of Learning Pathways Link Courses

For information on Forest School see :

www.forestschoolwales.org.uk & www.foresteducationinitiative

1.3 Background to the Current Project

In 2006, as part of the NE Wales Forest School Project (NEWFS) Denbighshire Forest School ran a 15 week program for 6 year 10 boys from Rhyl High School piloting accreditation at FS. Four of the boys were successful in obtaining 2 OCN Level 1 Awards: "Practical Work Outdoors" and "Introduction to Working in Woodlands". They were the first students in N Wales to obtain formal accreditation at FS.

In June 2006, the National Woodlands for Learning Forum discussed the need to develop a complete FS Learning Pathway, including Year 9 tasters, Link Courses for Years 10 & 11, and options for college accreditation thereafter. The then Education Minister Jane Davidson had expressed her support for this. With the delay of the initial planned pilot in Caerphilly, Denbighshire Forest School was one of the few FSs which had the manpower and resources to undertake this work.

Between 2006- 2007 DFS piloted a year long Link Course for 8 Year 10 students (funded partly by Rhyl High). The logistics of the course (2 FSLs, no school staff, taxi delivery, 8 students, cost £300 per session) were carefully set to be both safe and affordable by high schools (ie competitive with college prices). Although many of the students did obtain OCN accreditation, the program was less successful than the previous year (see

Case Study 13). One reason is that whilst £300 / session may be a realistic rate for delivery, it doesn't cover the amount of work needed to *develop* programs.

In June 2007, with the support of the NE Wales FEI cluster Group Impio, DFS was successful in obtaining £4500 from the Forest Education Initiative to develop and supplement FS Learning Pathways courses. The match funding for this came from paid bookings from secondary schools between 2007 – 2009.

2. Aims

Within this project, different partners had differing aims.

The aim of most of the schools involved was to provide engaging, value-for-money experiences which would contribute to the Core of Learning / Key Skills component of each student's Learning Pathway. For most, the programmes ran over the whole school year, and opportunities for accreditation were a bonus. A couple of schools designed their shorter programmes around ADSAN targets from the outset.

The aims of Denbighshire Forest School (DFS) and Impio are listed in detail in the discussion, and are summarised as follows:

- a. To research, develop and pilot components of a Forest School-based Learning Pathway in Denbighshire,
- b. To present the results in the most useful format for FS practitioners and schools,
- c. To disseminate the materials as freely and widely as possible.

3. Methods

3.1 Programme Delivery

The programmes were marketed at £300 / session, through Denbighshire County Learning Pathways Network, and directly to schools. Opportunities to develop Key Skills and gain OCN accreditation were highlighted.

Some common elements were planned from the outset. The programmes were delivered in a secluded private woodland which allowed for build up of artefacts and temporary structures over a programme. Generally there were 2 qualified FSLs per programme. Usually these were supplied externally through DFS. Where schools trained their own FSLs, these were tapered in with the external leaders, reducing the costs of the programmes to the schools.

Full day sessions were delivered where ever possible, within the constraints of travel time. Where possible the sessions included opening circle, lunch, free time and closing circle.

Other wise, the detail and flavour of each programme were determined by the schools and students involved.

The Forest School programmes fell into four broad models:

Special Needs (3 courses)

Students whose severe learning difficulties and special needs will probably necessitate lifelong support, and for whom the acquisition of simple Life Skills is paramount.

Special Schools Long programmes (7 courses)

Single classes with own staff and minibus.

Characterised by smaller classes, high staff : student ratios, more flexibility around curriculum, timetabling and leaving age, more support in school, more opportunities for extension; FS embedded **in** school curriculum.

High Schools Long programmes (4 courses)

Composite classes, usually no school staff, travel by taxi.

FS is one of a number of Link courses / options which students may choose. Must fit around rigid school timetabling, year groups, and National Curriculum. Minimal support and extension in school during and after FS programme.

Short targeted programmes (2 courses)

6 week programmes developed around specific ASDAN targets in which the students were currently involved in school.

3.2 Project Report

The programmes are presented as Case Studies (Appendix 1). Broad trends, comparisons and inferences are included in the Discussion below. No attempt at statistical analysis was made. Notes from the Case Studies have been used to write and update the Guidance Notes presented in Appendix 3.

3.3 Project Finances

DFS Pathways Project 07-09 (3 school yrs)	Income		
	Schools' fees	FEI grant	
Expenditure		original	Agreed Reallocation
Delivery including prep & sessions	46200	0	0
Admin including meetings	6300	450	450
Research & programme development	6300	2300	2720
Resources, materials & site maintenance	4200	150	150
Report write up including guidance notes	0	700	1900
Report translation & printing	0	900	0
Total	63000	4500	4500

Copies of invoices available on request

4. Results

4.1 Summary of Forest School Learning Pathways Link Courses

See Case Studies Appendix 1 for full details and Table 1 for Summary.

- 16 Forest School Learning Pathways Link Courses were delivered over four years, including seven year-long programmes.
- Over 100 KS4 pupils from 4 high schools and 2 special schools have been involved, many over several years
- Several types of Link courses have been tried, varying in length, input from school, and access to accreditation. In the Case Studies and Table 1 these have been coloured according to the four broad models identified above.
- 57 pupils have gained FS OCN level 1 and 10 gained OCN E. 35 gained their John Muir Discovery Award. Two programmes were tailored specifically around ASDAN challenges.

Additional benefits:

- All the Link courses were characterised by increased motivation and attendance amongst students compared to mainstream. Several High School students continued to attend whilst excluded from main stream school, or after they had left school in Year 11.
- The Forest School Programmes attracted high levels of support from families, Educational Social Workers and other key Local Authority officers.
- The project supported trainee Forest School Leaders from two special schools and two high schools, as well as two independent youth workers. The two FS Leaders from Tir Morfa helped Denbighshire FS to deliver an INSET day for staff from Plas Brondyffryn, and supported a trainee FSL from Pengwern Mencap College.
- Within Tir Morfa, opportunities for students to use their Forest School skills are increasing. Year 11 students help the local Countryside services team as part of their work experience. Of particular interest is the use of Year 11 and Post 16 work teams in helping to establish new Forest School sites, both at Pengwern College, and working alongside primary pupils at Ysgol Emmanuel.

4.2 Summary of Project Outputs with respect to Aims

<i>a. To research, develop and pilot components of a Forest School-based Learning Pathway in Denbighshire, including:</i>
--

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Recruitment – tasters (spring Yr 9 or Autumn Yr 10)</i> |
|--|

Not Done

None of the High Schools took up the offer of taster days. One reason for this was in the spring, funding for the next Autumn has not yet been confirmed, whilst by Autumn, students are starting their chosen courses. Two groups requested and received short presentations for students at the start of the Autumn term, but these served more as introduction than recruitment. There was little opportunity for Forest School Leaders to be involved in the selection of students.

The schools chose the majority of the students, usually on the basis of timetabling and funding. Particularly unfortunate was recruitment on the basis that Forest School would compliment a college course in building: the absence of power tools made Forest School rather unattractive for these students. Another challenge was that instead of the whole group starting together, as arranged, there was often a staggered arrival of new students over the Autumn term.

The issue of recruitment created most of the challenges experienced in delivering these courses.

The issue of recruitment is less important within the Special Schools where small class size means that a whole class can attend Forest School.

Interestingly, Tir Morfa has chosen to concentrate its annual Forest School delivery (25 sessions) within Yr9 with a further half term in Yr 10: Forest School is part of the transition between KS3 and KS4.

- Pupils are able to focus on developing Key Skills (social, emotional and physical) *before* tackling accreditation.
- FS provision across and beyond Yr 10 has been steadily increasing in response to the students themselves.

- *Researching options for awards and accreditation for FS courses including OCNs, John Muir and schools-based schemes like ASDAN*

Done, See Appendix 3

Within the present project, links to ASDAN were numerous and rewarding. Both special schools and at least two high schools were involved in the scheme. ASDAN is highly compatible with the FS ethos: it is flexible, cumulative over several years, and evidencing is done by students with a minimum of paperwork. In addition, the schools deal with the paperwork, registration etc. ASDAN is thus of interest to FS practitioners involved in 14-19 Learning Pathways because it is an easy way to add value to programmes without creating lots of admin (unlike OCNs).

- Students from Plas Brondyffryn used their basic FS programmes over several years to collect evidence for ASDAN. Occasionally activities were specifically planned (eg a study of a plant or animal)
- Two short link courses were planned around ASDAN challenges from the outset, one for a high school and one for a special school. The challenges provided a great focus for the programmes, and the basic FS structure provided an engaging learning environment.

