

# Forest School Family Handbook

2017-2018

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

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Anytown, VT 0000

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## **Table of Contents**

[Mission Statement](#)

[Philosophy](#)

[Typical Daily Schedule](#)

[Curriculum](#)

[Assessment](#)

[Behavioral Guidance](#)

[Support](#)

[What to Bring](#)

[What to Wear](#)

[Clothing and Gear Guide](#)

[Extra Clothing](#)

[Items from Home](#)

[School Procedures and Policies](#)

[Drop-off and Pick-up](#)

[Snacks and Meals](#)

[Rest Time](#)

[Physical Play](#)

[Hazards and Safety](#)

[Ticks](#)

[Bees and Wasps](#)

[Conferences and Communication](#)

[Family Involvement](#)

[Traditions and Holidays](#)

[Health and Illness](#)

[Medication](#)

[Absence/Vacation](#)

[School Closings and Emergency Preparedness](#)

[Confidentiality and Privacy](#)

[Statement of Commitment](#)

[Safe Departure and Parking](#)

[Enrollment](#)

[Schedule of Tuition and Fee Payments](#)

[Notice of Withdrawal](#)

[Transitions/Transfers](#)

[Additional Information](#)

[Babysitting/Nannying](#)

[Concerns, Complaints and Positive Feedback](#)

[School Calendar](#)

[School and Local Contact Information](#)

## Mission Statement

Forest School offers an early childhood environmental education program that nurtures children's development and lasting connections with nature. We support a diverse and inclusive community of children, families, and educators 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 discrimination based on age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnic group orientation, family structure, gender, gender identity or expression, marital status, medical condition, national origin, race, religious creed, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

## Philosophy

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

- Children are competent, capable, and resilient
- Experiences in nature develop children's sense of belonging and curiosity
- Relationships are foundational to learning

We believe children develop respect and compassion for themselves, each other, and the environment when given opportunities to take risks, make connections, explore, and discover their world. We understand that children's innate curiosity invites 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 for children to develop self-confidence, empathy, social and environmental responsibility.

Educators practice anti-bias approaches to learning that promote equity and justice, and empower all children to reach their full potential. In addition to being respectful caregivers, educators act as gentle facilitators, mentors, and co-learners supportive of each child's unique identity, 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 preset holidays and other scheduled closures (see School Calendar). The maximum staff to child ratio is 1:6. Our program will have similar routines each day, but may vary slightly depending on the environment and children's individual and group needs and interests on that particular day.

8:30-9:00am	<b><u>Arrival and Sign-in</u></b>	Children use the bathroom, wash hands, and check-in before outdoor play
9:00-9:15am	<b><u>Greeting</u></b>	Sing a welcome song, discuss adventure plan and weather predictions for the day

9:15am-12:15pm	<b><u>Outdoor Adventure</u></b>	Hike to base camp with time for imaginative play, sensory exploration, hazard identification* (healthy snack provided)
12:15-1:00pm	<b><u>Picnic Lunch</u></b>	Children eat lunch brought from home and reflect on morning activities with the group
1:00-2:00pm	<b><u>Rest/Quiet Time</u></b>	Educators share books, oral stories, and provide soft cots and art materials
2:00-3:30pm	<b><u>Outdoor Exploration</u></b>	Project work, dramatic play, and snack provided. Children wash hands and check-out before departing

*\*Hazard Identification: Please see Safety and Hazards for more information*

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum emerges from the natural world, children's interests, play, and daily routines. Children's self-directed activities, especially in the outdoors, guide their most meaningful, memorable, and foundational learning experiences. Play scenarios, discussions, and projects extend over weeks and months allowing for more in-depth learning compared to predetermined thematic units and curriculum. Children develop skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making while accomplishing tasks that are important to them.

Throughout daily activities, educators support children's holistic growth, including their emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development. The physical environment is an unlimited source of rhythm, patterns, and inspiration for small and large group projects and investigations that incorporate science, math, language arts, social studies, and creative arts. The program includes high-quality learning methods and materials such as diverse genres of literature, woodworking and baking activities, songs and fingerplays, developmentally appropriate technology, musical instruments, fine arts and natural materials found in nature.

### **Assessment**

Educators document children's progress using portfolio-based assessment. Portfolio entries include pieces of work, photos, videos, and written notes collected over time by educators and children. Throughout the process, children are encouraged to self-reflect on their learning and feel proud of their individual growth. Educators use their expertise in child development and examine current research to inform appropriate learning goals (i.e. scientific reasoning, mathematical thinking, language, communication, social, emotional and physical achievements). For a more detailed description of learning goals, please see the school website.

