



the Green Parent
**Alternative
Schools Guide**

2024 EDITION



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Welcome

Hello and welcome to the second edition of our Alternative Schools Guide for 2024

I'm excited to bring you the second edition of this jam packed guide to alternative schools across the UK. This is for those of you who don't want to follow the mainstream path for your children. Inside you'll find a broad range of alternative options to help you choose an education that is tailored to your child. So many of us are choosing something different for our kids. I see so much value in home education, in raising free-thinkers who are able to listen and respond to their own instincts. It's

my belief that the schools and settings in this guide will enable your child to be themselves and most importantly, think for themselves. Discover completely outdoor kindergartens, forest-based home-education groups, Waldorf schools, Montessori farm schools and many more. Happy discovering!

PS Please email letters@thegreenparent.co.uk. if we missed somewhere that you think should be included.
Melissa Corkhill - Editor and founder,
The Green Parent magazine



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We are an editorially led magazine, which means intelligent, non-biased journalism. Advertising space is available to those companies with a desire to make the world a greener, more positive place thegreenparent.co.uk

FEATURED



Frensham Heights School

WHERE: Farnham, Surrey **AGES:** 3-18
WEB: frensham.org **TEL:** 01252 792561

At Frensham, there is an energy, a feeling of happiness and a surprising calmness. It comes from all the children being comfortable in their own skins. With no prefects or head boys and girls, everyone is on a level playing field. They can be who they are. Teachers don't spend time telling students to pull up their socks; instead, they have conversations, inspire passion and teach creatively. It is a refreshingly different environment which you need to experience first-hand.

OPEN DAYS: 14 March, 10 May,
25 June and 21 September 2024



Imaginarium

WHERE: Lewes
WEB: educationhealthandwellbeing.co.uk/imaginarium

Two days of facilitated learning and workshops for children aged five to 11. A space that fosters autonomy, independent thinking and a deep understanding of physical and mental wellbeing.

My Helm CIC

WHERE: Brighton
WEB: myhelmcic.com

A safe space where kids and teens can attend fun and engaging workshops in a welcoming community.

The Centre for Self-Managed Learning

WHERE: Fishersgate
WEB: smlcollege.org.uk

This welcoming, safe environment for children aged nine to 17, from all backgrounds provides a unique alternative to mainstream schooling. Aims to help students learn how to manage their time, stay focused, and explore in greater detail the areas that they are passionate about.

Emerson College

WHERE: Forest Row, East Sussex
WEB: emerson.org.uk

Emerson College Trust is an education charity and learning community founded by Francis Edmunds. Train in everything from Anthroposophic Medicine to ceramics through their wide range of short courses and deep educational programme.

Treehoppers Forest Kindergarten

WHERE: East Grinstead
WEB: treehoppersfk.com

This is a completely outdoor woodland nursery, based on the principles of forest school. They are passionate about outdoor play and aim to give children the opportunity to have adventures and to play and learn in an outdoor 'classroom'.

Rain or Shine Forest Pre-School

WHERE: Tonbridge, Kent
WEB: rainorshineforestpreschool.co.uk

An outdoor preschool which follows the Forest School ethos. Two settings located near Bidborough and Leigh for ages from three to five from Mon to Thurs each week. Plus home education group weekly.

Trefoil Montessori

WHERE: East Grinstead
WEB: trefoilmontessori.co.uk

Three days a week, for ages from five to 11. After more formal lessons children are responsible for farm duties, including feeding the chickens, ducks, geese, pigs and sheep and collecting eggs in small groups.

Revolutionary Montessori

WHERE: East Grinstead
WEB: revolutionarymontessori.co.uk

Workshop opportunities for children aged between 5-11 years on Thursdays and Fridays. Set on an idyllic small farm in West Sussex.



EAST KENT SUDBURY

East Kent Sudbury

WHERE: Ringwould, Kent
WEB: eastkentsudbury.org.uk
 Part-time self-directed, democratic setting for home-educated children aged 5-18. Students direct their own learning in an environment that respects their freedom and right to determine their own futures.

East Sussex Montessori School

WHERE: Polegate, East Sussex
WEB: eastsussexmontessorischool.co.uk
 A calm nurturing community with no more than 15 children per session. The outdoor space provides both a garden in which the children can play and a separate area for planting and growing.

Willow's Forest School

WHERE: Guildford, Surrey
WEB: willowsforestschool.co.uk
 Expect den building, scavenger hunts, identifying bugs, making habitats for wildlife, using hand tools, playing in the mud kitchen or toasting marshmallows over a camp fire at this forest school setting for ages from one to five.

