



Farm & Forest School
Cambridge

Parent Handbook

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Philosophy and Vision

Mission

To provide children with opportunities to advance their education by exploring a natural space, caring for animals, identifying and navigating risk, gaining transferable life and leadership skills, and being contributing members of a community through the natural world.

Why Choose Farm & Forest School

Create Connections: Build long term relationships with nature, animals, staff and students.

Improve Mental Health: Time spent in nature offers many benefits to your overall well being.

Build Confidence: Gain transferable life and leadership skills through navigating the outdoors.

Get Outside: Play-based learning promotes healthy active lifestyles.

Navigate Risk: Nature provides a landscape to assess and mitigate risk.

Develop Agricultural Literacy: Understanding how food is grown and animals are cared for.

About Us

The Cambridge Farm and Forest School (CFFS) is a not-for-profit organization that provides alternative education and programming to children, families, and school groups on a privately owned 150-acre farm and forest. Located only minutes from town, the year-round site is nestled in the beautiful countryside of North Dumfries, Ontario..

Cambridge Farm & Forest School

Cambridge Farm & Forest School is a combination of [Forest School](#) philosophy and agricultural literacy. It allows children to gain experiences with nature and animals while engaging in various curriculum topics such as science, engineering, mathematics, language arts, physical education, and socio-emotional skills. Qualified educators encourage children to assess risks, exercise inquiry, and practice environmental stewardship — skills that will be used throughout their lives.

Activities

Our activities will depend on the season, weather and the ability and experience of participants. Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Nature exploration and identification
- Interacting with and caring for farm animals
- Building dens, shelters and other structures
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts, drama, storytelling, artwork
- Scavenger hunts and adventures
- Seasonal celebrations
- Sit Spots
- Nature Journalling
- Appreciation of Indigenous teachings
- Environmental stewardship
- Community circles - teaching, reflecting
- Skills - fire building, tracking, knot-tying, mapping
- Mindfulness, gratitude

Programs

Programs run year-round and emphasize regular and repeated exposure to the same natural space, as the Forest School philosophy entails. This, in addition to child-directed, emergent, and inquiry-based learning, is what differentiates these types of programs from other outdoor and environmental education programs. As Forest School Canada states, “the defining feature of this type of nature-based education program is that children are provided with opportunities to build an ongoing relationship with the land, to a dedicated educator, to one another, and to themselves.”

Preschool & Kindergarten

Does your child love playing in the forest, meadow, or swamp, interacting with and caring for animals, and engaging in challenging conversations and physical activities? Then why not give them the opportunity to explore and learn at the same time? There are paths to be created, shelters to be built, experiments to be conducted, and animal tracks to be followed! These kinds of activities allow children to gain experiences with nature and animals while engaging with curriculum topics such as science, mathematics, health and physical education, literacy, and socio-emotional skills. Don't forget to pack their rubber boots, and let them venture through the forest!

School Age

This program is designed for students ages 7-12 who are Homeschooled or in Public/Catholic/Private School. Students may attend for 1, 2, or 3 days per week from September to June. Students will engage with various seasonal activities such as caring for the animals, hiking, pond exploration, tree climbing, shelter/quinzee building, animal tracking, mushing (dog sledding), tobogganing, Sit Spots, nature journaling, appreciation of Indigenous teachings, environmental stewardship, community circles - teaching, reflecting, Hard Skills - fire building, tracking, knot-tying, mapping, and/or mindfulness, gratitude.

Summer Day Camp

Summer in the forest and on the farm brings many new opportunities: longer days, grazing animals, active forest creatures, and sunshine! Whether it is your child's first time at camp or they are an experienced camper, our staff will help them navigate this new environment. Children are surrounded by nature, farm animals, and people who really care about them.

PA Day & Holiday Camps

The seasons will determine which activities will be available on the farm and in the forest! Each one brings new adventures and learning experiences. With a wide age group of participants, opportunities for exchanging ideas, sharing and mentoring become plentiful. Some activities may include children taking turns to cross streams, catching frogs, and navigating how to build the strongest forts (with sticks or snow).



