



FIRS & FIDDLEHEADS FOREST SCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

JUNE 2025

www.firsandfiddleheads.org



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WELCOME

From The Director

Dear Families,

Welcome to Firs & Fiddleheads! We're honored to be part of your child's journey in the forest. Our team is passionate about nurturing curiosity, kindness, and confidence through outdoor learning and play. Our forest school was established with these traits at our core. Over the years, it has been a joy to see children thriving with nature as the best classroom, letting play and curiosity drive learning, all while being reinforced with the confidence that God uniquely loves each of them.

We can't wait to see what your child discovers this year!

Warmly,

Cameron "Akeela" Sandgren
Forest School Director | cameron@thefirs.org



Our Five Goals

- *Kindness—*
 - *to our natural world and each other*
- *Curiosity—*
 - *encouraging exploration and discovery*
- *God Made Me—*
 - *celebrating each child's uniqueness*
- *God Loves Me—*
 - *helping children know they are cherished*
- *God Has a Special Plan for Me—*
 - *inspiring purpose and hope*

School Info

Phone: (360) 410-4207

Email: firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org

Mailing Address: 4605 Cable Street,
Bellingham, WA 98229

Physical Address: 1150 Geneva Street,
Bellingham, WA 98229



HEALTH & SAFETY



BOUNDARIES & SUPERVISION

How our Forest classroom and teachers work together to foster growth.

WEATHER

Prepared for rain, shine, and everything in between.

EMERGENCIES & FIRST AID

Ready to respond to emergencies, bumps, scrapes, and everyday needs.

ILLNESS, ALLERGIES, AND MEDICINES

Keeping our community healthy so everyone can thrive outdoors.



BOUNDARIES & SUPERVISION

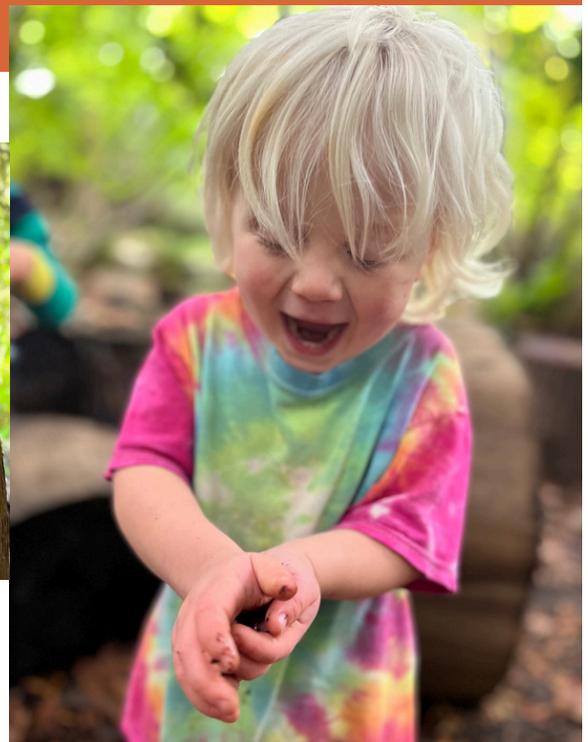
Empowering safe exploration

At Firs & Fiddleheads, we have lots of space where children are free to explore and grow—always within clear boundaries that keep everyone safe.

- **Setting Boundaries:** At the start of each program, teachers show children where it's safe to play using cones, flags, or natural markers. Boundaries are revisited regularly, especially in new areas or as seasons change.
- **Supervision & Communication:** We maintain a low adult-to-child ratio (at least 1:6) and use walkie-talkies to stay connected. Visual and verbal “handoffs” ensure children are always accounted for, even when moving between spaces.
- **Fostering Independence:** Children are encouraged to practice independence—like walking short distances—while staff keep a close watch and step in if needed. This helps build confidence, spatial awareness, and trust.
- **Safety Practices:** Staff maintain visual contact with every child at all times; activities that block supervision (like traditional hide-and-seek) are not part of our program. Only authorized adults may pick up children, and we always verify identification for new faces.

If a child struggles with boundaries, we partner with families to find supportive solutions.

Why It Matters: Clear, caring boundaries help children explore with confidence and grow into capable, independent learners—knowing a supportive team is always nearby.





WEATHER

Rain or shine adventures!