Michael Hall

WHERE: Forest Row
WEB: michaelhall.co.uk
 This Steiner school is aimed at pupils from three to 16 and aspires to develop responsible, creative and freethinking young people, who will contribute, with vision and purpose, to society and a sustainable environment.

New School Canterbury

WHERE: Canterbury
WEB: newschoolcanterbury.co.uk
 Situated on an idyllic site surrounded by a biodynamic farm, 10 minutes south of Canterbury, New School nurtures curious, compassionate, critical thinkers from age 3 to 11.

Bee in the Woods

WHERE: Portslade
WEB: beeinthewoods.co.uk
 In addition to providing Early Years education for children aged 2-5, this nature-based learning hub also offers Forest School sessions for home educated children up to age 7. This is a nurturing, safe and caring community, which fosters a strong sense of belonging, self worth and connection to the natural world.

FEATURED



Annan School

WHERE: Uckfield, East Sussex **AGES:** 2-11
WEB: annanschool.co.uk **TEL:** 01825 841410

Annan School is a unique and inspiring school in a beautiful woodland setting. A Froebelian ethos puts children at the centre of learning and helps them develop as confident, thoughtful learners who are happy, curious, and have empathy and responsibility towards each other and the world around them. At Annan, learning is hands on. Their creative curriculum encourages children to explore in a connected and meaningful way, to challenge themselves and take risks. The natural world shapes school days, every child has a forest school session each week. This close relationship with nature impacts on children's wellbeing and means children have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the world around them. *"A school that truly is a hidden gem and a very special place,"* Parent



FEATURED



The Outdoor Learning Company & Embers Learning Community

WHERE: Hinton, Christchurch **TEL:** 07523 918580
AGES: 1-14 **WEB:** theoutdoorlearningcompany.co.uk
 Embark on an educational adventure with The Outdoor Learning Company and Embers Learning Community. Rooted in an Authentic Forest School Approach, they offer outdoor experiences, including nursery, preschool, holiday clubs and home education groups in Dorset and Hampshire. Meanwhile, Embers caters to home-educated youth aged 5-14, providing an indoor self-directed learning community. Discover the perfect blend of outdoor exploration and indoor curiosity, where children can have fun, feel valued and empowered to become resilient, life long learners, equipped for the 21st century.
OPEN DAYS: Follow their social media for dates @[outdoorlearningcompany](https://www.instagram.com/outdoorlearningcompany)



FEATURED



New Forest Small School

WHERE: Lyndhurst, Hampshire **AGES:** 3-16
WEB: newforestsmallschool.com **TEL:** 023 8028 4415
 The New Forest Small School is an alternative, independent school in Lyndhurst, in the heart of the New Forest National Park. Since 1994, they've created a unique, child-centred environment where children can learn, thrive and grow within a community built on the principles of self-expression, creativity and compassion. They value play, time spent in the outdoors and an academic approach based on fostering children's interest in and connection with the world around them. They currently offer 12 GCSE subjects.





BARN HILL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Maverick Learning Community

WHERE: Buckfastleigh
WEB: mavericklearningcommunity.org.uk

A consent-based, self-directed exploration space in Devon for home-educated young people aged 8 to 13.

Barn Hill Learning Community

WHERE: Totnes
WEB: barnhilltotnes.co.uk

A self-directed learning community, set in 2 acres of woodland and open space, 15 minutes outside Totnes. Young people choose how to spend their time alongside facilitators, through play and projects.

The Forge

WHERE: Dorest
WEB: theforge.earth

A Montessori-inspired learning community for home-educated young people between 5 and 11, on the Somerset Dorset border.

Children of the Forest

WHERE: Cullompton, Devon
WEB: children-of-the-forest.com

This woodland setting offers a space for parents and their children up to the age of six to spend time immersed in nature (or for home educated or flexi schooled kids aged 5-16 there are full days available).

Badger Forest School

WHERE: Nr. Bodmin, Cornwall
WEB: badgerforestschool.co.uk

Woodland Skills is a forest school and outdoor learning group aimed at home-educated children aged five and over. Sessions include group discussion, free-play, exploring nature, and working on woodland skills such as knot tying, whittling, firefighting, den building, etc.



Inwoods Small School,

WHERE: Brockwood Park, Bramdean, Alresford, Hampshire
AGES: 4-11
WEB: inwoods.org.uk **TEL:** 01962 771065

Inwoods Small School is a day school for primary-aged children. They are connected to Brockwood Park School, which was founded by educator philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti. Inwoods is situated on a beautiful two acre site in the woods and much of the learning happens outside in nature. They aim to provide an education that concerns the development of the whole child. Through the learning process they encourage the children to be sensitive and willing to question the world around them.

