



FOREST BLUFF SCHOOL

Discovering the Nature of Learning

Family Handbook

2026-2027

*“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things,
but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”*

~Dr. Maria Montessori

Mission Statement

“Nurturing the Human Spirit”

Our mission is to guide children in their self-formation from birth through fourteen years of age. Self-formation follows universal principles and is unique for each child. It involves an integrated process that is guided by the developing intellect and the human spirit. It is best achieved in an educational environment that fosters self-discipline and the opportunity to exercise freedom appropriate to the child’s developing sense of responsibility. These skills of strong character are readily observed in the child’s growing respect for others, for the environment, and for the self.

Academically, a Forest Bluff education focuses on the child’s skills in order to discover and explore a world that is both physical and spiritual in nature. We believe that this search for understanding, as opposed to the presentation, memorization, and subsequent testing of information, is the essence of a meaningful education. It is a lifelong process for each of us.

We encourage teachers and parents to continue their own personal growth as a means to assist children in their self-development and in their attainment of those virtues important to a civilized and productive society: character, integrity, service, and passion for life.

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DAILY PROCEDURES & POLICIES

Communication with Teachers

All communication from parents must come through the school office. Please do not call, text, or email teachers. In order to maintain focus on their students, teachers are unable to have conversations with parents at arrival and dismissal. Parents may leave written notes for their child's teacher at the front desk, send an email through the office at office@forestbluffschool.org, or leave a message at 847-295-8338. When received after hours, messages are delivered to the teacher the following morning. Teachers will contact parents by phone from the school office by the end of the next business day (approximately 4:00 pm). Because our teachers are with their students for the entirety of the school day, most phone calls will be placed before or after school hours.

To protect the professionalism of our relationships and equality among our Forest Bluff employees, we ask that parents not invite teachers to socialize informally outside of school events or throw parties for them, unless the teacher is being invited *as a parent on their child's behalf*. While the generosity is greatly appreciated, please understand that teachers may politely decline social invitations. Additionally, when you see your child's teacher outside of school or working hours, please respect the boundaries of their personal lives. They are not available to discuss school or students at that time. They will be happy to respond to a school related message through the office.

Attendance

Full attendance on every school day is important for your child's education. If you are requesting permission for your child to leave school for a pre-planned vacation, please submit a hand-written notification to the Head of School as far in advance as possible. This enables teachers to make plans for group lessons. A child's absence impacts others, and we ask that absences are kept to a respectful minimum.

Late Arrival

At the Elementary and Secondary Levels, lessons begin promptly at 8:40 a.m. Arriving on time allows children to enter the classroom calmly, settle into the rhythm of the day, and be present for the lessons and work opportunities that begin each morning. A consistent arrival routine supports the development of responsibility, independence, and confidence, while helping children feel fully connected to their classroom.

The morning work period is carefully prepared to allow children to move quickly into meaningful work and concentration. We ask families to make every effort to arrive on time each day so that children can benefit fully from the morning's activities and participate alongside their peers from the beginning of the work cycle.

Early Pickup

Whenever possible, we encourage families to schedule appointments and other commitments outside of school hours. The school day is carefully structured to support long periods of uninterrupted work, social interaction, and intellectual engagement. Children often become deeply

involved in their work, and remaining for the full school day allows them to complete the work cycle and participate in scheduled lessons. If an early pickup is necessary, please notify the school office in advance.

Because children benefit from consistency and continuity in their classroom experience, we ask that students who leave school early for appointments or other commitments remain home for the remainder of the day. Returning after an absence from the classroom can be challenging for the child and interrupts the concentration and flow of work already underway in the environment.

Illness

Students must remain at home when ill. Please read Appendix A for full details on our school illness policy. **Every day** that your child is absent from school, you must notify the school office by 9:00 am; please call or email the office at: 847-295-8338 or office@forestbluffschool.org.

Emergencies

If a parent is unavailable in an emergency, we will call the numbers listed on the Student Information Form. Please be certain that the indicated family members or friends know that they are your emergency contacts. It is important to update the office if changes occur in your emergency information. Forest Bluff has contingency plans for large-scale emergencies, and you will be contacted through our AMG Alert system at the numbers you submitted to the AMG system.

Emergency contact numbers are required for every student **3 weeks before the first day of the school year**.

Health Forms

The school office must receive medical forms and emergency contact numbers for every student **3 weeks before the first day of the school year. If your child is admitted mid-school year, these documents must be sent 3 weeks prior to the student's first day.** Please read Appendix A to determine which health forms are required for your child.

Arrival and Dismissal

School begins at 8:30 am for all ages. The Young Children's Community and the half-day Primary classes dismiss at 11:30 am. The extended day Primary dismisses at 3:20, and the Elementary and Secondary Levels dismiss at 3:30 pm. For a calm entrance to the school day, it is important to hold the hand of children three-years-old and under until they arrive at their classroom door. We ask that four- and five-year-olds also walk by your side. YCC and Primary children are dropped off inside the building at their classroom doors. Elementary children enter their classrooms from the exterior. For safety, at the 3:30 pm dismissal, young children should remain next to you while waiting for elementary-age siblings outside the front entrance of the school.

