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# Parent & Guardian Handbook 2019-2020

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# About Firs & Fiddleheads Forest School

## Contact Information

- Preschool Phone Number: **(360) 820-2031**
- Preschool Director: Stacy Smith: (360) 223-3393
- Lead Teacher: Liz Holte (Ahi Ahi): [liz@thefirs.org](mailto:liz@thefirs.org)
- Website: [afterschooladventure.org](http://afterschooladventure.org) (preschool website coming in the future)
- Email Address: [FirsandFiddleheads@thefirs.org](mailto:FirsandFiddleheads@thefirs.org)
- Mailing Address: Firs & Fiddleheads • 4605 Cable Street • Bellingham, WA 98229

## Mission/Philosophy

At Firs & Fiddleheads Forest School, we believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn and that they do so by exploring the world around them. We aim to foster curiosity, to guide rather than compel, and to provide room for possibility and adventure rather than attempt to constrain children's interests to fit within a certain curriculum. Our goal is to provide each child with an inviting natural environment to encourage physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth, through a child-driven curriculum, small class sizes, nature immersion, and play-based experiential learning. We aim to convey relationships between all of God's creations - with each other and with the natural world that surrounds us.

## Curriculum

- Child (led) driven learning.
- Throughout the school year, we will be using the Creation Story as a framework for our exploration ... "God created \_\_\_\_\_ and it was good!"
- Other resources used in creating our daily - weekly - monthly lessons is the *Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers*.

# Forest School Schedule

## School Closures & Calendar Changes

We will follow the Bellingham School District schedule - this includes snow days. 2-hour delays will result in class cancellation. Any schedule changes will be communicated to families at the earliest opportunity via email and text.

- September 3rd First Day of School
- September 20th Teacher Workday (school closed)
- October 18th Teacher Workday (school closed)
- November 1st Teacher Workday (school closed)
- November 11th Veteran's Day (school closed)
- November 28th & 29th Thanksgiving (school closed)
- December 23rd - January 3rd Winter Break (school closed)
- February 17th President's Day (school closed)
- March 6th Teacher Workday (school closed)
- April 6th - 10th Spring Break (school closed)
- May 25th Memorial Day (school closed)
- June 11th Last Day of School (subject to change)

## Daily Class Schedule

- 8:00-8:30am - Drop-Off & Station Exploration
- 9:00am - Enter Forest Classroom
- 9:00-9:20am - Welcome Circle & Snack
- 9:20-11:00am - Work Time & Nature Discovery/Exploration
- 11:00-11:30am - Closing Circle & Lunch
- 11:30am - Pick-Up

## Drop-Off/Pick-Up

- Drop-Off - Drop-off is located in our outdoor space next to the K/1st Grade ASA building, just outside of our preschool classroom in the woods. You will need to sign in your child at the sign-in table when you arrive. We will move into our classroom at 8:45am - if you arrive later than 8:45am, you will need to walk your child to the forest classroom.
- Pick-Up - Children will be picked up in our classroom, where we will end the day. You will need to sign your child out at the sign-out table. Pick-up is at 11:30am.
- Late Pick-Up Fee
  - If you are late to pick up your child more than once, you will be charged a late fee of \$5 each following time that your child is picked up late.
  - If there is an emergency that requires you to be late, please call **(360) 820-2031**, so that we may reassure your child that all is okay.

## **Classroom Celebrations & Guests**

- Celebrations, Holidays
  - Our classroom will focus on seasonal changes and events in the natural world rather than commercial holidays.
- Field Trips
  - Field trips will not be a part of our first year of Forest School.
- Guest Teachers
  - We will occasionally invite guest teachers to join us in our classroom who will bring special topics to share. Upcoming guest visitor information will be included in our monthly newsletter.

## **Parent & Guardian Information**

### **Communication**

- If your child will be absent or late on their scheduled day, please notify us by calling or texting the Forest School or emailing [Stacy@thefirs.org](mailto:Stacy@thefirs.org) or [Liz@thefirs.org](mailto:Liz@thefirs.org).
- The Forest School phone number is: **(360) 820-2031**
- Newsletter
  - A monthly newsletter will be emailed out to parents and guardians for parent communication that will include important upcoming class information, special events, and a brief summary of the month, with photos as often as we have them!
- Email
  - If you have specific questions or would like to discuss topics concerning your child, we are there to listen and help! However, we ask that you email us to set up a scheduled time to meet via phone or in person, during non-instruction times, as discussions during drop-off or pick-up can be difficult for staff to provide their full attention to you and to our preschoolers.

### **Parent & Guardian Involvement**

Later in the school year, we will have the opportunity for parents and guardians to volunteer, with more information to come as to how that will be organized.