See Appendix 3: ASDAN guidance Notes for Forest School Practitioners

This project suggests the John Muir Award Scheme is another flexible, low-paper way to add value to Link Courses without compromising the FS ethos.

- Tir Morfa special school uses the introductory level of the John Muir Award effectively as a focus for the latter part of their Yr 9 FS programme. The students explore their FS site, carry out small conservation tasks agreed by the woodland management team, and share their experiences at the end of year FS event for family and friends. A mountain hike and overnight camp have also become established components of this programme. The students write FS diaries in school instead of the usual personal diaries. In discovering the fauna and flora of the site, the students collect evidence for the "biodiversity" section of their FS OCN.
- Within the present project, several students from High School groups reported they had already completed their John Muir introductory level, often at primary school. It would in theory possible to offer the intermediate and even the advanced levels at FS in future, providing these are agreed with students and staff well before the programme starts.

The old FS OCNs "*Practical Work Outdoors*" and "*Introduction to Working in Woodlands*" were delivered to five groups (four at Level 1 and 1 at Entry).

The new OCN level 1 "*Basic FS Practical Skills*" was delivered to 4 groups within the current project, and would appear to be a useful fusion of the two OCNs previously offered at FS. One drawback is that its name is less descriptive than the previous OCNs "*Practical Work Outdoors*" and "*Introduction to Working in Woodlands*".

See Table 2 for Summary of OCNs delivered by Denbighshire Forest School

Different ways of delivering and evidencing FS OCN L1 were explored. The programmes worked best where FS remained a paper-free zone. With high levels of school involvement, workbooks are a good way of spreading FS benefits across the curriculum, generating resources for Literacy or ASDAN; otherwise leader-based evidencing works best

- In all cases the delivery of the OCN required considerable time and energy from the Forest School Leaders.
- In all cases it put a degree of strain on the integrity of the Forest School programme (even highly motivated students struggle with some parts) and detracted from the development of Key Skills
- The idea that it would be a useful accompaniment to a college course in building was not supported: students already committed to this pathway were put off by the low-tech, hand-tools-only approach.
- Within the High School groups, opportunity for OCN accreditation was significant for some of the students choosing FS (although a good taster would have done as well, and they may have chosen FS anyway). Some students were very motivated to achieve their OCN award, others were committed to FS but saw the OCN as irrelevant.
- For the High School staff it didn't seem to be a significant factor ~ especially since OCNs were not at that time included in school league tables.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>developing a system of Student Evaluations (including forms) which is both practical for FSLs, and meaningful to schools</i> |
|---|

Partly done

See Appendix 2: "A Forest School Skills Ladder" and the Summative Assessment forms in Appendix 3.

Within the current project, a Forest School Skills Ladder evaluation system has been developed based on those used at Ysgol Tir Morfa. This decreases the inaccuracies and time involved in trying to be quantitative, and instead gives a visual representation of each student's progress. It is easy to use and can be tailored for each group.

Although potentially a really exciting new development, the Skills Ladder was not used widely within this project. Instead most daily evaluations consisted of a

couple of sentences about each pupil. Summative Assessment forms were used to evidence some parts of the OCNs.

In most cases, the schools were simply unable to handle regular detailed evaluations due to limited time, IT and phone access. Some simply wanted a comment for the end of year reports, a quick phone call of highs and lows, or an occasional email of noteworthy events. The FS link person in each school plays a crucial role here.

Based on this project, it seems questionable whether standard FS forms will ever work for all schools and all students.

- *Delivering three Yr 10 Link Courses (funded by schools) to pilot these accreditation options and evaluation systems*

Done

16 link courses were delivered

See Table 1 for Summary and Appendix 1 for full Case Studies

- *(if time) Research options for Yr 11 and links to colleges*

Partly done

The special schools offered better opportunities to develop Forest School after Year 10. They continue to support students through Year 11 and beyond with a mixture of life skills, work experience and supported college attendance. Some students from both Tir Morfa and Plas Brondyffryn attend Pengwern Mencap College, where they may continue to access Forest School.

Within Tir Morfa, opportunities for students to use their Forest School skills are increasing. Year 11 students help the County Council Countryside Services team as part of their work experience. Of particular interest is the use of Year 11 and Post 16 work teams in helping to establish new Forest School sites, both at Pengwern College, and working alongside primary pupils at Ysgol Emmanuel.

Several keen Forest School students from Tir Morfa went on to study childcare at college. This suggests that it would be worth offering introductory FS sessions for these types of college groups, especially when they contain keen ex-forest school students.

Within the high school groups there were fewer opportunities to develop FS delivery after Year 10. Options for both years are usually decided at the start of

Year 10. Two of the groups contained a mixture of Year10 and 11 students anyway. There are few resources to support students after they have left school. Several high school students expressed an interest in working outdoors. Some of these were already committed to mechanics etc. The students were put off by the lack of clear employment opportunities. Those who were genuinely interested and suited, were put off by the amount of Life Skills needed to seek out training and cope with travel.

b. To present the results in the most useful format for Forest School practitioners and schools, including:

- *updating existing Impio OCN workbooks, producing new ones if appropriate*
- *programme outlines and ideas for activities*
- *A set of Teaching Notes for FS practitioners working with 14-16 year olds, including advice about accreditation*

c. To disseminate the materials as freely and widely as possible.

Done

See Appendix 3: Guidance Notes on 14-19 Learning Pathways, ASDAN, John Muir Award and OCN.

Instead of a workbook, digital copies of sample forms for the Level 1 OCN Basic Forest School Practical Skills are also available.

All materials produced will be downloadable from:

www.forestschoolwales.org.uk & www.foresteducationinitiative

5. Discussion

5.1 Overall project

This project represents a good example of inter-agency flow of information. Armed with information from the Woodlands for Learning Forum, received through Forest School Wales, local practitioners were able to market Forest School link courses through the Local Authority Learning Pathways Network co-ordinator, to High schools, 2 years before they became statutory, and well in advance of other external Link Course providers. A couple of programmes were funded directly by the Learning Pathways Network, with the majority of funding coming from the schools.

The local practitioners were supported by Forest School Wales (FSW) which provided opportunities for mentoring and networking with practitioners across Wales, and were members of the NE Wales Forest Education Initiative (FEI) cluster group Impio.

The FEI grant provided funding for the development of resources associated with these programmes, including evidence forms for student portfolios, and Guidance Notes for FS Practitioners. These resources will be made available through the FEI and FSW websites.

5.2 Forest School and 14-19 Learning Pathways

During this project more than 100 students found Forest School Link courses to be accessible, engaging and beneficial. This included students with severe and moderate learning difficulties, challenging behaviours, and general low motivation in school. Some appreciated the peace and quiet, some the physical exercise and exploration, and others the chance to learn new skills and create. Development of emotional and social skills were central themes throughout. School staff were particularly impressed by the high levels of attendance and engagement.

Development of social and emotional skills was best supported by the year long programmes (30 or 15 sessions). Some of the essential ethos of Forest School was inevitably lost during the 6 week programmes, although the students still gained new experiences and valuable resources to support ASDAN awards in school. For the High School groups, it could be useful in future to split the year into three 10 week programmes with different focuses.

This project demonstrates the effectiveness of Forest School link courses in delivering many of the Key Skills components of the 14-19 Learning Pathways Core of Learning. It suggests that a Forest School option would be a useful addition to the basket of choices offered by all County Learning Networks to **all** their KS4 students.

The widespread availability of high quality FS Link courses in future could be greatly increased by attention to two specific areas: recruitment and costs.

(i) Recruitment is absolutely crucial to the success of the Forest School programme. The majority of the challenges experienced during the High School programmes were the result of lack of clarity around recruitment and could easily have been avoided. Above all, the students must **want** to be at Forest School. Within the High school groups there were only a handful of students who were clear from the outset that they **did not** want to be at Forest School but were being sent by school; these students had a large negative effect on the rest of the group, put a huge strain on the Leaders' resources, and inevitably, dropped out after a couple of months. New students were added late, or the places left empty, increasing the relative cost of the programme for the school.

One would think that the difference is obvious, between a cohesive and well-supported group of students seeking resources to support an alternative curriculum in school, and an assortment of misfits at risk of exclusion for differing reasons, seeking anything to engage and motivate. Whilst both groups can be accommodated and achieve at Forest School, the resource implications are obviously very different. Schools who promise the former and deliver the latter give Forest School Leaders no chance to plan and resource the sessions appropriately.

Involving the FS Leaders in recruitment, possibly through Challenge days, would improve group cohesion and attendance rate, and increase value for money to schools.

(ii) Forest School programmes are always going to be relatively expensive for schools to buy in compared to college courses because of the small group size and high number of FS Leaders involved. This will apply even when realistic recruitment decreases the student drop out rate. This applies more to high schools than special schools where classes are smaller anyway.