Parking Lot Procedures

Please turn to the right when entering the parking lot and *proceed slowly and carefully, as children are often walking through the parking lot.* Thank you for giving your parking space to waiting cars as soon as feasible when dropping off or picking up your children, especially at the 3:20-3:30 p.m. dismissals. *The school property is a "no cell zone." If you must use a cell phone, please do so in a parked car. Please share these guidelines with caregivers and other family members.*

Transportation

Before a child is picked up by anyone other than their parent or their usual caregiver, a parent's consent with a note or a phone call must be given to the school office. This regulation is necessary for insurance requirements.

Biking

All students biking to school are asked to wear helmets. Children in the Lower Elementary or younger may only bike to and from school with an adult. These children bring their lunches in their usual school lunch baskets. *Children may not bring motorized bikes or scooters to school.*

Bikes should always be walked downhill when going from the stop sign by the Village Green down along Route 176 (as per the village sign that says "walk your bikes") or, if using the ramp structure, from the railroad station down to Route 176. Please walk bikes on school property, and do not use walkways leading to the front door.

Students in the Upper Elementary and Secondary Levels are given permission to ride bikes or walk to and from school independently, upon mutual agreement between parent and teacher. This process includes the student submitting a drawn map of their planned route to the office and agreeing to stay on the submitted route.

Pets

Because of safety and liability issues, dogs and family pets are not permitted on school property. If walking to school, please keep dogs on leash at the edge of the school property.

Lunches

Students ages 5 and older bring their lunch to school daily and eat together, alongside their teacher, at small tables, setting their places as if dining in a restaurant together. The teacher guides them to develop good manners and polite conversation. This is a peaceful and joyful time in every classroom.

Children prepare their lunch themselves at home with adult supervision appropriate to their age level and ability. We recommend a simple menu that includes a source of protein and grain, as well as a fruit or vegetable. This is a good opportunity to help your children learn about nutrition and to establish healthy eating habits for a lifetime. Please do not allow your children to pack chips, nuts, popcorn, pretzels, soft drinks, boxed juices, or candy, as these make a mess in the classroom and do not lend themselves to the manners we are working to cultivate in the classroom. They may bring one small cookie for a dessert.

Children pack their lunches in baskets smaller than 16" in length, 8" in width, and 12" in height (available at the Mustard Seed in Lake Forest). We have found that baskets allow younger children to quickly see if they remembered all of the items they need for lunch, and they are easily able to identify anything that needs to be cleaned. This supports their developing independence and organization.

Their basket should include:

- a cloth placement
- a cloth napkin
- a glass or porcelain plate
- a glass or porcelain bowl (if needed)
- a drinking glass
- a spoon, a fork, and a knife
- a small reusable water bottle

At the end of their meal, children may place their used dishes and utensils in a large reusable or plastic bag to bring home for washing and disposal.

Students in the Upper Elementary and Secondary Level transport their lunches in backpacks instead of a basket. For more information, see our blog, [The Forest Bluff Montessori Lunch](#).

Items from Home

Please do not allow your child to bring personal items from home, such as purses, wallets, toys, games, pets, stuffed animals, blankets, or “show-and-tell” items. These make the morning drop-off more complicated for students, and lead to distractions with their friends at school.

School Dress

Over the years, Forest Bluff School has given careful thought to our dress requirements. We have found that maintaining a simple style serves our students and allows them to focus on their education. We suggest a limited school wardrobe appropriate for activity. These clothes can be kept separate from play or dress clothes, so that your child has an easy time making appropriate choices each day. *Please label all outdoor clothing, including coats, jackets, hats, mittens/gloves, scarves, boots and shoes with your child's name or initials.*

Clothing

- Collared shirts and turtlenecks tucked into pants or skirts
- Khakis or trousers
- Shorts to the mid-thigh or longer
- Dresses (which do not need to be collared) or skirts to the mid-thigh or longer
- Tights or leggings (if worn under a skirt or dress)
- Knitted sweaters/cardigans
- Simple, plain-colored, laced tennis shoes, without embellishment
- We ask that children with pierced ears wear just one stud in each lower ear lobe. Please avoid other jewelry
- Please help your child keep their hair off their face so they are able to work freely
- Baseball hats and sun hats may be worn outdoors
- Simple and practical jackets, coats, and outdoor accessories
- Elementary children should wear a simple analog watch daily

Clothing Not Permitted:

Bottoms: *Denim, sweatpants, cargo pants, cut-off pants or shorts, leggings worn as pants, lycra pants, excessively tight or baggy clothing*