OPEN DAYS: April 25 2024 and 4 more dates in 2024/25



FEATURED



Brockwood Park School

WHERE: Bramdean, Alresford, Hampshire **AGES:** 14-19

WEB: brockwood.org.uk **TEL:** 01962 771 744

Situated in 40 acres of beautiful countryside within the South Downs National Park, this is a unique and uplifting school. Providing a holistic education for 70 students aged 14-19, from around 25 countries, Brockwood is co-educational and fully boarding. Its intentions are to nurture self-reflection, inquiry, appreciation of the natural world, and discovery of one's own talent, in an atmosphere of creative energy. There are no grades, no comparison, and students create their own programme of studies that challenge and extend them. All meals are either vegetarian or vegan, some coming from the school's organic garden, which students help run. **OPEN DAYS:** 16 March 2024, Online Q&A 4 May 2024 12pm to 1pm



Totnes Progressive School

WHERE: Devon

WEB: totnesindependent.school.co.uk

Independent school for children aged between 11 and 16 with small class sizes, a non-punitive culture, an ethos of LARS (Love, Acceptance, Respect and Safety), no homework and a focus on nurturing relationships.

Out There Kindergarten

WHERE: East Winds Activity Centre, Brislington

WEB: outtherebristol.co.uk

For ages from two to nine years old, this outdoor setting draws on various educational approaches including Forest School, Steiner Waldorf and Reggio Emilio. Additional venue at Stapleton.

Park School

WHERE: Dartington, Devon

WEB: parkschoolonline.com

This school, set in spacious grounds on the historic Dartington Hall Estate is founded on 3 principles – take care of yourself, each other and the place you are in. Human scale education for ages three to 11.

Sands School

WHERE: Ashburton, Devon

WEB: sands-school.co.uk

An alternative independent school for 11 – 17 year-olds where children learn to think and choose for themselves. This is genuinely child-centred teaching in small classes with a democratic ethos that fosters trust, mutual respect and self-directed learning.

Ringwood Waldorf School

WHERE: Ringwood

WEB: ringwood.waldorfschool.org.uk

This independent school for children aged three to eighteen uses the Waldorf curriculum to support each child's development and balance their physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual needs.

South Devon Steiner School

WHERE: Dartington

WEB: sdsteiner.org

A co-educational school catering for 3 to 19 year olds and which follows the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. Situated on the doorstep of the Dartmoor National Park, surrounded by fields abundant with organic and biodynamic vegetables.



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THE ACORN SCHOOL

Clapham Montessori

WHERE: Clapham and Clapham Park
WEB: montessori-clapham.co.uk
 Children's House is used to describe these settings for children aged from two to six, due to Maria Montessori's belief in a home from home environment. The ratio of adults to children is at least 1:4 for children aged 2-3.

Greenwich Waldorf School

WHERE: Greenwich
WEB: greenwich-waldorfschool.com
 An independent school located alongside the green spaces of Greenwich and Blackheath in South East London, the teaching integrates art, creativity, movement and music with academic learning.

St. Pauls Steiner

WHERE: Islington
WEB: stpaulssteinerschool.org
 Providing an education for children aged three to 14 that supports the development of well-rounded human beings who are resourceful, creative, responsible and curious, this school is housed in a Grade II* listed building.

The Children's Garden

WHERE: Richmond
WEB: thechildrensgarden.org.uk
 The curriculum at this school for ages three to seven is based on an understanding of child development and reflects the seasonal changes. The morning starts with free play in the garden or a short walk and play in the nearby Ham Lands.

North London Steiner

WHERE: Hornsey
WEB: northlondonsteiner.org.uk
 This kindergarten has mixed age groups for pre-school children between the ages of three to six years, providing a traditional large family atmosphere, helping children to acquire social skills through experience and imitation.

The Gower School

WHERE: Islington
WEB: thegowerschool.co.uk
 A broad curriculum is provided for ages two to 11 at this school where the goal is to make sure that the children are confident, happy all-rounders

Into The Woods Nursery

WHERE: Highgate and Hampstead Heath
WEB: intothewoodsnursery.co.uk
 Based on the Forest School approach, this is a fully outdoor nursery. The children spend the whole day outside enjoying a unique experience and education. There is also provision for flexi schooled/HE children.

The Acorn School

WHERE: Morden Hall Park
WEB: thelondonacornschoo.co.uk
 Nestled between a rose garden and meandering stream, this school promotes an un-hurried approach, limits screen time and emphasises a connection with nature, for ages three to 11.

