

Forest School Association guidance notes

Ofsted Registration for Forest School

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Context

The Childcare Act 2006 introduced changes to the way childcare provision is regulated and inspected in the UK.

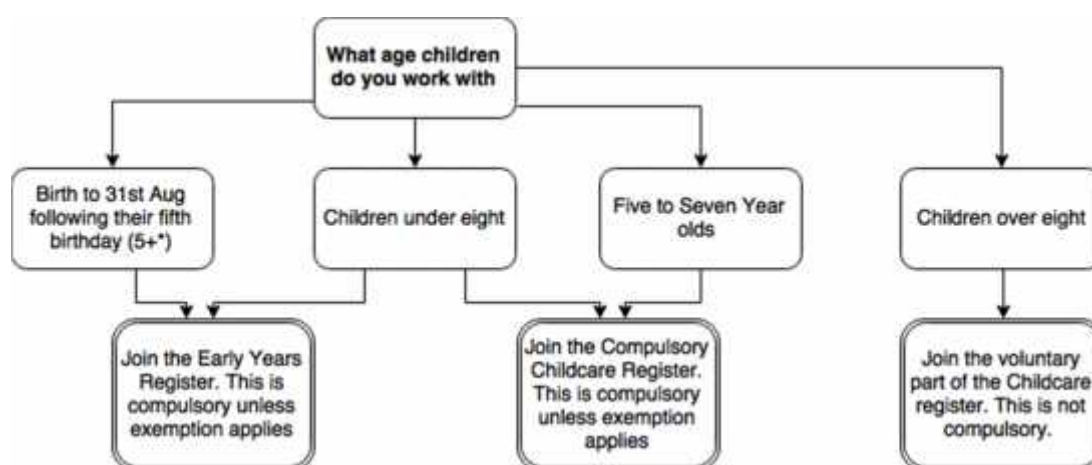
There are a number of different scenarios in which Forest School practitioners will need to register their provision with Ofsted to satisfy the requirements of the Act. However, if the Forest School provision is run *directly* by a school (i.e. the staff are employed by the school governors) and at least one child from the school attends, it will come under the school's own Ofsted registration and does not need to be registered separately.

If sessions are during school time and are run by the school or by a freelance Forest School practitioner or organisation who has a contract with the school, then this comes under the school's Ofsted registration.

If you provide childminding or daycare services and choose **not** to register with Ofsted, you can get an unlimited fine, be sent to prison or both.

Which Ofsted Register applies?

You can register as an individual or as an organisation. To find out if you need to register please look at the flowchart below. This indicates which register you will be required to join depending on the age of the children participating in your Forest School practice unless exemptions apply:



For exemptions see chart on page 2

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Types of registration

Early Years Register

If you are caring for children aged from birth to the 31st August following their fifth birthday, you are legally obliged to register with [Ofsted](#) on the Early Years Register. You will be inspected under the criteria in the [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#) only if children spend the majority of their time in your care. (i.e. your Forest School sessions offer the same level of provision as a nursery or childminder).

Compulsory Childcare Register

If you care for children from the 1st September following their fifth birthday up to the age of eight, you are also required to register on the Compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

