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# Family Handbook

Last Updated 2/21/2023

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# About Firs & Fiddleheads

## Contact Information

- ↑ Preschool Phone Number: (360) 410-4207
- ↑ Email Address: [firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org](mailto:firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org)
- ↑ Director: Stacy Smith: (360) 223-3393, [stacy@thefirs.org](mailto:stacy@thefirs.org)
- ↑ Program Coordinator: Cameron Sandgren [cameron@thefirs.org](mailto:cameron@thefirs.org) (School Name: Akeela)
- ↑ Registrar: Hannah Halstead [Hannah@thefirs.org](mailto:Hannah@thefirs.org), (360) 306-3101
- ↑ Senior Lead Teacher: Danielle Strasser (School Name: Javelina)
- ↑ Website: [firsandfiddleheads.org](http://firsandfiddleheads.org)
- ↑ Instagram: [@firsandfiddleheads](https://www.instagram.com/firsandfiddleheads)
- ↑ Mailing Address: Firs & Fiddleheads • 4605 Cable Street • Bellingham, WA 98229
- ↑ Physical Address: 1150 Geneva Street • Bellingham, WA 98229

## Mission/Philosophy

At Firs and Fiddleheads Forest School, we believe ALL things have been purposely created by God, and that through His creation, from the towering fir trees to the young fern gardens, He is whispering, “you are loved.”

We aim to give children the opportunity to explore and discover the wonders of God’s creation, foster curiosity, and provide room for possibility and adventure. As teachers offer guidance and instruction, they will not constrict a child’s learning to fit a specific curriculum, but harness the child’s natural interests and curiosity to spark creativity and problem-solving. We hope to convey that life has boundaries but not always walls, and to foster a sense of wonder in play and learning that will lead students to be successful in school and life.

## Forest School Readiness

Determining if your child is ready for forest school can feel daunting, but honestly most children ages 3-5 years old will rise to the challenges with the help of their teachers and forest friends, with a few exceptions. We have discovered these exceptions:

- ↑ If your child tends to RUN in response to conflict or over-stimulation and will not stop when instructed. This could be a safety issue.
- ↑ If your child regularly has more than one toilet accident per day, we recommend delaying their forest school start time.

Our staff understands children grow and develop differently, so please chat with Stacy or one of our lead teachers to help evaluate the readiness of your child.

## Forest Closures & Calendar Changes

Closures due to extreme weather, like snow days, will be evaluated and determined based on staff and families' ability to safely get to and from school. Families will be notified at the earliest opportunity via email and/or Procure if there are any changes.

Observed Holidays (tuition will be prorated when the break is longer than 6 days) Check your calendars for specific dates.

↑ August/September TBA	First Day of School
↑ September	School Closed (Labor Day)
↑ November	School Closed (Veterans' Day)
↑ November (Thur & Fri )	School Closed (Thanksgiving)
↑ December	School Closed (Winter Break)
↑ January	School Closed (Martin Luther King Day)
↑ February	School Closed (Presidents Day)
↑ May	School Closed (Memorial Day)
↑ June TBA	Last Day of School

## Curriculum

- ↑ Child-led learning.
- ↑ Throughout the school year, we will use the Creation Story as a framework for our exploration ... "God created \_\_\_\_\_ and it was good!"
- ↑ Celebrations, Holidays
  - Our main focus is to awaken children to the cyclic celebrations of the natural world
  - We have chosen to acknowledge Valentine's Day as an opportunity to celebrate friendships with simple preschooler-handmade notes
- ↑ Field Trips
  - A field trip schedule will be provided at the beginning of the school year.
  - All field trips will be family events where we will meet at a different location for the day.
  - Field trips will be held during regular school hours.
- ↑ Volunteers
  - We would love for each family to provide at least one volunteer in the classroom throughout the year. Lead teachers will work with families to help figure out how they can best contribute.
  - Every spring we gather as a preschool family for a work day on school grounds. Attendance is highly encouraged.
- ↑ Family Events
  - Our intention is to provide several events throughout the year for our families to come together. Please look for more information in the packet provided at the beginning of the school year.