Training school staff as Forest School Leaders is a good solution and can lead to additional benefits for the school. The two experienced FS Leaders at Tir Morfa not only run two FS programmes, but increasingly support a variety of outdoor learning and work experiences across the curriculum, and provide support for FS Trainees from other establishments.

Obviously this approach will only work where school staff are reasonably settled. During the course of this project alone, four of the schools experienced sudden prolonged gross-level upheavals, resulting from investigations, closures and staff changes. These upheavals disrupted both the FSL training and the overall development of Forest School provision within the school.

A more effective approach in the long run may be for FS provision to be co-ordinated at a County level, with a pool of FSLs delivering to lots of schools. This would also have the advantage that FS students would still interact with Leaders from outside their school, a factor which many schools identified as beneficial.

5.3 Accreditation and Forest School link courses

Overall this project did not support the delivery of practical FS OCNs within Forest School sessions. Opportunities to gain a FS OCN were significant for a few students for whom it would be their sole accreditation; most students, including many with few other opportunities as well as those already committed to a vocation, were not significantly motivated by the OCN.

Schools may be unaware that OCNs are now included on the Welsh Database of Accredited Qualifications (DAQW). OCN accreditation did not make Forest School significantly more attractive to schools and indeed, it often detracted from the Key Skills development which the schools were seeking.

Of interest in this context are the NOCN Skills Towards Enabling Progression (Step Up) Qualifications, which accredit the development of Key Skills like employability, learning to learn and personal development. This project suggests that the success of delivering these awards within a Forest School context will ultimately depend on the extent to which the sessions are maintained as a "paper-free zone" for students.

Within this project the FEI funding helped to develop and trial various methods of evidencing OCNs including work books completed in school, and summative assessment sheets completed by the FS Leader. At the time there were good links between Forest School networks and the Welsh College of Horticulture, which simplified the processes of OCN registration, verification and certification. Despite these advantages, the admin involved for the FS Leaders was time consuming and expensive: paperwork was cumbersome and there were difficulties tracking the folders and certificates. These issues will be worse where there is no grant to supplement school fees, and where college links must first be established.

Based on these case studies, it seems advisable that the OCN Level 1: Basic Forest School Practical Skills be reserved for adults wishing to assist with FS sessions.

This project suggests that offering resources to support school-based awards like ASDAN or the Welsh Baccalaureate is a more effective way to add value to FS Link courses than delivering OCNs. Supporting accreditation in school reduces the admin for FS Leaders, provides schools with flexible, highly engaging resources, and provides students with time and staff to support written work.

5.4 Forest School & the development of Land-based Vocational Learning Pathways

The development of woodland based skills and training has been the subject of much discussion within the Woodlands for Learning Forum. The current gap in land based skills including woodland based skills in Wales was acknowledged by Gary Jones, Senior Sector Skills Manager, DCELLS. Richard Withers of the Welsh Timber Forum reported that for forest industries there are no relevant courses and young people are unaware of the opportunities.

A scoping study into forestry careers, carried out by Zena Wilmot for Coed Lleol, found that this sector is actually growing despite the recession, yet there are still widespread misconceptions in the industry regarding both work opportunities and demand from prospective students. The survey also highlighted that people coming into the industry lacked appropriate skills including common sense, a willingness to work, woodland management or business skills.

Gary Jones suggested that the number of people interested in following a route into further land based skills development opportunities could be enhanced by engaging young people outdoors through the 14-19 Learning Pathways.

With the support of Education minister, Jane Hutt, Woodlands for Learning Forum members are working with officials from the 14-19 Learning Pathways, the Welsh Baccalaureate and LANTRA (the land based Sector Skills Council), to establish accreditation and apprenticeships, as a basis for a woodland based Learning Pathway from Foundation Phase, through training linked to the Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), to a career in forestry/woodland based work.

Another focus within the Woodlands for Learning Forum is the development and maintenance of differentiated areas within school grounds to support both Forest School and outdoor learning in general. Wildlife gardens, allotments and Forest School camps are hugely beneficial to pupils but require more specialised maintenance than most external contactors can offer.

Within the context of these discussions, the following findings of this project are especially relevant:

- (i) Denbighshire Forest School received many enquiries from local primary school seeking help with various school grounds developments and constructions.
- (ii) The Forest School experience prompted many students to enquire about land and woodland based employment opportunities. Conversations suggest that woodland based employment is also attractive to many other students (such as those with an "arts" bias) who were not especially engaged by mainstream opportunities, but who were not sufficiently "at risk" to be able to access Forest School. Denbighshire Forest School also received numerous enquiries from the local volunteer bureau seeking placements for school leavers.

- (iii) Within High Schools, choice of KS4 options occurs within Year 9, so by Year 10 many students were already committed to vocational training and had little chance to change.
- (iv) For High School students who were still undecided by KS4, there was inevitably little support in Year 11 and none afterwards.
- (v) Students who were interested and available were prevented from accessing what opportunities for land based training and work experience which do exist, because they lacked the required emotional, social and entrepreneurial skills.
- (vi) Where special schools are able to support students after Year 11, skills learnt at Forest School form a useful basis for work experience.
- (vii) Work carried out by the post-16 work team at Tir Morfa includes setting up Forest School sites, maintaining school grounds, and conservation tasks with the local Countryside Services team.
- (viii) The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Groundwork both provide opportunities for land based work experience within supported teams, but again, accessing these opportunities is not straightforward, and may even be contingent upon a long period of unemployment or a Court ruling.
- (ix) The differences in opportunities between high schools and special schools are especially sad when one considers that the differences between the students involved may actually be very small. One high school teacher commented on the growing similarities between his alternative curriculum classes, and the pupils he had been teaching 10 years previously whilst working at a special school.
- (x) Above all, jobs must be shown to be in place, and careers officers briefed, before students will choose a land based pathway over mechanics, hairdressing or building.

5.5 Other Forest School Learning Pathways opportunities

- (i) In addition to building Key Skills and increasing interest in land based employment, Forest School has links to other vocational pathways which would be worth pursuing. Within this project several students expressed an interest specifically in working with children outdoors and several went on to study Childcare at college. Building links between Forest School provision for Early Years and Learning Pathways could result in mutually beneficial work placements. Tracking Forest School students to college and offering FS sessions for the whole group could be a relatively efficient way of increasing outdoor experiences from an early age.
- (ii) Building links between Forest School and Learning Pathways will benefit the wider community of Forest School Practitioners as well as individual students, as this is one of the few occasions when schools have funding to buy in external providers.

5.6 Recommendations for future

Based on the experiences of this project, the following is recommended:

1. Starting Forest School provision in Year 9 would support all KS4 learning as well as the development of a woodland based Learning Pathway by (i) helping to improve soft skills sufficiently for students to engage fully with learning at KS4 and (ii) introducing the idea of outdoor employment in time to influence choice of KS4 options. In Years 10 and 11, Forest School could then become more work-based, possibly including practical OCNs, although not if this detracts from key skills development.
2. The link between poor life skills and employment in a land based industry is probably ancient and inherent, and is not being addressed by developments in accreditation and apprenticeships. There is an urgent need to resource the development of practical, supported work experience opportunities. In developing these opportunities, links to school grounds would be mutually beneficial.
3. Forest School has been shown to be a highly effective and engaging way of delivering much of the Core of Learning component of 14-19 Learning Pathways. In order to increase the numbers of students able to access this resource, links need to be built between the Learning Networks and the community of independent Forest School Practitioners. Perhaps resources could be found to bring these two groups together, for example by running seminars in each County. Information about FS Leader training for school staff could also be introduced at this stage.
4. Whether or not it is in place from the outset, some degree of County-wide co-ordination of Forest School activities will be highly desirable as FS provision increases within individual schools.

Appendix 1:

Case Studies

Case Study 1

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school; Tir Ysgol special unit
Dates	Oct 06 – July 07
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	FSLs x2, one volunteer (student placement)
No. students	11 varying
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1or2 teachers, 5or6 support staff
Programme length	15 wks, alternate weeks over whole year
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs School packed lunches supplemented with campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school from several classes; profoundly autistic students, challenging behaviours, SLD
Programme aims	Key skills; general FS, new experiences
Programme overview	Basic FS day structure ~ Opening and Closing Circles, fire-lighting, Lunch and Free-time; activities included nature walks, team games, crafts, and some tool use
Use of staff	Complicated by large, changing team; attempts to establish consistent 1:1s unsuccessful
Accreditation	
OCN Workbook	n/a
School link person	Teacher attending FS with group
Extension in school	Materials used in displays
No. students gaining Accreditation	n/a
What was successful?	Students came out in all weathers and had lots of new experiences, new opportunities to feel comfortable and succeed. From spring onwards, FSLs met teachers regularly in school; started doing mini training for Assistants at start of each session, giving them chance to raise concerns whilst extra FSLs & teachers supervised pupils.
What was challenging?	FS staff were new to working with autistic students, and did not know what information to ask for before programme. FS staff new to managing the large staff team this involves. Huge range of autism and needs in group, but all low verbalisers. Difficult to establish 1:1. Some assistants on supply, changed weekly. Negative attitude of some assistants towards FS had significant impact on sessions. Not possible to meet whole school team out of hours.
Post FS	Some of these students continued to attend FS for next 2 years. One student who was very challenging at FS is working on a placement in the garden of another school. Another is now at Pengwern College doing animal husbandry, and may possibly have chance to experience FS again at the college's new site.