Tops: *Hoodies, sweatshirts, crop tops, spaghetti straps, tunic tops worn over leggings, dresses with tulle skirts*

Design & Embellishments: *Club or team logos, graphics or writing, sparkles, sequins, stickers*

Accessories: *Jewelry (except simple stud earrings or a lightweight chain necklace), nail polish, makeup, hair or skin sparkles, hair coloring, tattoos, body piercings*

Clothing and footwear for the ***Young Children's Community*** varies slightly from the above, to facilitate ease of dressing and undressing for toileting, and to prevent distractions from the children's work. *When your child begins in the YCC, their teacher will provide a more detailed list of needed items.*

- Plain, or simple, patterns
- Comfortable clothing that allows for free movement
- Loose and easy to remove (elastic waists, not tight/restrictive, zippers easy to manipulate, sleeves without tight elastic, pants free of buttons and snaps)
- Shoes with rubber soles and Velcro fasteners—*No open-toe sandals, Crocs, dress shoes, shoes with decorations or that light up, hiking boots, high top shoes, etc.*
- Please attach a loop of string or yarn to zippers to help children more easily zip and unzip jackets etc., and add a loop of string or yarn to the inside labels of jackets etc. to help children more easily hang them on hooks
- Please avoid: *"onesies," overalls, belts, fancy party dresses, dresses with tulle skirts, nail polish, jewelry (other than the small stud earrings described above)*
- The toileting process begins on an individual basis. Children who are beginning the toileting process will need 6 pairs of training underwear (Gerber makes these) as well as a pair of plain, washable slippers.

Secondary Level students follow dress code guidelines set by the Secondary Level teachers and Head of School.

Winter Weather Guidelines

Please consider the "feels like" temperature and weather variability when preparing for the day.

50° F and below: Wear coats

40° F and below: Add hats and gloves/mittens

30° F and below: Add snow pants and boots

20° F and below: Add neck gaiter, scarf or balaclava

0° F and below: Add ski goggles; face completely covered

Dressing Appropriately

Having proper outdoor gear is expected as part of our dress code. We require children to dress according to our Winter Weather Guidelines (see above) in order to go outside.

During the colder months, we recommend that children have a tote bag for *all* their winter gear (snow pants, boots, hat, gloves/mittens, scarf/neck warmer, and face covering), which they can bring to and from school every day. This ensures that they are prepared for *any* weather event. Children should have their names clearly labeled inside **all** their winter gear and boots.

You can also consider investing in rain gear (coat, pants, and boots) for when the weather is rainy, damp, and/or muddy.

Please be sure your children bring indoor **shoes** that they can change into at school. For several reasons, all children must wear shoes in the classrooms.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Technology in the Classroom

Our school takes an explicit stance against the use of technology in our Young Children's Community, Primary, and Elementary classrooms, as our focus is on concrete experiences and work that requires the hand and the mind to work together. It also disrupts their social experiences at school. Because Montessori classrooms rely on natural and continued social interactions throughout the day, the use of technology negatively affects their developing ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with each other and collaborate on their work. Technology is only introduced at the Secondary Level, where computers are used as an adult tool, under close adult supervision, as a preparation for future learning.

If use of an electronic device is necessary for medical reasons that significantly impact a student's physical health, the parents, Head of School, and teacher will meet to discuss the parameters for the device in the classroom, and how best to integrate it so that it does not affect the child's learning or social experience, and is not a distraction from their work.

Testing

Traditional academic testing is not necessary in a Montessori setting because children's learning is being judged by different criteria than those of standard tests. You can be assured that informal testing occurs *daily* in Montessori classrooms because the presentation of new materials depends upon a child's mastery of each one in a sequence that leads to ever-advancing complexity and abstraction. A complete verbal account of your child's progress in every area is given at fall and spring conferences each year. Please consult your child's teacher if you have a concern about your child's abilities in any academic area.

Formal, standardized testing occurs at the Secondary Level in preparation for your child's entrance to high school. We will personally recommend formal SSAT or PSAT coaching during a child's seventh grade year for those who wish to take this test for high school placement. Students in the Secondary Level program also take some tests that will familiarize them with test-taking for high school, and they work through this process with their Secondary Level classmates and teachers to hone their test-taking skills. Because our children have not been subjected to constant formal testing in their early years of self-formation, they are ready to test at the Secondary Level with a refreshing confidence and competence.

Transitions

The teachers and administration at Forest Bluff School always want the best for every student, and check in regularly to make sure that each child is thriving in our authentic Montessori classrooms. Before each child transitions from one classroom level to the next, their current teacher will meet with the Head of School and their expected teacher from the next level. They will discuss whether that child has met the expectations of independence and the curriculum in their classroom, and determine whether they are ready to transition to the next level, or if there is an area of concern.

In the event that there is an area of concern, their teacher or the Head of School will communicate with the parents about whether the authentic Montessori program is meeting that child's needs. If there is a concern about meeting the child's needs, we will have conversations about whether the

child would benefit from outside support, or if they may be better served in another school environment.