### **Behavioral Guidance**

Educators are dedicated to developing strong, trusting relationships with children that focus on healthy social and emotional development. The Forest School environment is designed to support children's engagement and self-regulation by offering substantial physical space,

unhurried time, plenty of imaginative materials, and appropriate modeling from compassionate adults. Educators communicate explicit expectations, appropriate boundaries, and respectful limit setting, in addition to validating children's feelings and helping them find ways to express themselves safely and appropriately. We model deep breathing to facilitate self-control and children hold community meetings to help resolve community issues as a group.

When a child seems stressed, withdrawn or exhibits unsafe or puzzling behavior, we use positive methods of guidance that support self-direction, positive self-esteem, and cooperation. We also 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' bodies or feelings. We will use physical restraint only if a child is in danger of severely injuring oneself or others.

### **Support**

Children benefit when educators and families partner together to support children's well-being. While educators make daily observations of each child's development, they need families' observations and advice regarding what's working at home in order to best meet children's needs at school. It is often helpful for educators and families to discuss topics like changes in school and home routines, behavior, age-appropriate expectations, and long and short-term goals. Families routinely seek support from educators at one time or another for challenges great and small. Please communicate with an educator or director to share any observations, thoughts, or concerns you have regarding your child's behavior and development so we can explore and find effective strategies for both home and school environments that support children with various behaviors and abilities.

When educators have multiple observations of puzzling, unsafe, or unhealthy behavior, they will be in daily communication with the family to discuss observations and strategies. If staff feel that they need more support to continue providing safe, accessible, and quality care for all children in the program, they will ask the family to seek additional help from specialists. Staff will not seek referrals without written permission from the family.

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 inside and outside school to help assess and support children with puzzling behavior and different abilities.

Educators partner with state-sponsored resources like Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and private child development specialists during the school day to help support individual child and classroom needs. If deemed appropriate, an IEP (Individualized Education Program) will be created in partnership with specialists and implemented as soon as possible.

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).

When the director deems that strategies have been exhausted by the program staff and a mutually agreeable solution cannot be reached, educators will communicate with the family to discuss how to appropriately support the child's transition out of the program. In the event of a transition to a new program, staff will work with the family and provide information to new program staff if given express written permission from the family. Although school staff aim to support all children in the program, Forest School reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment or to ask that a family withhold their child from the program until additional support can be arranged. In such cases, written notice will be provided to the family at least five days prior.

### **What to Bring**

Each day, children need to be prepared with the following items labeled with their name:

A small backpack:

- 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.)
- empty plastic bag for wet or soiled clothes
- extra change of clothes in a plastic bag (see Extra Clothing below)

Child has a cubby at school for storage of a rest time blanket from home (a soft toy is optional) which needs to be washed every weekend at home. An additional set of extra clothing also needs to be stored in a plastic bag and kept stocked in the child's cubby at school.

### **What to Wear**

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

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.

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 outside when a toilet is not accessible and it is easier not to have the child undress entirely in order to squat. *For example, if using bib-style rain or snow pants, it's easier if they fit over the child's jacket, not underneath.* **If you have concerns, need assistance finding or affording gear, please ask an educator for additional information. There are affordable second-hand stores and local resources that can 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. There are many options for indoor activities. The indoor space is cozy, home-like, and has many natural materials to stimulate and engage children's curiosity.

## Clothing and Gear Guide

<b>Shoes</b>	Please work with your child to wear shoes and boots that are comfortable and functional in outdoor settings. <b><i>Open-toe shoes and sandals (i.e. crocs) are not suitable for outdoor play.</i></b> Please provide a pair of slippers (crocs are OK) at school for children to wear indoors.
<b>Cold Weather Gear</b>  <i>Layer, Layer, Layer!</i>	<p><b>Top:</b> long-sleeve wicking shirt (i.e wool or fleece long underwear), long-sleeve insulation layer (i.e wool or fleece sweater), vest, waterproof jacket or suit with hood (snow skirt is helpful), warm hat, neck warmer or balaclava, insulated mittens, waterproof mittens</p> <p><b>Bottom:</b> 1-2 pairs of insulated pants (i.e. wool or fleece long underwear), waterproof pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), gaiters or cuffed pants for snow, 2 pairs of wool or synthetic crew socks, insulated waterproof boots</p> <p>● <i>Wool blends and synthetic fabrics wick sweat and moisture, and dry more quickly compared to cotton blends</i></p>
<b>Warm Weather Gear</b>	<p><b>Top:</b> sun hat, long-sleeve wicking shirt, light insulation layer, vest, waterproof rain jacket with hood, bug headnet (optional)</p> <p><b>Bottom:</b> long wicking pants, waterproof pants (can be bib-style if worn over jacket), synthetic or wool crew socks, lightweight sneakers when it's dry, waterproof boots and closed-toe sandals for splashing</p> <p>● <i>Lightly colored, brown and grey pants, and long-sleeve shirts are best for sun and bug protection</i></p>