Liberty Woodland School

WHERE: Morden Lodge
WEB: libertywoodland-school.com
 At this school for ages four to 18, children have freedom. They spend the majority of their days exploring and learning outdoors in nature. Maths, reading, writing, science, art, music and much more takes place at a relaxed pace in a natural environment.

Dallington School

WHERE: Clerkenwell
WEB: dallingtonschool.co.uk
 At Dallington, children (aged three to 11) address teachers by their first names and do not wear a uniform. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It prides itself on being a habitat for creativity and wonder.



LIBERTY WOODLAND SCHOOL

Nature Of Learning

WHERE: Saffron Walden, Essex

WEB: natureoflearning.co.uk

The forest school provision includes Treecreepers, a drop-off group for home educated and flexi-schooled children from 5-12 years old. There's also Saturday sessions and adult skills courses too.

Bamble Learning Community

WHERE: Norwich

WEB: bamble.org

An innovative alternative for home educated children, three days per week in Norwich. Children are encouraged to make decisions and adults are known as facilitators who'll assist in learning journeys.

Hoglet And Twig

WHERE: Wantage, Oxon

WEB: hogletandtwig.com

Free play is the main emphasis at each session, but there's usually a loose theme and a number of 'play invitations' including a mud kitchen, hammocks, rope ladders, as well as craft activities such as clay, natural dyes and paints, and other multisensory aids.

Blue Squid Learning

WHERE: Ellington

WEB: bluesquidlearning.com

An education centre for young people aged nine to 16, which aims to arm them with the qualifications that they desire, but also develop a healthy knowledge of how they learn, where they're going in life and the tools they'll need to get there.

Into The Wild Wood

WHERE: Shipley, Derbyshire

WEB: intothewildwood.co.uk

A Forest School site, set on organic land owned by Weleda. Tuesday afternoons for ages five to 11 and Saturday mornings for ages 12 to 16.

Kinda Forest School

WHERE:

Halesworth, Suffolk

WEB: kindaforestschool.com

The long-term vision is a Kinda School offering an alternative curriculum for children of all abilities up to 16, combining Forest School and indoor learning programmes. Currently running sessions on Mon, Tues and Weds.

The Wilderness Grove

WHERE:

Cringleford, Norfolk

WEB: thewildernessgrove.co.uk

Wildlife Warriors is for home educated five to 11 year olds, runs four times a week and focuses on child-led learning. Expect trails, mud kitchen, water table, dens, hammocks, woodland creatures and more.

Wheatfen Forest School

WHERE: Norwich, Norfolk

WEB: wheatfenforestschool.co.uk

Tiny Acorns is a weekly Forest School group for children and their parents or carers, which takes place on Thursdays and Fridays. The majority of children are pre-schoolers, but home-edders and flexi-schoolers are welcomed.



NATURE OF LEARNING

The Iona School

WHERE: Nottingham

WEB: theionaschool.org.uk

Founded on the educational ideas and spiritual worldview of the philosopher and educator, Rudolf Steiner, this school is for pupils aged three to 11.

Little Grubs Kindergarten

WHERE: nr Ludlow, Shrops

WEB: littlegrubskindergarten.co.uk

An outdoor pre-school setting for children aged up to five, on a working farm. Activities include visiting the farm animals, Farm Shop and Walled Garden.

The World Outside

WHERE:

Kidderminster, Worcs

WEB: theworldoutside.co.uk

Predominantly outdoor kindergarten where children grow vegetables and care for animals in order to develop a greater understanding of the natural environment. On Thursdays there is home education provision.

Out There Forest School

WHERE:

Attleborough, Norfolk
WEB: outthereforestschool.co.uk

There are 3 weekly home education clubs aimed at ages eight to 13. In addition, there are forest school sessions four days a week for parents and their little ones aged up to five. And Sunday bushcraft sessions too!

Summerhill School

WHERE: Leiston, Suffolk

WEB: summerhillschool.co.uk

The oldest children's democracy in the world. It is probably the most famous alternative or 'free' school and is for ages five to 17. The system that Summerhill employs is not only about education - it is also a different way of parenting which eliminates most of the friction and many of the problems experienced by modern families.

EXPLORING the Rhythms

The Structure of a Steiner Waldorf Classroom



At the heart of the Steiner Waldorf classroom is the recognition of the importance of rhythm in fostering a sense of security and well-being for students. Rooted in the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, this educational approach seeks to nurture the physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of the child through academics, arts, and practical activities. Central to this philosophy is the structured organization of the day, week, and year, which provide a framework for meaningful learning experiences.