Case Study 2

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school; Tir Ysgol special unit
Dates	Oct 07 – July 08
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	FSLs x 2, one volunteer (student placement)
No. students	11 varying
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1 or 2 teachers; 5or6 support staff;
Programme length	15 wks, alternate weeks over whole year
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs School packed lunches supplemented by campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school from two classes; profoundly autistic students, challenging behaviours, SLD
Programme aims	Key skills, general FS, new experiences
Programme overview	Basic FS day structure ~ Opening and Closing Circles, fire-lighting, Lunch and Free-time; activities included nature walks, team games, crafts, and some tool use; By summer term, students from the two classes had separate activities for much of day
Use of staff	Complicated by large, changing team; attempts to establish consistent 1:1s unsuccessful
Accreditation?	
OCN Workbook	n/a
School link person	Teacher attending FS with group
Extension in school	Materials used in displays
No. students gaining Accreditation	n/a
What was successful?	Students came out in all weathers and had lots of new experiences, new opportunities to feel comfortable and succeed. Allowing the two classes to have separate routines. Having more advice from teachers about strategies and targets. A special craft space was built to facilitate choice and alternative activities. Organising for a FSL with experience of autistic students to observe and mentor for one day.
What was challenging?	Managing large team still difficult. Huge range of autism and needs in group, but all low verbalisers. Difficult to establish 1:1. Some assistants on supply, changed weekly. Negative attitude of some assistants towards FS had significant impact on sessions. Not possible to meet whole school team out of hours
Post FS	
Notes	
General	

Case Study 3

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school; Tir Ysgol special unit
Dates	Nov 08 – July 09
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	1 FSL; 1 trainee
No. students	11 varying
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1or2 teachers; 5or6 support staff ;
Programme length	Delayed by INSET at start of school year. After several weeks, the two classes were separated and attended on alternate weeks; one group had 11 days and one the most challenging group had 4 days.
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs Packed lunches supplemented by campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school from several classes; profoundly autistic students, challenging behaviours, SLD
Programme aims	Key skills; general FS, new experiences; support school trainee FSLs; build trained / experienced team of support assistants
Programme overview?	basic FS day structure ~ Opening and Closing Circles, fire-lighting, Lunch and Free-time; activities included nature walks, team games, crafts, and some tool use; After a couple of combined sessions , the two classes were separated ~ much better! Even doing sessions in school grounds was beneficial for more challenging group.
Use of staff	attempts to establish consistent 1:1s more successful than previous years especially with more challenging group
Accreditation?	FSLs only discovered mid program these students were also collecting materials for ASDAN targets
OCN Workbook	n/a
School link person	Teacher attending FS with group
Extension in school	Materials used in displays and as ASDAN evidence
No. students gaining Accreditation	
What was successful?	Students came out in all weathers and had lots of new experiences, new opportunities to feel comfortable and succeed More advice from teachers on targets and strategies. Support staff better managed by teachers, and some at least benefitted from INSET and could assist with tools, cooking etc . Real progress was made with the more challenging students once we started repeating a very specific day structure: names, break, stick collecting, fire lighting, cooking, then choice to opt out in craft space. Teacher Trainee took increasing role in leading, despite delaying her training.
What was challenging?	INSET was delayed so delayed the start of the programme; requests from FSLs that everyone attending FS did INSET were subsequently negated due to big staff changes in school; the use of temporary

	<p>supply assistants seemed unavoidable and made it difficult to pursue certain strategies with individual students.</p> <p>Huge range of autism and needs within group; mostly low verbalisers, no clear staff for each student; targets still not clear to FSLs at outset; composition of the group not fixed.</p> <p>Not being able to work longer with the more challenging students.</p> <p>The more able class included students who had previously attended FS with the main school group (CS 4 &5), now attending with college staff new to FS: lack of time prevented sufficient briefing for these staff and some students showed a decrease in skills and independence compared to previous years.</p> <p>Puberty also had an unavoidable part to play; for several students this was increasingly manifest in unpredictable and aggressive behaviours which decreased their comfortableness with FS compared to the previous 2 years.</p>
Post FS	
Notes	<p>The Tir Ysgol special unit was going through a transition during their 3 years at FS. It initially acted as a "holding group" for several classes whilst the new 52 week hostel was being developed for the most challenging students. The hostel was closed suddenly in June 08 and the teacher moved to the main school. The replacement teacher attended FS, then became acting deputy in winter 09. There were also lots of upheavals and uncertainties within the school generally: the Head teacher and deputy head, both very supportive of FS, both moved on during this time.</p> <p>Movement of students between the 2 Tir Ysgol groups and the main school group was unpredictable, and often made individual progression between years difficult.</p>
General	<p>For these already complex students, the effects of puberty (eg. increased stress or aggression), had a large impact on staffing ratios, and daily routine; ultimately their sessions were moved to the school grounds to improve supervision.</p>

Case Study 4

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school; main school
Dates	Oct 06 – July 07
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	FSLs x 2; one volunteer (student placement)
No. students	10
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1 teacher; 1 or 2 support staff
Programme length	15 wks, alternate weeks over whole year
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs Packed lunches supplemented by campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school, a single class. Students relatively able
Programme aims	Key skills; OCN/ ASDAN added midway through programme.
Programme overview	Basic FS day structure ~ Opening and Closing Circles, fire-lighting, Lunch and Free-time; activities included nature walks, team games, crafts, and tool use
Use of staff	Discipline backup from teacher; assistants confident with activities
Accreditation?	OCN Entry level ~ Practical Work in Outdoor Areas
OCN Workbook	IMPIO wkbk with adaptations by teacher, completed in school
school link person	Teacher attending with group: fantastic! ~ really understood FS and its potential; he suggested they do the OCN Entry Level and made it happen in school; he was also using FS for ASDAN targets ~ when FS staff realised, they were able to plan activities accordingly.
Extension in school	Students completed OCN workbooks in school, and used also them for ASDAN evidence
No. students gaining Accreditation	10
What was successful?	Teacher & assistants keen & competent; good communication between FSLs & Teacher, and between teacher & assistants allowed good use of staff, and rewarding FS programme. Students got lots out of FS
What was challenging?	FS staff new to working with autistic students
Post FS	
Notes	Due to structural changes back in school, several of these students attended FS again two years later as part of the more challenging Tir Ysgol group (Case Study 3)
General	

Case Study 5

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school, main school
Dates	Oct 07 – July 08
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	FSLs x 2
No. students	10
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1 teacher, same as previous year (CS 4); 1 or 2 support staff
Programme length	15 wks, alternate weeks over whole year
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs Packed lunches supplemented by campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school, a single class; students relatively able
Programme aims	Key skills; materials for ASDAN in school
Programme overview	Basic FS day structure ~ Opening and Closing Circles, fire-lighting, Lunch and Free-time; activities included nature walks, team games, crafts, and tool use
Use of staff	Discipline backup from teacher; assistants confident with activities
Accreditation?	
OCN Workbook	
Type of school link person	Teacher attending with group: fantastic ~ really understood FS and its potential; he was also using FS for ASDAN targets
Extension in school	materials for ASDAN in school
No. students gaining Accreditation	
What was successful?	Teacher & assistants keen & competent; good communication between FSLs & Teacher, and between teacher & assistants allowed good use of staff, and rewarding FS programme. Students got lots out of experience
What was challenging?	
Post FS	
Notes	This teacher attended the following year with the main school group (CS 16).