### Extra Clothing

Please ensure that your child's cubby always has at least one complete change of clothes (i.e. long-sleeve shirt, pants, underwear, socks), plus an extra pair of underwear, and in winter: extra socks, mittens (preferably waterproof) and a warm hat. ***Please write your child's first name and last initial on all of your child's clothing and gear.***

### Items from Home

When choosing which items to include with your child, clothing, toys and other items like a backpack or lunchbox that feature trademarked characters are inappropriate for school. Characters from television shows and movies are important to many children and families, and educators don't prevent children's imaginative role play when it includes such characters, however the presence of those character images creates a different learning environment for the group. The Forest School program thrives on engaging children's imagination with their peers and with nature in a productive and creative space. Please help your child leave toys at home unless

pre-arranged with an educator (or if it's a soft toy for rest time). If you have any questions about this policy, please contact an educator.

## **School Procedures and Policies**

### **Drop-off and Pick-up**

The school is open from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Families are required to sign their children in at drop-off and out at pick-up. Please ***use the Sign-in and Sign-out sheet twice each day*** your child attends the program and indicate if someone other than the primary family members or guardians will be picking up your child. Families may pick-up their children without prior notice. If possible, please call the school to coordinate early pick-ups.

**Drop-off Procedure:** An educator will greet you and your child in the morning as you sign-in and wash hands with your child. Please say goodbye to your child by 9:00am, so the program's activities can begin promptly.

**Separation Anxiety:** If a child is struggling during drop-off, it is best to comfort them with a hug, 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 comfort the child during transitions. Please reach out to an educator with any questions or if you'd like assistance during morning drop-offs.

**Pick-up Procedure:** Please arrive promptly to pick up your child, sign-out, and help them wash hands before leaving school. If you would like to spend a couple minutes checking-in, please arrive by 3:15pm. Staff 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.

*Daily check-ins in the morning and afternoon are essential to ensuring a positive experience for your child. Educators will communicate with families and caregivers to share unusual, as well as usual events from the day's activities, and staff expect families to share significant changes in a child's routine at home. Significant variation or disruption at home (e.g. new baby, divorce) could benefit from a more in-depth conversation around how to best support your child while they're at school. If you would like to speak privately with an educator or director, please reach out by email or phone to schedule a time to meet.*

### **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 needs to be brought from home. Meals 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 feeling full.

An ideal lunch is portable, incorporates reusable packaging, promotes healthy eating habits with whole fruits, vegetables, and grains, and includes balanced portions of protein, carbohydrates, limited saturated and trans fats and added sugar. Please avoid using glass



containers. To keep perishable foods fresh, refrigerate lunch overnight and pack it with two freezer packs in the morning. To keep food warm, a thermos is a good option.

School snacks are posted weekly and will include: water, fruit, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. When possible, staff source local food that has been grown using organic practices. Educators will work with families to ensure that children with allergies, restrictions and sensitivities are provided with healthful options.

### **Rest Time**

Children will be encouraged to carry out rest 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 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

### **Physical Play**

Big body physical play also known as rough-and-tumble play includes activities like running, chasing, rolling, jumping, climbing, tagging, grabbing, and wrestling. When children are willing participants, smiling, laughing and responsive to each other's emotions, active physical play benefits children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Children may not engage in play that causes pain or involves unwanted aggression and contact with the head and neck.

### **Hazards and Safety**

While there are unique hazards associated with outdoor learning, safety is the school's top priority. Educators carry backpacks with safety supplies and cell phones, are First Aid/CPR Certified, and have been trained in a comprehensive set of emergency preparedness plans and procedures. We conduct daily safety routines including headcounts and risk assessments of individuals, materials, and the environment. Children work with staff to identify and discuss boundaries, potential hazards, and how to approach healthy risk-taking in their play and explorations. While all children must stay within sight and hearing distance of an adult, each child is given a safety whistle and instructed how to use it in an emergency.