In the rare event that a family determines that their child will be leaving Forest Bluff School, we ask that parents consult with the Head of School and their child's teacher before discussing the transition with their child. While adults naturally focus on future plans, children are best able to thrive when they are free to engage fully in the work, friendships, and routines of the present moment.

When children learn of an upcoming departure too far in advance, they often begin to disengage from their classroom experience and become preoccupied with discussing the change with their classmates. Together, we can determine an appropriate timeline and approach that supports your child's emotional well-being and allows them to complete their time at Forest Bluff with confidence, gratitude, and a positive sense of closure.

Tutoring

The Montessori approach you have chosen works best for most children when school is their place for formal learning experiences. Our teachers carefully observe each child's intellectual, physical, and social development, and will let you know if outside support may be beneficial. If you have concerns about your child's progress in any area, please consult your child's teacher before seeking tutoring or supplemental academic programs.

If outside support is needed, we will help you identify experts whose approach complements your child's classroom experience. It is important that tutoring enhances—not conflicts with—the Montessori methods and sequence of learning. Children can become confused when they are asked to navigate multiple approaches, vocabularies, or expectations for the same concepts.

Communication between parents, teachers, and tutors is essential. We ask that parents keep teachers informed throughout the process so that we can work together in support of the child.

Some supplemental academic programs may be redundant or counterproductive when they duplicate work already being done in the classroom. The vast majority of our students do not receive outside academic support for subjects covered at school. The success of our graduates is rooted in parental trust of the Montessori approach and in a child's confidence and joy in learning from a supportive environment and comprehensive curriculum.

Please also respect the privacy of other families regarding their use of tutors or educational support. Families may have personal reasons for seeking assistance and may choose not to discuss them publicly.

Accommodations

The Montessori approach inherently supports children of varying abilities and needs through the implementation of concrete learning materials, open-ended work periods, peer-to-peer learning, contextual lesson plans, interwoven academic subjects, freedom for physical movement, freedom for social interaction, and freedom for individuality. Forest Bluff School has been able to support children with a variety of neurodivergences because there is a profound focus on individual

attention, unique learning styles, and different paces of work. This is in contrast to other settings that compare and score students, rush them through their work, and separate children by ability.

When a child is struggling within the Montessori classroom after we have tried using the methods at our disposal (which include strategies from coursework that our teachers have taken with learning specialists within the greater Montessori community), we welcome insights and evaluations from specialists that a family has chosen. When accommodations are recommended, Forest Bluff teachers review these as a team and implement the ones that are reasonable considering our classroom settings, and that do not fundamentally alter our instructional approach. The parents may also implement accommodations at home and outside of school, such as tutoring.

Forest Bluff School is able to make reasonable accommodations for a child with disabilities when they can be integrated with the school's teaching philosophy and methods. We cannot, however, provide every accommodation, especially when an accommodation is in conflict with the goals, context, or approach of Montessori pedagogy as implemented by Forest Bluff School. In those cases, we will meet with the parents to discuss whether this particular child's needs will be better served in another education setting, and make suggestions for schools that may be a better fit.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Continuing Education Series

This is possibly the most important request we make of parents at Forest Bluff School. When both parents attend these evenings regularly, the positive communication between your family and the school is affirmed, and your children benefit immensely. These educational gatherings form the basis of our ongoing understanding of the process of self-formation in childhood and our roles as parents and teachers in Montessori education. Children whose parents are faithful in their attendance through all their years at Forest Bluff benefit significantly at school and at home.

“Going Out”

Elementary Level children conduct research projects throughout the year as directed by their own interests, and often as follow-up work to presentations given by their teacher. These projects involve small groups of children, and utilize important skills for their age levels (reading, paraphrasing, grammar, vocabulary, illustration, etc.). When a project is complete, they are able to organize their own “Going Out” activity, with the support of their teacher. These trips take the place of conventional field trips, in that they are driven by the child’s interest, work, and planning. Children venture into the local community, or even nearby cities, to museums, historic houses, manufacturing plants, zoos, and more with an approved parent chaperone. Their outings allow them to expand on the information they gathered for their projects in the classroom and see what they learned out in the real world. “Going Outs” empower children, giving them a sense of responsibility and enjoyment that only comes from meaningful, self-directed activity.

Drama Workshop

After the last day of the academic school year, all lower and upper elementary students partake in a week-long drama workshop, which culminates in a production on Friday evening of that week. This workshop is an essential element of the curriculum and is **required** for all elementary students. There is a separate fee for this program which is included in the tuition invoice and is due at the same time. Children audition for parts in the spring, are assigned their roles, and begin practicing at school. “Drama week” lasts for five days, from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., at Gorton Community Center in Lake Forest. Parents are given an opportunity to buy tickets for family members (who are above age 5) and friends who wish to see the performance.