Rainy Days

Playing in the rain is part of the fun! Please dress your child in waterproof gear (see "What to Wear" for details) so they can enjoy every adventure.

Cold Weather

Warm layers—hats, mittens, and insulated clothing—keep everyone cozy. We adjust activities as needed for comfort and safety.

Hot Weather:

We prioritize shade and hydration. Send a water bottle, apply sunscreen at home, and include a sun hat when needed.

Extreme Weather

We move inside if:

1. There are high winds (whole trees swaying),
2. Air quality is worse than 100 AQI, or
3. Temperatures drop below 20°F with windchill.

If heavy snowfall makes travel hazardous, we may delay or cancel school. Families will be notified promptly via Procure.



Pack It In, Pack It Out

We are committed to caring for our forest classroom and teaching children to be thoughtful stewards of the natural world. That means everything we bring into the forest—food, wrappers, personal items—must be packed out at the end of each day. Please help us model this important practice of “leave no trace” for the next generation.



EMERGENCIES & FIRST AID

Safety is always our top priority.

In Case of Emergency

Our staff are certified in first aid and CPR, and are prepared to handle emergencies with care and confidence.

- **Medical:** Minor injuries are treated on-site; parents are contacted immediately if professional medical attention is needed.
- **Emergency Communication:** Please keep Procure active on your phone. Staff carry charged mobile phones and will contact emergency services if needed. Families are informed promptly about any serious incidents via Procure message or phone call to your phone number listed in Procure.
- **Shelter-in-Place:** If there is an unauthorized person or threat in our forest, classes will return to the building immediately and lockdown procedures will be followed until the threat is removed.
- **Evacuation:** In rare cases requiring evacuation (e.g., fire), staff and children will relocate to the field across the street. Staff maintain supervision at all times, and parents/guardians will be contacted via cell phone.

First Aid for Accidents & Injuries

The forest offers endless opportunities for exploration—and sometimes bumps and scrapes come with it!

- **Minor Injuries:** Scrapes and cuts are cleaned with soap and water and bandaged as needed. Parents may receive notification via Procure or at pick-up.
- **Head Injuries:** All head injuries are reported immediately via Procure; phone calls may also be made at staff discretion.

Preventative Care: Sun & Bug Protection

To help children enjoy the outdoors comfortably and safely, we encourage families to send sunscreen and insect repellent as needed.

- We will have sunscreen and insect repellent available and can help your child apply these products as needed if you grant permission **in writing**.
- By sending sunscreen or insect repellent with your child, you are giving us permission to assist with application of those products.



ILLNESS, ALLERGIES, AND MEDICINES

Healthy and ready for adventure!

At Firs & Fiddleheads, we are committed to supporting every child's well-being so they can fully enjoy their time outdoors. Your partnership helps keep everyone healthy, safe, and thriving in the forest.

When to Stay Home

Please keep your child home if they have:

- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher (children must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning)
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Thick green mucus from the nose and a cough, or other symptoms of a contagious illness

If your child will be absent due to illness, **please notify us via Procure or email.**

Immunizations

Please keep your child's immunization records up to date in CampBrain.

Food Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

- Document all food allergies and dietary restrictions in CampBrain.
- While we are not a nut-free school, we take allergies seriously. If a student in your child's group has a nut allergy, we will notify families and ask that you refrain from sending nuts or nut products to school.

Medication Plan

- Written parental consent is required for staff to administer any medication.
- All medication, including EpiPens and inhalers, must be in its original container, clearly labeled with your child's name, prescription or expiration date, and instructions for use.
- For safety, children may not carry medication in their backpacks or administer medicine themselves.

If your child has specific health needs, please reach out—our staff are here to support your family and ensure the well-being of every child at Forest School.



FOREST SCHOOL PROGRAMS



FOREST FRIENDS

"Exploring nature together, one tiny step at a time."

SUMMER PREKAMP

"A summer of adventure, discovery, and play."

PRESCHOOL

"Where curiosity takes root and wonder grows."

HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT

"Hands-on learning in the heart of the forest."



