



Free Spirit Forest and Nature School
COVID-19 Reopening Plan
Updated Sept 5th 2020

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A Message from our Board of Directors

Hey Folks!

What a strange year 2020 has been thus far and we'd first and foremost like to thank everyone for their patience, understanding and ongoing encouragement during these challenging times. Over the past few months and after careful and thoughtful consideration we chose to delay all of our in-person programming until the Fall 2020 – which meant canceling overnight trips, workshops/special events and summer camps. It was a tough choice, but inevitably enabled us to be flexible and accommodating (channeling our inner Raccoon and other adaptable animals!). The mantra “we are all in this together” certainly held true for us as we felt nothing but love and support from our school community.

This has been a year that enabled us to discover new and creative ways of connecting with ourselves, others and Nature, and will have some lasting positive impacts on how we move forward and deliver our programming. It's not necessarily how we expected to celebrate our 5th year, but are nevertheless extremely grateful! We are excited for the upcoming school year, have had a groundswell in our registration numbers and are busily preparing for how this will unfold.

Moving forward, we are confident that FSFNS is a common sense option for the Fall – our normal operations have us outdoors all the time, in daily cohorts and with small class sizes. We have always been well suited for an unprecedented time like this and are getting geared up for a great year. If there's a silver lining, this pandemic has really shone a light on just how important Nature Connection and what we are doing here really is.

That being said, our number one priority is (and always has been) to ensure the safety of all students, staff, their families and the greater community. Therefore we have put in place the following policies and procedures so we can minimize the risks associated with Covid-19. **These new specifically adapted protocols will remain in place and override any related policies in our Parent Handbook until further notice.** Please ensure you have read this guide carefully prior to beginning with us as there are some important changes to how we operate.

We are excited to get back to connecting with your kids and Nature - thank you for your continued support and commitment to getting everyone outside!

Matt an Kim Simpson
On behalf of the Board of Directors, FSFNS

Ministry Guidelines and Public Health Recommendations

As a certified private school, we are making decisions based on the guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education. In addition, we rely heavily on the expert advice from the Medical Professionals at Sick Kids Hospital and the local public health units. We recognize that these recommendations will change and evolve over time as we see the impact of COVID-19 and therefore this document will be consistently revised to reflect that.

Our Approach and Protection Strategies

As our normal operations have us outdoors all the time, in daily cohorts and with small class sizes, we believe we are a safe choice for the upcoming school year. Furthermore, we will be implementing the following measures to ensure the safety of everyone in our community. Parents and guardians must also sign a waiver prior to participation.

Self-Assessment

Public health recommends self-screening for symptoms of COVID-19. Therefore, all staff and students must self-screen every day prior to attending school. A checklist has been provided at the end of this document for you to do a daily screening to be cleared for entry (please print and have them filled out each day). We will also be taking students temperatures (with a no-touch infrared thermometer) upon arrival and again throughout the day if symptoms appear.

Hand hygiene

Appropriate hand hygiene is one of the most important protective strategies. We will teach and remind children about proper hand hygiene and incorporate a regular schedule for routine hand hygiene, above and beyond what is usually recommended. We will also have access to hand hygiene facilities (hand sanitizer dispensers, hand sanitizer with all staff, and water/soap), we also encourage personal hand sanitizer for all students. Hand sanitizer (60-90% USP grade alcohol) will be available at the entry point for each school and each dry space. Disposable disinfectant wipes will also be available so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before and after each use.

Sanitization Practices

FSFNS staff will:

- Ensure all loose parts are made of material that can be cleaned and disinfected.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting objects and frequently touched surfaces (before and after each cohort use)
- Perform proper hand hygiene, including assisting children with hand hygiene (water and soap when available and hand sanitizer when it is not), and more frequently - aka "Hand Hygiene Breaks"

Masks

Students

The ministry recommends that "outdoor times" at school be used as times to provide students with a break from wearing masks. The experts at Sick Kids suggests that being outdoors and maintaining physical distancing will alleviate the need to wear masks all day long and suggests that non-medical and medical face masks **are not required or recommended** for children returning to school.

Therefore students **will not be required** to wear a mask for the majority of the day at FSFNS. We will encourage non-medical or cloth mask wearing only in indoor areas for students grade 1+ (**our Painted Turtle, Snowy Owl and Blue Heron groups**), and when physical distancing isn't possible.

Our younger students will not be required to wear masks, but we do recognize that some parents/guardians and children may choose to wear masks.

Teachers and staff

Similar to students expectations, our teacher's **will not be** required (but may choose) to wear a mask outside, **unless physical distancing is not possible.**

Disposable masks will be made available but we do encourage students to bring a comfortable reusable one to minimize our waste. Students will also be provided with buffs on their first day of school.