All of our plays are specially written by a production group who worked closely with us to design scripts that support our Montessori philosophy, and have appropriate-sized roles with speaking and singing parts for all of the age groups. This same production group manages our drama workshop alongside the teachers. The children find this experience to be an enriching and exhilarating introduction to the theater where they are supported and encouraged in their confidence and growth.

Summer Session

Summer Session is a program that our school offers after the last day of the school year. Summer Session allows children to have consistency in their routine through more of the summer and to

further develop their relationship with their classroom environment. Young Children's Community and Primary Summer Session begins on the first Monday after the last day of the regular school year, and continues from 8:30am to 11:30am for four weeks. The students spend more time outside on these days, and are able to continue their classroom experience into the summer.

The Lower Elementary Summer Session begins on the Monday after the Drama Performance and continues from 8:30am to 11:30am for three weeks (ending on the same day as the younger age levels). Along with the usual work choices, their classroom experience revolves generally around a specific topic that their teacher provides structure and lessons for (examples include "Greek Civilization" or "Art and Illustrations"). Children are eager and excited to pursue these subjects with their peers in a relaxed classroom setting.

The Upper Elementary begins on the Monday after the Drama Performance and continues from 8:30am to 2:30pm for one week. During this week, their teacher provides many lessons and activities around a specific topic (examples include "Local Lake Bluff History" or "Medicine Through the Ages"). They often will venture into the local community as a group to connect what they are learning to the world around them, and are enthusiastic about this engaging time together.

Institute Day

Our school believes in the importance of continuing education for our teachers, and the ongoing personal and professional development of everyone who works with children. As such, we provide regular Institute Days for teachers to pursue experiences and education to better serve their students. Children do not attend school on these days. Teachers have the opportunity to attend conferences, lectures, and visit local Montessori or conventional schools to learn more about what is offered in our community.

Directors' Meetings

Forest Bluff School is a largely teacher-run school with teachers making the majority of decisions for the school after discussion and consensus during weekly Directors' Meetings. In these two-hour meetings, teachers confer about school and classroom policies, and how to support each other in serving the needs of children in an authentic Montessori program. They also spend some of this time in a book discussion related to education and the topics of today, in order to continue to deepen their understanding of child development in our current culture and society.

HOME LIFE

Homework

“Homework” at Forest Bluff is reading, helping out at home, and, for children age five and older, includes making their own lunch. These activities are indicated by research as being vitally important for developing confidence and academic competence.

From the time children enter Forest Bluff, we ask that parents read to them daily. This habit is important to continue even when children are older, because they can learn more advanced vocabulary, comprehension, and writing styles by listening to a good reader. The most important part of reading together is what happens between a parent and their child in these private moments. Spontaneous discussions arise in which you are able to impart your values, your deepest feelings about spirituality, the human condition, and more. Such conversations strengthen your bonds as a family and better prepare your children for their lives.

The Elementary years are the ideal age to establish a habit of reading at home *every day*. We ask that Lower Elementary children read for 30 minutes, and Upper Elementary children for an hour. It is helpful to make this a regular time; such as right before bedtime, or when other family members are quiet and studying or reading, as well.

We strongly urge families to include children of all ages in the caring of your home and in contributing to the daily functioning of the family in the form of chores and real responsibilities. This is a powerful way to prepare our children for their future, helping and interacting with others. For more ideas and inspiration, read our blog [“How Can I Help? Creating a Routine with Chores”](#). For more information on making lunch, see the Lunch section of our handbook.

Technology and Screen Time

Forest Bluff School takes an explicit stance against the use of personal technology by children. Our experience, along with a growing body of research, suggests that excessive exposure to screens and internet-connected devices can interfere with the development of concentration, independence, social skills, and emotional well-being. We consistently encourage families to limit children’s access to smartphones, social media, and other internet-connected devices, and to prioritize direct experiences with people, nature, reading, creative pursuits, and meaningful work.

No personal technology, including cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, tablets, handheld gaming devices, or similar electronics, may be brought to school. If parents feel that an older child requires a means of communication for safety or logistical reasons, we recommend a simple communication device without internet access. We strongly encourage families to delay smartphones and social media for as long as possible, ideally until after a child graduates from Forest Bluff School.

For families who choose to provide their children with access to technology, we recommend that devices remain under adult ownership and supervision, are stored in shared family spaces rather than bedrooms, and are monitored regularly. Children benefit when adults remain actively involved in guiding their use of technology and helping them develop sound judgment, self-discipline, and

responsible communication habits. For additional information and recommendations, please refer to our Forest Bluff School Technology Information guide in Appendix D.