The day begins with a gentle transition from home to school, as children are welcomed into a warm and nurturing environment. This period of arrival sets the tone for the day ahead, allowing students to ease into the learning atmosphere and connect with their peers and teachers.

As the morning unfolds, the classroom comes alive with activity, guided by a carefully crafted rhythm that balances academic lessons with artistic and practical pursuits. In a typical Steiner Waldorf classroom, the morning is devoted to academic subjects such as language arts, mathematics,

and science. These lessons are designed to engage students' intellectual curiosity while fostering critical thinking skills and a love for learning.

Interspersed throughout the morning are periods of movement and artistic expression, which play an essential role in the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. From circle time activities to music and eurythmy (a form of expressive movement), these moments allow students to engage their bodies and senses, promoting physical coordination, creativity, and emotional expression.

Nurturing Nature

Following a nourishing mid-morning snack, the rhythm of the day continues with a focus on practical activities and outdoor play. Whether tending to the school garden, engaging in handwork projects, or exploring the natural world, students have ample opportunities to connect with the earth and develop practical skills that will serve them well in life.

After lunch, the afternoon unfolds at a more relaxed pace, with time set aside for storytelling, artistic endeavours, and free play. This period of the day provides students with the opportunity to unwind, cultivate their imaginations, and deepen their connections with the world around them.

Creating Connection

As the day draws to a close, everyone gathers once again for a closing circle, where students reflect on their experiences, share gratitude, and prepare for departure. This ritual serves as a meaningful conclusion to the day's activities, fostering a sense of closure and connection before students return home.

Beyond the daily rhythm, the Steiner Waldorf approach also incorporates a broader framework of weekly and yearly rhythms, which are informed by the changing seasons

and natural cycles. Weekly rhythms may include special activities such as gardening, woodworking, or cooking, while yearly rhythms are marked by seasonal festivals and celebrations that reflect the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world.

MORE RESOURCES

EXPLORE waldorfeducation.uk to read articles and find your nearest school

READ Rhythms of Learning: What Waldorf Education Offers Children, Parents, and Teachers

'The afternoon unfolds at a more relaxed pace, with time set aside for artistic endeavours'



In a Steiner (Waldorf) classroom, the rhythm of the day is carefully structured to honour the natural rhythms of life, foster a nurturing environment, and support the holistic development of each child. Here's a glimpse into the rhythm of a typical day in a Steiner classroom:

1 Morning Gathering: The day often begins with a gentle morning gathering, where students and teachers come together in a calm and welcoming atmosphere. This may include a song, a verse, or a moment of quiet reflection to set the tone for the day ahead.

2 Main Lesson: The morning is dedicated

to the main lesson, which focuses on a specific subject such as mathematics, language arts, science, or history. These lessons typically last for a few weeks, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the topic. Teachers use a variety of hands-on activities, storytelling, and artistic expression to engage students and bring the subject matter to life.

3 Outdoor Time: Steiner education places great importance on connecting with nature, so outdoor time is incorporated into the daily rhythm. Whether it's a nature walk, gardening, or outdoor play, students have the opportunity to engage their senses and explore the natural world around them.

4 Artistic Activities: After the main lesson, students participate in artistic activities such as painting, drawing, knitting, or woodworking. These activities not only develop their creative skills but also provide a balance to the more academic aspects of the curriculum.

5 Practical Work: Practical work is another integral part of the Steiner curriculum. Students may engage in activities such as cooking, sewing, or woodworking, helping them develop practical skills and a sense of responsibility.

6 Lunch and Rest: A nutritious lunch is served, followed by a period of rest or quiet time. This allows

students to recharge and process their experiences from the morning.

7 Afternoon Lessons: In the afternoon, students typically engage in shorter lessons or activities focused on subjects like foreign languages, music, or movement. These lessons provide further opportunities for exploration and learning in different areas.

8 Closing Circle: The day often ends with a closing circle, where students and teachers come together to reflect on the day, share stories, or sing songs. This helps create a sense of community and closure before students head home.

Scraffle And Scrow

WHERE: Carlisle, Cumbria

WEB: scraffleandscrow.uk

This outdoor nursery features a large, natural play area where little people can run, explore, and discover, as well as dedicated areas for gardening, nature crafts, and environmental exploration. Also provision for home educators one day a week.

Apple Blossom Kindergarten

WHERE: Levenshulme, South Manchester

WEB: appleblossomkindergarten.squarespace.com

Set within Cringle Park, this is a play and nature-based education for three to six year olds. Open five days a week from 8:30am-5pm.