Policies and Procedures

Privacy Policy

All personal files and forms (electronic and hard copy) are kept in a secure cabinet in the locked Principal's office and on a secure Google account, only accessed by staff with permission. The following data and information is collected from each student: household information and emergency contacts, student photo, signed waiver of liability, student ID (passport, birth certificate or Baptismal certificate), copy of Immunization Record (or specific dates of each vaccine) or certification of Vaccine Education Course from Public Health, completed consent form and completed medical form. The purpose of collecting this information is to allow CFFS to appropriately respond to an emergency or a health concern, allow authorized personnel to pick-up students, create classes according to age and readiness, and provide the Ontario Ministry of Education with an annual submission of statistical information.

Any personal data shared with us, including photographic images, is processed strictly in accordance with the privacy legislation and is only used in accordance with your consent in the registration form. Please note that where consent is given to share images on the internet, they can be viewed by the general public. We do not share details with third parties without consent, except where we are legally compelled or obligated to do so (i.e. the Ontario Ministry of Education). CFFS exchanges personal information with the Ontario Ministry of Education in order to assign, update and validate the Ontario Education Number and the personal information associated with each student.

Photos/Videos: Opt-in or out to the use of images of your child for promotional/outreach purposes by CFFS, including, but not limited to, photo, audio, and/or video media. *Note: Your child's picture and video may appear on CFFS' public social media pages (Instagram & Facebook).

All information collected in the registration forms is considered private and confidential and will be treated accordingly in adherence to this Privacy Policy. Should you have any questions or concerns relating to our Privacy Policy or if you would like access to your student's files, please email info@cambridgefarmandforest.ca for more information.

Payment Procedure

Payments for Summer Camp, March Break Camp, and PA Days Camps are due in full upon acceptance into the program. Payments for Forest School programs are due in one payment or monthly installments (the first installment is due upon enrollment). A staff member will notify the contact person (listed on the registration form) of acceptance and the steps to submit payment. If payment is not received in time, your child will be moved to the waiting list.

Payment can be made by:

- Credit card payment through our [Registration Portal](#)
- eChecks can be set up through our [Registration Portal](#)
- Electronic Funds Transfer to info@cambridgefarmandforest.ca. Please write the Invoice number and your child's name in the message section
- Cheque made out to *Cambridge Farm and Forest School* (arranged drop-off to onsite staff or deposited in our on-site mailbox), or

Mailing Address:

Cambridge Farm and Forest School
3238 Old Beverly Road
Cambridge, ON
N1R 5S7

Terms and Conditions

Cancellation Policy

If you need to cancel your student's registration in the program before a program begins or during a program, CFFS must receive written notice of cancellation one month in advance of the cancellation date in order to waive the \$100 Cancellation Fee. If CFFS receives notice that your student is cancelling or not returning to the program with less than one month's written notice, CFFS will charge a \$100 Cancellation Fee. Payment that has been made beyond the cancellation date will be refunded to you. CFFS does not issue refunds for single day absences. If a student will be absent for multiple days, CFFS reserves the right to review this on a case-by-case basis in order to determine if CFFS can issue a refund for the missed days. Refunds will not be given in the event that a day's program is cancelled due to inclement weather. If CFFS' programs are cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic related closures, all students will be issued a full refund for any remaining days in the program.

Emergency Contact with Educators

You can contact the school during office hours at 8:00am-4:30pm at 226-533-9591.

Child Entry and Release Forms

Parents/guardians must give written authorization for any adults who may be picking up their child. In the case that staff do not have written authorization for someone to pick-up, staff will phone the parent to receive verbal authorization by phone for the new pick-up person. Parents must notify [our school director](#) before changing the usual pick-up routine.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Requirements

Children must be dropped off or picked up by a person who is at least 16 years old and who is listed on the authorized pick-up list on the child's [Household Account](#). Staff will take attendance electronically on cell phones or tablets. Please report any absences for your family by emailing our school director, Heather Figueiredo at heather@cambridgefarmandforest.ca. Thank you for your assistance with this process.