Case Study 6

School	Ysgol Tir Morfa, special school
Dates	Oct 05 – July 06; summer 07
Funding & costs	Initial program provided free under NE Wales Forest School Project as a pilot of a year-long programme. Funding for the last summer term was through the Local Learning Pathways fund.
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp
FS staff	FSLs x 2; volunteers x2 (plus film-maker at end)
No. students	9
Age of students	Yr 9 (yr 10 for last summer term)
No. school staff	1 teacher, 1 LSA
Programme length	25 & 10 wks approx
Day length	9.50-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in school minibus. School provides kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots, warm socks Breakfast on arrival: School staff buy food for communal lunch by collecting £2/wk from students and visiting staff; supplemented with contributions from school kitchen for free-lunch students.
Selection of students	By school ~ teacher had attended 4 sessions with previous class in Loggerheads summer before, and convinced senior management group (SMG) to allow her current class to attend for a whole year, as long as they met the NC objectives of the Humanities they were missing
Programme aims	Yr 9 ~ Key Skills; healthy eating & living; John Muir Award Also all NC targets for History (Tudor reformation & discovery of America) and Geography (Woodlands) Yr 10 ~ a pilot of OCN accreditation at FS for this school
Programme overview	Dominated by History Projects: making church & boat Initially lots of nature/ Web of Life and Keeping safe Big focus on preparing healthy food. Tool use developed slowly. John Muir was the focus for March – June: Miniparks and woodland management worked really well. Yr 10: 10 wk pilot to complete whole OCN workbooks
Use of staff	Yr 9: LSA & teacher supervised breakfast and lunch prep with student volunteers. Teacher involved in activities with FSLs. Students rotated in one session
Accreditation?	John Muir Discovery Award 2 x OCN Level 1:~ <i>Introduction to Working in Woodlands and Practical Work in Outdoor Areas</i>
OCN Workbook	Old one, filled out in woods Too much writing for students; mostly scribed;
Type of school link person	Teacher attending sessions; instrumental in getting FS started; large input into sessions; good relationship with SMG / DFS
Extension in school	No paper in FS in yr9, except for JM books; Humanities extension in school limited as all lessons at FS; Yr10 ~ trial of OCN ~ workbooks completed in woods
No. students gaining	9

Accreditation	
What was successful?	<p>Students used site effectively for wide ranging free play from very early on; high attendance from students with low school attendance; group quickly established as a team; everyone carried water, food and equipment; success of cooking partly due to interest of school staff; provided real focus on Healthy Eating, Food Prep etc</p> <p>Activities round the boat building were focussing and fun, nice big group project, also viewpoint bench at end, and bread oven – great team work; lots respect and appreciation for nature</p> <p>Presence of film-maker Ben heightened students sense they were something very special.</p> <p>John Muir, Overnight Camp and family BBQ and Mountain walk all great and to be included in future</p> <p>All students made good progress, most made excellent: one challenging pupil received pupil of the year award in school for achievements at FS. All were very sorry to leave, especially without knowing if FS would happen again; Excellent ESTYN visit!</p> <p>Yr10 summer term return successful in establishing that these students could easily gain an OCN at FS.</p>
What was challenging?	<p>During the first term, the need to meet the NC targets (eg. build a hurdle church) meant that some activities were rushed and the sessions somewhat prescriptive rather than student-led.</p> <p>Students leaving in summer ~ very very sad ~ not knowing if they would every return.</p> <p>The return in summer Yr10 to do the OCN, when the students had not been to FS for two terms, was very rushed and prescriptive; low literacy meant leaders had to do most of scribing, and there was a scramble to collect photo evidence.</p> <p>Lack of clarity about evaluation systems means far too much time is wasted on writing things which are never read.</p>
Post FS	<p>KS4 Activity Week 08:~ FS students from 2 years chose to return to Warren Wood for one day, bringing with them a new less able class ~ 3 groups on site at once, with lots of visiting between! Head of KS4 impressed.</p>
Notes	<p>Truly magical programme all round! Benefits of year long programme clearly apparent in school. Teacher works with SMG to get it written into Yr9 provision</p> <p>In some cases attendance and behaviour deteriorated subsequently, possibly as FS ended suddenly with no followup.</p>

Case Study 7

School	Ysgol Tir Morfa, special school
Dates	Spring 06
Funding & costs	Provided free under NEWFS
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp
FS staff	FSLs x 2 (occasionally 3)
No. students	10
Age of students	Yr 10
No. school staff	1 teacher, 1 LSA (attached to specific pupil)
Programme length	10 wks approx
Day length	9.50-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in school minibus. School provides kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots, warm socks Breakfast on arrival: School staff buy food for communal lunch by collecting £2/wk from students and visiting staff; supplemented with contributions from school kitchen for free-lunch students.
Selection of students	School involved in year long FS pilot with Yr 9; this was a taster for Yr10. Single class, MLD
Programme aims	Key Skills; pilot of FS for Yr 10; materials collected for Art in school
Programme overview?	General FS ~ team games, fires, tools and shelters; lots of behaviour management
Use of staff	Teacher involved in activities with FSLs. Assistant supervised lunch prep
Accreditation?	Discussed briefly as possibility, but programme too short
OCN Workbook	
school link person	The teacher back in school who was instrumental in getting FS started; she had a good relationship with SMG, DFS and the teacher attending the sessions.
Extension in school	Materials and photos collected for use in Art sessions
No. students gaining Accreditation	
What was successful?	Use of woodcookie rewards for whole group ~ reward chocolates made into fondue next session; good understanding of concept of "Fair Trade" and Organic. Higher attendance than in school. Pupils enjoyed themselves and gained new skills. Tools, fires and shelter building popular. Good use of space to develop behaviour management strategies ~ students who may exit school altogether here remained in sight of camp and eventually could be coaxed back
What was challenging?	Several of the students in particular displayed extremely challenging behaviour, frequently opting out of activities and storming off; FSLs and school staff did not always agree how best to manage these situations
Post FS	
Notes	

Case Study 8

School	Ysgol Tir Morfa, special school
Dates	Nov 06 – Nov 07; FS used as Transition into KS4
Funding & costs	£300 / session, including meetings etc, Paid by School
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp yr 9, Bottom Camp Autumn
FS staff	FSLs x 2
No. students	9
Age of students	Yr 9 (yr 10 for last half term)
No. school staff	1 teacher, 1 LSA
Programme length	30 wks approx
Day length	9.50-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in school minibus. School provides kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots, warm socks Breakfast on arrival: School staff buy food for communal lunch by collecting £2/wk from students and visiting staff; supplemented with contributions from school kitchen for free-lunch students.
Selection of students	Now part of school policy that all the more able MLD students attend FS in Yr9; one whole class
Programme aims	Key skills; healthy eating & living Yr 9 ~John Muir Award Yr 10 ~ finish OCN, preparation for work
Programme overview?	Initially Web of Life and Keeping Safe. Tool use developed later, towards Easter. Focus on John Muir from March – June: miniparks, woodland management, Mountain Walk, Family BBQ, Overnight camp. Yr 10: fire lighting and shelter building
Use of staff	Yr 9: LSA & teacher supervised breakfast and lunch prep with student volunteers. Teacher involved in activities with FSLs. Students rotated in one session
Accreditation?	John Muir Discovery Award 2 x OCN Level 1:~ <i>Introduction to Working in Woodlands</i> and <i>Practical Work in Outdoor Areas</i>
OCN Workbook	Mostly old Impio Workbook, with some changes, eg Shelter page. Too much writing for students; all tool parts scribed; rest completed in school (see below).
school link person	Teacher attending sessions; instrumental in getting programme started; large input into sessions; good relationship with SMG / DFS
Extension in school	No paper in FS in yr9, except for JM books; extension in school limited to internet research on flora & fauna; Yr10 ~ trial of filling in workbook in school for other curriculum objectives ; subject presented as "interesting subject for English" not "FS Homework"
No. students gaining Accreditation	9
What was successful?	Students used site effectively for wide ranging free play from very early on; high attendance from students with low school attendance; group quickly established as a team; everyone

	<p>carried water, food and equipment; Cooking provided real focus on Healthy Eating, Food Prep.</p> <p>Students displayed lots respect and appreciation for nature. All students made good progress and were sorry to leave; continuity over KS4 transition was helped by having same teacher; Growing appreciation for FS in school from people like ESWs and Statementing team.</p> <p>Completing OCN evidence sheets in school as interesting materials to support literacy worked really well for pupils, school and FS staff.</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Focus on nature to slight detriment of tools meant students late to gain competency; students moved to Bottom Camp at start of Autumn term, and had to construct it from scratch whilst also meeting their outstanding OCN targets of shelter & fires.</p> <p>The Overnight camp in October was way too dark and cold!</p> <p>Lack of clarity about evaluation systems means far too much time wasted on writing things which are never read.</p>
Post FS	<p>One day of Woodland Management work experience in summer term, with teacher, FSL and Countryside Services Wardens, on Dyserth Way; students used FS skills to clear path, coppice, and make hurdle fence. Very successful and popular with students and countryside wardens!</p> <p>Students also chose to return to Warren Wood for one day of their KS4 Activity Week: also last year's students and a new less able class ~ 3 groups on one day, with lots of visiting between! Head of KS4 impressed.</p>
Notes	