Pods (Cohorts)

FSFNS organizes students by age groups (Chickadees, Painted Turtles, Snowy Owls and Blue Herons) and will continue to organize our groups into these cohorts. Students will remain in their pods with their teachers allocated to them for the duration of the session to limit exposure. Our teacher to student ratios are already well below the allowable limit per class size. Each pod will remain below recommended levels with a maximum of 15 students.

Additional Indoor/Dry Space

While we spend the majority of the time outside, we have acquired additional prospector tents in order to keep pods separate. Each pod will be given a "home base" they will use for the duration of the session.

Distancing

We will promote as much distancing as possible between students, between students and staff and between staff members. Physical distancing will be supplemented with the other public health measures that we have indicated. Other specific Distancing Strategies include:

- Spreading children out into different areas when appropriate
- Spreading out pods throughout the property so there are no overlaps in any areas
- Incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children when appropriate
- Distanced seating around fire pits/common areas
- Distanced seating and/or assigned distanced areas at tables for lunch when masks cannot be worn inside

Visitors

For now we must significantly limit and even prohibit visitors, including parents. Any visitors to the school are required to self-screen and to wear a mask while on school premises. **We ask that parents do not enter any indoor spaces at drop-off or pick-up and avoid entering school grounds if possible.** We will not be allowing volunteers until further notice.

Lunch and Snacks

As usual, students are required to bring their own lunch, snacks and water bottle for each day of programming and we encourage families to consider packing a littler-less lunch that is easy to carry in a back pack. To minimize our risk, students will continue to not share food with other students (unless from the same household). We will also be shifting away from any "camp" style shared meals (ie. Pizza, Stone Soup, Wild Edible stir fry) for more individualized meals when/if we offer them. Wild edibles are still a key component of programming, though we will be limiting these to personal collection.

Drop Off/Pick Up

All individuals including children attending FSFNS, staff and child care providers, parents/guardians, and visitors must be screened each day before entering the school setting. We ask that only students and staff enter school grounds as well as indoor spaces unless absolutely necessary. If parents/guardians need to enter, please use the hand sanitizer at the entrance and maintain at least 6 ft distance from others. Staff, students and parents/guardians are encouraged to use masks at drop off and pick up. For our larger programs, designated locations will be set up for pods.

Illness

Prevention is key and staff, parents and guardians, and children must not attend the program if they are sick, even if symptoms resemble a mild cold. Symptoms to look for include but are not limited to: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, headache, and a general feeling of being unwell.

For more information, please see the symptoms outlined on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website.

If a staff member or student exhibits COVID-19-like symptoms, they are advised to seek advice from public health. **Public health officials will determine any additional steps required.**

If a student develops COVID-19 symptoms while in school, they will:

- be immediately separated from others until they are able to go home
- be supervised after they are isolated
- maintain physical distancing
- wear personal protective equipment that is consistent with health guidance

As per the Ministry of Education outline, we will immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school to the local public health unit and provide any materials (for example, daily attendance) to public health officials to support contact tracing. **Public health officials will determine any additional steps required**, including but not limited to the declaration of an outbreak and closure of classes and/or schools.

Closest Assessment Centres

Collingwood, Duntroon and Wasaga:

Location: Georgian Bay Family Health Team, 186 Erie Street Medical Building (parking lot), Collingwood

Hours: Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Meaford:

Location: Grey Bruce Health Services – Owen Sound Regional Hospital

Portable facility just outside the entrance to the Owen Sound Hospital Emergency Department

Hours: Monday to Friday 12:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Refund Policy (COVID-19 Related)

Please refer to our 2020-21 Parent Handbook - refunds if applicable will be determined on a case by case basis. If the school is forced to close to due to COVID-19, a refund for remaining days/missed days can be issued.

Self-Assessment Tool

To be completed at home prior to each school day.

Name of Student/Staff:

Date:

Temperature:

Please indicate “yes” or “no” to the following questions as it pertains to the above person.

<i>Do you have any of the following symptoms?</i>	YES	NO
Fever (hot to the touch - 100.4 or higher)		
Chills		
New or worsening of cough		
Barking Cough (whistling noise when breathing)		
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (inability to breathe deeply)		
Sore Throat or difficulty swallowing		
Decrease or loss of sense of tastes or smell		
Runny/Stuffy nose (not related to seasonal allergies)		
Headache that is unusual or long lasting		
Unexplained fatigue/muscle aches		
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea/stomach pain		
Pink eye		
Runny nose/nasal congestion without other known cause		
Confusion or loss of consciousness		
Sluggishness or lack of appetite		
In the last 14 days, have you been in close physical contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or who is currently sick with COVID-19 symptoms?		
Have you travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days or been in close physical contact with someone who has returned from outside of Canada in the last 2 weeks with new COVID-19 symptoms (like a cough, fever, or difficulty breathing)?		
Do you have a confirmed case of COVID-19 or have you been in close contact with someone who does?		

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions, do not come to school. Stay home and refer to public health for further instruction.