



the  
Green Parent

# Alternative Schools Guide

2025 EDITION

*Featuring  
90 schools  
and groups  
across  
the UK*



# Welcome

Hello and welcome to the third edition  
of our Alternative Schools Guide for 2025

An increasing number of us are seeking out alternative education to meet the needs of our kids. As a home educating mum I've so enjoyed putting this guide together, discovering lots of places offering a real difference to mainstream school. There's outdoor kindergartens, forest-based home-education groups, Waldorf schools, Montessori farm schools and many more.

I think it's vital that we bring more awareness of nature, sustainability and diversity into our children's education. Now is the time to teach about kindness and respect, community and connection. I believe that each of the settings listed here will help to foster that understanding and knowledge in our kids.

Inside you'll find some of the best alternative schools, forest kindergartens and more, packed into one handy guide to help you make the right decision when it comes to education.

Happy discovering! **Melissa, editor**

## CONTENTS:

- 3 South East**
- 5 London**
- 7 South West**
- 8 East**
- 8 Central**
- 10 Child Centred Education**
- 13 Subscribe**
- 14 North East**
- 15 Classroom Without Walls**
- 17 North West**
- 18 Wales**
- 19 Scotland & Ireland**

---

**Editor** Melissa Corkhill [letters@thegreenparent.co.uk](mailto:letters@thegreenparent.co.uk)

**Subscriptions** [subs.thegreenparent.co.uk](mailto:subs.thegreenparent.co.uk) **Art Director** Jez Harris [art@thegreenparent.co.uk](mailto:art@thegreenparent.co.uk)

**Advertising Sales** Hayley Biddulph, Tel **01892 677744** [hayley@thegreenparent.co.uk](mailto:hayley@thegreenparent.co.uk)

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](http://thegreenparent.co.uk)

## Annan School

**WHERE:** Uckfield,  
East Sussex

**WEB:** [annanschool.co.uk](http://annanschool.co.uk)

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.

## Frensham Heights School

**WHERE:** Farnham, Surrey

**WEB:** [frensham.org](http://frensham.org)

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.

## Bee in the Woods

**WHERE:** Portslade and Stanmer Woods, Brighton  
**WEB:** [beeinthewoods.co.uk](http://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.

## The Centre for Self-Managed Learning

**WHERE:** Fishersgate

**WEB:** [smlcollege.org.uk](http://smlcollege.org.uk)

This welcoming, safe environment for children aged nine to 17, from all backgrounds provides a unique alternative to mainstream schooling.

## East Kent Sudbury

**WHERE:** Ringwould, Kent

**WEB:** [eastkent.sudbury.org.uk](http://eastkent.sudbury.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:** [eastsussex.montessorischool.co.uk](http://eastsussex.montessorischool.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.

## Emerson College

**WHERE:** Forest Row,

East Sussex

**WEB:** [emerson.org.uk](http://emerson.org.uk)

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.

## FEATURED



## Inwoods Small School,

**WHERE:** Brockwood Park, Bramdean,  
Alresford, Hampshire **AGES:** 4-11

**WEB:** [inwoods.org.uk](http://inwoods.org.uk) **TEL:** 07818 246472

Inwoods Small School is a day school for primary - aged children. They are connected to Brockwood Park School, which was founded by world renowned educator and philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti. Inwoods is situated on a beautiful two-acre site, surrounded by trees, in the South Downs National Park. Much of the learning happens outside in nature whatever the weather! With small class sizes the children and teachers develop close and genuine relationships. Through the learning process they encourage the children to be sensitive and willing to question the world around them. They aim to provide an education that concerns the development of the whole child.  
**OPEN DAYS:** Thursday 1st May 2025 and dates in September and November 2025 to be announced soon.





