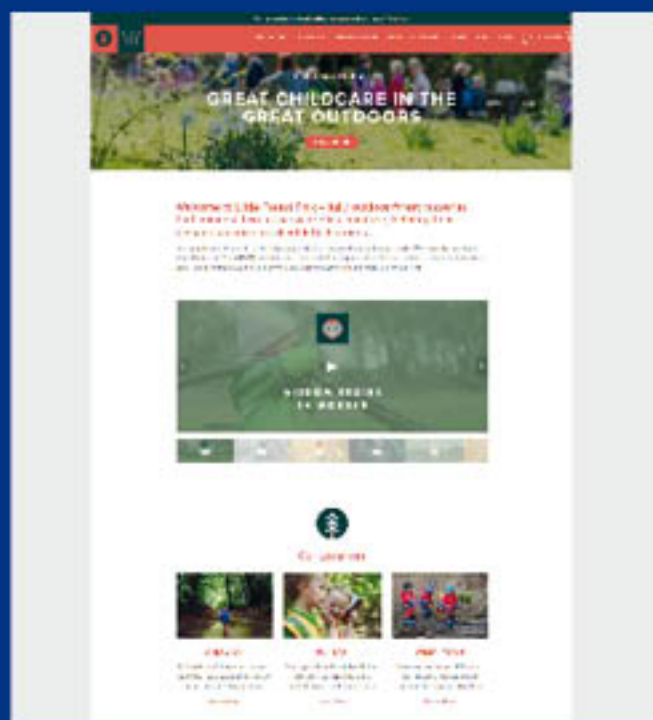


Online and Social Media

Little Forest Folk, London



'We really love being able to check the website to find out any information we need. It's accessible, informative and logical. And, of course, not forgetting Leanna's blogs, which are passionately written and connect with us as parents'
Parent

For the second year running Little Forest Folk has won *Nursery World's* Online and Social Media Award. The nursery group, which operates five (as of this summer) outdoor 'forest' nurseries and holiday camps in London, was founded in 2014 to give children in the capital the opportunity to connect with nature and to learn in a safe as well as stimulating outdoor environment.

Little Forest Folk describes its website as 'responsive, current, relevant and easy to use', and says it reduces the administration of handling common queries. Its site provides

information to current and prospective parents about the nursery's ethos, settings, staff and what the children typically get up to.

It also features Little Forest Folk's recipes and 'vision' blogs. Parents can use the website to sign up to the nurseries' waiting lists and book places on the group's holiday camps. There is also a careers page that the nursery group uses to advertise positions.

The website is regularly updated with weekly news updates from the nurseries, posts which Little Forest Folk says are particularly popular and generate a lot of traffic to the site. In April, one post generated more than 10,000 views.

Little Forest Folk also uses social media to communicate with parents and more widely with local organisations, the media and those interested in the early years and the natural environment.

At the time of entering this award, the nursery group had 3,669 Facebook fans, 1,931 Twitter followers and 845 followers on Instagram, which it uses to reach a younger audience. On its social media platforms the nurseries share photos, videos and blogs showing what the children get up to in the forest, as well as articles, posts about local events, quotes, petitions and their recipes.

Writing on Facebook, one parent said, 'I just wanted to say thank you for sharing so many wonderful adventures and photos on your Facebook page, it really is so inspiring to see children and educators enjoying nature every day. It makes me smile and makes my day that bit more delightful.'

Social media is also used as an advertising tool to promote new settings – a new nursery in Barnes opened in the summer – and recruit staff; currently it is promoting apprenticeships. To reach a wider audience, Little Forest Folk uses paid-for targeted advertising on Facebook. Over a year, the nursery group has spent £260 on social media advertising, which averages at a cost of £22 a month.

Little Forest Folk says social media is useful to build brand awareness, relationships with other early years professionals and influencers, and communicate with others who advocate what they believe in and share ideas.

In the future, the nursery group says that it will be using its social media pages to promote plans for its new school. Across its platforms, it will develop a social media campaign to build awareness, and identify influencers, support and investment. It is also considering using LinkedIn.

Finalists

Mama Bear's Day Nursery,
Bristol
Twinkles Nurseries,
Knaresborough

Criterion

Open to early years providers (nurseries, schools, pre-schools and childminders) and services whose website and use of social media is informative, accessible and innovative