Below you will find important information regarding how educators respond to two of 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 are encouraged to wear long pants, tall socks, and long-sleeve shirts. Participants are always asked to wear 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 children and staff routinely discuss safe boundaries with living creatures), 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 families 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**

Educators offer family conferences at least twice a year, typically each fall and spring in November and April. The conference will address your child's developmental progress, achievements, and any questions you may have. Additional meetings can be arranged at anytime throughout the year. Staff expect families to raise concerns or problems directly with educators or the director as needed. In addition to daily check-ins at drop-off and pick-up, educators will communicate with families through posts online 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 changes in the household and to update preferred contact information as needed.*

### **Family Involvement**

The most important family involvement happens outside of school. Some meaningful ways to support your child's education and development include engaging your child in conversation about their activities at school, reading and spending time in nature together, and modeling learning at home.

Families are invited to participate in special events and gatherings throughout the year to join families and celebrate children's achievements. Family members are also welcome to share their interests and talents with the class or join their child on an outdoor excursion. If you would like to visit, please contact an educator to discuss how you'd like to be involved and to pre-arrange a date and time. Educators also offer conferences twice per year (see Conferences and Communication) and once per year the director requests feedback from families in a survey regarding their program experience.

When joining the class for a visit, please dress appropriately for the weather including wearing and modeling appropriate foot and sun protection (i.e. wearing sun hats, closed-toe shoes) and keep in mind the following school policies:

- *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.*
- *Smoking is prohibited on school property.*
- *Visitors may not capture photos or video without written permission.*

### **Traditions and Holidays**

Classroom celebrations 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. While traditions and holidays are important to many families, it is inappropriate to bring gifts, desserts, and party favors to school without pre-planning with an educator. If you'd like to share traditions including artifacts and food with the class, please contact an educator or director to make a plan in advance. We look forward to partnering with families to find simple, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate ways to include special family traditions in the program.

If families would like educators to acknowledge a child's birthday at school, staff will help children create a Birthday Book and prepare a special, healthy snack to share. If families want to distribute party invitations to children at school, cards must be addressed to all children.

### **Health and Illness**

Forest School is committed to maintaining a healthy learning environment. We use only non-toxic cleaning solutions and disinfectants that are effective and safe for children, families, and the ecosystem. Children and educators wash their hands regularly upon arrival at school, before eating, after going to the bathroom, upon departure, and after sneezing, coughing, and nose-blowing into their hands. Staff encourage children to cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue in order to reduce the spread of germs. When proper toileting facilities are not available, educators assist children in going to the bathroom outside (with respect to privacy, hygiene, and environmental impact) using liquid soap and water to wash hands afterwards. At times, non-toxic hand sanitizer spray and wipes may be used in place of liquid soap and water.

When a child (or educator) is unable to comfortably participate in the day's activities and is showing serious signs of illness or injury, Forest School staff will provide a separate, comfortable space for the child to rest until they can be picked up. In order to protect children's health and prevent the spread of disease in our community, educators share responsibility with families to exclude individuals exhibiting serious signs of injury or infectious disease. Educators will contact families if a child needs to be picked-up early. If family members are unavailable, educators will contact additional Emergency Contacts. If symptoms require immediate medical attention, educators will contact emergency services and inform families as soon as possible. Please inform the director if your child needed medical attention due to an injury that occurred while at school.

***If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please let us know so we can ensure a safe and healthy environment for all families. We will never give out individual health information, even if we are informing families of possible exposure to a reportable communicable disease.***

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) <b>fever</b> over 100°F with behavior change, persistent <b>diarrhea</b> (uncontrolled or 2x more than is typical), <b>vomiting</b> with stomachache, <b>severe coughing</b> (over 10 days), a type of viral <b>conjunctivitis</b> , ear <b>drainage</b> , <b>sores</b> in mouth or nose
Staff will inform families of communicable diseases that have been diagnosed in our community such as:	Campylobacter, Chicken pox, Head lice, Cryptosporidiosis, E. coli, Giardia, Hepatitis A, Ringworm, Scabies, Impetigo, Hib, Measles, Mumps, Whooping cough (Pertussis), Rubella, Coxsackie Virus, Salmonella, Shigella, Fifth Disease, Tuberculosis, Viral gastroenteritis

*Please see "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 for a description of illnesses common to children in child care, their management, and precautions to address the needs and behavior of the child who is ill and others in our community.*

### **Medication**

Whenever possible, it is best to administer medication to your child at home. If your child needs prescription or over-the-counter medication during school hours, families will complete consent and medication administration forms which include instructions for dosage, possible side effects, and a description of how the medicine needs to be administered. All medication needs to be in its original packaging with an appropriate administration device. Educators will work with families to create medical action plans for individual children if needed. Please talk with an educator if your child needs medication to be administered during school hours.

