

Forest School Family Handbook

2015-2016

A year-round nature immersion program
for children ages 3½ -6

xxx Rd.
Anytown, VT 0000

www.preschool.herokuapp.com
207-409-2792

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Mission Statement

Forest School offers an early childhood environmental education program that nurtures children's holistic development and lasting connections with nature. We support a diverse and inclusive community of children and families who respect and care for themselves, each other, and the Earth.

Forest School gives equal treatment and access to our program and to current or prospective employees without regard to race, gender, color, religious creed, national origin or ancestry, ethnic group orientation, medical condition, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, family structure, disability, pregnancy or sexual orientation.

Philosophy

Forest School believes in child-centered, inquiry and play-based educational philosophies. Our guiding principles are:

- Play is a child's work
- Children are competent, capable, and resilient
- Relationships are foundational to learning

We view early childhood as an opportunity for children to be introduced to the wonders of nature and to be guided in social and environmental responsibility. We believe children develop respect and compassion for each other and the environment when given opportunities to connect, explore, and discover their world. We understand that children's innate curiosity provides meaningful context for inquiry-based learning and outdoor immersion inspires children's imagination, creativity, and practical skill development.

Our program provides a trusting and supportive environment that helps children feel confident enough to take healthy physical and emotional risks. In addition to being respectful caregivers, educators act as gentle facilitators, mentors, and co-learners aware of each child's individuality, strengths, and challenges. We value and advocate for families, their diversity, unique perspectives and expert knowledge of their children.

Typical Daily Schedule

The program operates Monday through Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm, except for national holidays and other scheduled closures (see School Calendar). We aim to enroll 6-9 children during the first year, so the maximum staff to child ratio is 1:6 while the minimum is 1:4½.

Predictability and routine are very important for young children, in addition to flexibility based on children's needs. Our program will have similar routines each day, but may vary slightly depending on the environment and children's individual and group needs on that particular day.

8:30-8:45am	<u>Drop-off/Arrival</u>	Sign-in, hand-washing, morning check-in*, bathroom visits, clothing check
8:45am	<u>Morning Circle</u>	Greeting, weather observations, safety reminders as needed**

9:00-10:00am	<u>Outdoor Exploration</u>	Child-led play, sensory awareness, hazard identification as needed**
10:00-10:30am	<u>Morning Snack</u>	Organic, vegan snack provided outside
10:30-12:00pm	<u>Outdoor Exploration</u>	Imaginative play, music, navigation and mapping
12:00-1:00pm	<u>Lunch</u>	Food/table preparation, sharing circle
1:00-1:15pm	<u>Reflection</u>	Storytelling, stretching
1:15-2:30pm	<u>Rest/Quiet Time</u>	Napping, quiet books, mark-making
2:30-3:00pm	<u>Afternoon Snack</u>	Organic, vegan snack provided, yoga
3:00-3:30pm	<u>Yard Play/Pick-up</u>	Sign-out, hand-washing, afternoon check-in*

**Morning and Afternoon Check-ins*

Morning Communication is essential to ensuring a positive experience for your child. Please inform an educator upon arriving at school if your child did not sleep well during the previous night, didn't eat breakfast, etc., so that we may be better informed at helping them during the day. Educators will communicate with families and caregivers in the afternoons to share unusual, as well as usual events from the day's activities.

***Hazards and Safety Awareness*

Educators help children identify and learn about potential environmental hazards that exist outside. As a group, we discuss the potentially dangerous object or area and we work together to mark it and create a boundary for future reference. Sometimes educators use a whistle to ask all children to stop where they are and respond with their immediate attention. We regularly share the First Aid Backpack with children and call their attention with songs and rhymes when needed. Educators practice many safety routines, including daily risk assessments of the tools and the environment. While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is our top priority. Please read the Hazards section for additional information related to insect stings and ticks.

