



Fern Gully Forest School

Nature-based Early Childhood Education

Policies and Parent Handbook

Outdoor early education in a nature setting with small class sizes is the best option for childcare, now more than ever. We provide a safe, open-air environment for children to interact in a healthy way during the most important time of their development. We have a focus on social-emotional learning, environmental education, imaginative play, and exploration. We bring awareness to the cycles and seasons of the Earth and help children develop life-long relationships to the natural world. Our structure follows the Olympia school district schedule for breaks, start, and end times.

We are committed to helping families raise happy, healthy, and capable children. We offer a home away from home with a close connection to nature and other children, providing them with friends of all ages, to play, socialize, and learn from. Our goal in providing quality childcare for your child is to provide:

- ☺ A safe and nurturing environment
- ☺ A learning environment... learning includes traditional outdoor education, such as plant identification, as well as the ABC's and 123's and it is also the learning of values and social/emotional awareness. The learning of honesty, respect, self-reliance, and potential, self-discipline, and moderation, the values of being dependable, loving, sensitivity to others, kindness, friendliness and fairness.
- ☺ A proper approach to discipline... Since children occasionally need discipline, it is important that you and I share a similar philosophy so that your child is not too confused as to where the boundaries are and what is expected of him/her. Children are taught which behaviors are inappropriate, and why, and given alternatives that are acceptable. In this way, the behavior is being changed, with out making the child feel "bad" or unloved. This helps develop their self-esteem and teaches them how to handle difficult situations themselves in the future. I express my disapproval (without attaching character). I state my expectations and show your child how to make amends. I give choices, and in extreme situations a child may be asked to take a break in the "calm down space"; because at times a child may be having trouble making choices of their own and they just may need a couple of minutes to calm down and think about their choices.
- ☺ And to foster unconditional love... this kind of love is very important because children should not grow up feeling that to be loved and cared for, they must meet numerous conditions.

Communication is key to a successful childcare arrangement. The parent and provider need to have a good working relationship so they can communicate and work together. Parent and provider need to exchange pertinent information in the child's life such as changes in routine, special events, or activities, as well as changes such as death, divorce, separation, moving, visitors, etc. All this information can be important in understanding the child's feelings, behavior, and well being.

I invite you to share with me in writing, by telephone, or schedule an appointment to talk about you concerns in-person.

Typical Activities

- Group Play: Singing, dancing, play acting, games, reading, listening to tapes (story and music), circle time
- Free Play: Children have a choice of - blocks, kitchen toys, science sets, play sets, Household toys, pull/push toys, art materials, and outdoor activities
- Language: Nursery rhymes, finger plays, stimulus pictures or objects to encourage verbalization, reading to the children, flannel boards



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Dramatic play: Dress up, role playing, puppetry, dancing, singing, music-making, etc.

Outdoor play: (all-weather) Swinging, climbing, riding toys, running, ball playing, gardening tools, dancing, games, toys, trucks, mud kitchen, etc. (please remember to dress your child appropriately for the weather, if in doubt, dress in layers and bring extra clothes)

Typical Daily Routines

9 AM Arrival and Greeting
9:30 Circle time (including name games, our 5 agreements, songs, warm-ups, dancing, etc.)
9:45 Nature Exploration
10:15 Bathroom and hand washing
10:30 Snack time
11:00 Outdoor play or other learning activities
11:15 Bathroom and hand washing
11:30 Lunch and clean up
12:00 Activity: Art, yoga, dance, books, story time, small animal care and cuddles, etc.
12:45 Free play
1:00 Parents arrive to pick up children

(Your child is released to my care after you leave the premises in the morning, and he/she is released to your care as soon as you walk in at pick up time)

Note: Bathroom times vary to meet the child's needs. This is a general schedule and is dictated mostly by the children's needs and feelings each day.

Policies and Procedures

If illness or other emergencies should arise during childcare hours every attempt will be made to have a substitute provider care for your child so that I can remain open for childcare. If substitute care is not available, you will receive a phone call to pick up your child. Whenever possible medical and personal appointments will be made after childcare hours however, if I must use childcare hours to secure appointments every attempt will be made to have a substitute provider care. If a substitute is not available, I will have to close my childcare home.

For your convenience, we follow the Olympia School District schedule for closings for vacations and holidays and every attempt will be made to minimize any changes in this schedule.

Holidays follow the Olympia School District Schedule.

Vacation closing: 10 paid vacation days per year; all other vacation days are not paid, if any occur.

Please respect that when my childcare home is closed for vacation, I am taking this time to rest and to be with my family or just to catch up on home duties. I take my job very seriously and consider this to be a legitimate long-term career. In order to accomplish this, I need this time out to maintain the energy level it takes to give your child the quality care he/she deserves.