FOREST FRIENDS

Essential Details

Little Explorers, Big Discoveries

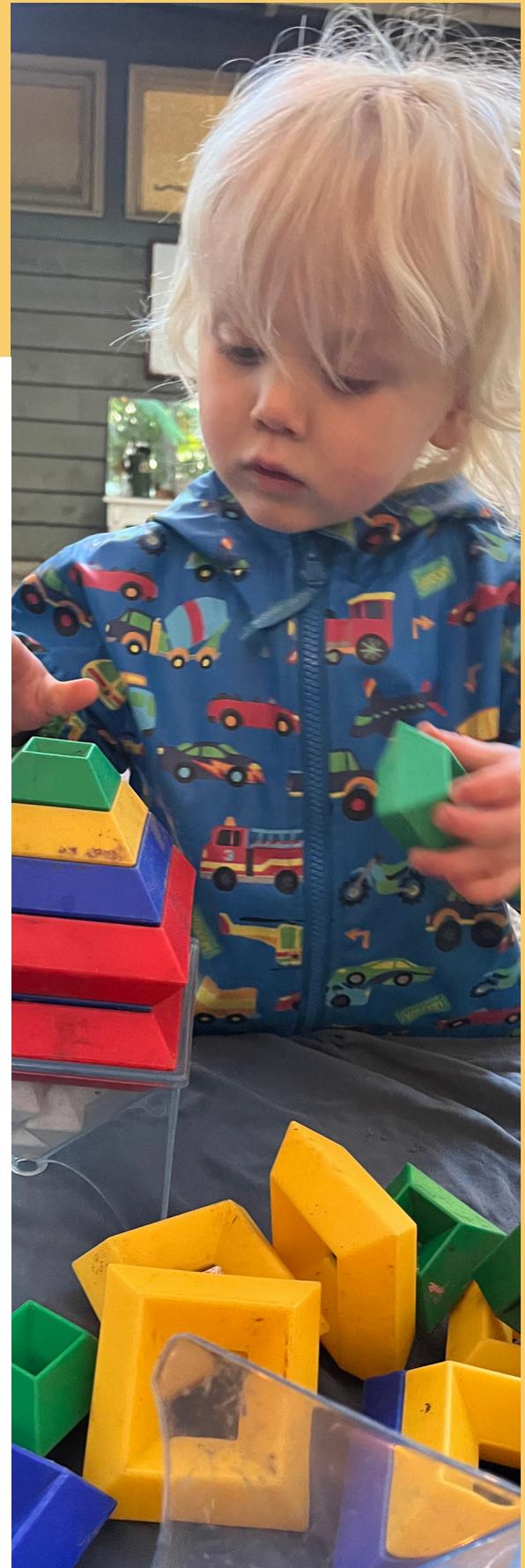
This caregiver-child program (ages 1–3) is all about joyful exploration, play, and connection. Each session is a chance for families to discover the wonders of the forest side by side—rain or shine!

Session Times

- Mondays, 9:30–11:00 AM
- Fall & Spring 10-week sessions

Location

Base Camp (the south side of 1146 Geneva Street)





Session Routine

Arrival: Settle in, say hello, and get ready for fun!

Exploration & Play: As a group, we will choose from sand pit, frog bog, creek, and more.

Story & Snack: Gather for a story, songs, and snack together.

Farewells: We finish each session with more exploration play.

Boundaries

- Staff mark safe play areas with cones or natural markers.
- Please keep your child within arm's reach, especially near water.
- If you have questions, staff are always nearby to help!

Readiness & Expectations

- Caregivers are responsible for supervising their children at all times.
- Be ready to get muddy, play, and follow your child's curiosity!
- Older and younger siblings are welcome—babies under 12 months attend free; ages 1+ must be registered.



What to Wear

- For Both Child & Caregiver: Waterproof rain gear, boots, and layers.
- We're outside in all weather, and there's always mud that kids will find to play in!
- Diaper bag: Include snacks, water, extra clothes, and a wet bag or trash bag for dirty diapers.
- Pack-It-In, Pack-It-Out: Please take home all belongings and trash at the end of each session (including dirty diapers).



Tips for Success

*If your child loves to play in water or mud,
dress to get wet!*

*Label all personal items (coat, water bottle,
gloves, and other clothing) to avoid mix-ups.*

Be ready to explore and have fun together!

Communication

Watch for a detailed welcome email about a week before your session starts. Staff are available at every session for questions or support.

Contact us anytime: (360) 410-4207
firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org



SUMMER PREKAMP

Essential Details

Forest Adventures Await!