## FEATURED



## Brockwood Park School

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

**WEB:** [brockwood.org.uk](http://brockwood.org.uk) **TEL:** 01962 771 744

Founded in 1969 and 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 about 60 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:** Saturday 22nd March 2025 and Online Saturday 1st March and Saturday 3rd May 12pm 1pm



## Imaginarium

**WHERE:** Kingston, Lewes

**WEB:** [imaginariumlwes.com](http://imaginariumlwes.com)

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

## My Helm CIC

**WHERE:** Hove, Sussex

**WEB:** [myhelmcic.com](http://myhelmcic.com)

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

## Rain or Shine Forest Pre-School

**WHERE:** Tonbridge, Kent

**WEB:** [rainorshineforestpreschool.co.uk](http://rainorshineforestpreschool.co.uk)

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

## Revolutionary Montessori

**WHERE:** East Grinstead

**WEB:** [revolutionarymontessori.co.uk](http://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.

## Treehoppers Forest Kindergarten

**WHERE:** East Grinstead

**WEB:** [treehoppersfk.com](http://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'.

## Trefoil Montessori

**WHERE:** East Grinstead

**WEB:** [trefoilmontessori.co.uk](http://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.

## Willow's Forest School

**WHERE:** Guildford, Surrey

**WEB:** [willowsforestschool.co.uk](http://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 Waldorf School

**WHERE:** Kidbrooke Park, Priory Road,

Forest Row, East Sussex RH185JA **AGES:** 0-18

**WEB:** [www.michaelhall.co.uk](http://www.michaelhall.co.uk) **TEL:** 01342 822275

Michael Hall School is the UK's longest-established Waldorf school, offering a rich, holistic education from Early Childhood to Sixth Form. Nestled in the beautiful Ashdown Forest, the school nurtures creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning through a balanced curriculum of academics, arts, and practical skills. With a strong sense of community, a deep connection to nature, and a focus on individual growth, Michael Hall provides a warm, inspiring environment where students flourish. Small class sizes, dedicated teachers, and a child-centred approach ensure a meaningful and enriching education, preparing students for life with confidence, resilience, and a lifelong love of learning.

**OPEN DAYS:** 8th & 20th May,

24th September, 20th November 2025



## Maria Montessori School

**WHERE:** Hampstead NW3 5NW,

Bayswater W2 4LA, Notting Hill W11 1JG.

**AGES:** 2½ - 16 **TEL:** 020 7435 3646

**WEB:** [www.mariamontessori.org/school](http://www.mariamontessori.org/school)

The Maria Montessori School offers authentic Montessori education for 2½ - 16 year olds in London, located at Hampstead, Bayswater and Notting Hill.

The school is designed with the child and their development at the forefront and fosters a classroom culture that leads to a strong sense of community and a deep respect for humanity, the environment, and the world. Children learn through real life experiences and specially designed materials that make abstract concepts concrete. There is an absence of competition; each child is treated as an individual and given time to learn at their own pace, offering them a sense of agency over their learning. It is a peaceful, engaging, vibrant and welcoming environment.

**OPEN DAY:** We recommend parents book a Classroom Observation - a unique experience to come into our classroom environment during school hours, see Montessori in action and observe how children and teachers engage in their daily routine. Book via [www.mariamontessori.org/school/visit-our-school/](http://www.mariamontessori.org/school/visit-our-school/)





## FEATURED



## Dallington School

**WHERE:** London, EC1 **AGES:** 3-11

**WEB:** [dallingtonschool.co.uk](http://dallingtonschool.co.uk) **TEL:** 020 7251 2284

Dallington School is a progressive, nurturing independent school in the heart of London, dedicated to creativity, individuality, and holistic learning. With small class sizes, no uniform, and a culture where everyone is on a first-name basis, we encourage confidence, curiosity, and a love of learning. Rooted in our values of play, empathy, and creativity, our broad curriculum includes weekly Forest School sessions, exciting trips across London, and a creative arts focus. Dallington pupils develop the strong academic skills and independence to thrive, moving on to sought after secondary schools that align with their strengths and aspirations. Here, children grow, explore, and flourish in a joyful, inclusive environment. Weekly tours available. **OPEN DAY:** May 15th, 9.30am



## The Acorn School

**WHERE:** Morden Hall Park

**WEB:** [thelondonacornschoo.co.uk](http://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.

## Clapham Montessori

**WHERE:** Clapham and Clapham Park

**WEB:** [montessoriclapham.co.uk](http://montessoriclapham.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.

## The Gower School

**WHERE:** Islington

**WEB:** [thegowerschool.co.uk](http://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.

## Greenwich Waldorf School

**WHERE:** Greenwich

**WEB:** [greenwichwaldorfschool.com](http://greenwichwaldorfschool.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.



