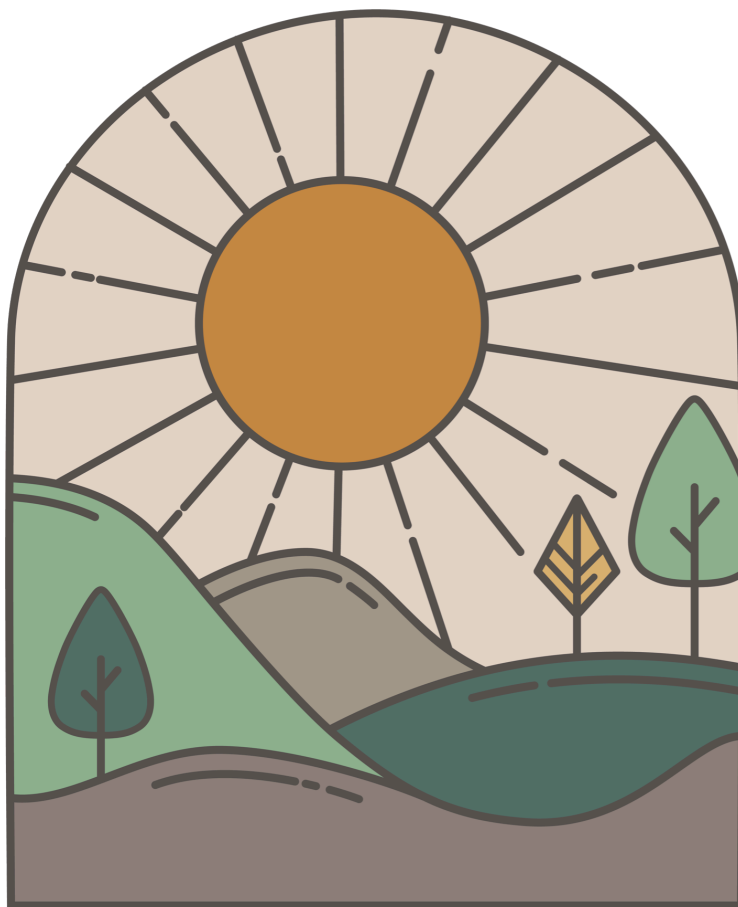


# PARENT HANDBOOK



FAYETTEVILLE  
NATURE SCHOOL

2025

# 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 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 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: Protect the Wonder of Learning & Play**

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 exploration, 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 will be:

- Whole, minimally processed, and organic whenever possible.

- Free from chemical additives, preservatives, artificial flavors, sweeteners, and dyes.

**Accreditation** Our school is in the process of being 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. For more info check out Cognia's performance standards here: <https://www.cognia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Performance-Standards.pdf>

# GENERAL POLICIES

## Hours of Operation

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

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

## Tuition and Fees

We split our annual tuition of (\$8,800) into 10 monthly installments (\$880/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 and necessary school supplies for our programs and are billed in September 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

See Calendar for in-service days

## 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 for closings when there is inclement weather.

If inclement weather conditions prevent the center from opening or require a delayed start, an announcement will be made through a Brightwheel message.

## Arrival

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

## Departure

Pick up is from 3:15 - 3:30 p.m. Anyone picking up a child must be recognized by a staff member or verified through a message with the parent.

If you expect someone new to pick up your child, please add them as a Brightwheel contact or communicate this through a Brightwheel message.

## Late Pick-up Policy

In the event that a pick-up is unable to arrive by 3:40 for a child, the child will be checked in to our on-site aftercare. If not pre-planned, after care is \$20/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, communication, and attendance.

### **Meals, Snacks, and our Food Culture**

As a school, we believe nutrition impacts our health. We value wholesome food that is free from preservatives, food dyes, and without flavors from artificial sources. We ask that you support our food culture by respecting these values when sending lunch, snacks, or treats for the class.

We are a Nut Aware, but not Nut Free facility.

\* If food is bought in that does not meet our standards please do not offer it to others, and place drinks in unbranded cups.

### **Technology and Toys**

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 ask that devices are not brought to 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. 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 the indoor 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 in the 2nd and 3rd quarter of each year. Tests are around 45 minutes long and administered on an ipad. Results are shared with parents.

# Behavior Guidance

Our teachers are all trained in Positive Discipline. Due to the higher risk in a nature school setting, our behavior expectations are higher than the average school.

## **FNS Student Expectations**

1. There should be mutual respect between teacher, student, and nature.
2. Teachers establish clear boundaries for the children and remind them of those boundaries daily. Students must respect the physical boundaries that are set on land and boundaries around interactions with classmates and teachers.
3. Teachers and students foster kindness and have zero tolerance for pushing, hitting, name calling, grabbing, aggressiveness, excessive attention seeking, or other hurtful behavior.
4. Students must follow these everyday guidelines on a regular basis.

These everyday guidelines include:

- Always be able to see a teacher
- Ask a teacher prior to eating something you find in nature
- Follow directions when they are given
- Support the daily rhythm even if it's not exactly what you want to do

\*Kindergarteners are in the early stages of developing these skills so there is more tolerance for this class. While some of these expectations may seem trivial, it's extremely important for a teacher to have the confidence that their students will listen and follow through with instructions, especially since they are often for the child's safety.

## **Disciplinary Steps**

First, if a student cannot follow directions, the instructor will have a conversation with the child to talk about what happened, what should have been done differently, and what needs to happen to rectify the situation.

Second, if a child is repeatedly unable to respect the foundational guidelines (such as "Always be able to see a teacher.") for their safety or the safety of others, parents will be informed of their actions and the child must be picked up for the day.

Third, if there is a pattern in behavior that risks the child's safety, we will ask a parent to stay with the child during the next class or multiple classes if necessary until the behavior is no longer an issue.

Fourth, should attending with your child not be an option, the child will be dismissed from the program for the year. Should the issue not resolve, the child will be dismissed from the program for the year. Children who are dismissed may reapply for the following year to try again in most circumstances.

### **Special Needs**

Should your child have specific individual needs, it does not mean your child cannot attend. It means we need to evaluate if our teachers have the ability to keep your child and their classmates safe at Nature School. At this time, our teachers are not trained to work with children with high behavioral needs and we are not staffed to serve children who need regular one to one care.

### **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 several field trips throughout the year. We visit all kinds of places in our community. We frequent the library, local businesses, and local hiking trails. We typically announce these the month before and ask that parents drop off and pick up at the alternate field trip location. Each child must have a signed field trip waiver on file to participate.

## **Family Involvement**

### **School Events**

We have several events throughout the year that we invite and encourage family attendance. Events include our Lantern Festival , Winter Market, Spring Games 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.

# 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 6th grade, we will host a graduation celebration!

## Withdrawal

When you are certain your child will no longer be attending, we require that you complete and return a withdrawal form and give at least a 30-day notice for withdrawal. Tuition refunds or reimbursements 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) 443-1900 .

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

Warmly,

The Fayetteville Nature School Team

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

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Supplies List

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

## How to dress for Nature School

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/how-to-dress-your-kids-for-the-outdoors.html>

<https://getthekidsoutside.com/dress-kids-for-weather/>