## Program Hours

- ↑ Morning Session 8:00 am - 12:00 pm
- ↑ Afternoon Session 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

## Typical Daily Class Schedule

### Forest School - AM

- ↑ 8:00 am - Arrival & Open Play
- ↑ 8:50 am - Enter Forest
- ↑ 9:00 am - Opening Circle
- ↑ 9:20 am - Work Time
- ↑ 9:40 am - Snack Time
- ↑ 10:00 am - Wash & Bathrooms
- ↑ 10:15 am - Open Forest Exploration
- ↑ 11:35 am - Closing Circle
- ↑ 11:45-12:00 pm - Pick Up

### Play Exploration- PM

- ↑ 12:00 pm - Lunch
- ↑ 12:30 pm - Wash & Bathrooms
- ↑ 12:45 pm - Quiet Time
- ↑ 1:15 pm - Stations/Group Activities
- ↑ 2:15 pm - Snack
- ↑ 2:40 pm - Wash & Bathrooms
- ↑ 3:00 - 4:00 pm - Open Forest Exploration

## Drop Off/Pick Up

### Morning Forest School

- ↑ Drop Off - Drop off is from 8 am - 9 am and is located outside of our indoor classroom. Your preschooler will need to be signed in on Procure. We will move into our forest classroom around 9 am. If you arrive later than 9 am, you will need to call our phone, (360-410-4207), to find your class's location and where you will need to walk your preschooler.
- ↑ Pick Up - Children will be picked up in the same area as drop off. You will need to sign your child out on Procure. Pick-up is from 11:45 am - 12 pm.

### Afternoon Forest School

- ↑ Pick-Up - Children will be picked up in the same area as drop-off. You will need to sign your child out on Procure. Pick-up is from 3:45 pm - 4 pm.

## Please bring the following on your 1st day:

In a Ziploc bag, labeled with your child's name (we will keep these, and any **extra** gear in child-specified cubbies that families can access and check regularly):

- ↑ 2 extra underwear
- ↑ 2 pairs of warm socks (wool, if possible)
- ↑ 1 cozy pants
- ↑ 1 long sleeve shirt
- ↑ A family picture for our 'Family Tree'(you can email or text us this too)

## What to Bring Daily

### Half Day and Full Day Forest School

#### ↑ Lunch & Snacks

- **Lunch & snacks will not be provided for your child.** Plan to bring items that do not require refrigeration/heating or create excess garbage. We encourage using reusable containers to keep our forest clean! Extra snacks are a good idea, as your child will be exerting tons of energy playing outdoors! On cold days, we recommend sending your child with warmed food and/or tea in a thermos.
- If your child is only attending the half-day sessions, they will need snacks and a full water bottle.
- If your child is attending the full-day sessions they will need lunch, enough snacks for morning and afternoon, as well as a full water bottle.
- In cases of severe allergies, parents may be asked to exclude certain foods from their child's lunch. **If your child has an allergy or food restriction, documentation must be on file.**

#### ↑ Gear

- Please bring a small backpack, labeled with your child's name. This should be small enough for them to comfortably carry, but large enough to fit their lunch, water bottle, extra gloves, and a hat. A backpack with a chest strap is recommended.

#### ↑ Clothing

- During Forest School, it is very likely that your child will get dirty, muddy, and wet! However, appropriate clothes will help your child to remain happy, healthy, and able to learn. We suggest the following:
  - a Warm Hat (wool or fleece)
  - Waterproof/Insulated Mittens
  - Top and Bottom Long Underwear - fleece, wool, or polypropylene - these materials will stay warm when wet!
  - Top and Bottom Outer Layer - fleece, a wool/blend, or a poly-blend
  - Waterproof Raincoat and Rain Pants, or Rain Suit
  - Wool Socks
  - Waterproof/Insulated Rain Boots (i.e. Bogs, Muck Boots, Merrell, Keen)
- Just remember, "cotton is rotten"! Cotton wicks moisture, which not only makes us cold and uncomfortable but can be a safety hazard for hypothermia in temperatures lower than 60 degrees.
- *Thrift stores are a great option for many of the clothing items listed! Many are stocked with fleece and wool.*

### Full-Day Forest School *Only*

#### ↑ Rest Gear

- On your first day, please bring a sleeping bag or a heavy blanket, and if your child would like, a stuffed animal that can stay at school.
- We will be resting outside on raised cots (dependent on the weather) for about 30 minutes a day.