I do reserve the right to close for any reason in which I cannot operate in a safe manner. i.e. loss of electricity, water, heat or in extreme circumstances, medical epidemics. Childcare fees are paid for any of these occurrences.

Discipline

I express my disapproval (without attaching character). I state my expectations and show your child how to make amends. I give choices, and in extreme situations a child may be asked to take a break in a "calm down space"; because at times a child



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may be having trouble making choices of their own and they just may need a couple of minutes to calm down, identify their emotions, learn to self-regulate and think about their choices. *No physical discipline is ever used in my care.*

Gross Misconduct:

I will communicate to you if your child is frequently and deliberately causing harm to others and/or is frequently and deliberately destructive. Violent and destructive behavior is unsafe and will not be allowed – immediate termination will ensue if the behavior persists.

Child's Health

Your child cannot be admitted with symptoms of illness as specified below; unless written documentation from a licensed physician, or verbal (with written follow up) states the child has been diagnosed and poses no serious health risk to the child or to other children.

Should your child have signs or symptoms requiring exclusion from the family childcare home he/she will be isolated and the parent/guardian or other authorized person by the parent will be notified immediately to pick up your child. There can be no exceptions since illness spreads quickly among children.

Please make other arrangements if your child is sick and respect my decision if I feel your child is too sick to be in childcare. I am sympathetic to the difficulties of taking time off, so discretion will be used.

The symptoms of illness for possible exclusion shall include, but are not limited to any of the following...

- A. The illness prevents your child from participating comfortably in the outdoor childcare environment,
- B. The illness results in a greater care need than I can provide with out compromising the health and safety of the other children in my care, Or
- C. The child has any of the following conditions:
 - Temperature: Oral temperature 101 degrees or greater; axillary (armpit) temperature 100 degrees or greater; accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness- until medical evaluation indicates inclusion in the facility. Oral temperature shall not be taken on children younger than 4 years (or younger than 3 years if a digital thermometer is used). Rectal temperature shall be taken only by persons with specific health training.
 - Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs)- until medical evaluation allows inclusion;
 - Uncontrolled diarrhea, that is, increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form that is not contained by the diaper- until diarrhea stops;
 - Vomiting illness (two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines the illness to be non-communicable, and the child is not in danger of dehydration;
 - Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
 - viii. Scabies, head lice, or other infestation, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
 - Tuberculosis, until a health care provider or health official states that the child can attend child care;
 - Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
 - Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever;



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- Chicken pox, until at least 6 days after onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted;
- Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment (currently; erythromycin) to prevent an infection have been completed and a licensed physician states in writing the child may return;
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling and a licensed physician states in writing the child may return;
- Hepatitis A virus, until 1 week after onset of illness or as directed by the health department when passive immunoprophylaxis (currently, immune serum globulin) has been administered to appropriate children and staff and a licensed physician states in writing the child may return;
- Measles, until 6 days after onset of rash and a licensed physician states in writing the child may return;
- Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash and a licensed physician states in writing the child may return;

Injuries: I will supervise your child closely in an attempt to prevent injuries, but accidents resulting in injury do occur. All teachers have been trained in first aid and CPR and will follow training. If the injury is minor (requiring only a band-aid or ice) I will tell you about it when you pick up your child. If it is serious, I will call you and may even suggest that you take your child to the doctor or emergency room. If an injury is very severe, I will call 911 for assistance before I call you. If I can not reach you, I will call the emergency contacts listed on your enrollment form (please remember to keep this up-to-date).

Child's Medication:

1. A "Medication log" **must** accompany all over the counter medicine. Over the counter medicine is usually given for short term health conditions; the average length of time is 5 days/
2. Prescription medicine **must**:
 - a. be dated with in the past 30 days
 - b. have child's name printed clearly on the label
 - c. have dosage amount and times
3. Prescription medicine must also be accompanied by a "medication log" which **must include**:
 - a. Date
 - b. Child's name
 - c. Doctor's name and phone number
 - d. Name of medication
 - e. Dosage amounts and times to be administered
 - f. Route of medication, i.e. oral, eye, etc.
 - g. Date medication is to end
 - h. Special directions, i.e. take before eating, etc.
 - i. Parent's signature

Days/Hours of Operation:

Childcare is available Monday through Friday 9am-1pm with the exception of closings as referred to in this handbook. Actual days are determined by the parent/guardian's individual needs.

Please understand that the contracted drop-off time is important because I plan our day around the collective time frame of each child as well as each other phase of our morning routine – **please** call me if you know that you will be more than 15 minutes late.