## Into The Woods Nursery

**WHERE:** Highgate and Hampstead Heath

**WEB:** [intothewoodsnursery.co.uk](http://intothewoodsnursery.co.uk)

Based on the Forest School approach, this is a fully outdoor nursery. There is also provision for flexi schooled/HE children.

## Liberty Woodland School

**WHERE:** Morden Lodge

**WEB:** [libertywoodlandschool.com](http://libertywoodlandschool.com)

For ages four to 18, children 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.

## St. Pauls Steiner

**WHERE:** Islington

**WEB:** [stpaulssteinerschool.org](http://stpaulssteinerschool.org)

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.

## New Forest Small School

**WHERE:** Lyndhurst, Hampshire  
**WEB:** [newforest.smallschool.com](http://newforest.smallschool.com)

The New Forest Small School is an alternative, independent school in Lyndhurst, in the heart of the New Forest National Park. 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.

## The Outdoor Learning Company & Embers Learning Community

**WHERE:** Hampshire/Dorset  
**WEB:** [theoutdoorlearningcompany.co.uk](http://theoutdoorlearningcompany.co.uk)

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.

## Badger Forest School

**WHERE:** Nr. Bodmin, Cornwall  
**WEB:** [www.choose-nature.co.uk](http://www.choose-nature.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 and working on skills such as knot tying, whittling, firelighting, den building, etc.

## Barn Hill Learning Community

**WHERE:** Totnes  
**WEB:** [barnhilltotnes.co.uk](http://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.

## Children of the Forest

**WHERE:** Cullompton, Devon  
**WEB:** [children-of-the-forest.com](http://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).



RINGWOOD WALDORF SCHOOL

## Maverick Learning Community

**WHERE:** Buckfastleigh, Devon  
**WEB:** [mavericklearningcommunity.org.uk](http://mavericklearningcommunity.org.uk)

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

## Out There Kindergarten

**WHERE:** East Winds Activity Centre, Brislington  
**WEB:** [outtherekindergartens.co.uk](http://outtherekindergartens.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](http://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.

## Ringwood Waldorf School

**WHERE:** Ringwood  
**WEB:** [ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk](http://ringwoodwaldorfschool.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.

## Sands School

**WHERE:** Ashburton, Devon  
**WEB:** [sands-school.co.uk](http://sands-school.co.uk)

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

## South Devon Steiner School

**WHERE:** Dartington  
**WEB:** [sdsteiner.org](http://sdsteiner.org)

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



CHILDREN OF THE FOREST



## FEATURED



## St Christopher School

**WHERE:** Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire **AGES:** 3-18

**WEB:** [www.stchris.co.uk](http://www.stchris.co.uk) **TEL:** 01462 650947

St Chris is an outstanding, modern school with an important, progressive heritage. As a school, we were amongst the first to see that humanity, understanding, kindness, and 'progress' are the pillars on which education - and childhood - should stand. Our approach values the individual, nurtures curiosity, and equips young people with the confidence, skills, and academic excellence to thrive. By giving children the time and space to grow at their own pace, we foster a love of learning and a true zest for life—preparing them not just for exams, but for the world beyond.



## Bamble Learning Community

**WHERE:** Norwich

**WEB:** [bamble.org](http://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.

## Blue Squid Learning

**WHERE:** Ellington

**WEB:** [bluesquidlearning.com](http://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](http://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](http://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. Sessions on Mon, Tues and Weds.

## Little Grubs Kindergarten

**WHERE:** nr Ludlow, Shropshire

**WEB:** [littlegrubskindergarten.co.uk](http://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.

## Nature of Learning

**WHERE:** Saffron Walden, Essex

**WEB:** [natureoflearning.co.uk](http://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.







## Summerhill School

**WHERE:** Leiston, Suffolk

**WEB:** [summerhillschool.co.uk](http://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.

## Wheatfen Forest School

**WHERE:** Norwich, Norfolk

**WEB:** [wheatfenforestschool.co.uk](http://wheatfenforestschool.co.uk)

Tiny Acorns is a weekly Forest School group for children and their parents or carers on Thursdays and Fridays. Home-educators and flexischoolers are welcomed.

## The Wilderness Grove

**WHERE:**

Cringleford, Norfolk

**WEB:** [thewildernessgrove.co.uk](http://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.

## The World Outside

**WHERE:**

Kidderminster, Worcs

**WEB:** [theworldoutside.co.uk](http://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.

## the Green Parent

IT'S A WAY OF LIFE!