After-School Activities

The school day at Forest Bluff is demanding; children choose their activities during the school day and interact with their peers constantly. Afterwards, they feel much the way you might after a big day at work. Our school community prioritizes our children's wellbeing, and respects their need for recovery after a productive and social day. We recommend that younger children go right home after school, have lunch with a parent or caregiver, and then have a quiet (rest) time by themselves in their bedroom, followed by some time outdoors. Unscheduled time to unwind is very important for children of all ages because it offers time to develop creative thoughts, to explore and make things, and to read and reflect on the many images and learning experiences of the day.

If parents want their children to participate in a formal sports program, take individual lessons, or play a musical instrument, we suggest limiting the number of days and hours involved, so that your children arrive at school each day rested and ready for the challenges ahead.

Playdates

Because of the demanding nature of the school day, we suggest reserving playdates for weekends. We find that students get along best when they do not spend an excess of time together outside of school, and, therefore, we encourage parents to guide their children to developing many different friendships. This also cultivates the spirit of inclusivity and kindness that we seek to build at Forest Bluff School.

Due to their current level of social formation, children ages four and under are not ready for playdates. Their role at this early age is to focus on their individual development. Therefore, they tend towards "parallel play" as opposed to the sharing necessary for collaborative play.

Birthday Parties, Social Events, Sleepovers

Young Children's Community and Primary: Our hope is to find a way for children to feel special and celebrated on their birthday without overwhelming them. Young children often express anxiety over approaching events in a variety of ways. Excitement over a party or any unusual event can actually be quite stressful for them. Please remember that clowns, magicians, trips to the city, and much of what is commonly planned for children introduce confusing concepts for which they are not equipped to understand before the Second Plane of Development.

We recommend a gathering that lasts no more than an hour and a half, during which a few friends share cake and enjoy being together on a Saturday. The less the children know about the approaching event, the easier it will be for them to remain their relaxed selves and stay in the present moment. Having a family event can also be a special and meaningful way to celebrate your children.

Additionally, please do not plan a party for a weekday. It has been our experience that such an event can disrupt the entire class from working for several days running, even if only a few children are involved in the event. For more ideas and inspiration you can read our blog post on [Birthday Parties](#).

Elementary and Secondary Level: We ask the children not to discuss their birthday parties and social parties at school. Without exception, discussing such an event distracts the children for at least a day, and sometimes for several days. Because we foster the children's sense of responsibility and commitment to each other as an important part of the educational process, we ask that parents be extremely sensitive to any child feeling "left out" when deciding on guests. To help avoid this outcome, no birthday presents or party invitations may be brought to school.

Elementary-aged children may want to include many children in a party or birthday celebration. You may consider inviting only girls, only boys, or only the children closest to your child's age so that no one is arbitrarily excluded. We are trying to help our children learn to appreciate their individual classmates with empathy. Making clear guidelines for the reasoning behind invitations in an objective manner is very helpful in maintaining good relationships. Planning parties for over breaks or the summer also helps with this matter. We are grateful for your sensitivity.

Sleepovers: Sleepovers for Elementary children under age ten are not recommended during the school year. Parents and teachers often find that after such an event, children typically take several days to recover their natural dispositions and energy.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Parent Code of Conduct

At Forest Bluff School, we pride ourselves on being a community of respectful and open communication. As teachers and administrators, we strive to speak positively and constructively about all parents and students, and we ask parents to do the same. When a parent has feedback or a concern, we invite them to discuss it with their child's teacher, the Head of School, or the Assistant Head of School directly. We have found that this kind of direct communication allows us to operate as a team for the benefit of each child and the school as a whole. As such, our Head of School is easily accessible and will call parents back promptly when contacted. Similarly, out of respect for our teachers and office staff, we require that families are responsive to our requests for communication, as well as signing and returning documents on time.

In order to facilitate positive communication between home and school, we ask that communication from parents to teachers flow through the office either via email (office@forestbluffschool.org), telephone (847-295-8338), or by a written note left with the office staff. Teachers do not respond to messages during the school day. The school facilitates regular communication from teachers to parents through scheduled conferences and periodic phone calls based on teachers' reporting needs. While email is an important tool for home/school communication, constant, repeated emailing about a child's status or progress is not permitted as it interferes with teachers' instructional responsibilities. Additionally, teachers do not communicate by email. They will respond with a phone call. Texting on school matters is not permitted. Teachers are also unable to discuss individual student matters at arrival and dismissal, in order to maintain focus on students.

We ask that parents have faith that we have every child's best interest in mind in every decision that we make. Spreading malicious or threatening messages in the surrounding community undermines our trust and our ability to work together. We require parents to refrain from derogatory comments about any staff member or their family, and to refrain from statements meant to undermine or harm Forest Bluff School. Respectful, professional communication with school staff members and fellow parents are expected at all times during the school day and at school events. Derogatory, demeaning, and disrespectful language is not permitted. We are a deliberately small school so that we can have a close relationship with every family. If a parent is dissatisfied with our decisions or values, then we are available for conversation to determine if the issue can be resolved or if their family's needs will be better served at another school.