Unauthorized Pick-up Procedure:

If someone other than a parent/authorized adult arrives to pick up a child and we have not been notified in advance by the authorized adult, educators will:

1. Call the parent/guardian for verbal authorization
2. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the child must remain in the staff's care until the parent/guardian has been reached.
3. Staff will remain with the child until an authorized adult gives verbal consent or arrives.

Late Pick-up and Extended Day Policy

Parents must make alternate arrangements for pick up if they cannot pick their child up by 4:00pm (for Forest School) or 4:30pm (for camp). A late fee charge of \$10.00 for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, will be charged for the aforementioned times. If there is an emergency and you are going to be late, we ask that you call the school to notify us at 226-533-9591.

Numerous or persistent incidences of late pick up may result in termination of care. It is important for parents to have an alternate person who can pick up their child when they are late. All available alternate pick-up persons must be on the registration form prior to the beginning of Forest School or camp.

During the school year, parents can opt into our extended care each day, or as needed. Parents must register for extended day care in advance (at least 48 hours in advance) and there is an additional daily fee. Before-School care is from 8:00-8:30am for \$8.00 per day, and After-School care is from 4:00-4:30pm for \$8.00 per day, or both options for \$14.00 per day.



Risk Management

Risk--the experience and management of it--is an inherent and integral part of Forest School, as well as of healthy child development. CFFS educators and volunteers endeavour to assess and mitigate risk alongside students. We believe this is an essential skill for children to acquire and for adults to support. Our educators and volunteers conduct seasonal on-site risk assessments and activity risk assessments on an on-going basis, always considering the balance between risk and benefits when doing so.

Some of the risks inherent to Forest School and outdoor play include, but are not limited to:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities (i.e. on uneven ground in the forest).
- Injuries from failing to properly use tools (i.e. knives) despite proper instruction.
- Injuries resulting from fire.
- Contracting poison ivy.
- The presence of wild animals and ticks.
- Interacting with farm animals.
- Inclement weather.

On-Site Risk Assessment Procedure

Forest School sites must be reasonably safe and easily accessible, so whenever possible we will visit and assess site areas before activities take place. During our assessment, we will seek to

identify any significant hazards and take the necessary precautions to reduce the risk to an acceptably safe level.

Due to changing weather conditions, possible wildlife and visitors, we may be faced with new challenges, such as fallen branches, high water levels, the presence of wildlife, or even human litter. These risks will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to the group's arrival, a site sweep and assessment will be made immediately upon the group's arrival. We pause our activities to articulate these assessments with students at any point where there is a hazard or risk. Assessing and managing risk is an important skill for children to develop, and it can offer great learning opportunities.

Emergency Procedure and First Aid

CFFS has detailed emergency procedures with which all educators are familiar. A copy of these procedures is carried by an educator, along with a First Aid Kit, emergency numbers, contact numbers, and medical information about all participants. All staff will be trained in First Aid and the school's emergency procedures. First Aid Kits will be restocked as needed and adjusted for every season. The Old Growth and Evergreen forests are accessible by vehicle and allow emergency vehicles to access these areas, if needed. All staff will carry a mobile phone and walkie talkie in case of emergency and will be able to contact the director.

Please note that there is potential risk that your child may be subject to small and minor injuries (i.e. bumps, bruises, scratches). Parents will be notified at the end of the day if these minor injuries occur. If children experience a greater injury or an injury to the head, parents will be notified by phone immediately. Accident forms will only be given out based on the case and circumstances. If you require more information, please contact one of our educators or our director. Additionally, each student will receive a Waiver of Liability form to be completed by a parent or guardian prior to the start of Forest School.