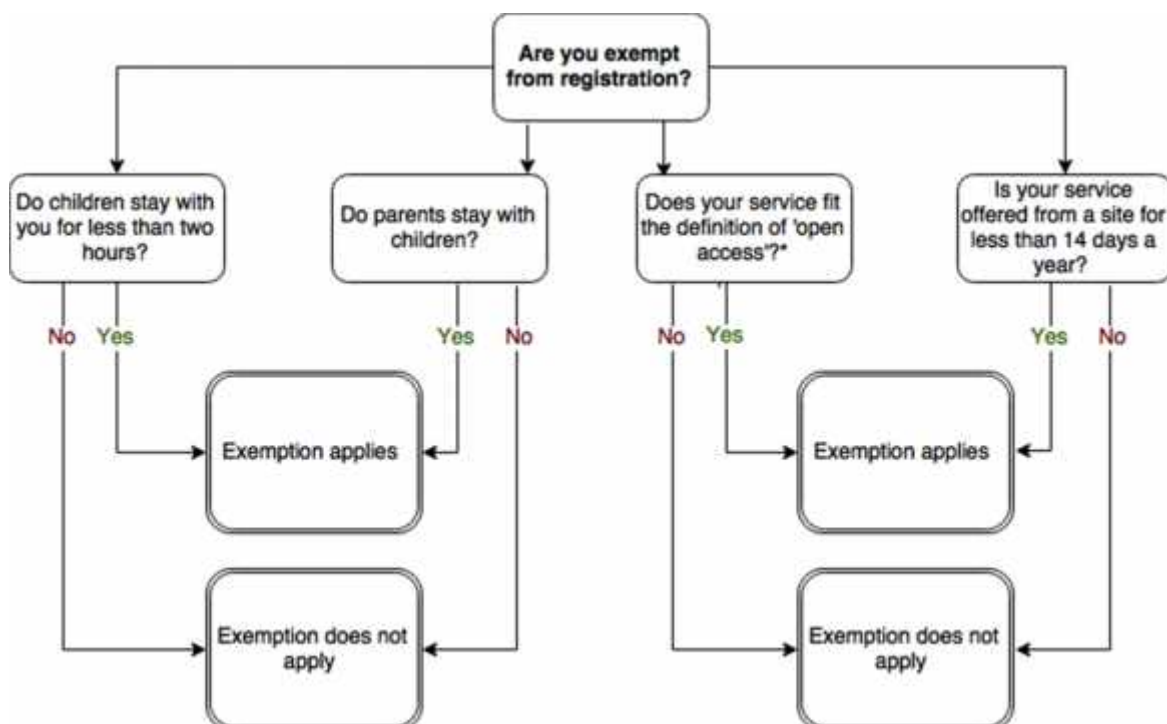
Voluntary registration

If you care for children aged eight to eighteen, you may opt to register with the Voluntary part of the Childcare Register. The voluntary part of the Childcare Register is for childcare providers who, "care for children for whom compulsory registration is not required, for two or more hours in any one day; or for a period less than two hours where this includes care immediately before or after a school day." *Early Years and Childcare Registration Handbook 2016*

If you join the register voluntarily you'll get a certificate. The parents of the children you care for may also be able to get other types of support, like help with childcare costs. You'll need to pay the registration fee and annual fee. You can be inspected.

Exemption from registration

If one or more of the criteria below applies, then you are exempt from registration:



If you wish to operate from an open space or other area with no building as a Forest School, you must still register with Ofsted unless you meet one or more of the exemption criteria outlined in numbers 1–17 of 'Annexe A registration not required' from the [Early Years and Childcare Registration Handbook](#):

- **Less than 2 hours:** You are exempt if you provide care where a child does not stay with you for more than two hours a day, even if the service is open for longer than two hours. *Source: Section 2 of Annex A*
- **Parents are present:** You are exempt if (excluding childminders) you care for children under eight for four hours or less each day and the care is for the convenience of parents who plan to stay on the premises where they are providing care or within the immediate area. This type of provision has no long-term commitment to provide care for children and covers services where children do not necessarily attend every day. *Source: Section 14 of Annex A.*
- **Less than 14 days a year:** You are exempt if (excluding childminders) you care for children under eight from specific premises for 14 days or less in any year, and you let Ofsted know in writing at least 14 days before starting the service. *Source: Section 16 of Annex A.*
- **Open Access:** You are exempt if you provide an open-access scheme for children who are not in the early years age group.
Open-access provision is where children can leave on their own without an adult. However, if you also offer provision for children in the early years age group who attend for more than two hours in any one day, you must register on the Early Years Register and meet its requirements. *Source: Section 15 of Annex A and Regulating Play Based Provision Ofsted factsheet 2011*

A further exemption might apply to a Forest School provider where the main purpose of what they intend to offer is to give instruction or tuition in the activities. Ofsted looks for specific tuition or coaching to help children improve their skills. *Source: Section 11 of Annex A.*

Registration process:

For full details about the Ofsted registration process, see:

www.gov.uk/register-childminder-childcare-provider/how-to-apply

Having decided to offer Forest School sessions that need to be registered, you are advised you to submit your registration application quickly. The registration process can take around 12 weeks if you are registering on the Childcare Register only, and **can take anything up to six months** for the Early Years Register.

From 1 February 2014 Ofsted will accept applications for registration for the Early Years or Childcare Registers via Ofsted Online. Any applications submitted in paper form on or after that date will be returned to the applicant. In order to use the Ofsted Online system, you need to have a Government Gateway account so if you don't already have one you should register for this first via the following weblink: [Log in to the Ofsted Online service](#)

[Creating a Government Gateway account](#)

4.4 Please note **before you submit your online application to Ofsted you need to already have a DBS Disclosure Notice, and to have sent the Health Declaration Booklet to your GP if your role requires this.** If you don't already have a current DBS Disclosure Notice you should apply for one via Ofsted's DBS Disclosure Portal via the following weblink: [More about Ofsted's DBS Disclosure Portal](#)

Note that Ofsted does not normally conduct post-registration inspections of settings that are *only* on the Childcare Register. Instead around 10% of settings on the Childcare Register are inspected at random each year.

Registration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Ofsted registration applies to settings in England only. If you are based in Scotland, Wales or NI you will need to register with the appropriate regulatory authority:

Wales

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)
Telephone 0300 7900 126 or contact the nearest CSSIW regional office for more information.

[Registering with CSSIW](#)

Scotland

The Care Inspectorate (SCSWIS)
Telephone 0345 600 9527 or contact your nearest regional office for more information.

[Registering with the Care Inspectorate](#)

Northern Ireland The Health and Social Care Trusts

Contact your local HSC Trust for more information.

[Contact details for HSC Trusts](#)

This information was correct as of March 2017. You are responsible for undertaking your own research to ensure you comply with legislation.