Curriculum

Forest School curriculum emerges from children's play, interactions with the natural world, and daily routines. The physical environment is an unlimited source of rhythm, patterns, and inspiration for small and large group projects. Investigations or subjects of study evolve with the group's interests and changing seasons. Educators thoughtfully integrate multiple subject areas and learning domains (i.e. social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, math, social studies, arts, science) by arranging environments and offering open-ended loose parts to provoke children's engagement and curiosity. We practice anti-bias education to promote equity and justice, and challenge stereotypes and inequality with critical thinking and problem-solving.

Our program exposes children to a variety of engaging learning methods and quality materials including diverse children's books, songs, fingerplays, Spanish and English languages, fine arts materials, music, natural materials found on our grounds, and developmentally appropriate technology.

Assessment

Educators document children's progress using portfolio-based assessment. Portfolio entries can be pieces of work, photos, videos, and written notes collected over time by educators and children. Children are inspired to self-reflect on their learning journey and feel proud of their individual growth.

Learning Objectives

Children will practice skills and develop knowledge at their own pace.

Environmental:

- observe and engage with plants, animals and fungi
- practice scientific inquiry
- recognize weather patterns and states of matter
- practice stewardship of the physical environment

Ex. Each day children observe the weather conditions outside through experiencing first-hand how the plants and animals change and adapt throughout the seasons.

Social-Emotional:

- build relationships with others, show and understand empathy
- practice self-awareness, adaptability and resilience
- practice non-violent conflict resolution, advocacy and collaboration
- develop self-regulation, perseverance and flexibility
- listen to others and express feelings safely and productively, especially when dealing with disappointment

Ex. The Montessori concept of a Peace Flower is used regularly when children are experiencing peer conflicts. The process of using the flower allows children to own their feelings and feel empowered by their ability to share their thoughts with others while understanding the importance of listening and respecting others. (See Behavioral Guidance in the Family Handbook for more information on Peace Flowers)

Physical:

- practice risk assessment and risk management
- develop sensory integration and physical coordination
- build gross motor (body awareness, flexibility)
- develop fine motor (grip, hand dominance, object manipulation)

Ex. When children play by pretending to put on a concert using sticks and stumps, they are engaging various senses and practicing physical coordination.

Language and Communication:

- practice verbal and nonverbal expression
- practice listening and following directions
- develop receptive and expressive language
- reason and respectfully articulate feelings and plans with others

Ex. Active storytelling occurs everyday in the program and engages children through asking questions about a story's plot, character and setting along with questions regarding children's predictions and thoughts.

Literacy:

- develop print awareness and letter recognition
- practice identifying and producing letter sounds
- practice rhyming
- develop mark-making (writing and drawing)
- understand, relate to, and communicate oral and written stories

Ex. The Children's Sign-in sheet enables children to explore mark-making and the meaning of print in their everyday routine.

Mathematical Thinking:

- develop shape and color identification
- practice sorting, sequencing, classifying, and counting
- develop number recognition, patterning, quantifying and comparison
- practice one-to-one correspondence

Ex. Collecting acorns and fallen leaves for pretend food among children enables individuals and groups to have an authentic experience with sorting and counting.

Social Studies:

- develop knowledge of self, family, classmates and local community
- develop confidence, positive self-identity and family pride
- express comfort and joy, and use accurate language for human diversity
- recognize unfairness, use language to describe it and understand that it hurts

Ex. Sharing Circles provide opportunities for children to share information about their families. Children bring in a photo(s) and talk about who is in their family.

Creative Arts:

- explore and represent ideas with a variety of visual and performing art
- develop sensory integration
- practice public speaking

Ex. Loose parts are arranged by educators each day and offer opportunities for children to use materials, such as watercolor paints to create a prop for imaginative play or a picture for a family member.

Cognition:

- develop executive functions (i.e. problem-solving, planning and execution)
- practice self-regulation
- develop higher-order thinking (i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, creating)

Ex. During morning meeting, children dictate to an educator where they would like to play or what they would like to work on.