There are so many ways to read *the Green Parent*, on your tablet, phone or PC

Download a single issue to keep forever for just £4 at [subs.thegreenparent.co.uk](http://subs.thegreenparent.co.uk)

Subscribe and also get access to all our back issues: Quarterly recurring for £4.99 or annually for £19.99  
[link.thegreenparent.co.uk/digital](http://link.thegreenparent.co.uk/digital)

You can also find the Green Parent on:



**Readly**  
**ZINIO**

Available on the  
**App Store**



# *A Child-Centred Education*

Traditional education systems often follow a structured curriculum accompanied by standardised assessments and exams, but alternative education models have emerged to offer diverse and child-centred approaches. These alternative methods aim to cater to different learning styles, needs, and philosophies. Let's explore six significant types of alternative education: Froebelian, Montessori, Steiner, Democratic, Forest School, and Reggio Emilia.



**E**ach alternative education model offers a unique perspective on learning, catering to different children's needs and strengths. While the Froebelian and Montessori methods emphasize early childhood development through play and hands-on activities, the Steiner approach fosters creativity and holistic growth. Democratic education

prioritizes student agency, and Forest School immerses children in nature for experiential learning. The Reggio Emilia approach nurtures self-expression and collaborative learning through creative exploration.

As education continues to evolve, these approaches provide valuable alternatives to traditional schooling, offering children opportunities to learn in ways that align with their interests, abilities, and developmental stages.



## ***Froebelian Education***

Developed by Friedrich Froebel in the 19th century, Froebelian education emphasizes play-based learning, recognizing that young children learn best through exploration and creativity. Froebel, who coined the term "kindergarten," designed an approach that integrates songs, games, and hands-on activities to develop a child's cognitive and social skills. Key elements include:

- The use of Froebel's "gifts" - a series of educational toys that aid in sensory and motor development.
- A focus on creativity, imagination, and free play.
- Teacher guidance rather than direct instruction, encouraging children to make discoveries on their own.



## ***Montessori Education***

Founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 20th century, the Montessori method is based on self-directed learning, mixed-age classrooms, and hands-on experiences. This approach prioritizes independence and encourages children to explore their interests at their own pace. Key features include:

- A carefully prepared environment with specialized Montessori materials designed to foster sensory and practical skills.
- A focus on self-discipline, with teachers acting as facilitators rather than lecturers.
- Mixed-age groups to encourage peer learning and social development.



## ***Steiner (Waldorf) Education***

Developed by Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century, Steiner education (also known as Waldorf education) emphasizes creativity, imagination, and holistic development. The curriculum integrates arts, music, storytelling, and movement into academic subjects, fostering a child's emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth. Core principles include:

- Delayed formal academics, with an emphasis on creative play in early years.
- A rhythm-based learning structure that aligns with developmental stages.
- A strong emphasis on storytelling, music, and hands-on activities. ➔



## **Forest School Education**

Forest School is an outdoor, nature-based approach that fosters experiential learning through exploration and play in natural environments. Originating in Scandinavia, this method encourages children to engage with their surroundings, promoting resilience, problem-solving, and teamwork. Essential features include:

- Learning through direct interaction with nature, regardless of weather conditions.
- Development of physical, emotional, and social skills through hands-on activities like climbing, foraging, and shelter-building.
- A focus on risk-taking and problem-solving to foster confidence and independence.



## **Democratic Education**

Democratic education is built on the idea that children should have equal say in their learning process. Schools following this approach, such as Summerhill in the UK and Sudbury schools in the US, operate on democratic principles, where students help decide school rules, curriculum, and daily activities. Key aspects include:

- Student-led learning, where children choose what, when, and how to study.
- A governance system where students and teachers have an equal vote in school decisions.
- Emphasis on responsibility, autonomy, and self-motivation.

Watch this documentary (*pictured*) [schoolcirclesfilm.com](http://schoolcirclesfilm.com)

## **Reggio Emilia Education**

The Reggio Emilia approach, developed in Italy after World War II by Loris Malaguzzi, is a child-centred philosophy that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and experiential learning. This method views children as capable, curious learners who express themselves in multiple ways. Key features include:

- A project-based curriculum driven by children's interests and inquiries.
- A strong emphasis on artistic expression, storytelling, and hands-on experiences.
- Teachers acting as co-learners and facilitators, guiding children through exploration.
- An environment that serves as a "third teacher," designed to inspire curiosity and interaction.