# Summer PreKamp

## Daily Schedule

- ↑ 8:00 am - Arrival & Open Play Time
- ↑ 9:00 am - Camp Begins! Head to Circle Time (songs, games, & stories)
- ↑ 9:30 am - Snack
- ↑ 10:00 am - Forest Exploration
- ↑ 11:30 am - Group Game or Activity
- ↑ 11:45 am - Lunch
- ↑ 12:30 pm - Quiet Time
- ↑ 1:00 pm - Art & Choice Time
- ↑ 2:00 pm - Snack
- ↑ 2:30 pm - Excursion (at the Forest, Field, or Slip N' Slide)
- ↑ 4:00-5:00 pm - Open Play Time & Pick-Up

## Drop Off/Pick Up

- ↑ Drop off is located at our indoor classroom. You will need to check in your child on the Procure app. We will move into our forest classroom at 9 am - if you arrive later than 9 am, you will need to call our phone (360-410-4207), to find your class's location and where you will need to walk your child.
- ↑ Pick-up is located in the same area as drop-off. Please be prompt in picking up your child by 5 pm.

## Please bring the following on your 1st day:

In a Ziploc bag labeled with your child's name (we will keep these, and any extra gear in child-specified cubbies that families can access and check regularly):

- ↑ 2 Underwears
- ↑ 2 Pairs of Socks
- ↑ 1 Cozy Pants
- ↑ 1 Shirt
- ↑ There is also a potential of water play in the afternoon, we suggest keeping a swimsuit and towel in their boxes.
- ↑ Sunscreen

If your child ends up changing clothes, the dirty clothes will be in a plastic bag by your child's box.

## What to Bring Daily

- ↑ Food
  - **Lunch & snacks will not be provided for your child.** Please bring enough food for a snack in the morning, a lunch, an afternoon snack, and a full water bottle. Extra snacks are a good idea, as your child will be exerting tons of energy

playing outdoors for 8+ hours! Plan to bring items that do not require refrigeration/heating or create excess garbage. We encourage using reusable containers to keep our forest clean!

- In cases of severe allergies, parents may be asked to exclude certain foods from their child's lunch. **If your child has an allergy or food restriction, documentation must be on file.**

#### ↑ Gear

- Please bring a small backpack, labeled with your child's name. Inside their backpack should include their lunch, snacks, a full water bottle, and a sunhat.

#### ↑ Clothing

- It is very likely that your child will get dirty during their play here at Summer Camp! However, appropriate clothes will help your child to remain happy and healthy throughout the day. We suggest the following:
  - Jacket or Sweatshirt
  - T-Shirt
  - Pants *AND* Shorts (weather can change very quickly!)
  - Closed-Toed Shoes

## Communication

If your child will be absent or late on their scheduled day, please notify us by **using the Procare App** or calling or texting the Forest School **(360) 410-4207**. If there is a future day when you know your child will be absent or late, you may also email us at [firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org](mailto:firsandfiddleheads@thefirs.org).

### Procare

- ↑ All staff will have access to Procare while in the forest. Procare will be used to communicate incidents, and behavior, and is a fast way to check in with your child.

### Newsletter

- ↑ During the school year a monthly newsletter will be emailed out to parents and guardians that will include important upcoming class information, special events, a brief summary of the month, and photos of our adventures!

## Policies & Procedures

### Registration & Enrollment

Registration Forms are available online ([firsandfiddleheads.org](http://firsandfiddleheads.org)). Space is secured when Registration Forms and fees are submitted. If a chosen session is already full, students will be put on a waitlist. Waitlisted students will be informed as space becomes available.

## Tuition Payment Schedule

- ↑ **Registration Fee:** There is a \$75 annual, non-refundable fee required to enroll your child in our programs each year. A new registration fee will be due for all programs beginning in the Fall of each year. If your child has siblings that you are also enrolling the Registration fee is \$20 and \$10 for any additional children. This payment must be received before a child may start.
- ↑ **Payment:** Invoices are emailed on the 20th of the month for the next month of service. Tuition is due by the 1st of the month (i.e., a bill for September will be emailed around August 20th and payment is due by September 1st). You are responsible for payment even if you do not receive a bill.
- ↑ **Payment options:** credit card, check, money order, or direct withdrawal. Cash payments can be made in person and with exact cash amounts. If paying by direct withdrawal we will need an authorization form on file. Email [hannah@thefirs.org](mailto:hannah@thefirs.org) to get a form. You can access your account online at [www.myprocare.com](http://www.myprocare.com). If you choose to mail a check, please send it to  