Behavioral Guidance

Educators are dedicated to developing strong relationships with children and families in order to best support children's healthy development. We use positive methods of guidance and behavior management to encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation. We communicate explicit expectations, appropriate boundaries and respectful limit setting. By maintaining a safe and secure environment for all children, it is less common to observe oppositional behavior. The Forest School program environment is designed to offer every child a wide space to explore, unhurried time, plenty of imaginative materials, and appropriate modeling from compassionate and supportive adults. Educators validate children's feelings, reflect back their ideas and help children find ways to express themselves safely and appropriately.

When a child seems stressed, withdrawn or exhibits unsafe or puzzling behavior, we want to address the most common causes: Are they tired? Did they eat and drink enough? Has there been a change in routine at home or at school? When it is clear that a child needs more support, our program provides children with reasonable 1:1 time with an adult. Every child has a right to their feelings, but not a right to hurt others. We will incorporate physical restraint if a child is in danger of severely injuring themselves or others. We use breathing techniques and peaceful spaces for taking a break when needed. Additionally, community meetings can help children resolve issues as a group.

Children are encouraged to resolve their own peer to peer conflicts. For example, children can use the Peace Flower as a part of their own conflict resolution process with peers. This tool is used in Montessori classrooms and has shown many positive results for children as it helps them slow down, share their feelings and listen to others from a place of empowerment. The Peace Flower is similar to a Talking Stick which allows children to take turns and voice their feelings independently.

Challenges and Support Process

We strive to develop trusting and open relationships with families in order to best support children's development. We want to talk with families about important issues like consistency between home and school, age-appropriate expectations, and changes in routines. Educators make

daily observations of all children's development and we need families' observations from home in order to best meet children's needs at school. Families routinely seek out educators for support at one time or another for challenges great and small. Please reach out and share any observations, thoughts and concerns you have. We will actively work with families to explore and find effective strategies for home and school environments that support children exhibiting puzzling and/or challenging behavior, and children with different abilities.

When educators have multiple observations of puzzling, unsafe or unhealthy behavior, we will be in daily communication with the family to discuss strategies and ongoing progress. If we feel that we cannot continue providing safe, accessible and quality care for all children in the program, we will ask the family to seek additional support from specialists. Children and families benefit tremendously from obtaining extra support before a child enters grade school and risks falling further behind. Specialists work with educators and families to help assess and support children with puzzling or challenging behavior and different abilities. We will not seek referrals without written permission from the family. Although our goal is to support all children in our program, Forest School reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment at anytime or to ask that a family withhold their child from the program until additional support can be arranged.

If deemed appropriate, an IEP (Individualized Education Program) will be created in partnership with specialists and implemented as soon as possible. Forest School partners with Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and specialists during the school day. When strategies have been exhausted by the program staff after partnering with additional specialists and a child's progress or behavior has not improved his/her participation to an acceptable level for the needs of the child and overall program, educators will communicate with the family to discuss how to appropriately transition the child to a more supportive environment.

There are many advocacy and support groups for families in the area. Please reach out to an educator for more information regarding early intervention services, caregiver education, advocacy and support groups, professional referrals, and information around IFSPs (Individualized Family Service Programs) and IEPs (Individualized Education Programs).

What to Bring

Each day, children should be prepared with the following items and gear:

- Child is wearing appropriate clothing and gear (see Dressing for the Weather below)
- Child has small backpack with:
 - a full water bottle
 - healthy, whole-foods based, zero waste lunch whenever possible
 - non-aerosol sunscreen, DEET-free insect repellent, and lip protectant (Please apply to your child in the morning. We will re-apply in the afternoon.)
 - small handkerchief in pocket (for nose wiping)
 - empty plastic bag for wet clothes
- Child's cubby is stocked with extra clothing, as needed, in a plastic bag (see Extra Clothing below)
- Nap time blanket and pillow are stored in cubby (if child is enrolled in full day program)

Dressing for the Weather (required!)

"There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate gear."