Our contracted pick-up time is equally important; there are several things to do before the children leave.

Late Drop Off and Pick Up:

Please call me if you will be late dropping your child off. It is very important to me and the other children to know our schedule (breakfast, etc.) and when we can move along from one activity to another.



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I'm sure you agree, personal time is precious; accordingly, it becomes extremely difficult and stress full to have an appointment or other plans scheduled if I cannot depend on the mutually agreed pick up time. I do understand that there may be an occasion of major traffic congestion or bad weather conditions causing a delay in your travel – if you have a cellular phone, please call me and perhaps we can work out a contingency plan. Consistent tardiness could be cause for termination. Following the first 5-minute grace period, a \$1.00 late fee for each additional minute past our agreed pick-up time will be due.

Nutrition:

The parent provides a sack lunch and snacks. Additional nutritious snacks may also be served as needed. Cakes, cookies, and other “not so nutritious food” may be served during special events like birthday parties, and holidays.

Potty Training:

Potty training shouldn't be rushed; it is important that your child is psychologically **and** physically ready for training. Your child must be potty trained prior to coming to Fern Gully School. This is when your child maintains at least 2 continuous weeks of bladder/bowel control and can communicate their need to go to the bathroom; of course, it is okay if your child still needs assistance with the bathroom. If your child regresses we will work with you and assess the next step.

Release of Children:

It is important that I protect your child by ensuring that your child does not leave my home with a person you have not authorized to pick up your child. Also please tell me when someone else that you have authorized will be picking up your child. Even if it is an emergency, I must have your permission to release your child to someone other than you. I will need the person's name and a description of what he or she looks like. The person picking up your child will have to show me a picture ID before I will release your child from my care.

I must assume that both parents have the right to pick up your child, unless you give me a copy of a court order stating otherwise. We will need to discuss how I should handle the non-custodial parent who arrives to pick up your child. Without a copy of the court order, I cannot refuse a parent. If I have a court order and a noncustodial parent tries to pick up the child, I will immediately call the custodial parent. If the non-custodial parent leaves with the child, I will immediately call the police and report the situation. I will not place the other children at risk in a confrontation with the non-custodial parent.

It is very important to me that your child arrives home safely. Therefore, If the person who arrives to pick up your child appears intoxicated or otherwise incapable of bringing your child home safely, I will call the parent or emergency contact person listed to request their assistance. If the situation occurs a second time, it will be grounds for terminating my care of your child.

All children should be transported to and from childcare in a car seat. For further clarification refer to the Washington State Law regarding children and seat belts and abide by that law for your child safety. I will not release your child if the person picking up your child does not have a car seat and your child falls into the car seat requirement age bracket.

Supplies:

To eliminate the daily bundle of items to carry you may bring a package of items and extra clothes. I will notify you if items are running low. All items need to be marked with the child's name.

IMPORTANT: Parent/guardian will provide a water bottle, sack lunch, healthy snacks, and a change of clothes in a backpack on a daily basis or keep a change of clothes with us – replacing as needed.



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Fee Payment Guidelines:

Childcare fees are paid in advance on a monthly basis. Payment obligation is based on the days agreed to use childcare, not on actual attendance. There is no change in fee due to your child's absences. If your child is absent or I am closed on the Friday **before** the week begins or the last scheduled day of attendance for the week, you are responsible to make payment as agreed. In the case of your vacation or absence, please postdate your check for the up coming date due and make payment before you leave.

Late payments – A \$25 late payment fee (per child) applies for any payment not received by the fifth of the month unless a payment plan has been worked out in advance. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, an additional \$10.00 fee per day will be charged. Your child will not be permitted to return to childcare until both the payment and the late fee are paid in full.

A personal check, cash or Paypal transfer will be accepted for payment, however if a check is returned for any reason and I incur any bank charges from the return of your check, those charges will be added to the following weeks daycare fee additionally because I am unable to use these funds my late fee for payment also applies. After 2 check returns, all further payments must be made in cash. Non-payment or consistent late payments is cause for termination immediately with out 2 weeks notice.

A two week notice of any increase in tuition or fees will be posted.

Early drop off

Any care needed prior to my normal opening time will need be scheduled at least by the Friday prior to the week care is needed. There is a charge of \$5.00 per 15 minutes of care prior to normal opening time. This fee is non-refundable. This includes if you decide not to bring the child early.

Covid-19 Guidelines

We are devoted to keeping our community safe and children happy and healthy. We want to provide a safe environment for Fern Gully's teachers, parents, and students during the Coronavirus pandemic, so we follow recommended guidelines from the CDC and the Department of Health for childcare, youth development, day camps, and outdoor programs.