Case Study 9

School	Ysgol Tir Morfa, special school
Dates	Nov 07 – Nov 08; FS used as Transition into KS4
Funding & costs	£150 / session, including meetings etc Paid by School; included in school budget
Site	Warren Wood; Bottom Camp
FS staff	1 FSL; 1 vol 6 wks winter 07, 1 vol 10wks Autumn 08
No. students	9
Age of students	Yr 9 (yr 10 for last half term)
No. school staff	1 teacher, 1 LSA / Trainee FSL
Programme length	30 wks
Day length	9.50-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in school minibus. School provides kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots, warm socks Breakfast on arrival: School staff buy food for communal lunch by collecting £2/wk from students and visiting staff; supplemented with contributions from school kitchen for free-lunch students.
Selection of students	Now part of school policy that all the more able MLD students attend FS in Yr9; one whole class
Programme aims	Key skills; healthy eating & living Yr 9 ~John Muir Award Yr 10 ~ finish OCN, preparation for work
Programme overview	Lots of tool use till March reflecting focus of FSL trainees; John Muir march – june: miniparks, woodland management, Mountain Walk, Family BBQ, Overnight camp Yr 10: fire lighting and shelter building
Use of staff	Yr 9: the teacher supervised breakfast and lunch prep with 3 students rotated each week; all activities replicated over 3 weeks, rather than in one session as in previous years (CS 6&8). The 2 LSA FSL trainees attended FS on alternate weeks. Initially they assisted the FSL, then they each lead the sessions with the FSL assisting.
Accreditation?	John Muir Discovery Award Basic Forest School Practical skills OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Some evidence sheets completed back in school as in previous year. For the rest, the FSL experimented with photo sheets for whole projects, each combining several assessment criteria; whilst these provided lovely mementos for the students, they were extremely time consuming and costly for FSLs to produce.
Type of school link person	The teacher in school who was instrumental in getting programme started; she had a large input into sessions and a good relationship with SMG, DFS and the teacher attending FS.
Extension in school	Students select photos to update FS Display Board in main entrance of school each week No paper in FS in yr9, except for JM books; extension in school limited to internet research on flora & fauna; Yr10 ~ much of workbook completed in English lessons as agreed component of literacy for term; subject presented as "interesting

	subject for English" not "FS Homework"
No. students gaining Accreditation	9
What was successful?	<p>Continued provision of FS program whilst integrating the training needs of the 2 school staff; Students benefited from heightened interest of trainees in EI and evaluations.</p> <p>Rotating activities over 3 weeks instead of trying to carousel it all in one session; students reached high tool competency quickly which allowed lots differentiation into individual projects; high attendance from students with low school attendance; group quickly established as a team; everyone carries water, food and equipment; lots respect and appreciation for nature.</p> <p>All students made huge progress and were sorry to leave.</p> <p>Amazingly high attendance at family BBQ, despite widespread chronic illness~ huge appreciation for FS.</p> <p>Good continuity over KS4 transition; having volunteer for last few weeks, supervising step job was good transition into work experience.</p> <p>Literacy Link is the best system for completing OCN wkbks so far.</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Having to provide continuity between 2 alternating trainees.</p> <p>Poor communication between Trainers and DFS: trainers seem unwilling to engage with qualified FSLs, other than sending their trainees to them to gain experience.</p> <p>Use of non-FS teacher for cooking was good use of staff skills, but meant less focus on healthy eating, tool use and fire skills.</p> <p>Nature study rather missed out at start.</p> <p>Lack of clarity about evaluation systems means far too much time wasted on writing things which are never read.</p> <p>Bottom Camp site very different to Top Camp ~ dense Gorze affects way students play in free time.</p> <p>Completing OCN folders again challenging and resulted in lots of last minute work for FSLs.</p>
Post FS	<p>School trainees started to lead impromptu FS Lunchtime club in school, sometimes with resources bought back on request by students from FS</p> <p>KS4 ~ previous FS students helped to clear a woodland site in school grounds; they also put in 2 days hard labour preparing a new site at Pengwern college for less able students.</p> <p>Post 16~ the students were able to use their FS skills to help a local primary school to establish a FS site in their grounds, and are hoping to continue providing ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>In June 2010, 3 of these students were delighted to be asked to design and build a portable compost toilet for the current Yr 9 FS group. They completed it in a single day, were extremely proud.</p> <p>One student was able to visit the toilet insitu during the family BBQ.</p>

Case Study 10

School	Ysgol Tir Morfa, special school
Dates	Nov 08 – Nov 09; FS used as Transition into KS4
Funding & costs	£150 / session, including meetings etc Paid by School; included in school budget
Site	Warren Wood, Top Camp;
FS staff	FSL x1, 1 volunteer Autumn 08
No. students	10 / 9
Age of students	Yr8 / Yr 9 mixed age class (yr 10 for last half term)
No. school staff	1 FSL (LSA); 1 teacher
Programme length	30 wks approx
Day length	9.50-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in school minibus. School provides kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots, warm socks Breakfast on arrival: School staff buy food for communal lunch by collecting £2/wk from students and visiting staff; supplemented with contributions from school kitchen for free-lunch students.
Selection of students	Now part of school policy that all the more able MLD students attend FS in Yr9, and return to complete their OCNS for the first 6 weeks of the Autumn term in Yr 10. One whole class.
Programme aims	healthy eating & living; key skills Yr8 ~ focus on social and emotional skills Yr 9 ~John Muir Award Yr 10 ~ finish OCN, preparation for work
Programme overview	Lots of team games and tool use till March John Muir is focus March – June: miniparks, woodland management, Mountain Walk, Family BBQ, Overnight camp Yr 10: fire lighting and shelter building
Use of staff	Yr 9: Initially one FSL helped to supervise breakfast with teacher until teacher confident around fire, then teacher supervised breakfast and lunch prep with 3 students rotated each week; all activities replicated over 3 weeks, rather than in one session. The 2 FSLs (one school LSA, one DFS) planned and led the sessions together, including the teacher in emails.
Accreditation?	John Muir Discovery Award Basic Forest School Practical skills OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Photo formats attractive but very time consuming for FSLs; yet again there was lots to fill in at last minute!
school link person	Teacher in school instrumental in getting FS started; large input into sessions; good relationship with SMG / DFS / teacher attending FS
Extension in school	Students select photos to update FS Display Board in main entrance of school each week Teacher keen to use FS for other subjects: pupils do FS diary next day; later make and complete own John Muir books; Yr10 ~ much of workbook completed in English lessons as agreed component of literacy for term; subject presented as "interesting subject for English" not "FS Homework"
No. students gaining	9

Accreditation	
What was successful?	<p>High attendance from students with low school attendance; everyone carries water, food and equipment; lots of respect for and appreciation of nature.</p> <p>All students made huge progress and were sorry to leave; two boys in particular made huge rapid progress with social & emotional skills.</p> <p>There were 2 experienced FSLs with complimentary skills each session, and excellent communication within and in between sessions, between all 3 FSLs, the teacher and the Link person back in school.</p> <p>Although new to FS, the teacher was extremely sympathetic to FS ethos, quickly picked up the necessary fire-skills to supervise cooking, and was otherwise happy to support FSLs.</p> <p>Recent Coppice work in the woodland generated lots of materials and useful work for pupils to undertake~ brashing, sorting, collecting, building nests round stools; the close proximity of coppice area to camp quickly allowed low supervision and high pupil autonomy.</p> <p>Many students reached high tool competency quickly which allowed lots differentiation into individual projects.</p> <p>Amazingly high attendance at family BBQ~ huge appreciation for FS. The FS programme provided good continuity for pupils during transition into KS4.</p> <p>Literacy Link in school is easily best system for completing OCN Portfolios tried so far.</p> <p>Having a mixed Yr 8/Yr 9 group allowed plenty of time for Yr 8 pupils to focus on social skills, knowing they would return for another 30 sessions next year.</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Although competent in practical woodland management, the volunteer had little experience of working with young people, and required considerable resources to manage, especially at first.</p> <p>The presence of one particular student with much greater learning and behavioural needs was limiting for the rest of the group, until he was switched to another class in the spring.</p> <p>Some of the Yr 8 pupils were especially demanding of attention and supervision, and the whole team checked constantly to ensure the Yr 9 pupils received proper attention also.</p> <p>The use of the non-FS teacher for cooking was a good use of staff skills, but meant less focus on healthy eating and on tool use whilst prepping vegetables.</p> <p>A large cargo-net hammock was a huge attraction for students, providing good opportunities for socialising during free time; the disadvantage of this was that the that students needed much more prompting than previous groups to engage in active exploratory play during free time.</p>
Post FS	<p>In 2009 DFS helped the school to establish a new FS site in a woodland closer to school. Two of the Yr 8 pupils experienced a further year at FS at this new site; both displayed a good retention of their previous skills and knowledge.</p>