Forest School is an outdoor preschool. We will spend most of our time outside each day, in rain, snow, or shine, so please be prepared for your child's clothes to get wet and dirty! Children and adults must be dressed appropriately in order to be comfortable and to gain the most out of each day in the program. An educator will be available upon arrival to help ensure that children are appropriately dressed for the day's weather conditions. **If children do not have appropriate gear and clothing, they will not be able to participate in the program.**

When choosing appropriate gear, please keep in mind that we encourage and support all children to be able to dress and relieve themselves each day. Children will be assisted to relieve themselves appropriately outside when a toilet is not accessible and it is best not to have the child undress entirely in order to squat. *For example, bib-style rain or snow pants must fit over the child's jacket, not underneath, so that they may easily pull down their pants for toileting.* If you have concerns, need assistance finding or affording gear, please ask an educator for additional information and help.

Limitations to Time Outdoors: If weather conditions drop below 15 degrees or above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, there is heavy precipitation, thunder, lightning or high winds, children's time outdoors will be limited. Educators follow exposure recommendations from the NOAA website for wind chill factors and frostbite risk. We have many options for indoor activities. Our indoor space is cozy, home-like, and has many natural materials to stimulate and engage children's curiosity.

Required Clothing and Gear

A Note About Shoes	Please work with your child to wear shoes/boots that are comfortable and functional in outdoor settings. <i>Open-toe shoes, such as flip flops are prohibited.</i> Crocs are discouraged for outdoor play. <i>Please leave a pair of slippers (crocs are OK) at school for children to wear indoors.</i>
Cold Weather Gear <i>Layer, Layer, Layer!</i>	Top: Long-Sleeve Wicking Shirt (ex. wool or fleece long underwear), Long-sleeve Insulation Layer (ex. wool or fleece sweater), Vest, Waterproof Jacket with Hood (snow skirt is helpful), Warm Hat, Neck warmer or Balaclava, Insulated Mittens, Waterproof Mittens Bottom: 1-2 pairs of Insulated Pants (ex. wool or fleece long underwear), Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Gaiters or Cuffed Pants for snow, 1-2 pairs Wool socks, Insulated Waterproof Boots

	<Wool blends and synthetic fabrics wick sweat and moisture and dry more quickly compared to cotton blends.
Warm Weather Gear	<p>Top: Fully-Brimmed Sun Hat, Long-sleeve Wicking Shirt, Light Insulation Layer, Vest, Waterproof Rain Jacket with Hood, Bug headnet (optional)</p> <p>Bottom: Long Wicking Pants, Waterproof Pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), Synthetic or Wool Socks, Lightweight Sneakers when it's dry, Waterproof Boots and closed-toe Sandals for splashing</p> <p><Lightly colored, brown and grey pants and long-sleeve shirts are best for sun and bug protection.</p>

Extra Clothing

Please ensure that your child's cubby always has at least 1 complete change of clothes with a minimum of: 2 pairs of wool or synthetic socks, 2 pairs of underwear, 1 long-sleeve shirt, 1 short-sleeve shirt, 1 pair of pants, 1 pair of mittens, preferably waterproof and 1 warm hat. ***Please write your child's first name and last initial on all of your child's clothing and gear tags.***

School Procedures and Policies

Arrival and Dismissal

The school day runs from 8:30am until 3:30pm. The state requires families to Sign-in at the time of children's drop-off and pick-up times, so please ***use the Sign-in and Sign-out sheet twice each day*** your child attends the program. Please also indicate if someone other than an immediate family member or guardian will be picking up your child. *Please note: If you would like to speak with an educator or director for more than a minute or two or if you would like to speak privately, please reach out by email or phone to schedule a specific time to meet.*

Drop-off: An educator will greet you and your child in the morning as you sign-in and wash hands. Please say goodbye to your child by 8:45am, so the program's activities can begin promptly. If children are struggling during drop-off, it is best to comfort them with hugs, to remind them of the plan for pick-up, and to follow through with confidence. Sometimes, personal items such as a family photo, handkerchief, or small soft toy can be kept with the child as a comfort piece to aid in transitions. Thank you for your support and please reach out to an educator with any questions or if you'd like assistance during morning drop-offs.