Photography Permission

Throughout the school year, our teachers and staff take photographs of children, their work, and their activities to share with our community. Some photos may capture your child's participation, directly or indirectly. These photographs may be published via our newsletters, media, website, marketing materials, and advertising. Your child's name or other identifying information will not be published in connection with your child's photograph. If you prefer that your student's photo is not published, please come to the office to fill out an opt-out form for our files.

APPENDIX A

Health Information

Health Forms

Forest Bluff School (FBS) and Illinois state policy require the following health forms to be submitted to the school office. Please read the information carefully to determine which forms are required for your child. **We must have these forms three weeks before the first day of the school year. If your child is admitted mid-school year, these documents must be sent three weeks prior to the student's first day.** You must notify us as soon as possible if you will be late in submitting the required forms.

Forms are available on our website under the "FBS Families" tab and on the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) website.

Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination (physical exam)

- Required for *all* new students of any age and returning students who are between 1-5 years old on the first day of the school year
- Must be completed by the student's physician **and parent**
- Past and present medical conditions should be indicated on this form
- Must be signed and dated within a year of the first day of school

Child Immunization Record

- Required for *all* new students of any age and returning students who are between 1-5 years old or students who are 11-years-old on the first day of the school year
- Must be compliant with Illinois vaccine schedule (available on the IDPH website: dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization.html or from your child's pediatrician)
- Must be the most recent record and dated within a year of the first day of the school year
- Parents who wish to exercise a religious exemption to any single vaccine must submit a Religious Exemption Form (available on the IDPH website)

Illinois Proof of Dental Examination Form (Due by the first week of May)

- Required for all students who will be 5-, 7-, or 11-years-old on the first day of the current school year

Illinois Eye Examination Form (Due by the first week of May)

- Required for all students who will be 5-years-old on the first day of the current school year and required for students over 5-years-old who are entering an Illinois school for the first time

Allergy & Asthma Action Plans

- All students needing Epinephrine (i.e. EpiPen) or an asthma inhaler at school must submit a completed and signed *FBS Medication Authorization Form* **and** an *Allergy or Asthma Action Plan* with instructions for use of the medication
- Action Plans must be signed and dated by a physician within the past two years

Diabetes Medical Management Plans (DMMP)

- All students diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes must have a current and completed DMMP on-file in the school office before starting or returning to school
- A new DMMP must be submitted every school year and whenever revisions have been made
- The DMMP must be signed and dated within a year of submission
- The completed DMMP must be reviewed and receive approval by the school designee and the FBS leadership team before the student can start or return to school
- The DMMP must be signed by the school designee, the student's parents or legal guardians, and the student's physician
- FBS recommends the DMMP template created by the American Diabetes Association (ADA). This template can be found at: <https://diabetes.org/advocacy/safe-at-school-state-laws/diabetes-medical-management-plan>
- If a parent would like to use a DMMP template other than the one provided by the ADA it must follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines which can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/caring/managing-diabetes-at-school.html>

Students with a Medical Diagnosis

Prior to the student's first day of school, the school office must receive written documentation of **any existing diagnosed medical conditions** that could impact the student's safety or participation in school activities. This is a necessary requirement **every school year**, even if you have notified the school before. *Documentation must be received before the student's first day of school.* Any new diagnoses during the school year should be reported to the school office as soon as possible.

Allergies & Asthma

- A written notification must be provided to the office each school year, before the first day of school, if the student has any allergies and/or asthma
- A FBS Medication Authorization Form and an Action Plan must be submitted when your child's condition requires medication to be kept or taken at school
- Parents are responsible for keeping track of all medication expiration dates and must replace the medication after use or upon expiration
- When a child has a food allergy that requires medication at school (e.g., EpiPen), the teacher and/or school designee will discuss any precautionary measures with the student's parents and a notification will be sent home to each student in the affected classroom indicating any foods that are prohibited in that classroom
- FBS reserves the right to send children home if they bring prohibited foods to school

Diabetes

In order for students with diabetes (type 1 or 2) to receive the care and support they need in the safest possible manner while at school, FBS requires the following conditions to be met **prior** to a student starting or returning to school. In order for a student to participate in any school activities, the following conditions must be met:

- Parents must provide a written notification to the school office soon as possible after their child is diagnosed
- An FBS Medication Authorization Form must be submitted when your child's condition requires medication to be kept or taken at school
- A DMMP must be submitted to the school office and must fulfill **all** requirements (see previous section on Diabetes Medical Management Plan)
- Parents must participate in a care planning meeting with the school designee, the classroom teacher, and a member of the school leadership team
- Parents are responsible for sharing, in writing, all necessary health related information with the school office and classroom teacher as they become aware of it
- When there is a change to the student's diabetes medical management, the school designee must review and approve all new accommodations before the student can return to school after a change to their diabetes management
- Parents are solely responsible for providing and transporting all medications, equipment, supplies, and carbohydrate snacks related to the student's diabetes
- Parents are responsible for the maintenance and calibration of all diabetes medical equipment
- Students with diabetes should wear a medical identifier, such as a tag or jewelry, that indicates their medical diagnosis (Parents are responsible for the provision and wear of the medical identifier)
- Prior to off-campus school trips or activities the parents must meet with FBS staff members to discuss all relevant information about the student's diabetes management
- FBS reserves the right to make the final decision about when a student with diabetes needs to go home for safety reasons
- FBS reserves the right to decide when a student's condition requires emergency measures to be taken at school