Our week-long camps for ages 3–6 are all about discovery, friendship, and outdoor fun. Each day, children dive into creek play, nature games, creative crafts, and joyful exploration—rain or shine!

Session Times

- Monday–Friday
- Morning Camp: 8:00 AM–12:00 PM (pick-up 11:45–12:00)
- Full Day: 8:00 AM–5:00 PM (pick-up 4:30–5:00)

Location

Base Camp (the south side of 1146 Geneva Street)





Readiness & Expectations

- Campers must be fully potty trained and able to use the restroom independently.
- Children should be able to stop when asked, follow directions, and participate in group activities.
- We encourage independence, kindness, and a spirit of adventure!

Example Schedule

08:00 Arrival & Open Play
09:00 Camp Kickoff
09:20 Snack & Bathroom Break
09:45 Zone 1 Exploration
10:45 Zone 2 Exploration
11:45 Lunch & Bathroom Break,
Farewell to Morning Campers
12:20 Storytime
12:45 JAM (Jesus And Me)
01:00 Zone 3 Exploration
01:45 Zone 4 Exploration
02:30 Snack & Bathroom Break
03:00 Excursion
04:30 Pickup

Toileting

Campers must be potty trained. Staff provide verbal support and gentle help if needed.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

- Check in and out via **Procare**
- Please be prompt
- Only authorized adults may pick up (have ID available)





What to Wear

- Shorts/t-shirt (plus a sweatshirt or fleece for chilly mornings)
- Waterproof rain gear and boots (ok to bring and put on as needed)
- Backpack with:
 - Lunchbox full of food (please avoid excess packaging; label all containers with your child's name)
 - Full water bottle
 - Sun hat
 - Sunscreen & insect repellent (also apply beforehand at home)

Food Fuels the Fun!

- Pack plenty of snacks!
- Pack a hearty lunch for full-day campers.
- Outdoor play means big appetites—extra snacks are encouraged!

Cubbies

- Each camper has a cubby for extra clothes and gear.
- Keep it stocked with extra clothes (shirt, pants, socks, underwear), swimsuit & towel
- If returning for another week, items may stay in the cubby.
- Remember to take everything home after your last week.

Tips for Success

If your child loves to play in water or mud, dress them to get wet!

Write your child's name on all personal items (backpack, water bottle, sunscreen, bug spray, towel, clothing) to avoid mix-ups.

Encourage your child to share their discoveries and adventures with you at home.

Reach out with questions or feedback—your partnership matters!

Communication

- Updates and reminders via Procure and email
- In-person check-ins welcome at drop-off/pick-up
- Call the school cell phone for urgent matters: 360-410-4207



PRESCHOOL

Essential Details

Wonder Grows Here

Our nature-based preschool for ages 3–5 nurtures curiosity, creativity, and independence through hands-on exploration in our forest classroom. Each day, children build friendships, discover God’s creation, and learn through joyful, play-based experiences—rain or shine!

Session Times

- Morning: 8:00 AM–12:00 PM
 - 2–5 days/week options
- Afternoon: 1:30–4:00 PM
 - Wed/Thurs

School Year: September–June

Location

Base Camp (the south side of 1146 Geneva Street)





First Day

Please bring, email, or text a family photo for our “Family Tree.” Kids love seeing their families represented in our classroom community!

Readiness & Expectations

- Children should be fully potty trained and able to follow simple directions and boundaries.
- We encourage independence, kindness, and a spirit of adventure!
- If your child tends to run when upset or regularly has multiple toilet accidents per day, please connect with us about readiness.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

- Check in and out via Procare
- Please be prompt
- Only authorized adults may pick up (have ID available)



Food Fuels the Fun!

- Pack plenty of snacks! Outdoor play means big appetites, and we take two snack breaks—extra snacks are encouraged!
- Please avoid excess packaging and label all containers with your child's name.
- Snacks should not require refrigeration or heating.
- On cold days, consider packing an additional thermos of warm food.
- We compost food scraps at school—kids and families are welcome to add theirs!



What to Wear

Waterproof **rain gear** and boots.

Layered clothing for **warmth**—our shaded forest can be up to 15 degrees cooler than elsewhere.

Check the **weather** daily and adjust layers as needed.