Maharishi School

WHERE:

Ormskirk, Lancashire

WEB: maharishischool.com

Consciousness-based Education started by the founder of the Transcendental Meditation technique. All teaching and office staff at Maharishi School practice the technique and pupils (aged four to 16) meditate in the class as part of their school day.

Kids Adventures

WHERE:

Prestwich and Salford

WEB: kidsadventures.co.uk

The nursery features a large outdoor play and education space. Part of a small chain of local nurseries, who also run two forest schools, there's an emphasis on outdoor education and natural resources.

The Old Vicarage Nature Kindergarten

WHERE: Blackburn

WEB: theoldvicaragenursery.co.uk

The Nature Kindergarten allows children aged from 0 to five to take risks beyond the usual boundaries of the indoor environment, encouraging children to develop a strong sense of self-esteem. It promotes collaborative working, encouraging children to form new friendships and develops communication and problem-solving skills.

Nest In The Woods

WHERE: Warrington

WEB: nestinthewoods.co.uk

The outdoors is the absolute best place for children to be. Children aged two to four become natural explorers and little scientists finding out about the world for themselves with the support of experienced and caring adults. There's also provision for home educated children two days a week.

Lancaster School for Independent Learning

WHERE: Lancaster

WEB: lisal.school

Offering a gentle and natural alternative to mainstream, at this school education is a journey, not a race. Instead of testing and targets, this is a nurturing environment with small classes for ages up to 11, where each child receives individual care and attention.

the
Green Parent

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Embracing Montessori EDUCATION

Nurturing Young Minds Through Self-Directed Learning



In a world where education seems to be comprised of standardized tests and uniform curriculum, Montessori education stands as a beacon of innovation and child-centered learning.

Developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 20th century, this educational approach emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and a deep respect for the child's

natural psychological, physical, and social development. Today, Montessori schools continue to thrive globally, offering a unique environment that fosters creativity, curiosity, and a lifelong love for learning.

Philosophy and Principles

At the core of Montessori education is the belief that each child is a unique individual with innate potential waiting to be unlocked. Dr. Montessori observed that children possess an intrinsic motivation to explore and understand

their world. Hence, the Montessori approach aims to cultivate this natural curiosity by providing a prepared environment filled with carefully selected materials that stimulate learning across various domains – from mathematics and language to practical life skills and cultural studies.

The key principles of Montessori education include Self-Directed Learning: Children are encouraged to follow their interests and work at their own pace. Teachers act



'Montessori classrooms are highly structured, but the structure is based on the needs and interests of the child rather than a predetermined curriculum'

as facilitators, guiding students rather than imposing a rigid curriculum.

Hands-On Materials: Montessori classrooms are equipped with specially designed materials that promote sensory exploration and concrete learning experiences. These materials are self-correcting, allowing children to learn independently from their mistakes.

Mixed-Age Groups: Unlike traditional classrooms, Montessori environments typically include children of different ages within the same class. This fosters collaboration, peer teaching, and a sense of community among students.

Respect for the Child: Montessori educators deeply respect each child's individuality, autonomy, and unique learning style. They strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, where children feel valued and empowered.

Challenges and Misconceptions

Despite many benefits, such as fostering independence and encouraging critical thinking, Montessori education faces

certain challenges and misconceptions. One common misconception is that Montessori schools lack structure. In reality, Montessori classrooms are highly structured, but the structure is based on the needs and interests of the child rather than

Research has shown numerous benefits associated with Montessori education:

1 Independence and Self-Confidence:

By allowing children to make choices and take ownership of their learning, Montessori education instills a sense of independence and self-confidence from an early age.

2 Love for Learning: The hands-on, experiential nature of

Montessori materials ignites a passion for learning that extends far beyond the classroom. Children develop a lifelong love for exploration and discovery.

3 Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:

Montessori education emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Through exploration and

a predetermined curriculum.

Another perception is that Montessori education is only suitable for preschool-aged children. While Montessori principles are often most strongly associated with early childhood education, Montessori schools exist at all levels, including primary and even secondary school.

Montessori education offers a holistic approach to learning that honours the natural curiosity, creativity, and potential of every child. By fostering independence, critical thinking, and a love for learning, Montessori schools prepare students not only for academic success but also for success in life.

As we continue to explore innovative approaches to education, the principles of Montessori remain as relevant and inspiring as ever, guiding us towards a brighter future for generations to come.

MORE RESOURCES

READ Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood by Paula Polk Lillard

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experimentation, children learn to think creatively and analytically.

