

PARENT HANDBOOK



FAYETTEVILLE
NATURE SCHOOL

A bit about us

Our school opened in 2021 to offer an alternative to the screen heavy and sedentary environment found in many education institutions. Our team is passionate about quality, holistic elementary education for children. Born out of the pandemic, the benefits of our nature based, child centered approach have continued to be proven relevant and we are thrilled to continue serving our community today.

Our Mission:

Whole Child Education, Rooted in Nature

We believe our work contributes to the *rebalancing of childhood*—restoring time outdoors, play, and connection to community. We equip the next generation to mindfully shape the future. Our mission is to provide children in Northwest Arkansas with a holistic, nature-immersed education that fosters a lifelong love of learning. We balance core academics with social-emotional well-being, nurturing kindness, innovation, and critical thinking. By fostering respect for self, others, and the environment, we empower children to grow into confident, compassionate individuals who are able to positively impact the world.

Our Core Values:

Village Mindset: It Takes a Village to Raise Good Humans

We believe in the power of community. Our school is a supportive network where students, teachers, families, and staff uplift one another with grace and understanding. We commit to:

- Respecting children in our words, actions, and intentions.
- Fostering a culture of kindness, empathy, and collaboration.

Be Good Stewards: Our Actions Leave a Lasting Footprint

We recognize our responsibility to care for the world around us. This means:

- Respecting and protecting nature through mindful consumption.
- Choosing sustainable, natural materials and maintaining simple, beautiful spaces.

Safeguard Childhood: Let them be children

We honor childhood as a sacred time of curiosity, creativity, and discovery. This means:

- Protecting unstructured play as essential to growth, imagination, and well-being.
- Encouraging curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning.

Food Standards: Nutrition Fuels Well-Being

We believe that what we eat impacts how we feel, think, and grow. Food served at our school is:

- Whole, minimally processed, and organic whenever possible.
- Free from chemical additives, preservatives, and artificial flavors, sweeteners, or dyes.

Accreditation

Our school has been accredited through Cognia. Accreditation through Cognia is built on research-based performance standards that give schools data and tools to make continuous and meaningful improvement. Accreditation was finalized in March 2026.

GENERAL POLICIES

Hours of Operation

We are open from 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

2026 Kindergarten Pick up is from 3:00 pm-3:15 pm

2026 Grades 1-4 Pick up is from 3:15 pm-3:30 pm

Extended Care available 7:30-8:30am and 3:30-5:30pm

Tuition and Fees

We split our annual tuition of (\$9200) into 10 monthly installments (\$920/mo)

Tuition is due by the 15th of each month. Payment is due August - May.

You are welcome to pay by card or bank draft through Brightwheel, or check/cash given to the office at drop-off. Payments that are more than 15 days late will be subject to a late fee of 10% of tuition due.

In addition to standard tuition, our program has two semester fees of \$200 each. These provide snacks, necessary school supplies, and maintain our facilities for our programs and are billed in October and March.

We are an approved EFA/Learns Act provider.

Closings

We are closed for holidays aligning with Fayetteville Public School closings and for 2 in-service days per year:

Labor Day, Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, Spring Break, Memorial Day

We also close for Parent Teacher conferences once each semester. See Calendar for closures.

Inclement Weather and Closing for Ice/Snow

Thunderstorms, lightning, or extreme temperatures will keep us inside. We will close for dangerous road conditions. Please watch for announcements via Brightwheel for closing info when there is inclement weather. We typically follow Fayetteville Public Schools for weather related closings.

Arrival

Students may arrive beginning at 8:15a.m. At drop off, a teacher will check your child in on Brightwheel. Please ensure they are met by a teacher. If you need to drop off earlier, please look into before school care.

Dismissal

2026 Kindergarten Pick up is from 3:00-3:15 2026 Grades Pick up is from 3:15-3:30

For your child's safety, anyone picking up must be recognized by a staff member or verified with an ID.

If someone new will be picking up your child: **Add them as an approved contact in Brightwheel, or Send us a message through Brightwheel** to let us know in advance.

Late Pick-up Policy

In the event that a pick-up is unable to arrive by 3:30 for a child, the child will be checked in to our on-site aftercare. If not pre-planned, after care is \$15/day. Please let us know with as much notice as possible if you expect you will be late or need your child to go to aftercare.

