



## Hakeford Woods

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Registered Charity Number 1203076

### **How students and schools benefit from Forest School at Hakeford Woods:**

Hakeford Woods opened in 2015 as Hakeford Woods Forest School CIC. The Community Interest Company concerty to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in May 2023. Hakeford Woods is based on a 40 acre private site composed of mixed deciduous woodland and meadows, 10 minutes East of Barnstaple. Since the Autumn/Winter of 2015 we have been working with groups of students from local alternative provision schools between the ages of 6 and 16. All of the children who have attended within these groups are unable to attend mainstream schools due to exclusion or other issues related to behavioural, learning or social problems and the majority of the children have attended Forest School sessions on a weekly basis for an extended period of time.

In working with these children, it has become clear to the Forest School staff and the staff from the schools that there are significant benefits for those children attending on a regular basis. The benefits of Forest School would apply to the majority of students, but are particularly significant for those children for whom regular education is a struggle. Time spent at Forest School provides some respite from the stresses and pressures in the classroom, engaging those who struggle educationally and emotionally and providing them with the opportunities to succeed. In the process, their confidence and self-esteem is also built.

Since opening in 2015, one of the main aims of Hakeford Woods was to engage students and staff from mainstream schools. We are fully aware of the constraints on mainstream schools, in terms of budget and curriculum pressures; we also know that the opportunities for regular experiences outside the classroom are often very limited and the opportunities that are available, are often one-off sessions or short programmes.

As former teachers, the primary Forest School leaders are also very aware that there are a significant number of children who really struggle with school on a daily basis and are at risk of exclusion or dropping out of the education system without significant intervention. Causes are often social and as a result of home circumstances, but can also be due to mental health issues, anxieties and other stresses that the school has little control over. For some of these children, one day a week out of school, in a completely different environment is the type of intervention that can provide them with the motivation and coping strategies to help them remain in school, and give them the chance of completing their compulsory education so they leave with skills and qualifications to help secure a positive future.

Seeing the relief and benefits provided by the Forest School experience, and through working with groups of specifically chosen KS2 students from a mainstream school, we have seen massive improvements in their self-confidence, coordination, risk assessing and willingness to try new things. We have also received extremely positive feedback from school staff who observed huge improvements in the behaviour of some students, improvements in their relationships with staff and peers, and improved self-esteem, which followed recognition of their own achievements.

In Forest School sessions, we focus on developing the student's knowledge and self-confidence, teaching and developing new skills, building self-esteem and providing opportunities to play and burn off energy and some of their frustrations. The Forest School Leaders have the skills and experience to plan and deliver sessions targeting the needs and abilities of the students in their care.

We believe that what we are able to offer at Hakeford Woods, in terms of facilities, activities and other experiences, has the potential to have a very significant positive impact on the education of mainstream pupils, particularly for those that struggle within the constraints of the current system.

### **The KS3 and KS4 Forest School Programmes we offer at Hakeford Woods:**

- **KS2/3/4 EBD Programme:** Long term programmes for students with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). Sessions will provide opportunities for burning off excess energies and frustrations, developing new skills, building self-esteem, and also give the students the chance to make positive contributions to sessions and group activities. (years 4-10)
- **Nurture Group Programme:** Long term programmes for students who would benefit from a “nurture group” type situation. These programmes would be provided for students lacking in confidence, social skills, self esteem or with other conditions that may cause them significant difficulties in the environment of a secondary school. The programme would focus on developing skills through a wide variety of activities, using achievable tasks to help improve confidence, as well as providing opportunities for socialising, play and improving fitness. (Key stage 2 and 3)
- **KS4 Intervention/Work Experience Programme:** This Forest School/work experience programme is for Key stage 4 children who may struggle socially and or academically. This programme would provide a variety of opportunities for students who may be lacking in motivation in the classroom and it is felt that they need to be out developing working skills that could help them in the future, possibly helping them to remain in school until they have completed their GCSEs. We would continue to provide Forest School type activities to help build and develop confidence and self-esteem, but include more work-related tasks, through woodland management and developing traditional countryside skills including hedgelaying, coppicing, green woodworking, charcoal making and more.

### **Example Costs of Forest School provision at Hakeford Woods:**

#### **EBD programme:**

£195 for up to 4 students, accompanied by a staff member from school. **1 Forest School Leader**

£340 for between 5 and 8 students accompanied by a staff member from school. **2 Forest School Leaders**

#### **Nurture Group Programme:**

£340 for up to 14 students accompanied by 1 or more school staff as appropriate. **2 Forest School Leaders**

#### **KS4 Intervention/Work Experience Programme:**

£195 for up to 4 students, accompanied by a staff member from school. **1 Forest School Leader**

*Staffing ratios and associated costs are not fixed and can vary depending on the duration of the provision, needs of the students and experience of staff attending.*

Forest School programmes will run for a minimum of one half term. To gain maximum benefit, we recommend that students attend for significantly longer. Long term programmes give the participants the chance to develop skills and confidence over time, developing a familiarity with the site, how the sessions run and can contribute more and more as time goes on. We have found that these benefits also go back to the school in terms of their improved confidence, positivity and motivation.

If you have any questions, would like to discuss opportunities that we could provide for your students or would like to visit the site, please get in touch either by phone or email.

Regards

Stuart Young

(Director/Forest School Leader)