Case Study 11

School	Rhyl High School
Dates	Jan05 – May06
Funding & costs	Delivered free under NE Wales Forest School Project
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp
FS staff	3x FSLs; 1 student placement, 2 volunteers
No. students	5 (8 at start)
Age of students	Yr 10
No. school staff	None
Programme length	15 wks approx
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in public taxi, paid by school. School provides old kit: waterproof coat & trousers, boots. Lunch provided by FS staff and students.
Selection of students	Selected by deputy head ~ sub group of students struggling in, or on the verge of exclusion from mainstream school.
Programme aims	N Wales Pilot of OCN accreditation at Forest School Engage students
Programme overview?	After the first couple of weeks, the group settled down to 5 /6 students which, with 4 staff, allowed lots of differentiation from start. The students did not work well as team, but worked very hard on individual projects. The OCN provided some focus, and using a video camera was also popular and engaging. Workbooks required more than original term planned for completion (owing to the range of behavioural and learning needs within the group) so some students returned in the summer term for a couple more sessions. Several students helped out with an Easter holiday session in the woods for a community group from their home town.
Use of staff	Virtually 1 : 1. The student placement and volunteers were all experienced in practical woodland management and youth work.
Accreditation?	Introduction to Working in Woodlands OCN Level 1 Practical Work in Outdoor Areas OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Pilot of old IMPIO workbook, filled out in woods during sessions. Too much writing for students; mostly scribed by adults.
Type of school link person	Deputy Head; not directly working with students but maintained friendly interest. Links with DFS minimal but sufficient : personal texts for emergencies, email anything noteworthy
Extension in school	None
No. students gaining Accreditation	4
What was successful?	Good pilot of accreditation. The five students who completed all proved to be extremely engaged with the woods from the start, although for very differing reasons. Small group size; good mix of adults with differing skills; cooking very engaging. Students made good use of video clips of their experiences, and input into a FS DVD. The students generally showed a big pride in their achievements and work; there was lots of chance to develop and practice coping strategies. The students generally

	<p>had a high level respect for forest and each other. The FSLs arranged with school for students to attend FS even when they were excluded from mainstream school ~ worked really well. The use of FS students to help with the community FS day worked really well; one in particular was very patient when showing a small boy how to use a saw. The taxi driver was related to one of the students, which was often helpful, facilitating good communication and a smooth process overall. This same student was the only one who filled out his own OCN workbook, taking it home to complete with great ownership and pride.</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Challenging behaviour by a few especially at the start prevented others from achieving. Filling out workbooks ~ all students bar one switched off immediately and required scribing; literacy skills were very low. Lack of follow-up and links in school. Nothing to offer students on leaving</p>
Post FS	
Notes	<p>The students didn't really take up an invitation to assist on more family sessions in the summer holidays in their home town; possibly FS was perceived as too "uncool" on their home turf and also, one student had personal reason for not wanting to visit the site.</p>
General	<p>NB remember that taxis and school admin staff are all important parts of the team and can contribute to the success or failure of the project, especially in a relatively small community where everyone is interconnected.</p>

Case Study 12

School	Rhyl High School
Dates	Nov06 – July07
Funding & costs	School paid £200 / session (subsidised by DFS volunteer time in order to complete with college rates).
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp
FS staff	2 x FSLs, 1 student placement (same person as last year CS11)
No. students	5 (8 at start)
Age of students	Yr 10
No. school staff	None
Programme length	30 wks
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in public taxi, paid by school. School provides old kit: waterproof coat& trousers, boots Lunch co-ordinated by FS staff; attempts to collect £1 largely unsuccessful; students must be fed even if they don't pay, and many only bring sweets.
Selection of students	Selected by deputy head; sub group of students struggling in, or on the verge of exclusion from, mainstream school. Had to fit round college days since many students were studying building at college.
Programme aims	Engage students, Key Skills Opportunity for OCN accreditation was a bonus
Programme overview?	After the first couple of weeks, the group settled down to 5 /6 students. The students did not work well as team. The OCN provided some focus; cooking was popular.
Use of staff	Virtually 1 : 1 and 1 : 2
Accreditation?	Introduction to Working in Woodlands OCN Level 1 Practical Work in Outdoor Areas OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Old IMPIO workbooks, filled out in woods Way too much writing for students; mostly scribed by adults.
school link person	Deputy Head; not directly working with students but maintained friendly interest. Links with DFS minimal but sufficient : personal texts for emergencies, email anything noteworthy
Extension in school	None
No. students gaining Accreditation	5
What was successful?	Students did get a lot out of FS, witnessed by higher engagement and attendance than in school; one student continued to attend FS after leaving school in year 11; they did achieve a far amount, especially developing individual coping strategies; cooking was always engaging.
What was challenging?	The students continued to present highly challenging behaviour right to the end of the programme, especially a student with ADHD; this was exacerbated as students were neither as comfortable in, nor as respectful towards, the woods as last year's group. Sessions were hard to plan and exhausting to deliver. Those already committed to a career in building saw it as a step down from their college work.

	<p>Students seemed less motivated by achieving an OCN than last year's group, and completion of the OCN was sometimes at the expense of focussing on the development of much needed social and emotional skills.</p> <p>Filling out workbooks ~ all students switched off immediately and most required scribing by an adult.</p> <p>Lack of follow up in school; Nothing to offer students on leaving</p>
Post FS	Nothing to offer students on leaving
Notes	Same taxi driver as last year (CS 11) was useful
General	

Case Study 13

School	Rhyl High & Blessed Edward Jones RC
Dates	Oct 07 – July 08
Funding & costs	£300 per session
Site	Warren Wood; Top Camp initially, new middle camp after change of FSLs
FS staff	2 or 3 FSLs; 2 x student placements spring onwards, both experienced youth workers. FSLs changed mid programme
No. students	5 (10 at start)
Age of students	Yr 10 & yr11
No. school staff	Mostly none; occasional attendance of BEJ LSA provided some support for BEJ pupils but upset overall group dynamic between the pupils from the two schools.
Programme length	30 wks approx
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Half hour travel from school in public taxi, paid by school; company changed mid programme Schools provide basic kit ~ problem since one school's kit considered inferior by all pupils. Lunch co-ordinated by FS staff and students and paid for through schools' sessional fees.
Selection of students	Selected by schools; subgroup of students in alternative curriculum classes or at risk of exclusion; many were studying building at college 2 dys/wk, which schools thought would be good link.
Programme aims	Learning Pathways Core of Learning ~ Key Skills; opportunity for OCN accreditation was a bonus
Programme overview	Overshadowed from start by unforeseen rivalry between the two schools, issues about recruitment, and issues with the taxi. Then by changes in staff at FS and school. From mid spring, the group moved to set up a new site with Hogan building as a new focus; cooking remained big attraction to end.
Use of staff	Students naturally split into 2 groups requiring 1 FSL each; usually a third adult was required to guard the fire & camp.
Accreditation?	Basic Forest School Practical Skills OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Summative Assessments and FS intermediate certificates were developed to improve student motivation and support Key Skills development.
school link person	Autumn term ~one teacher from BEJ was appointed link for both schools with limited success until he left at Christmas, then: BEJ ~the deputy head took on role by default RH ~ same deputy head as in previous years
Extension in school	none
No. students gaining Accreditation	4 (2 of these were in yr11, so had left school by the end of their FS programme)
What was successful?	The 5 / 6 who completed got lots out of it, and attendance was better than in school; two Yr11 students carried on after May, one even delaying her job! They did get the Hogan up with a lot of help;