Tool Use

Prior to teaching procedures for tool use, parents/guardians will sign a waiver of liability allowing their child to use tools. These skills will only be taught by experienced and appropriate staff. The program will be scaffolded and directed depending upon the age, ability, and experience of the child.

The availability of tools for use will depend on the fine and gross motor skills of that individual child. Children will begin with small and beginner tools and graduate to other more advanced tools as the educator recommends.

- For example, a child may begin carving with a vegetable peeler until their motor skills are proficient enough to move on to a small fixed blade. The educator will also monitor the child's kinesthetic awareness and use of appropriate terms, such as "blood bubble", knife safety skills, and body positioning.

Tools provided by the school will be available for the child to use on the site (Students may not bring their own tools to Forest School). All tools are kept out of reach from the children and are only accessed when it is an appropriate time for use. It will be the educator's responsibility to ensure that the children are able to use the tools properly and safely at all times.

In case of an accident during tool use, an additional First Aid Kit will be kept in the tool cabinet as well as a list of the local emergency phone numbers. Each educator will be certified in Emergency First Aid and CPR-B or CPR-C in case of an emergency anywhere on site.

Inclement Weather/Closure

Cambridge Farm and Forest School staff will use their discretion to discern unsuitable weather and will consult the forecast regularly, keeping the safety of our students and their parents/guardians in mind at all times. If the WRDSB announces a snow day, CFFS programs will remain open. It is up to the parents' discretion if they are comfortable traveling to the school.

Extreme weather is defined as: strong winds, blizzards, ice storms, risk of tornadoes, extreme temperatures. Our school house, portable, and barn give us shelter from the elements.

In the case of a closure due to staff illnesses, every effort will be made to seek substitute staff or to reschedule.

Illness Policy

CFFS is currently following the COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures set out by the Ministry of Education and Public Health Ontario. The measures and any updates can be found here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-health-and-safety-measures-schools>

We ask that participants (including students, educators, and accompanying volunteers) stay home from CFFS programs for at least 48 hours after their last symptoms have subsided, for the following cases:

- Temperature (100.4°F or higher)
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Pink Eye
- Any contagious illnesses

Should the above-mentioned situations arise while at Forest School, the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to pick up their child immediately.

In the case of communicable diseases such as measles, pink eye, chickenpox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral pneumonia, etc., a sick child may return to Forest School after their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to do so. Any outbreak of communicable disease or lice treatment will be communicated to parents/guardians via preferred method of contact.

Additional COVID-19 Protocols:

CFFS Programs follow the protocols set out by the Region of Waterloo Public Health unit which include: cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, frequent hand washing or hand sanitizing (eg. before and after eating or handling our animals) and self-screening.

Immunization Policy

At CFFS, we want to protect the health and well-being of the staff, students and families who are enrolled or present on-site. Under the [Immunization of School Pupils Act](#), all primary students need to have proof of immunization against:

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Polio
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Meningococcal Disease
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Varicella (chickenpox)

FOR SCHOOL ONLY: CFFS requires parents/guardians to provide an up-to-date copy of each child's immunization record in case an outbreak should occur. All immunization records are to be sent to info@cambridgefarmandforest.ca ATTN: Immunization Records.

Parents who have medical, conscious or religious objections to immunization must notify Public Health. They will then be required to apply for an exemption for their child through Public Health and must attend a mandatory Vaccines and Preventable Disease Program. To contact Public Health and at 519-575-4400 x 5003 to book an appointment and get more information. A copy of your certification of program completion must be sent to info@cambridgefarmandforest.ca ATTN: Immunization Records.

If a disease (listed above) appears in your child's school, your child may have to stay out of school/child care until the disease is no longer present.

Poison Ivy

Poison ivy is present in some locations on the farm and forest. To limit exposure, we suggest that all participants wear long pants, socks and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs in all seasons. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so staff will carry potable water, soap and a cloth at all times. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we are able to wash the affected area. Staff will notify parents/guardians if their child comes into contact with poison ivy.