Pick-up: Please arrive promptly to pick up your child, sign-out, and help them wash hands before leaving school. We cannot extend pick-up time. In extenuating circumstances, please notify the school by phone as soon as possible. Families may be subject to late pickup fees and will be notified in advance.

Under the laws of the state of Vermont, both parents may have the right to pick up their child unless a court document restricts that right. The enrolling parent who chooses not to include the other parent's name on the authorized list for pick-up must file an official court document such as the following: current restraining order, sole-custody decree, divorce decree stating sole custody, judgment of adoption, foster parent documentation. The parent must provide the program with updated legal documents when any changes occur.

Snacks and Meals

Forest School provides a morning snack around 10am and an afternoon snack around 2:30pm. Lunch around 12pm, is *NOT provided* and should be brought from home. We recommend zero-waste lunches that use reusable packaging and promote healthy eating habits. An ideal lunch will be portable and contain natural whole fruits, vegetables and grains. Please avoid using glass containers for food. Warm food stored in a thermos is especially tasty during cold weather months. Forest School will not refrigerate children's lunches or heat food in a microwave.

Meal times are enjoyed while sitting in a circle on the ground, or family-style at picnic tables, so children practice serving themselves. Children will be asked to sit calmly while eating. When a child shows signs of being full, such as playing with their food, an educator will gently remind them to listen to their body and clean-up if they are full. School snacks are posted weekly and will include: fresh water, organic fruit, crackers, and organic vegetables. Snacks are always vegan, meaning they do NOT contain animal products: no dairy, egg or meat. We will work with families to ensure that children with allergies and sensitivities are provided with healthful options. Products served to children, such as cider, will be pasteurized.

Please note, according to VT Child Care regulations, special or therapeutic diets may be served, and changes to basic meal patterns may be accommodated upon written instructions from the child's health care provider, or family.

Nap Time

Preschool-aged children enrolled in full day programs for more than 5 hours per day must be given an opportunity to rest quietly for at least 30 minutes. Children will be encouraged to carry out nap time procedures on their own with assistance and adaptations from educators as needed. Our typical nap time procedure is outlined below.

- establish a comfortable sleep space for child (may be assigned by an educator)
- child gets blanket and soft toy (if applicable) from their cubby
- child takes off their shoes at their space
- child looks at or listens quietly to a book while sitting or lying down at their space
- when music begins, children tuck away their books, lay and rest quietly
- after 30 minutes has elapsed, children may begin to look at books and/or draw quietly

Hazards

While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is our top priority. Beyond conducting daily risk management, all lead and assistant educators are First Aid and CPR Certified. Below you will find important information regarding how we respond to the most significant hazards in outdoor environments: ticks and insect stings.

Ticks

Ticks are very small arachnids and typically completely harmless; however some can transmit disease which can lead to serious illness. Ticks are prevalent and active during warm weather months when the temperature is 40-45 degrees Fahrenheit and above. Even during hot summer days, children and adults involved in the Forest School program must wear long pants, tall socks, long-sleeve shirts and wide-brimmed hats. This type of gear and clothing will help prevent ticks from finding exposed skin to latch on to. A tick bite is not painful and can easily go a few days unnoticed. ***It is imperative that families check their children's bodies each day for suspected tick bites. If your child has been bit by a tick, use tweezers to remove it by grasping straight up and down onto the head (head will be closest to the skin) and pull straight up.*** An indication of a serious illness, Lyme Disease, is a small red ring around the tick bite. Wash the affected area with soap and water and save the tick in a small ziploc bag with a paper towel soaked in mouthwash or alcohol. The alcohol will kill the tick and the bag will save it for identification, if needed. If you believe your child has concerning symptoms, contact your doctor right away.

Bees and Wasps

While bees and wasps are not known to sting unless provoked (and we routinely discuss safe boundaries with living creatures with children), children may encounter a bee or wasp sting. All educators are aware of children with known allergies and will carry appropriate treatments. For children who have no known allergies to insect stings, educators will be vigilant in observing signs and symptoms of an adverse reaction. As stated in the enrollment papers, educators will contact family in the event of an emergency and will contact emergency services first if needed. In most cases, children respond to insect stings with localized pain and inflammation that can be soothed with an ice pack, warm attention and hugs.

