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If you go down to the woods today...



Pictured with children from Grayswood Nursery are (left-right) Lara Butler, Yvanka Wilkinson, Richard Dean after their forest school was declared 'outstanding' by the national association (NS00-59-10)

PIONEERING Grayswood Nursery has become the first early years provider in Surrey to be given the official seal of approval by the Forest School Association (FSA).

The award recognises the nursery's trail-blazing educational quality, largely founded on the 2011 establishment by Richard Dean, who runs the nursery with his wife Kate, of a dedicated forest school.

Based at a woodland headquarters

nearby, it was modelled on the Scandinavian approach to education, which is all about child-led learning, focusing on all of the senses.

The nursery has the first, and currently only Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' forest school, in Haslemere, and provides year-round outdoors education, with each child experiencing outdoor learning every week during term-time.

Forest schools have become increasingly popular and many education pro-

fessionals come to Grayswood to use it as a blueprint.

Mr Dean, Lara Butler and Yvanka Wilkinson are accredited level three forest school leaders and drive the children in their waterproofs to the base camp close by, for teaching sessions around a log fire with storytelling, songs and outdoor play, all geared to forging a closer connection with nature and building greater resilience.

Mr Dean told *The Herald*: "It's our job

to facilitate that connection, which can get lost in our busy lives

"Forest school significantly adds to their experience and they love it.

"They challenge themselves constantly and that helps them develop.

"It equips them with a greater capacity to cope, which transfers to other areas of their lives. The FSA bought in a system of regulation so that only qualified leaders take part, but we really follow the children's lead."