Ticks

Ticks are present in the region. To limit exposure, we suggest that all participants wear long pants, long socks, and closed-toed shoes while taking part in our programs in all seasons. We suggest that participants tuck pant legs into socks and tuck shirts into pants to limit possible tick exposure.

We recommend using insect repellent to deter ticks. We recommend that parents/guardians send their child with insect repellent that contains DEET, or natural alternatives, to re-apply as required throughout the day.

Parents are responsible for checking their child after a day at Forest School. If a tick is seen on a participant, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, staff who are trained to do so will safely remove the tick and save it in a clear plastic bag. Parents/guardians will be informed at pickup, and given the opportunity to take the tick to the health unit for testing. All parents will be informed if there has been a tick encounter and they will be reminded to check their children.

Blacklegged ticks, which carry Lyme disease, are not commonly found in Waterloo Region. According to public health, the risk of encountering a blacklegged tick in the region is low.

For more information about ticks, we recommend visiting the Waterloo Region Public Health website:

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/insect-and-animal-diseases.aspx>

For more information about being outdoors during tick season, visit a blog post on the Child and Nature Alliance website: <http://childnature.ca/what-can-we-do-about-ticks/>

Head Lice

Head lice may affect participants at CFFS. Head lice is not considered a communicable disease but rather an annoying condition that can spread rapidly. If head lice or nits are present, we ask that you:

- Contact staff at CFFS immediately so that other families can be informed (the affected individuals will remain anonymous).
- Follow the treatment suggestions on the information sheet provided by Waterloo Region Public Health: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/pests.aspx>

Food Policy

- **Nut Free Zone:** Due to the prevalence of life-threatening nut allergies, we ask that participants refrain from bringing products that contain nuts. Soy and sunflower seed substitutes for nut butters are welcome.
- **Snack-Sharing:** In addition, we ask participants not to share snacks, as this practice contributes to the health and safety of the community.
- **Litterless Lunches:** We encourage participants to bring snacks that are litter-free (as much as possible). Some examples of containers to use are beeswax wraps and Bento boxes (brand) lunch containers which have multiple dividers). We seek to empower even our youngest participants to carry their own snacks/water bottles on our adventures, which is possible with small containers.
- **Hand-washing and Drinking Water:** Participants will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water before eating and after using the washroom. They will also be able to refill their water bottles on-site. All water on-site is potable drinking water, designated as safe by the Region of Waterloo water sample test (conducted bi-annually).

Washrooms and Toileting

Washrooms will be open and available inside the schoolhouse and at our school's outdoor porta-potty at all times. Parents will be asked to remind children to use the washroom before their day begins.

Once in the forest, in the event that a child needs to use the washroom, an educator will help the child find a suitable place to relieve him/herself. Educators follow a *Leave No Trace* philosophy to limit the impact on the environment. If this is not possible, one adult will accompany the child to the washroom inside the schoolhouse. Water and hand sanitizer will be carried with the group at all times.

All children must be able to use the washroom independently prior to attending CFFS' programs. Staff have assigned regular washroom breaks throughout the daily schedule (approximately every hour). Children will be encouraged to use the washroom prior to any excursion to the back Old Growth Forest. The toilets on site have heights and stools to accommodate all ages.

We understand that accidents happen, especially if the child is just learning how to navigate the farm and forest. If a child does have an accident or is not able to make it to the toilet quickly enough, we will use the extra clothes that are sent with the child to school/camp (the parents/guardians will be asked to replenish the extra clothes for the following day that the child attends).



Environmental Sustainability

At the Cambridge Farm and Forest School we aim for our participants and staff to exhibit a high level of respect for the natural world. We believe that through repeated exposure to the same natural area, participants nurture a love for the environment and their community.