Conferences and Communication

We offer conferences for families twice a year, typically each fall and spring in November and April. The conference will address your child's developmental progress and any questions you may have. Informal meetings can be arranged at anytime throughout the year.

Families are asked for their preferred method of communication during the enrollment process. In addition to daily check-ins at drop-off and pick-up, educators will communicate with families through daily blog posts and occasional newsletters (available in print by request) that describe and document classroom activities and upcoming events.

Please communicate with an educator if there have been any life changes in the household and to update contact information as needed.

Family Involvement

Families are always welcome and encouraged to visit the school, share with children and join us on our outdoor excursions. Since we are often outside exploring or on a hike, ideally, families will let us know when they want to visit, so we can be sure to spend time effectively together. Do you have a special hobby, skill, language or story that you would like to share? Would you like to help us with garden projects? We love to have visitors help out and teach us new things. Once a year, families will be requested to contribute to an Annual Satisfaction Survey.

We ask that families who are visiting, dress appropriately for the weather, including wearing similar items that we ask children to wear in order to model appropriate gear (i.e. sun hats). Also, please keep in mind the following school policies when participating in our program:

- *Adults do not help children climb higher than the child can climb by him or herself.*
- *We avoid picking up items that are still alive.*
- *Children may take home pieces that are smaller than a finger and inanimate.*
- *We can use sticks as long as the child has enough space.*
- *Smoking is prohibited on all school property.*
- *Visitors will not take any pictures or videos of the children in our program.*

Media and Toys

We ask children and families to leave toys and screen media at home, including refraining from bringing toys or commercial gifts to school during birthdays or holidays. Please ask an educator if you would like additional information regarding our approach to media and toys.

Traditions and Birthdays

Forest School celebrates classroom traditions that emerge and grow from our community and the natural world around us. We strive to reflect diverse cultural and social identities that empower children and families and resist prejudice and bias. We welcome families to share traditions that reflect their family life or cultural identity. We look forward to partnering with families to find simple, meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways to include these traditions in the program.

We like to acknowledge children's birthdays, with collaboration from the child's family, by creating a Birthday Book. Educators help children record what they like about the birthday child and work together to compile it with art into a book.

Please avoid bringing gifts or party favors to school. We ask families not to bring in birthday party invitations/cards unless all children in the class are included.

Health and Illness

Forest School is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment. We use only non-toxic cleaning solutions and disinfectants that are effective and safe for children and families. When a child (or educator) is unable to comfortably participate in the day's activities and is showing serious signs of illness or injury, we share responsibility with families to exclude that person from the program in order to protect children's health and prevent the spread of disease in our community. Educators will contact families if a child needs to be picked-up early. If immediate

family members are unavailable, educators with contact additional Emergency Contacts. If symptoms require immediate medical attention, educators will contact emergency services and inform families as soon as possible.

Please contact us if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, so we can ensure a safe and healthy environment for all families. We always keep medical information confidential, so we will never use your child's name in connection to a diagnosis.

Children exhibiting the following symptoms must be cleared by child's doctor or be symptom-free without medication (i.e. fever reducer) for 24 hours before returning to the program:	axillary (armpit) fever over 100 ⁰ F, persistent diarrhea (uncontrolled or 5x in 8hrs), vomiting twice in 24hrs, severe coughing (over 10 days), conjunctivitis (or pink eye), ear drainage , sores in mouth or nose
Diagnoses that require notifying our program:	Campylobacter, Chicken pox, Cryptosporidiosis, E. coli, Giardia, Head lice, Hepatitis A, Ringworm, Scabies, Impetigo, Hib, Measles, Mumps, Whooping cough (Pertussis), Rubella, Coxsackie Virus, Salmonella, Shigella, Fifth Disease, Strep Throat, Tuberculosis

Above information has been taken from "Inclusion And Exclusion of Ill Children in Child Care: Guidelines for Common Signs and Symptoms, Illnesses And Conditions Related to Contagious Diseases" by the Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Vermont Department of Health.