Attendance Policy

Our school prioritizes mental health and fostering a love for learning. Although we do not have a minimum attendance requirement, if your child is struggling making progress in their learning due to time out of school, we will initiate finding solutions (e.g. additional homework or extra work cycles and/or additional support from parents outside of class time)

Individual Educational Plan

As a private school in Fayetteville, Fayetteville Nature School has education referral resources available through the public school system. If you are concerned about your child's hearing, vision, reading, or learning, please let us know. We will share concerns if we have them. If your child is already receiving therapy, we will support any current plan to the best of our ability and will discuss accommodations thoroughly before enrollment.

Brightwheel

Each child has their own Brightwheel account. We use it for billing, record keeping, communication, billing and attendance.

Technology

We are a slow-tech school. We have ipads in classrooms for occasional use and research. We do not rely on technology for our lessons. We do not allow devices at school. This includes any device that can access social media (Phones, Tablets, Smart watches). Watches or phones *strictly for communication* are allowed and can be used before and after school and as needed.

Toys

Please talk with children about bringing toys to school. They can be played with only during recess or before/after school and must be stored in a backpack during classes.

Pets & Visiting Animals

We love animals at FNS! We have dogs, cats, chickens, and goats around the campus. If your child has severe allergies to any animals, FNS may not be a good fit for your family. Kindly, request permission from administration before bringing new animals to visit our environments.

Testing

We are required by the Education Freedom Accounts Program to test each child at least once per school year. We use Renaissance STAR Assessments for tracking reading and math progress and assessments/tests are given twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Tests are around 45 minutes long and administered on an ipad. Results are shared with parents.

Gulley Park

We are lucky to be located just a short walk away from Gulley Park! Our school takes frequent trips over to the park to use the playground, walking trails, Niokaska Creek and the variety of natural areas as part of curriculum and free play.

Outdoor Environment & Dress for School

As a nature school, we believe it is imperative to health and development to spend time outdoors. We have an all weather policy. If it is safe to be outside, we will spend time outside. In colder months we bundle up, stay active. In hotter months, we like to take advantage of the creek and take breaks in the shade and indoors. that is comfortable, appropriate for the weather, and that you keep in mind your child may get paint, mud, and other play messes on their clothing.

Field Trips and Hike Days

Our school organizes field trips throughout the year, including visits to local hiking trails and nature-based destinations. We have two preplanned hike days each year, and additional field trips are announced about a month in advance.

For most trips, we ask that parents drop off and pick up at the designated field trip location. Each child must have a signed field trip waiver on file in order to participate.

Family Involvement

School Events

We have several events throughout the year that we invite and encourage family attendance. Events include our Lantern Walk, Fall Festival, Winter Bonfire, and more!

FNS Parent Group

Please join our Parent organization. :) We welcome parent involvement at FNS! Please talk to your child's teacher about classroom needs and scheduling a time for volunteering.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We assess children in the Fall and Spring and informally throughout the year. Parent-teacher conferences allow us to collaborate with parents one on one. We plan 2 per year: one in October and one in March.

Food Culture

At our school, we believe that nourishing our bodies and caring for the planet are deeply connected. Our food culture and zero waste efforts reflect a shared commitment to health, environmental responsibility, and community respect.

Wholesome Food Standards

We value real food—free from artificial additives. Please help us support this by ensuring all meals, snacks, and classroom treats are free from:

- Artificial preservatives
- Artificial colors and flavors
- Artificial sweeteners
- Chemical additives
- Added MSG

Note: We are a **Nut Aware**, not **Nut Free**, facility.

Our standards align closely with **Ozark Natural Foods (ONF) and Natural Grocers**, making it easy to shop locally and confidently. If a food item does not meet these guidelines, children may enjoy it themselves, but we ask that it not be shared with others.

When bringing food to share (e.g., for classroom or community events), please:

- Follow our ingredient guidelines above
- Provide a full ingredient list with the dish to support families with allergies or dietary needs

Zero Waste Goals

We're working toward a zero waste school environment. You can support this by packing food in ways that reduce waste:

- Use reusable containers (stainless steel, silicone, durable plastic)
- Choose unpackaged snacks or remove packaging at home
- Avoid single-use plastics; opt for compostable or recyclable alternatives when possible

We know that family life is full and every day looks different. These suggestions are not strict rules—just shared goals. Every small effort adds up.

Thank you for partnering with us to nurture healthy children and a healthy planet. Your support strengthens our community and helps model meaningful values for our students.

Behavior Guidance

Because a nature setting comes with unique risks, our behavior expectations are higher than at a typical school. Safety and respect are at the heart of everything we do.