4 Social and Emotional Development:

Montessori classrooms provide a supportive environment for social and emotional growth. Children learn to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and develop empathy and respect for their peers.

Scotswood Garden

WHERE: Newcastle

WEB: scotswoodgarden.org.uk

Free creative outdoor fun every week during term-time. Suitable for two to eight year olds, activities include clay work, mark making, weaving, tinkering, potion making, creating and reading stories. Elderberries is a community group run for 55+ year olds too!

Plumb Learning

WHERE: Hebden Bridge

WEB: plumblearning.org/home-education

Hands on, vocational learning opportunities for home educated children and young people aged six to 16. Choose from useful skills such as plumbing, tiling and engineering.

York Steiner School

WHERE: York

WEB: yorksteinerschool.org

Classes are kept small and school days are packed with academic lessons, practical work (children are encouraged to use tools and build things), music, art, sport and drama. Weather allowing, much of this happens outdoors.

Calder Steiner School

WHERE:

Cragg Vale, West Yorks

WEB: caldersteiner.org.uk

Children aged from three to five spend time playing in the woods, fields and gardens around the school and one full day is spent in the woods each week, cooking lunch over an open fire and playing in the trees.

Sheffield Woodland Kindergarten

WHERE: South Yorks

WEB: sheffieldwoodlandkindergarten.org

A fully outdoors kindergarten set in Lynwood Gardens, an inner city Victorian nature reserve. Staff are passionate about children learning through nature and having real life experiences.

Conkers Life

WHERE: Nr. Hamsterley, County Durham

WEB: conkerslife.com

This outdoor kindergarten for ages three to six takes principles from Steiner and Forest School. There's opportunity for physical challenge and risk taking, opportunities to practice mindfulness and to deepen the children's connection with nature.

Saplings Nature Kindergarten

WHERE: Peterlee, County Durham

WEB: saplingsnaturekindergarten.com

This is a fully outdoor kindergarten for children aged two to five years set in 500 acres of protected ancient woodland and meadows. Forest School programmes can be created for home education groups too.

Enjoy Education

WHERE: Halifax

WEB: enjoyatthebridge.com

Educational sessions for kids of all ages - catering for those in alternative education and also mainstream school.

FEATURED



Ruskin Mill Trust

WHERE: Freeman College in Sheffield

AGES: 16-25 **FOUNDED:** 2005

WEB: rmt.org **TEL:** 0330 055 2653

We welcome visits by appointment.

As a provision of Ruskin Mill Trust, Freeman College offers exciting outdoor learning environments, utilising practical land and craft activities to support the development of work and life skills in young people with autism and learning difficulties. Alongside the urban environment of the college, there is a nine-acre biodynamic market garden at High Riggs. Students grow the produce used in the residential homes, in the Fusion Café and the canteen at Freeman College. Placements are offered on either a day or residential basis, for young people aged 16-25.



FEATURED



Nant-y-Cwm Steiner school

WHERE: Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire

AGES: 3-14 **TEL:** 01437 563640

WEB: nant-y-cwm.co.uk

Surrounded by forest, field and river, Nant-y-Cwm School in rural Pembrokeshire offers a rich environment for whole-being learning with head, heart and hands. With a deep understanding of child development from ages 3-14, the Steiner-Waldorf pedagogy nurtures creativity, critical thinking and curiosity in pupils; crucial skills in today's information era. Within the small class sizes and extensive grounds, they offer a child-centred education that fosters a love of learning, emotional intelligence and a connection with the natural world. Our students leave as confident, creative and morally capable young people able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.



The Lighthouse

WHERE: Cardigan

WEB: lighthouselearningproject.org.uk

Self-directed learning community for home educated young people aged 7+ (plenty of teens too). Two days of activities each week.

Kin Nature Kindergarten

WHERE: White Castle, Monmouthshire

WEB: kidsinnature.co.uk

Completely outdoor setting for children aged two to five. A child led, play based approach encourages wondering, exploring, experimenting and discovering.

Create Play

WHERE: Llandrindod Wells

WEB: createplay.co.uk

The aim of this outdoor nursery for two to six year olds is to spend the majority of time outside but there's a small, warm wooden cabin for downtime. Founders have cherry-picked aspects of the Playwork Principles and curriculum, alongside the Forest School Ethos to create their own curriculum.

Rooted Forest School

WHERE: Talgarth

WEB: rootedforestschool.co.uk

The Nurture Group run by this group of forest school leaders supports those children that are experiencing anxiety, disruptive classroom behaviour, challenges at home or a lack of stability in their lives. There are also Woodland Explorer Days for families.