**NEW!**  
**Subscribe**  
**for £3 per**  
**month\***

\*Cancel anytime

# the Green Parent

The one subscription  
 for *all* your parenting needs



For those of you who trust your children, believe in respectful parenting and want your kids to have the freedom to be a bit wild!

[subs.thegreenparent.co.uk](https://subs.thegreenparent.co.uk)



## Ruskin Mill Trust

**WHERE:** Freeman College in Sheffield  
**WEB:** [rmt.org](http://rmt.org)

Freeman College welcomes visits by appointment. As a provision of Ruskin Mill Trust, the 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.

## Calder Steiner School

**WHERE:** Cragg Vale, West Yorks  
**WEB:** [caldersteiner.org.uk](http://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.

## Conkers Life

**WHERE:** Nr. Hamsterley, County Durham  
**WEB:** [conkerslife.com](http://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.

## Hebden Bridge Learning Community

**WHERE:** The Birchcliffe Centre  
**WEB:** [hebdenbridgelc.co.uk](http://hebdenbridgelc.co.uk)

This is a three-day, flexible-time community where you can choose to do the number of days you want. Subjects include wellbeing and mindfulness, democratic decision making and cross-subject learning.

## Kith Homestead

**WHERE:** North Rigion, N. Yorks  
**WEB:** [kithhomestead.com](http://kithhomestead.com)

A 2 day a week programme for young people aged 6 and over. Founded to support the needs of home educated young people in the local area, this is a nurturing homely environment that supports the natural pace of learning of each child.

## Plumb Learning

**WHERE:** Hebden Bridge  
**WEB:** [plumblearning.org/home-education](http://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.

## Scotswood Garden

**WHERE:** Newcastle  
**WEB:** [scotswoodgarden.org.uk](http://scotswoodgarden.org.uk)

Free creative outdoor fun every week during termtime. 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!

## Sheffield Woodland Kindergarten

**WHERE:** South Yorks  
**WEB:** [sheffieldwoodlandkindergarten.org](http://sheffieldwoodlandkindergarten.org)

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.

## York Steiner School

**WHERE:** York  
**WEB:** [yorksteinerschool.org](http://yorksteinerschool.org)

Classes are kept small and school days are packed with academic lessons, practical work, music, art, sport and drama. Weather allowing, much of this happens outdoors.





# *Classroom Without Walls*

Why I believe in the power of Forest School for children says **Sally Hughes**



**A**s someone who has witnessed the transformative effects of alternative education, I wholeheartedly believe that Forest School offers children an unparalleled opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive for all children. Unlike traditional classrooms confined within four walls, Forest School immerses children in nature, allowing them to engage with their environment in ways that nurture their curiosity, resilience, and confidence.

## ***Learning Beyond the Classroom***

One of the most profound benefits of an outdoor education is that it takes education beyond textbooks and the usual tests and grades. What I've witnessed is that instead of passively absorbing information, children in a forest school setting get to actively participate in hands-on experiences, whether it's

building shelters, identifying plants, or learning how to navigate through the woods. This kind of experiential learning fosters problem-solving skills and encourages children to think critically.

## ***Emotional and Physical Growth***

In a world that often feels structured and controlled, Forest School provides children with the freedom to explore and take risks in a safe and supportive environment. Climbing trees, balancing on logs, and even handling tools like whittling knives help build self-confidence and independence. Every small achievement - whether it's lighting a fire or successfully crossing a stream - instills a sense of accomplishment and self-reliance.

Forest School is not just about academic learning; it's also about emotional and social development. When children work together to solve problems, create ➡



***'Forest School is more than just an alternative education model; it is a powerful tool for nurturing well-rounded, confident, and curious individuals'***

nature-based projects, or simply play, they develop essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and empathy. I've seen how children who may struggle in traditional school settings blossom in Forest School, gaining confidence in their interactions and forming deep connections with their peers.

## ***Lifelong Love***

One of the greatest gifts Forest School offers is a deep, lasting connection with nature. In an age where screen time dominates, many children miss out on the joys of outdoor exploration. Through activities like foraging, wildlife observation, and seasonal nature crafts, children develop an appreciation for the environment. This not only benefits their mental and physical well-being but also instils a sense of responsibility for protecting the natural world. It gives them a deeper awareness and a sense of responsibility that they might not otherwise have.