It is important to be mindful of the ecological impact of running a Forest School. Each area accessed on site will receive a detailed Site Assessment that will include an environmental assessment of the wear on that site. This will change during each season and will depend on the exposure level from the children. Educators will determine if an area is not suitable for accessing on a daily basis and this will depend on weather conditions and previous use from other groups of children. If an area on-site becomes unsuitable for use, due to excessive use or wear from the weather, we may close that area until the land revives itself. The children will be encouraged to create land revival recommendations in order to be accountable for their land use and wear.

As for the crops and garden, we will ensure sufficient crop rotation and soil health each growing season. In the forest, children will be educated to avoid picking anything that is living unless the educator is using it as a learning opportunity. Children will also learn about what makes a healthy ecosystem and its lifecycle.

Any fire building will be contained by rocks, a Hibachi bucket, or a Kelly Kettle in order to prevent the spread of fires or root fires.

All children will be encouraged to be stewards of the land. They will become responsible and feel a sense of ownership over the land.

CFFS Educators

Our educators are passionate about connecting children to the natural world, while modeling and encouraging relationships with others that demonstrate respect, kindness and cooperation. Founder and Educator, Heather Figueiredo, is an Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT) and a certified Forest School Practitioner through *Forest School Canada*. As well, Brittany Kivell is a Registered Early Childhood Educator who works with the Kindergarten and Preschool-aged students. Our other educators and organizational volunteers are recognized for their passion and experience working with children, youth and families. We aim to provide a high quality, educational, and social experience, and talented staff are key to achieving this goal.

It is the responsibility of CFFS to ensure the safety of all participants in our care. We are committed to creating an environment which is inclusive and safe. Any suspected cases of abuse and negligence will be promptly and appropriately dealt with by the staff.

Furthermore, all staff and volunteers will have Vulnerable Sector Police Checks. Each member of the on-site team will hold current Emergency First Aid and CPR qualifications and be trained in Epi-Pen use. We will also aim to provide adequate support to ensure all staff and volunteers are confident and competent when following the policies and procedures we have set out in this handbook.

CFFS Staff Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a CFFS educator/volunteer are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensure the physical safety of participants, including students, educators and accompanying volunteers, by co-assessing and co-managing risks on an on-going basis and make participants feel comfortable in the natural environment.
- Model the proper care and respect for the natural world, as well as respectful use of tools and supplies.
- Take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are followed.
- Seek to be co-learners with the group, prompting questions and curiosity, modeling wonder and enthusiasm for learning and understanding about the natural world. They encourage new learning by introducing loose parts, supplies, provocations, and resources that change the environment. Leaders work to scaffold participants' learning so that deeper questions and ideas arise.
- Ensuring students' families understand how to equip students with proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies according to the season.

Participant to Staff Ratios

The ratios between CFFS educators/volunteers and students vary depending on the age of the group of students and the adults accompanying them. The following ratios will be maintained for the majority of the school day and especially during risky play, travelling to forested areas, and tool use:

- Preschool-aged children to staff ratio is 5:1
- Kindergarten-aged children to staff ratio is 8:1
- School-aged children to staff ratio is 8:1

Reduced ratios can only be in effect when children are arriving, leaving, during the indoor periods, and recess. The reduced ratio cannot be less than two-thirds of the required ratio (with the exception of lunchtime where one supervisor is present). This is in accordance with the recommendations from the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians will be asked to complete a form before their child begins the program with Cambridge Farm and Forest School. The completed consent form will give relevant medical details of the child, consent for the child to take part in the Forest School activities, permissions to administer medicines and/or to admit the child to hospital for emergency treatment. The form also provides emergency contact details and optional permission to take and use photographs and videos of the child for promotional purposes and reports. The educator will keep a copy of this form with him/her while the child is present at the program.

Parents are also expected to observe prompt drop-off and pick-up times for the registered programs. Unless special permission has been granted, parents/guardians are to drop children off without lingering. Having parents stay with the group can create problems for group dynamics and separations of individual children.