See the Gear Guide in the appendix for tips and recommendations.

Small Backpack with:

- Full water bottle
- Lunchbox of food
- Extra mittens, a warm hat, or a sun hat as needed

Cubbies

- Each child has a cubby for extra clothes and gear—please keep it stocked and check it regularly.
- First Day (in a labeled Ziploc bag):
 - 2 extra underwear
 - 2 pairs of socks
 - 2 pairs of pants
 - 2 shirts
- As weather changes, swap out extra clothes for seasonally appropriate layers.
- Label everything to help us keep track of your child's belongings!
- We have extra dry gear we will lend if your child gets wet or muddy a second time.



Communication

- Updates and reminders via **Procare** and email
- In-person check-ins are welcome at drop-off/pick-up
- Call the school cell phone for urgent matters: 360-410-4207

Sample Schedules

Morning Session

- 08:00 Arrival & Open Play
- 09:00 School Prayer
- 09:05 Circle Time
- 09:30 Snack & Bathroom Break
- 10:15 Open Forest Exploration
- 11:30 Snack & JAM (Jesus And Me)
- 11:45–12:00 Pick-Up

Afternoon Session

- 01:00 Arrival & Open Play
- 01:30 School Prayer
- 01:35 Circle Time
- 02:00 Snack & Bathroom Break
- 02:40 Open Forest Exploration
- 03:40 Snack & JAM (Jesus And Me)
- 03:50–4:00 Pick-Up

Toileting

- Staff encourage independence and provide verbal guidance for handwashing and toileting.
- If accidents happen, children are guided to change themselves; staff assist only as needed.
- Soiled clothes are bagged and placed in your child's cubby; you'll be notified via Procare.

Tips for Success

Make a habit of checking cubbies regularly for items to take home and to restock clothes for your child

Label all personal items (backpack, water bottle, clothing) to avoid mix-ups.

Encourage your child to share their discoveries and adventures with you at home.

Reach out with questions or feedback—your partnership matters!



HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT

Essential Details

Forest Days, Lasting Lessons

Our afternoon program is designed for homeschoolers ages 6–11 to connect, explore, and grow in the heart of the forest. Each day is filled with hands-on learning, collaborative projects, and time to reflect on God’s love and creation. Children are encouraged to follow their curiosity, try new things, and enjoy the freedom of outdoor learning—rain or shine.

Session Times

Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday
1:30–4:00 PM

Location

Base Camp (the south side of 1146 Geneva Street)





Example Schedule

01:00 Arrival & Free Play
01:30 Group Discussion, Journaling, Prep
02:00 Activity & Exploration
03:15 Reflection
03:40 JAM (Jesus and Me)
04:00 Pick-Up

Readiness & Expectations

- Children should be able to follow directions, stay within boundaries, and participate in group activities outdoors in all weather.
- We encourage independence, responsibility, and a spirit of adventure.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

- Check in and out via Procure app
- Be prompt for both drop-off and pick-up
- Only authorized adults may pick up
 - Have photo ID available





What to Bring

- Weather-appropriate layers
 - see Gear Guide in the appendix
- Waterproof rain gear and boots
- Snack and water bottle
- Small backpack
- Extra set of clothes for the cubby
 - Update cubby regularly with layers for changing seasons
- Any requested project materials

Communication

- Updates and reminders via Procure and email
- In-person check-ins welcome at drop-off/pick-up
- Call the phone for urgent matters

Tips for Success

Sessions run rain or shine—dress your child for the weather!

Label all personal items (backpack, water bottle, clothing) to avoid mix-ups.

Encourage your child to share their discoveries and adventures with you at home.

Reach out with questions or feedback—your partnership matters!



REFERENCE & GUIDES



GEAR GUIDE

For: All families

PROCARE SETUP

For: Summer, Preschool, and Homeschool Programs

TUITION, FEES, AND PAYMENTS

For: All families

GEAR GUIDE

Dressing for Every Bellingham Day

How to Use Our Gear Guide

To help your child stay comfortable and ready for adventure in any weather, we've created a color-coded infographic with icons for what to wear on hot, mild, or cold days. Here's what the icons mean:

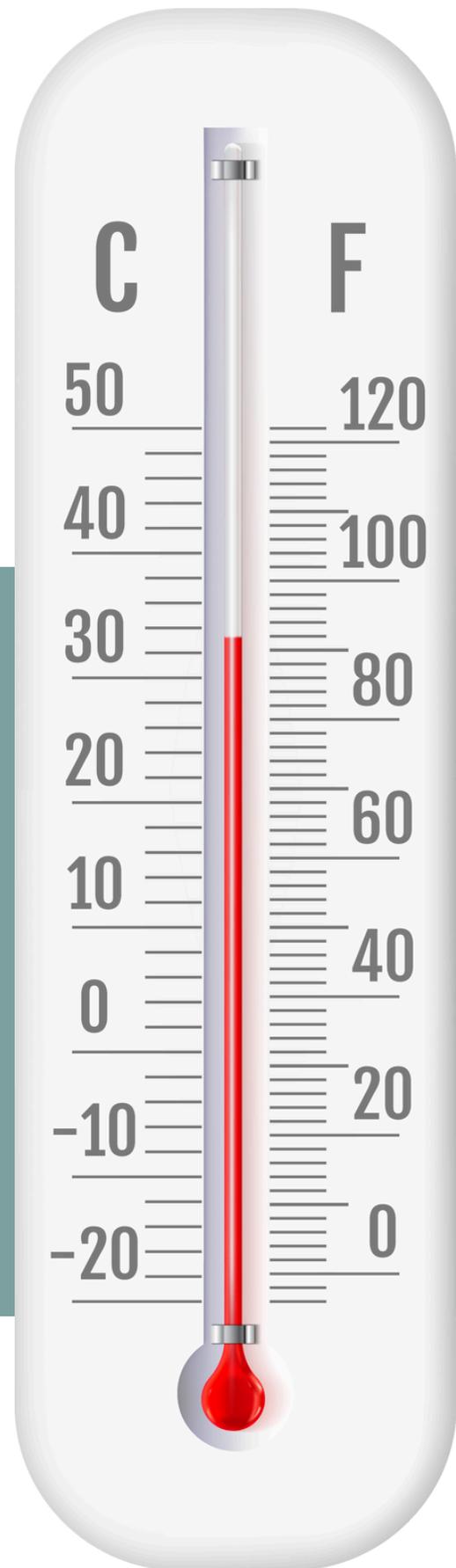


- **Yellow:** Waterproof rain gear (bibs, jackets, boots, mittens)
- **Red:** Insulated winter gear (puffer coats, snow boots, snow pants, thickest socks)
- **Green:** Warm insulating layers (wool/fleece sweaters, jackets, sweatpants, socks)
- **Lavender:** Moisture-wicking base layers (long underwear tops and bottoms)
- **Tan:** Light summer clothing (t-shirts, shorts, sun hats, sturdy sandals)



Why Gear Matters at Forest School

- **Bellingham's Climate:** Expect rain, mud, and cool temps—even in summer. Our shady forest can be up to 15 degrees cooler than your yard at home!
- **Creek & Mud Play:** Kids will get wet and dirty. The right gear keeps them dry, warm, and happy.
- **All-Weather Play:** Your child will be outdoors for hours, so comfort and safety depend on proper layering.



This page is inspired by the “What Should I Wear Today?” chart by OutdoorSchoolShop.com. This store is one of our partners; ask us for the current discount code.



Time-Tested Tips

Backpack & Lunchbox

- **Backpacks:** Choose the smallest backpack that fits your child's gear. A chest strap helps keep it secure and comfy for little shoulders.
- **Lunchboxes:** Reusable containers (like bento boxes) are handy and help keep our forest clean. Squirrels sometimes chew through lunch boxes—so pick one that's sturdy and won't cause tears if it gets a hole!
- **Label Everything:** Names on all items help us return lost gear quickly.

Hand & Footwear

- **Socks:** For cold days, one pair of super-thick wool or fleece socks works best (rather than two thin pairs). Ask us to show you our sock collection if you're unsure!
- **Boots:** Waterproof boots are a must for creek and mud play. In summer, sturdy sandals may work on the hottest days, but always check the day's weather and planned activities.
- **Mittens:** Waterproof mittens keep little hands warm and dry, and you can layer a pair of gloves or mittens inside when it's especially cold.