FNS Student Expectations

1. **Respect** — Treat teachers, each other, and nature with care.
2. **Kindness First** — We have zero tolerance for hurtful or mean-spirited behavior. This includes pushing, hitting, name-calling, grabbing, or aggression.
3. **Follow Nature School Rules**
 - Always stay within sight of a teacher.
 - Ask a teacher before eating or foraging anything in nature.
 - Respect physical boundaries that are set.
 - Follow directions the first time they are given.
 - Support the daily rhythm — even if it's not your first choice of activity

Note: Our kindergarten students are just beginning to develop these skills, so there is more learning and grace in that class. While some rules may seem small, each expectation helps ensure your child's safety and the trust between students and teachers.

How We Guide Behavior

We use positive guidance, never shame or punishment. Here's how we handle behavior issues:

1. **First step:** The teacher talks with the child to discuss what happened, what choices could be made instead, and how to make it right.
2. **Second step:** If a child repeatedly (three or more times in a day) struggles to follow safety expectations, parents will be notified, and the child may need to be picked up for the day.
3. **Third step:** If there is an ongoing pattern that puts the child or others at risk, we may ask a parent to stay with the child during the next class days until the behavior improves.

If the issue is not resolved within three weeks, the child will be dismissed from the program for the remainder of the year. In most cases, children are welcome to reapply for the following year.

Special Needs

If your child has specific needs, it does not automatically mean they cannot attend FNS. We will thoughtfully evaluate whether we can safely meet their needs within our setting.

Health Policy

We strive to maintain a clean, healthy environment for our students and teachers. One ill child can infect the whole classroom and ultimately the whole school. If your child shows any of the following symptoms, they must be kept home until they are ***without symptoms for 24 hours***. This will minimize the spread of infection and allow appropriate recuperation time for your child.

Your child should stay home if:

- They have a fever of 100.4 or higher in the last 24 hours. Your child may return after being fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- They are vomiting or having diarrhea (2 or more loose stools in 24 hours). Your child may return 24 hours after they last vomit or have diarrhea.
- They have symptoms of pink eye.

Please let us know if your child is staying home due to illness. If your child shows any of the above symptoms during the school day, we will call you to pick them up as soon as possible. If we cannot reach you we will call other emergency contacts you have listed. This policy is set to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses. Your consideration in observing these policies will help keep our teachers and all of the students in our school healthy and happy!

Allergies/Action Plans

If your child has an allergy, please provide an Allergy Action Plan from your doctor. If medication for an allergic reaction is provided, please make sure we have the proper medication and that it stays up to date.

Accidents/Injuries/Emergency Treatment

While precautions are taken to avoid injuries, childhood accidents do happen as your child explores new physical skills and muscle control. All of our staff is trained in basic first-aid for minor injuries. Our outdoor skills teacher is wilderness responder certified.

In the event that emergency treatment is needed, here is the protocol our staff will follow:

Minor - If your child suffers a minor injury (i.e. small scrape or cut) that requires first-aid, We will care for the injury and you will be notified through a Brightwheel message or in person by a teacher at pick-up.

Serious – If your child suffers a somewhat more serious injury (i.e. bump on head, or possibility of stitches, sting) we will treat and post a photo of the injury through their account and contact you to come to the school to further evaluate your child.

Severe - In the event of a severe or critical injury (i.e. uncontrolled bleeding or head injury) you will be notified immediately and we will call 911 for your child to be transported to the nearest medical facility for treatment. *If an ambulance is required, costs incurred are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Saying Goodbye

Graduation

When your child is ready to move on to 5th grade, we will host a graduation celebration in May!!

Withdrawal

When you are certain your child will no longer be attending, we require that you complete and return a withdrawal form and provide at least a 30-day notice. Tuition refunds will not be given for early withdrawals.

We would love to hear about your experience at FNS and would welcome any feedback, good or bad, that you would be willing to provide. You are welcome to contact admin by email (Fayettevillenatureschool@gmail.com), text or phone call anytime at (479) 343-1900 .

Thank you for taking the time to read our handbook. Please sign the Parent Handbook Signature Page to acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to our policies.

Thank you for being part of the FNS Family! It is truly a privilege to partner with you in your child's education.

Student Name: _____

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Supplies List

- Reusable Water Bottle
- Backpack w/ extra set of clothes
- Reusable lunchbox
- Weather appropriate accessories(Rainboots, hat, gloves, etc.)

How to dress for Nature School

[How to Dress Your Kids for the Outdoors | REI Expert Advice](#)

How to Dress Your Kids for Outdoor Play in Any Weather