Little Hobbits Forest School

WHERE: Various locations, Wrexham

WEB: littlehobbits.co.uk

A unique stay and play Forest School experience for children of all ages, including home educators. The sessions consist of sensory and creative play experiences, as well as games and songs.

Woodland Classroom

WHERE: Erddig, Wrexham

WEB: woodlandclassroom.com

Reconnecting people of all ages with nature through bushcraft, outdoor learning, forest school, nature therapy and wellbeing in the woods, this is a programme of outdoor courses including a monthly home education group called Pathfinders.

Nestlings

WHERE: Cardiff

WEB: nestlingsnursery.co.uk

A bi-lingual, eco-friendly nursery for children aged up to five years old. Home cooked organic food is served by on site chef. A forest-focused holiday club is also available for school children up to the age of 12 during holiday times.

The Awen Project

WHERE: Dinas, Powys

WEB: theawenproject.com

The Awen Project is pioneering a new model for learning environments: where young people are championed to be themselves and follow their passions as active participants in a democratic community. Available three days a week.

Greenbank Woodland Play

WHERE:

Clarkson, nr Glasgow

WEB: woodland-play.co.uk

The philosophy of Woodland Play is to inspire children aged three to five through positive outdoor experiences and provide them an opportunity to appreciate the wider, natural world to encourage a responsibility for nature conservation in later life.

Outlet

WHERE: Hamilton

WEB: outlet.scot

A safe space that allows all children to be courageous in nature, to reconnect and fall in love with the outdoors. There's family forest school, afterschool clubs and conservation and bushcraft for vulnerable teens.

Edinburgh Montessori Arts School

WHERE: Edinburgh

WEB: emaschool.co.uk

This creative school for ages one to 18 follows the cycle of the seasons each year. Through real experiences the children are encouraged to make connections with the world around them.

Edinburgh Steiner School

WHERE: Edinburgh

WEB: edinburghsteinerschool.org.uk

An independent school set in three acres of leafy grounds to the south-side of the city, where up to 300 children aged three to 18 years receive an education based on Steiner principles.

Drumduan School

WHERE: Forres

WEB: drumduan.org

The Drumduan School is located in Moray, Scotland, close to Findhorn Bay. It provides Steiner education from ages 0 to 18. The location allows a direct connection with nature, which means plenty of opportunity to explore outdoor activities and a broad and rich, experiential curriculum. In place of exams, Drumduan Upper School offers Integrated Education qualifications as a route to higher education and employment.

Little Acorns Cic

WHERE: Ayr

WEB: little-acorns.org

There's a giant mud kitchen, swings, treehouse, sandpit, vegetable garden, wildlife pond, marble runs and obstacle courses, plus a woodworking and craft area, campfire circle, indoor yurt space and composting toilet. Choose from forest schools for families, toddlers and a half day for home educators from five to 15 years old once a week.

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

WHERE: Cupar, Fife

WEB: secretgardenoutdoor-nursery.co.uk

Based in a 25 acre woodland, this childcare setting, for children aged three upwards is entirely out of doors all year round. There's also practitioner workshops to share their research and experiences.



Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

WHERE: By Crieff

WEB: auchlone.co.uk

Children between two and five years old spend the majority of the day outdoors in all weathers, using tools such as saws and loppers to make fires and cook their own snacks.

W.i.l.d. Woodland Learning

WHERE: Glasgow

WEB: wildwoodlandlearning.co.uk

Regular Forest School sessions on Wednesdays and Saturdays during term time for children aged five to 11.

IRELAND

Dublin Steiner School

WHERE: Dublin

WEB: dublinsteiner.com

The school's focus is on creativity, developing emotional intelligence, and on cultivating a love of learning as an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end.

Nature Kindergarten

WHERE: Bray, Co. Wicklow

WEB: parkchildcare.ie

Nestled in a small forest in north County Wicklow, is a unique classroom where the walls change colour every day and the ceiling is a kaleidoscope of hues of blues, whites and greys. A classroom where children aged three to six immerse themselves in nature and learn through it.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hollywood Steiner School

WHERE: Hollywood

WEB: hollywood-steiner.co.uk

This school for ages three to 17 follows the Waldorf model, which unlike mainstream education provides the time and space for each child to learn and grow at their own pace, allowing them to fully grasp a concept or achieve a skill when they are ready. Plus Wildflowers Parent and Child group.

the Green Parent

THE NATURAL PARENTING MAGAZINE



"My mum brought me my first subscription to your magazine when my eldest daughter, now five, was born and I haven't missed an edition since. Your magazine makes me feel less alone and part of a group of wonderful families." - Leanne C

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