## ***Reducing Stress***

Time spent in nature has been proven to reduce stress, boost mood, and improve focus. I love watching children that might have come to us feeling overwhelmed by being in a traditional classroom setting find solace in the open spaces of the woods. The combination of physical activity, fresh air, and unstructured play fosters overall well-being, helping children feel happier, calmer, and more engaged in learning.

Forest School is more than just an alternative education model; it is a powerful tool for nurturing well-rounded, confident, and curious individuals. By allowing children to explore the world at their own pace, develop resilience, and foster a deep appreciation for nature, Forest School equips them with skills and experiences that will serve them for a lifetime. I truly believe that every child deserves the opportunity to learn in this enriching and inspiring way.

## ***MORE INSPIRATION***

**VISIT:** Forest School Association - The FSA is the professional body and UK-wide voice for Forest School, offering a wealth of information, including a comprehensive reading list and resources for practitioners and parents. [forestschoollassociation.org](https://forestschoollassociation.org)

**WATCH:** What are Forest Schools? In this talk, Joan Whelan explores the concept of Forest Schools, discussing their origins, implementation, and the benefits of nature-based education. [ted.com](https://ted.com)

**LEARN:** Check out Roots to Branches – The Power of Nature Based Education. In this TED talk, Mary Skopec discusses how nature-based education immerses students in learning environments that foster connections to the world and each other, transforming educational experiences across all ages.

**LISTEN:** The Forest School Podcast is hosted by qualified Forest School practitioners, this podcast delves into various topics related to outdoor education, sharing experiences, tips, and discussions on the impact of Forest School on children's learning and development.

**READ:** Forest School Adventure by Dan Westall and Naomi Walmsley - Learn how to light a fire without matches, build a shelter to sleep in, cook on a fire, hunt for bugs and much more.



## Apple Blossom Kindergarten

**WHERE:** Levenshulme, South Manchester

**WEB:** [appleblossomkindergarten.squarespace.com](http://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.

## Kids Adventures

**WHERE:** Prestwich and Salford

**WEB:** [kidsadventures.co.uk](http://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.

## Lancaster School for Independent Learning

**WHERE:** Lancaster

**WEB:** [lisa.l.school](http://lisa.l.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.



KIDS ADVENTURES

## Nest in The Woods

**WHERE:** Warrington

**WEB:** [nestinthewoods.co.uk](http://nestinthewoods.co.uk)

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.

## The Old Vicarage Nature Kindergarten

**WHERE:** Blackburn

**WEB:** [theoldvicaragenursery.co.uk](http://theoldvicaragenursery.co.uk)

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

## Scraffle and Scrow

**WHERE:** Carlisle, Cumbria

**WEB:** [scraffleandscrow.uk](http://scraffleandscrow.uk)

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

## FEATURED



## Maharishi School

**WHERE:** Davies Building, Cobbs Brow Lane, Lathom, Near Ormskirk, L40 6JJ

**AGES:** 4 - 16 **TEL:** 01695 729912

**WEB:** [maharishischool.com](http://maharishischool.com)

Maharishi School, situated in West Lancashire, is a state-funded, all-through school (age 4-16) founded on Consciousness-based Education (CbE). CbE gives pupils direct practical knowledge of their own consciousness and unfolds their creativity and intelligence as a basis for greater achievement. Staff and pupils practise Transcendental Meditation, the cornerstone of CbE, as part of their school day, helping to create a dynamic and harmonious school environment. Inner development leads to outer success! "Pupils are tolerant, considerate and empathetic... they are ambitious, articulate, confident and engage very well with adults." *Ofsted. (2017)* Maharishi School is a non-religious, non-denominational school where pupils of all religious faiths and of no faith are welcomed.