Medication

If your child needs prescription or over-the-counter medication during school hours, a permission form must be filled out by the family, including instructions for dosage, possible side effects, and a description of how the medicine should be administered. Please talk with an educator if you need to fill out a permission form for your child's medication.

Absence/Vacation

Please contact us at your earliest convenience by text, email or phone when your child will not be attending due to illness, planned or unplanned absence.

Emergency Closings and Emergency Preparedness

The program will do its best to alert families of Emergency Closings via email or phone no later than 7am on the day of closing. In case of emergency during the day, children will be evacuated and families will be notified as soon as possible.

A complete first aid kit and emergency preparedness plan are kept in educators' backpacks and in the classroom. The backpack also contains emergency contacts, food, water, blankets, books and mark-making materials. All injuries will be communicated to families and a record of injuries will be kept. At minimum, there is always one First Aid and CPR Certified adult working with children. Please inform the director if your child needed medical attention due to an injury that occurred while at school.

Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

Forest School keeps all records and information about your family strictly confidential and private. We abide by Vermont's privacy laws and will release records of information about your family when required by law. This includes releasing information to the Child Development Division, Department of Children and Families, police, and health care professionals. Other than these legal requirements, we will release records of information about your family only with your written permission. The following records of your child are available for your inspection at any time: enrollment forms, medical records, immunization records, attendance records, assessment records, and incident reports. Please contact the director to schedule a time to view these records and/or if you would like to review the Privacy and Confidentiality policy for staff.

Statement of Commitment

Forest School is committed to upholding our legal, professional, and ethical responsibilities to children, families, and educators. We are committed to following all state early childhood care licensing standards and mandated reporting standards for child abuse and neglect. We are also committed to following the professional and ethical standards of the NAEYC's Code of Ethics (revised in 2011) and the Code of Ethical Conduct (2006). Copies of all licensing rules and ethical standards are available from the director.

Safe Departure and Parking Policies

It is the primary responsibility of the educators to ensure your child's safety when in our care. When dropping off or picking up your child, please turn your car off and check-in with an educator before leaving.

Enrollment

- 1) **Initial Contact:** Interested family contacts Forest School
- 2) **Site Visit:** Family and child visit school campus, receive Family Handbook
- 3) Family **Submit an Application for Enrollment**, including \$45 application fee
- 4) If offered a space in the program, **submit an Admission Form + Enrollment Contract, immunization record** and required **payment**
- 5) **Home Visit:** Educator will visit your home to help build connection with family and child, and to help family prepare gear and clothing items
- 6) **Orientation:** 30-60 minute overview of program routine, expectations, and important policies, events and questions

Schedule of Tuition and Fee Payments

There is a non-refundable \$45 application fee that must accompany all Application for Enrollment forms. A non-refundable tuition deposit of the last month's tuition is due upon return of the Admission Form and Enrollment Contract.

If the child is a good fit for the program, but there are no spots available, families may be waitlisted until space becomes available. The Director will contact waitlisted families according to their place on the waitlist with earliest applications being notified first. There is a non-refundable

holding rate due upon enrollment into the program for families wanting a space to be held for their child more than two months in advance of their child's starting date.

Tuition can be paid using one of the payment plans below:

1) Annual payment, paid at least two weeks in advance of starting classes

2) Monthly payments, paid at least two weeks in advance for the first month, then subsequent payments are due on the 15th of each month thereafter

There is a \$20.00 late fee for payments made 7 days overdue and a \$25 NSF (non-sufficient funds) fee for returned checks. Please contact us as soon as possible to discuss a special payment plan if needed. To learn more about economic subsidies and tax breaks that might be available to you, call: 1-800-479-6151 or visit the [Vermont Childcare Subsidy](http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us) website at: <http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us>.