	<p>and they obviously enjoyed being at FS. Cooking was very engaging; FS certificates were popular. Some students attended a tree planting session near their school with Countryside Services and FSLs. The volunteer student placements gave much needed support to FSLs.</p> <p>The attendance at the end of year family BBQ was amazing; in addition all the families were extremely positive about FS, younger siblings saying "I can't wait til I get to go"; one mother and teenage sister returned to accompany the FS group on its end of term walk up a nearby mountain!</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Initial size of 8-10 students was too great for 2 leaders alone, given that many students claimed not to want to be at FS, and given the rivalries between the schools. The program got off to ragged start ~ students arrived over 3 weeks not all at once as agreed, so the introductory session had to be repeated several times.</p> <p>The new taxi company was much less supportive than last year's company; communication was poor and tension built until an incident at week 4 when the group was dropped off at a random point with no one to meet them, and walked to the base-camp shelter before the leaders. After this, contracts were drawn up with staff and students of both schools and the taxi company.</p> <p>There were lots changes to school staff and to FSLs.</p> <p>Many of the students were hostile towards FS, and claimed not to have chosen to attend. Some of these, including all except one RH boy, dropped out after 2 sessions. A couple of very challenging BEJ students continued attending until early spring despite saying they didn't want to, and put a huge drain on FSL resources and the overall group dynamics. There was more wanton damage to trees and property during this half year than in all the previous years and groups.</p> <p>The OCN Portfolios were unpopular even with Summative Assessments and certificates ; much time was taken whilst adults scribed for students.</p>
Post FS	<p>One Yr 11 student left school and decided as a result of his FS experiences that he would like to work outside in gardens or woodlands; sadly he lacked the social and emotional skills to enable him to engage with the limited college opportunities (for example, making the long bus journey alone). He found his way inevitably to the Volunteer Bureau who then contacted FS unsuccessfully for a placement.</p>
Notes	<p>For 3 years DFS has tried to deliver FS Link courses which are competitive with college rates. After visiting Burnworthy Forest School, several components were tried to ensure cost effectiveness for the schools: 10 pupils, 2 FSLs, no school staff, travel to FS on pubic taxi. Unfortunately this model has not really been achievable in this context. Perhaps it could work if all students are keen to attend and thus reasonably trustworthy and motivated (as in CS 11). Without this, we found we needed 3 FSLs just to maintain peace and safety.</p>

Case Study 14

School	Dinas Bran High School, Llangollen
Dates	Oct 07 – July 08; Autumn 08.
Funding & costs	£300 per session; through local Learning Pathways Network fund
Site	Llangollen 2 sites, then Warren Wood Top Camp; then Llangollen again in Autumn 08.
FS staff	2 or 3 FSLs; one student placement spring onwards FSLs changed mid programme
No. students	5 (9 at start)
Age of students	Yr 10 & yr11
No. school staff	One or 2 support assistants; generally supportive of FS
Programme length	30 wks booked; only got 18wks in original year, then 10 wks in autumn 08
Day length	9.40-2.40 at Llangollen; 10-1.40 at Warren Wood
Kit / travel / food	15 minutes by minibus in Llangollen; hour travel to Warren Wood in public taxi, paid by DFS & school; excellent taxi staff School provides basic kit . Lunch co-ordinated by FS staff and students and paid for through school's sessional fees
Selection of students	Selected by school, subgroup of students in alternative curriculum class or at risk of exclusion; many studying building at college
Programme aims	Core of Learning ~ Key Skills Opportunity for OCN accreditation was a bonus
Programme overview?	Initial site fell through just before the start of the programme; a temporary site was used but had too few resources to really engage the students. Both FSLs left in mid-Autumn and sessions were suspended until mid spring. With new FSLs the students were then bussed to Bodfari until the summer holidays, and really engaged with building a Hogan. A new site was finally established near school in autumn 08, where the students did their final 10 sessions with the same FSL (the remaining money having been transferred to Montgomery FS).
Use of staff	School support assistants were happy to support FS activities
Accreditation?	Basic Forest School Practical Skills OCN Level 1
OCN Workbook	Summative Assessments and FS intermediate certificates were developed to improve student motivation and support Key Skills development
school link person	Teacher in school; good understanding of FS and good relationship with support staff; communication with DFS limited by time. (this teacher went on to train as a FSL).
Extension in school	None formally, but support staff were aware and provided "social" consistency throughout.
No. students gaining Accreditation	4
What was successful?	School very keen (went on to train its own FSL). The final core of students were all engaged with Hogan building and cooking, and achieved an OCN. The learning support assistants who attended facilitated a good level

	<p>of communication between school and FS (eg about what was going on for students between sessions), which helped planning and delivery; the presence of LSAs also helped in managing the more challenging behaviour of some students.</p> <p>Summative Assessments and certificates were quite popular</p>
What was challenging?	<p>Initial size of 8-10 students too great for 2 leaders, especially given many claimed not to want to be there, program got off to ragged start ~ students arrived over 3 weeks not at once as agreed, so the introductory session had to be repeated.</p> <p>Problems finding a site near to school meant that students were bussed to Bodfari, resulting in great cost to DFS and the school, long travel times and shorter sessions.</p> <p>Changes in DFS staff were extremely challenging, and it was surprisingly difficult to brief new FSLs about OCN accreditation.</p> <p>Filling out workbooks and meeting all the targets with students required lots of adult scribing.</p>
Post FS	<p>The school had plans to use this year's FS students as mentors for next year's group.</p>
Notes	<p>Access to resources and space are important for this kind of group. This case study illustrates the importance of supportive school and staff, which here easily compensated for the disruptions of changing site and FSLs, to maintain a successful programme.</p> <p>The process of accreditation seems surprisingly complicated to transfer to new FSLs.</p>

Case Study 15

School	Prestatyn High School
Dates	Summer 08
Funding & costs	Part school; part AONB Sustainable Development Fund
Site	Warren Wood top camp and Prestatyn Hillside
FS staff	2 x FSLs
No. students	10
Age of students	Yr 10
No. school staff	2 or 3, teachers and supports
Programme length	Initially planned as 6-8 weeks; curtailed by delays in receiving CCW permit for further work on Prestatyn Hillside
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	Warren Wood is 20 minutes from school by minibus. Prestatyn Hillside is 10 minutes walk from school. Packed lunches
Selection of students	Selected by school from those doing ASDAN; pilot of FS at KS4 for this school (Yr 9 Nurture groups previously)
Programme aims	Tailored around a specific ASDAN challenge, in addition to Key Skills; also building links with the Hillside and Countryside Services for future.
Programme overview	Surveying on Prestatyn Hillside followed by planning in school and a couple of FS sessions at Warren Wood
Use of staff	Teachers and assistants have really good understanding of FS and are happy to support activities
Accreditation?	ASDAN through school
OCN Workbook	n/a
school link person	Deputy / senior teacher; attended some sessions; instrumental in establishing FS in school
Extension in school	Materials used for ASDAN challenge so time allocated in school for student planning.
No. students gaining Accreditation	10
What was successful?	School very keen; staff great; lots of extension in school; Countryside Services very keen.
What was challenging?	CCW delayed giving permission to work on hillside so initially only surveying was possible; permission was only granted in spring 09, too late for woods work that year
Post FS	We had hoped to complete this project in 09 but owing to above challenges, the school decided to use their remaining money for another Yr 9 group. The school and Countryside Services Wardens are still keen to work together on Hillside. The school is training one FSL.
General Notes	Any woods based learning pathway MUST take into account the working season (October to February) and the nesting season (March onwards).

Case Study 16

School	Plas Brondyffryn Autistic school, main school
Dates	Summer 09
Funding & costs	£300 per session; RAISE money
Site	Warren Wood top camp
FS staff	1 FSL, 1 trainee
No. students	10
Age of students	KS4
No. school staff	1 teacher; 2 support staff;
Programme length	6 wks (to use up remaining funding)
Day length	9.40-2.40
Kit / travel / food	15mins travel from school in school minibus School provides waterproofs Packed lunches supplemented by campfire cooking
Selection of students	Selected by school, one whole class physically & academically relatively able but huge range of Autism, emotional and behavioural needs ~ verbalising, concentrating, need to move around
Programme aims	Key skills & ASDAN Key Steps Award, Environment Section
Programme overview	FS structure of Opening and Closing Circles, Lunch and Free Time. Activities for one ASDAN activity each morning, choice and chillout in afternoon.
Use of staff	Teacher old FS hand (see CS 4 & 5) with good understanding of FS ethos and extremely comfortable outdoors; teacher took lead role in disciplining / managing runaways since students very specialised and programme very short. Support staff happy to assist with tools in small groups; third FSL on occasion allowed smaller groups
Accreditation?	Pupils completed sections of ASDAN. FSL sent summaries, photos and certificates to school for individual folders
OCN Workbook	
school link person	Teacher attending with group: fantastic ~ really understood FS and its potential; liaised with FS staff re ASDAN
Extension in school	Photos emailed to school for use in ASDAN folders by students
No. students gaining Accreditation	10
What was successful?	Teacher & assistants keen & competent; good communication between FSLs & Teacher, and between teacher & assistants allowed good use of staff, and rewarding FS programme despite inherently challenging nature of group. Activities planned for quick completion, lots of differentiation and minimum talking at start; all students got something out of the experience, most enjoyed FS; ASDAN targets easily met without too much compromise to FS ethos.
What was challenging?	Short length of programme
Post FS	
Notes	Lovely programme; really fascinating and complex students; would love to have had them for a year or more