### **Absence/Vacation**

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

### **School Closings and Emergency Preparedness**

The program will do its best to alert families of school closings and delayed starts via email or phone no later than 7am on the day of closing. In case of an emergency or deteriorating weather during the day, children will be evacuated as needed and families will be notified of an early closing.

All staff are familiar with the emergency plans, procedures, and their roles. A complete first aid kit, comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plans (e.g. monthly fire drills, procedures for indoor and outdoor fires, sheltering-in-place, medical emergencies) are reviewed with all staff, updated annually, and kept in educators' backpacks and in the classroom at all times.

Educators' emergency backpacks also contain emergency contacts, food, water, blankets, books, and drawing materials. There is always at least one First Aid and CPR Certified adult working with children, and all injuries will be recorded and communicated to families.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy**

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 only 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 express 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**

It is the primary responsibility of the educators to ensure each child's safety when in care. When a person authorized to pick up a child, is unknown to the staff, their identity must be verified (e.g. check identification) prior to releasing the child. When an emergency request is made by a family member via telephone for the child to be picked up by someone not listed, there shall be a system to verify the identity of both the caller and the person being authorized to pick up the child.

When dropping off or picking up your child, please turn your car off.

### **Enrollment**

- 1) **Initial Contact:** Interested family contacts Forest School
- 2) **Site Visit:** Family and child visit school campus, receive Family Handbook
- 3) Family Submits an **Application for Enrollment**, including \$45 application fee
- 4) If offered a space in the program, **submit an Admission Form + Enrollment Contract, immunization and wellness records** and required **payment**
- 5) **Home Visit:** Educator will offer to visit your home to help build connection with family and child (~20 minutes)
- 6) **Orientation:** Overview of program routine, expectations, and important policies, events and questions (~60 minutes)

### **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 one month 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 Child Care 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, federal 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 express written 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](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Early_Childhood_Program.pdf)

### **Babysitting/Nannying**

Forest School staff do not provide caregiving services outside of school hours for families whose children are enrolled in the program. If families choose to bypass this policy, a “hold harmless” agreement may be signed by the director, educator, and family before caregiving 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:

<b>Summer: June, July, August</b> 1 Holiday, 4 Vacation, 1 PD	<b>Fall: September, October, November</b> 4 Holidays, 1 Vacation 1 Half-day for conferences?	<b>Winter: December, January, February</b> 4 Holidays, 1 Vacation	<b>Spring: March, April, May</b> 1 Holiday, 4 Vacation, 1 PD, 1 Half-day for conferences?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vacation: 1 day in June</li> <li>● 1 Professional Development Day in June</li> <li>● Independence Day: July 4th</li> <li>● Vacation: 3 days at end of August</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labor Day: 1st Monday in September</li> <li>● Indigenous People’s Day/ Columbus Day: 2nd Mon in Oct</li> <li>● Veterans Day: November 11th</li> <li>● National Day of Mourning/ Thanksgiving Day: 4th Thurs in and Fri in Nov</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Christmas Day: Dec 25th and 1 day in December</li> <li>● January 1st: New Year’s Day</li> <li>● Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day: 3rd Monday in Jan</li> <li>● President’s Day: 3rd Monday in Feb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vacation: 4 days in March</li> <li>● 1 Professional Development Day in April or May</li> <li>● Memorial Day: last Monday in May</li> </ul>

### **School and Local Contact Information**

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

Street Address: xx xxxl Rd. xxx, VT 05443

Mailing Address: xx xxxx Rd. xxx, VT 05443

Owner, Director, Lead Educator: Annabelle Knight

School Cell phone #: (207) 409-2792

Email: [annabelle.knight@gmail.com](mailto:annabelle.knight@gmail.com)

Assistant Educator:

Cell phone #:

School Website: [www.preschool.herokuapp.com](http://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 or visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ccfap>

To learn about issues related to child support, call the Child Support Helpline: 1-800-786-3214 or visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/child-support>

To learn about Vermont Children's Integrated Services (CIS), visit: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/child-development/cis> or call: [\[add local contact\]](#)

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

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

Food and Nutrition Support: 3SquaresVT <http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/3SquaresVT>

Federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): <http://healthvermont.gov/wic/>