## What to Bring Daily

- Lunch & Snacks
  - Lunch & snacks will not be provided for your child. Please bring a lunch, snack, and full water bottle (all in reusable containers!). Plan to bring items that do not require refrigeration or heating or that create excess garbage. Extra snacks are always a good idea, as your child will be exerting tons of energy playing outdoors for 3-3 ½ hours! On cold days, we recommend sending your child with warm soup and/or tea in a thermos.
  - In cases of severe allergies, parents may be asked to exclude certain foods from their child's lunch. If your child has an allergy or food restriction, documentation must be on file.
- Gear
  - Please bring a small backpack, labeled with your child's name. This should be small enough for them to comfortably carry, but large enough to fit their lunch and water bottle. A backpack with a chest strap is recommended.
- Clothing
  - As we are an outdoor preschool, your child will get dirty, muddy and wet! However, appropriate clothes will help your child to remain happy, healthy and able to learn. We suggest the following:
    - A warm hat (wool or fleece) and waterproof/insulated mittens
    - Top and bottom long underwear made of fleece, wool, or polypropylene (these materials will stay warm when wet!)
    - A mid, top and bottom layer (fleece, a wool/blend, or a poly-blend)
    - Waterproof rain or snow coat (dependent on weather)
    - Waterproof rain or snow pants (dependent on weather)
    - Wool socks
    - Waterproof rain/insulated snow boots (i.e. Bogs, Muck Boots, Merrell, Keen)
    - Layers, layers and more layers! (Your child can always remove a layer if needed)
  - Just remember, "cotton is rotten"! Cotton wicks moisture, which not only makes us cold and uncomfortable, but can be a safety hazard for hypothermia in temperatures lower than 60 degrees. (Thrift stores are a great option for many of the clothing items listed! Many are stocked with fleece and wool.)
  - Please bring the following on the 1st day, in a Ziploc bag, labeled with your child's name:
    - 2 extra pairs of underwear
    - 2 pairs of socks
    - 1 cozy pants
    - 1 shirt

# Policies & Procedures

## Registration & Enrollment

Our class sizes are kept to 16 students, to best maximize their learning experience. If a day is already full, students will be put onto a waitlist; when space becomes available, students may take open slots. Registration Forms are available online ([afterschooladventure.org](http://afterschooladventure.org)). Space is secured when Registration Forms and fees are submitted.

## Tuition Payment Schedule

- **Payments** can be made by check, money order, Visa or MasterCard, or direct withdrawal. If paying by direct withdrawal, we will need an authorization form on file with the registrar. Email [kim@thefirs.org](mailto:kim@thefirs.org) to get a form.
- **Tuition** is due the first of each month. We offer a 10-day grace period. If payment is not received by the 10th of each month, a \$25 late fee is added to the bill. If you choose to mail a check, please send to:

**Firs & Fiddleheads • 4605 Cable Street • Bellingham, WA 98229**

## Attendance

- **Regular attendance is an important element of your child's success. If your child will be missing class for any reason, please call (360) 820-2031.**
- If attendance is interrupted due to illness longer than 8 days, tuition can be adjusted.

## Withdrawal Policy

- We ask for a month's notice, if your child will no longer be attending school with us.

## When to Call Parent/Guardian to Pick Up Child

- If your child is not yet toilet trained and has an accident, staff will contact you to ask you to come.

# Health & Safety

## Inclement Weather

- Our forest classroom will be used daily as our main classroom, unless weather becomes unsafe. We will move our classroom into the Vanstone Building (located directly next to drop-off), if there are:
  - High winds
  - Temperatures drop below 28 degrees
  - Other conditions that make the forest unsafe

## **Bathrooms**

- Our preschool bathrooms are located inside the Vanstone Building (located directly next to drop-off).
- Toilet trained is preferred, but we also understand that this happens for children at different times. If a child does have a pull-up and an accident, parents may be called to take care of the situation.

## **Health Policy**

- When to keep your child home from preschool:
  - If they have a fever of 100 degrees or more
  - If they have thrown up or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
  - If they have thick green stuff coming out of the nose

## **Immunizations**

- Please fill out and return your child's immunization records with your registration packet, found at [afterschooladventure.org](http://afterschooladventure.org).

## **Food Allergies**

- Food allergies and dietary restrictions need to be documented.

## **Medication Plan**

- Written parental consent is required to administer any medication. All medication, including EpiPens and inhalers, must be in its original container and properly labeled with the child's name, date the prescription was filled or the medication's expiration date, and legible instructions for administration (such as manufacturer's instructions or prescription label). Children may not carry medication (of any kind) in their backpacks or administer medicine themselves.

## **Sunscreen & Insect Repellent**

- We will carry both sunscreen and insect repellent on hand that we can help your child apply if needed, with written permission.