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- ↑ **Past Due Tuition:** Tuition is due on the first of each month. We offer a 7-day grace period. If payment is not received by the 7th of each month, a \$25 late fee is added to the bill.
- ↑ **Late Pick-Up Fee:** If you are late to pick up your child more than once, a \$6 fee will be charged each subsequent time that your child is picked up late. If there is an emergency that requires you to be late, please call **(360) 410-4207**, so that we may reassure your child that all is okay.
- ↑ **Credits for Absences:** When you enroll you are reserving the time, space, staffing, and provisions for your child whether the child attends or not. For these reasons, we cannot give tuition credits for days your child is absent. If there is a prolonged illness or other serious matter, please contact the Firs & Fiddleheads Director for consideration, [stacy@thefirs.org](mailto:stacy@thefirs.org)

## Withdrawal Policy

- ↑ **Withdrawal from Program:** Written one-month notice of cancellation is required to withdraw your child from the program (email is sufficient). Discontinued attendance without prior notice of cancellation will not result in credit. Your last payment will be prorated if your child's final day of attendance does not fall on the last day of the month.

# Health & Safety

## Boundaries

- ↑ As part of being outdoors, there is a lot of space to explore and discover. We use bright-colored disc cones and logs to mark the areas in which staff can see and hear all students. This allows the students to stay focused in one area and for staff to keep the class safe.

## Inclement Weather

- ↑ Our forest classroom is our main classroom unless the weather becomes unsafe. We will move into our indoor classroom at the discretion of the Lead Teachers/Program Coordinator/Director.
- ↑ In the event of high winds, we have the option to move our classes to spaces that are not under trees; including the field, the corral, or across the street to an outdoor covered area.
- ↑ In the event that the evacuation of the forest becomes necessary, the following will apply:
  - The staff and children will relocate to the Bellingham Fire Department across the street. Staff will maintain supervision of each class and parents/guardians will be contacted via cell phone.

## Accidents and Injuries

- ↑ Minor injuries like scrapes or cuts will be assessed by responding staff members, washed with soap and water when needed, and a band-aid will be used to keep clean. Parents/guardians may receive notification via Procure or upon pickup.
- ↑ All head injuries will be recorded and a message will be sent to parents/guardians within Procure. Phone calls to parents/guardians will be at the discretion of Lead Teachers.
- ↑ Any accident needing professional medical attention will result in an immediate call to the parents/guardians of the child.

## Bathrooms

- ↑ Our preschool bathrooms are located inside the same building where drop-off and pick-up take place.
- ↑ Children coming to preschool should be potty trained. However, we know that not all children are fully-independent in the process, and accidents do happen. Therefore:
  - Staff will verbally guide children in hand washing and toileting procedures.
  - Accidents/Wet Clothes: soiled clothes will be put in plastic bags and placed in your child's box.
    - ⇒ Children will be given the opportunity to clean/change themselves.

- ⇒ Staff will help children to clean up and change only when absolutely necessary.
- Staff will remain outside of the bathroom when a child is inside the bathroom. If a staff member does enter the bathroom with your child, the door will remain fully open. In addition, the lead teacher will enter the interaction into ProCare so that parents/guardians are made aware.
- All requests by children in regards to the adult that accompanies them to the restroom and open/closed door while toileting will be respected to the best of our abilities.

## Health Policy

- ↑ When to keep your child home:
  - If they have a fever of 100 degrees or more
    - Your child will need to be fever-free for 72 hours before returning to school.
  - If they have thrown up or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
  - If they have thick green mucus coming out of their nose and a cough, please keep them home.

## Immunizations

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

## Food Allergies

- ↑ Food allergies and dietary restrictions need to be documented.

## Medication Plan

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

## Sunscreen & Insect Repellent

- ↑ We will have both sunscreen and insect repellent, that we can help your child apply if needed; written permission must be given.
- ↑ By sending sunscreen/insect repellent with your child you will be giving permission for us to help apply the sunscreen.