Layering & Outerwear

- Always start with a moisture-wicking base layer (👕) in cold weather.
- Add an insulating layer (🧣) made of wool or fleece.
- Top with waterproof rain gear (👈) for rain, mud, or creek play.
- In freezing temps, add extra mid layers or insulated outer layers (👖) like ski coats and snow pants - or both!
- On hot days, stick with light, breathable clothes (👕) and sun protection.

See the infographic for specific outfit suggestions by temperature.

Gear Shopping

- **Waterproof rain gear:** Double-coated PVC/polyester or rubber gear is best. Test by pouring water on it—if it beads up and rolls off, it's good!
- **Thrift is great:** Many families find excellent gear secondhand. Prioritize durability and room for layering.
- **Avoid:** Cotton layers (they hold moisture and chill), unlined windbreakers, and lightweight “packable” rain gear.

Final Advice

- If you buy only one new thing, make it sturdy waterproof bibs/overalls with boot straps.
- Thrift first, label everything, and ask us for gear advice—we're happy to help!
- The right gear means your child can play, explore, and stay comfortable in any weather.



PROCARE

Setting up Streamlined Communication

Who Sets Up Your Account?

Kim Galoia, Head Registrar for The Firs, enters your family information and sends your Procure invitation.

Contact: kim@thefirs.org

Getting Started

- Look for the Procure email invitation to set up your Procure account.
- Follow the setup instructions in the email and download the Procure Child Care app on your smartphone.

Checking In & Out

- Open the Procure app when you arrive on-site.
- Firs & Fiddleheads has GPS check-in enabled, so you can simply select your child(ren) and tap to check in or out—no QR code needed.
- You'll get a confirmation in the app.



Adding Authorized Pickups

- Email Kim with the name and contact info for anyone (like grandparents or other caregivers) who will regularly pick up or drop off.
- They'll get their own Procure invite and can use the app, too.

Forgot Your Phone?

- If you need help, ask any staff member—they can check your child in or out for you, no problem!

More Info & App Help

- [How to Sign Up for a Procure Account](#)
- [Getting to Know Your Procure App](#)



TUITION, FEES, & PAYMENTS

Quick Reference

Tuition & Fees

for Summer 2025 through Spring 2026

<u>Program</u>	<u>Tuition</u>	<u>Registration</u>
Preschool	<p>Morning Options (8:00 AM–12:00 PM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Days/Week (Mon/Wed or Tues/Thurs): \$341/month • 3 Days/Week (Mon/Wed/Fri): \$490/month • 4 Days/Week (Mon–Thurs): \$680/month • 5 Days/Week (Mon–Fri): \$750/month <p>Afternoon Option (1:30 PM–4:00 PM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wed/Thurs: \$215/month 	\$75 annual fee per child
Summer PreKamp	Weekly sessions run Monday–Friday from 8:00 AM–4:30 PM (pick-up by 5:00 PM). Cost varies by session (\$316–\$395/week).	\$50 deposit per session
Forest Friends	\$150 per child for each 10-week session (Mondays, 9:30 AM–11:00 AM).	Tuition-only Due at Registration
Homeschool Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Days/Week (Mon/Tues OR Wed/Thurs, 1:30 PM–4:00 PM): \$230/month - 4 Days/Week (Mon–Thurs, 1:30 PM–4:00 PM): \$430/month 	\$75 annual fee per child

20% sibling discount available



Payment Policies

Billing Schedule

During the school year, invoices are emailed on the 20th of each month for the following month's tuition. Payment is due by the 1st of the month (e.g., September tuition is billed on August 20th and due September 1st). For Summer PreKamp, each session must be paid in full before a child is left in our care. Forest Friends sessions are paid for at the time of enrollment.

Payment Methods

We accept payments via credit card, check, money order, direct withdrawal, or cash (exact amount only). Checks should be mailed to:

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



Late Payments

A \$25 late fee will be applied if payment is not received by the 7th of the month.

Withdrawal Policy

Families are expected to fulfill their semester contracts for Preschool and Homeschool Enrichment programs. If extenuating circumstances arise, please contact the Director to discuss options.

Absence Policy

Tuition reserves your child's spot and covers staffing and resources, so we are unable to provide credits or refunds for missed days. Exceptions may be considered in cases of prolonged illness or serious circumstances with approval from the Director.



FAMILY
HANDBOOK

THANK YOU!



www.firsandfiddleheads.org
360-410-4207