If tuition is over one month late, we will use your last month's tuition for the unpaid month and your child's enrollment will end. No refunds will be given for dates missed due to illness, vacation, national holidays, and inclement weather.

Forest School accepts, personal checks (payable to Forest School), bitcoin, cash, and credit card payments. Credit Card payments have an additional fee to cover card-company transaction fees. When paying by check, please write your child's name and tuition month on the memo line.

Notice of Withdrawal

A written request must be submitted 2 months prior to the withdrawal date in order to give us enough time to fill the space. If we fill the space before two months is through, you may have the opportunity to withdraw earlier. If sufficient notice is not given prior to withdrawal, families are still required to pay for all scheduled days corresponding to the full two month period.

Transitions/Transfers

Educators will work with families to create a plan to help children prepare to transition or transfer to new schools in a way that is consistent with the child's ability to understand the change. We can also help by offering to collaborate and share information between educators when we have a family's permission.

Additional Information

If you are unable to access the internet and you would like to read more about program information and regulations, please visit your local library or talk with an educator to request use of the school computer and internet. Links to resources and the VT Early Learning Standards can be found at the school website. Additionally, the Vermont Early Childhood Regulations can be found at: http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Early_Childhood_Program.pdf

No Babysitting Policy

Educators cannot babysit for families whose children are enrolled in our program.

If families choose to bypass the No Babysitting Policy, a "hold harmless" agreement may be signed by the director, educator and family before babysitting services are rendered.

Concerns, Complaints and Positive Feedback

We want to hear about your experience in our program. Please share concerns, complaints and feedback with an educator or Director. If you feel uncomfortable engaging with an educator or the Director, you may call the Child Care Consumer Concern Line: 1-800-540-7942. This resource can also provide families with information about child care regulations and regulatory histories of individual child care programs.

School Calendar

School is Closed on the following dates for 2015-2016:

Summer: June, July August 1 Holiday, 7 Vacation	Fall: September, October, November 3 Holidays, 4 Vacation	Winter: December, January, February 4 Holidays, 3 Vacation	Spring: March, April, May 1 Holiday, 6 Vacation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Vacation: 1 day in June● Independence Day: July 4th● Vacation: 6 days at end of August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Vacation: 4 days in September● Labor Day: 1st Monday in September● Columbus Day: 2nd Mon in Oct● Veterans Day: November 11th● Thanksgiving Day: 4th Thurs in Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Christmas Day: Dec 25th● Vacation: 3 days in Dec/Jan● January 1st: New Years Day● Martin Luther King Day: 3rd Monday in Jan● President's Day: 3rd Monday in Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Vacation: 5 days in March● Vacation: 1 day in May or April● Memorial Day: last Monday in May

School and Local Contact Information

Location: located at the intersection of xxx Rd and xxx Rd. in xxx, VT.

Street Address: 60 xxxl Rd. xxx, VT 05443

Mailing Address: 60 xxxx Rd. xxx, VT 05443

Owner, Director, Lead Educator: Annabelle Knight

Cell phone #: (207) 409-2792

Email: annabelle.knight@gmail.com

Assistant Educator:

Cell phone #:

School Website: www.preschool.herokuapp.com

Community and State Services

If you have questions or concerns about a child care provider or program in Vermont, call the:

Child Care Consumer Helpline: 1-800-649-2642

or the Child Care Consumer Concern Line: 1-800-540-7942

To report suspected abuse, maltreatment, or neglect of a child, call the Child Abuse Hotline, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week: 1(800) 649-5285 or visit: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting child abuse](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/reporting_child_abuse)

To learn about economic benefits that may be available to you call: 1-800-479-6151

To learn about issues related to child support, call the Child Support Helpline: 1-800-786-3214

To learn about Vermont Children's Integrated Services (CIS), visit:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cis> or call:

Burlington Contact: Ann Dillenbeck (802) 860-4426 ann.dillenbeck@chittendencis.org

Middlebury Contact: Sue Bloomer (802) 388-3171 sbloomer@addisoncountypcc.org

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children(WIC):

<http://healthvermont.gov/wic/>