Preparing for Forest School: Supply List

We aim to experience nature in all seasons, so it is imperative that participants dress appropriately to stay comfortable and dry. Below are suggested clothing options for various types of weather. Please label all of your children's gear and clothing with their name.

Weather	Clothing
Warm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short or long-sleeved shirt ● Durable and breathable pants ● Sun hat ● Closed-toed shoes or boots ● An extra pair of socks in backpack
Cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Base layer shirt and long underwear of fleece, wool, or polyester to wick away moisture (no cotton) ● Middle layer of wool or fleece ● Outer shell of waterproof, wind resistant shell, and breathable, including jacket and pants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Waterproof and insulated boots ● Thick wool or polyester socks (no cotton) ● Warm hat that covers ears ● Warm, waterproof mittens ● Balaclava and/or tube scarf ● An extra pair of mittens in backpack ● An extra pair of socks in backpack
Rainy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Waterproof shell, of hooded jacket and pants, or coveralls ● Waterproof boots ● And extra pair of socks in backpack

At the beginning of a program, please bring:

- A labeled plastic bag with a change of clothing (underwear, pants, socks, shirt) for your child.
- Optional: A bin (preferably with a lid) that will hold all of your child’s extra gear. The bin can remain at school and parents will be notified when items need to be replenished.

Every day that your child attends, please bring:

- A backpack containing the following supplies
 - Extra socks
 - Extra mittens (in cold weather)
 - Reusable water bottle
 - Two plastic bags (to put over dry socks, in the event of a boot “soaker”)
 - A nut-free, healthy, litterless snack (optional)
 - Lunch (nut-free, litterless)
 - Bug jacket (May-September only)
 - Sunscreen and/or bug spray (optional)*

*Note: if participants need to apply sunscreen and/or bug repellent, parents/ guardians are asked to apply this before the child comes to the program, either at home or in the parking lot when they arrive at school. Staff may help your child to reapply later in the day.

Please do NOT bring:

- Toys from home
- Pocket knives or other tools
- Electronic devices including cell phones, mP3 players, gaming devices*

*CFFS is not responsible for any personal property that is lost or damaged.



Learning and Development

A Typical Day

Cambridge Farm and Forest programs vary greatly, depending on the age and interests of the children, the length of the program, and the weather. Each day is as unique as the children in the group and the adults leading them.

During the program:

- Opening circle, introductions, Land acknowledgement, gratitude, planning our time together
- Community building activities and lessons from educators
- Any new information (weather, hazards, other considerations)
- Go to Base Camp site
- Describe boundaries
- Engage group in developing rules and guidelines for the program

Ending the Day:

- Return equipment if needed
- Remove structures (i.e. stick forts), if needed
- Check for litter and dispose of it appropriately
- Closing debrief and circle time featuring Story of the Day , reciprocity, gratitude, Rose/Bud/Thorn, reflective debrief
- Walk to pick up point
- Reflective debrief between educators

Emergent Learning

Learning at CFFS may look different than learning in a conventional school. Our learning strives to be learner-led, experiential, inquiry-based, and play-based. Through this approach, the students can pursue their interests, develop an appreciation for the farm and forest, construct knowledge, acquire new skills, ask questions, and learn to express themselves in safe and appropriate ways.

Play

Each program will include unstructured, free play time, which we believe is fundamental to healthy development and learning. Through play, children make connections to the world around them. Social play teaches participants how to effectively communicate, negotiate roles and responsibilities and share. Much of children's play in Forest School is imaginative and uses natural objects (logs, water, leaves, etc) which are always at their fingertips at the farm and in the forest. All educators involved in the Forest School programs are conscious that it is an exploratory experience for the group. Programs give multiple opportunities for the group to play and learn as independently as possible. If invited to provide support then staff will do so, otherwise they observe and ensure a safe learning environment, allowing the experience to be as learner-directed as possible.