It is important to state that much is unknown about COVID-19. It is up to you to weigh the risks and benefits of enrolling your child in this program, and you do so at your own risk. We believe being outdoors is the safest way to keep our kids happy and healthy. We are committed to following the most up to date advice from the Department of Health and we will adjust our policies as new information arises. Your health, your child's health, and the health of our staff are first and foremost on our minds.

- **Before Arrival:** If you or your child is sick, stay home. This applies to all signs of illness, including lingering coughs or suspected allergies. Please take all signs and symptoms of illness seriously and err on the side of caution. Please wash your hands before leaving your home.
- **Upon Arrival:**
We are taking children's' and teachers' temperatures in the morning at drop-off and screening for symptoms.
- **Additional health checks** will be given during the program if children/teachers are experiencing fever or any symptoms related to COVID-19. If teachers or children are running a fever of 100° F [37.8° C] or greater, have a cough, and/or



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difficulty breathing, or other COVID-19 symptoms, they will be sent home and told to contact their healthcare provider. We will follow the healthcare provider's recommendations for everyone's case and a negative COVID-19 test will be required to return. This information is documented daily. If your child has allergies or a non-COVID-19 related cough please bring a doctor's note letting us know.

- **Masks/Facial Coverings:** We are following the WA Department of Health regulations for Childcare, Youth Development and Summer Day Camps. With our programs being fully outdoors, and mainly being in the age range of 3-5, children are not required to wear masks/face coverings when engaged in play and being able to space out.
 - We are asking parents to please wear masks when at drop-off and pick-up. Entrance and Exit are separate and follow a one-way flow to reduce contact with others. Teachers will also wear masks if social distancing is not possible.
 - When class is in session, teachers are not required to wear masks when outside with the children.
 - We believe that it is vital for children's early development and social/emotional skills to be able to see and read full facial expressions and that we can minimize the risk and maximize the benefits with outdoor education.
- **Cleaning and sanitation:** Shared materials that can be sanitized will be daily and/or between use.
- **Hand washing and hand sanitizers:** Regular hand washing will be promoted, especially before food is consumed and between activities with shared items. Each school has put in extra handwashing stations. We will use the hand sanitizer thoughtfully, with an eye towards preventing overuse. Nothing takes the place of simple hand washing in terms of safety and efficacy.
- **Physical contact:** Safe Social Space will be encouraged in all programs. Children are encouraged to give space to each other as they play and any unnecessary contact should be avoided. Daily conversations will be had about what this looks like throughout the day. That being said, we will not reprimand children for holding hands, patting a friend on the back or generally being in close proximity, especially the younger children. At the same time, we will encourage children to develop kinship and empathy through practicing other ways of relating and showing care. Teachers may administer empathy and care for children by holding hands, a pat on the back, or by offering a hug. Hand washing after physical contact will be encouraged.
- **Drop off/pick-up:** Drop off and pick up routines ensure families can stay 6 feet apart.
- **Water and Food:** To minimize accidental sharing of water bottles they will stay in backpacks when not in use. They are always available for your child to access. Food will also stay in backpacks when not in use and will not be shared.
- **In the event** a teacher or child attending Fern Gully School has been exposed to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 outside of the Programs, the exposed teachers or family of the exposed child will be asked to contact their healthcare provider, stay home for 14 days, and complete a COVID-19 test at the end of the 14 days before returning.
- **In the event** there is a confirmed COVID-19 case among teachers or children, Fern Gully School will inform teachers and parents about the confirmed case, keeping confidentiality. All people who closely interacted with the infected person will be asked to contact their healthcare provider, stay home for at least 5 days, and complete a COVID-19 test at the end of the 5 days before returning. Fern Gully School will follow all the recommendations given by the state and



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local health departments. Based on their recommendations, Fern Gully School may close temporarily anywhere from 5-10 days. Additional cleaning and disinfecting will be performed.

Termination:

Parent/Guardian must give two weeks written notice, and two weeks full payment to terminate your child's enrollment regardless as to whether your child is present (with the exception of the trial period). If two weeks notice is not given, you are still financially obligated for the two weeks of tuition and late payments.

A Few Final Thoughts:

As a parent in Fern Gully School, please...

- ☺ Take an interest in your child's activities here, and share your child's habits, fears, and concerns with me.
- ☺ Read all correspondence given to you, and those posted. Promptly sign and return those forms needing to be signed.
- ☺ Remember that you are responsible for your child while you are on my premises so, please remain in complete contact with your child during that time.
- ☺ Call me! Your concerns and feed back are important to me.

Kind regards,

Charissa Waters

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