**OPEN DAY:** Saturday 26th April - 10am - 12 noon



## Nant-y-Cwm Steiner School

**WHERE:** Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire

**WEB:** [nant-y-cwm.co.uk](http://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. 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. Students leave as confident, creative and morally capable young people able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

## The Awen Project

**WHERE:** Dinas, Powys

**WEB:** [theawenproject.com](http://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.



NANT-Y-CWM STEINER SCHOOL

## Create Play

**WHERE:** Llandrindod Wells

**WEB:** [createplay.co.uk](http://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.

## Kin Nature Kindergarten

**WHERE:** White Castle, Monmouthshire

**WEB:** [kidsinnature.co.uk](http://kidsinnature.co.uk)

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

## The Lighthouse

**WHERE:** Cardigan

**WEB:** [lighthouselearningproject.org.uk](http://lighthouselearningproject.org.uk)

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



NESTLINGS FOREST SCHOOL

## Nestlings Eco Nursery

**WHERE:** Cardiff

**WEB:** [nestlingsnursery.co.uk](http://nestlingsnursery.co.uk)

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

## Nestlings Forest School

**WHERE:** Various locations, Wrexham and Mold

**WEB:** [nestlingsforestschool.co.uk](http://nestlingsforestschool.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.

## Rooted Forest School

**WHERE:** Talgarth

**WEB:** [rootedforestschool.co.uk](http://rootedforestschool.co.uk)

The Nurture Group 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.

## Woodland Classroom

**WHERE:** Erddig, Wrexham

**WEB:** [woodlandclassroom.com](http://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.



## Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

**WHERE:** By Crieff

**WEB:** [auchlone.co.uk](http://auchlone.co.uk)

Children spend most of their day outside at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten. 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.

## Drumduan School

**WHERE:** Forres

**WEB:** [drumduan.org](http://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.

## Edinburgh Montessori Arts School

**WHERE:** Edinburgh

**WEB:** [emaschool.co.uk](http://emaschool.co.uk)

Creative school for ages one to 18. Through real experiences the children are encouraged to make connections with the world around them.

## Edinburgh Steiner School

**WHERE:** Edinburgh

**WEB:** [edinburghsteinerschool.org.uk](http://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.

## Greenbank Woodland Play

**WHERE:** Clarkson, nr Glasgow

**WEB:** [woodland-play.co.uk](http://woodland-play.co.uk)

Inspiring children aged three to five through positive outdoor experiences and provide them an opportunity to appreciate the natural world.

## Little Acorns CIC

**WHERE:** Ayr

**WEB:** [little-acorns.org](http://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.

## Outlet

**WHERE:** Hamilton

**WEB:** [outlet.scot](http://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.

## The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

**WHERE:** Cupar, Fife

**WEB:** [secretgardenoutdoor-nursery.co.uk](http://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.

## W.I.L.D. Woodland Learning

**WHERE:** Glasgow

**WEB:** [wildwoodlandlearning.co.uk](http://wildwoodlandlearning.co.uk)

Regular Forest School sessions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during term time for home-educated children aged five to 11.

## Dublin Steiner School

**WHERE:** Dublin

**WEB:** [dublinsteiner.com](http://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. In Waldorf education, outdoor play and natural experiences are not an 'extra' at school, but crucial elements that lie at the heart of the student experience and provide the foundation for much essential learning.

## Nature Kindergarten

**WHERE:** Bray, Co. Wicklow

**WEB:** [parkchildcare.ie](http://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](http://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.



EDINBURGH MONTESSORI ARTS SCHOOL



# RUSKIN MILL TRUST SPECIALIST SCHOOLS

Offering innovative, high quality, holistic child-centred provision for day and residential students from ages 6–19

Ruskin Mill Trust applies its research-based method of *Practical Skills Therapeutic Education* to provide young people with holistic learning opportunities. Immersed in the productive aspect of the curriculum, our pupils learn to care for their own wellbeing and development, and overcome their barriers to learning.

Ruskin Mill Trust is an educational charity founded by Aonghus Gordon, inspired by the insights of Rudolf Steiner, John Ruskin and William Morris.

Applications and referrals are taken all year round. Contact us today to find out more or to arrange a visit at a time to suit you.



0330 055 2653



[admissions@rmt.org](mailto:admissions@rmt.org)



[rmt.org](http://rmt.org)

**ASHDOWN  
GARDEN SCHOOL**

Coming soon, East Sussex

**BRANTWOOD  
SPECIALIST SCHOOL**

Sheffield, 7–19

**CLERVAUX  
GARDEN SCHOOL**

Darlington, 10–19

**GRACE  
GARDEN SCHOOL**

Bristol, 7–16

**SUNFIELD  
GARDEN SCHOOL**

Clent Hills, 6–19