Behaviour Management

At CFFS, staff work with a group of children to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. We aim to promote self-esteem, self-awareness of abilities and limitations, self-regulation and emotional intelligence, respect of self, cooperation and nonviolent communication, and risk management. We proactively set up the physical and social/emotional space to encourage positive behaviour. CFFS strives to:

- Focus on the behaviour rather than the child.
- Consider the child's development level and needs.
- Implement behaviour management in a positive and consistent manner.
- Assist the child to learn appropriate behaviour and conflict management techniques.
- Help children to develop self-control, self-confidence, decision-making skills, the ability to communicate effectively and sensitivity in their interactions with others.

CFFS prohibits:

- Sexual abuse, harassment, molestation, corporal punishment, bullying, neglect, humiliation, deprivation of basic needs, and confinement.

If a child is exhibiting any inappropriate behaviours on a consistent basis, the child may be required to have a support person in place or to temporarily leave the program. Every effort will be made to ensure that all children will find their place in our Forest School community.

CFFS and the Region of Waterloo reserves the right to suspend or expel a child from the program should their behaviour be deemed unsafe. Decisions to re-enter the program and create a plan to return will be made on a case-by-case basis. At all times, the safety and learning environment of the group will be paramount. CFFS also records inappropriate behaviour on Incident Reports which are to be reviewed by staff and parents/guardians at the end of the day.



Equality

Inclusion

We have seen many cases where Forest School has positively impacted children with exceptionalities. CFFS strives to be as inclusive as possible. Please note, we don't have additional staff to provide one-to-one support or Independent Education Plans (IEP) at this time. However, due to our low staff-to-student ratios and the freedom within our curriculums, we have more flexibility with assisting students as needed. If your child requires one-to-one support, a support worker is welcome to come to the site as long as they provide a Vulnerable Sector Check, are familiar with CFFS' policies and procedures, and be agreeable to the Forest School philosophy. CFFS staff would happily work collaboratively with other specialists or professionals to assist in the development and learning of all students. If available, please enclose a copy of the last centre or school report to keep in your child's file. CFFS staff will do their best to accommodate all students however, if there are recurring behaviours that are deemed detrimental to other students and staff, we will refer to our Behaviour Management policies for the best solution for all.

Accessibility Policy

CFFS is committed to equal opportunities for all and strives to provide an environment in which everyone feels welcome, valued, and safe. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all, irrespective of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, language or background.

When planning a visit, information is requested from school groups and parents about participants with access or medical requirements so they can be fully included in the program. We will work to adapt activities to ensure that everyone can participate.



Communication

Participants

Due to the nature of our student-lead programs, we value the input of our participants and look for opportunities to collaborate. Each program will include “looking ahead” where participants can voice interests and ideas to educators. This will inform the staff planning for the next program.

Staff

Staff (including Administration) will be communicating with families in person, by phone or by email, in order to keep everyone aware of new announcements, upcoming events, and the things happening on site. Staff will contribute to weekly documents to jointly track the process and interest of the group as well as possible directions for further learning. We will have ongoing and regular contact with staff in order to plan and prepare for possible programs and to discuss facilitation of current programs.

Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency, parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone. If the primary contacts cannot be reached, the Secondary Emergency Contact (listed on registration package) will be contacted. Staff will remain with participants until the parent/guardian has arrived. In the event the child needs to be transported, a staff member will accompany them to the next location until an authorized guardian is available. Due to the alterations in staff to participant ratios, programs may need to go indoors until an alternative staff or volunteers can come and assist.

Questions and Concerns

We encourage all participants and parents/guardians to give us regular feedback about their experience, what they enjoyed about Forest School as well as any concerns. Feedback and concerns can be expressed through our evaluation forms, however, we would be happy to speak in person or over the phone. We will endeavour to be as open, honest and straight-forward as possible with parents/guardians with regards to any issues. Maintaining positive two-way communication helps us resolve problems before they arise or escalate.