Illness Policy & Guidelines

As a general rule, students who are sick must stay home until they are well and energized enough to work their full school day. FBS will consult state and local health departments for illness related guidance. FBS reserves the right to make the final decision about whether a child is well enough to attend school for the day. This decision will be based on health department recommendations, the risk to the overall classroom health, the containment of germs, and the child's ability to participate in classroom work without frequent breaks or distractions due to symptoms. Decisions regarding illness management at school and school exclusion will be made on a case-by-case basis by the school designee in conjunction with the school office and the classroom teacher.

Examples of infectious illnesses are: Strep throat; RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus); Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (Coxsackievirus); Fifth Disease (Human Parvovirus); Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis); Head Lice; Chickenpox (Varicella); Whooping Cough (Pertussis); Influenza; and COVID-19.

Illness Notifications

When we have been alerted that a student in a class has a confirmed, diagnosed case of an infectious illness, and if we suspect that the class has been exposed, we will notify you. If subsequent cases of the same illness develop within two weeks of the initial case, we **will not** send a notification to you about every case; however, if it has been more than two weeks since the last diagnosed case then we **will** notify you again. You are always welcome to contact the school office in the interim to inquire about the health of your child's classroom.

When to Notify the School Office

- Each morning that your child is absent from school due to illness
- If your child is diagnosed or tests positive for a communicable illness
- If your child has vomited in the past 24 hours
- If your child has recently sustained a serious injury, such as a broken limb or concussion
- If your child is diagnosed with a chronic illness that could affect them at school
- When your child requires any medications (prescription, over-the-counter, or homeopathic) to be given during school hours (**Parents will need to come to school to administer the medication**)

General Guidance for Staying Home

- Your child must stay home if they have been recently diagnosed or have a positive test result for an infectious illness (see list above)
- Symptoms for which to stay home include:
 - Temperature of 100° F or higher within the last 24 hours
 - Vomiting or diarrhea anytime in the past 24 hours
 - Excessive fatigue, chills, or body aches
 - A cough that is: producing mucus, forceful, persistent, or barking
 - Respiratory wheezing or persistent chest pain
 - Moderate to severe cold-like symptoms such as: frequent sneezing, persistent runny nose and congestion (requiring frequent attention), or sinus congestion
 - A persistent sore throat that is distracting or one that causes pain when swallowing
 - One or both eyes are pink/red, itchy, or have mucus discharge
 - An open wound that is actively bleeding or draining
 - Untreated head lice
 - Undiagnosed (itchy or non-itchy) skin rash from an unknown cause
 - Signs of a UTI such as, unusually frequent urination, accidents (older children), blood in the urine, pain with urination, unusually foul smelling urine, extreme discomfort before, after, or during urination
 - An earache
 - A persistent headache that prevents them from doing school work

General Guidance for Returning to School

The following conditions must be met before your child can return to school after an illness:

- They must be fever-free for a full 24 hours **without the help of fever reducing medication such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin)**
- They have not had an episode of vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours

- If they have been prescribed antibiotics, they must take them for a full 24 hours before returning to school
- They must be able to work in the classroom without frequent breaks to blow/wipe their nose (occasional sniffles are okay if all other symptoms are resolved)
- Any painful, persistent, or barking coughs have been treated or resolved
- Any other symptoms listed above have been treated or resolved

Emergency Illness or Accident

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, FBS will notify you as soon as reasonably possible and take the necessary actions to care for or secure care for your child. If we are unable to reach you, we will refer to your child's emergency contact list on file in the School Office. If necessary, the student will be brought to the nearest hospital via ambulance and will be accompanied by a FBS staff member. If outside medical care is sought, payment for these services will be the responsibility of the child's parents or legal guardians. An incident report will be filled out by a FBS staff member(s) and this report will be kept in the student's file. It is crucial that you keep your child's emergency contact information up to date. Please contact the School Office if you have any questions about your emergency contact information.

APPENDIX B

Employee Code of Professional Conduct

**As required by the Illinois State Board of Education and Faith's Law*

Forest Bluff School seeks to provide a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for children. We have the highest standards of conduct for all our faculty and staff, because your children's safety is our most important priority. We comply with all state requirements regarding these matters. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Employees are expected to conduct themselves with probity, be respectful and cooperative, and maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students, parents, staff, and others. Forest Bluff School expects all employees who work at the school to create and maintain healthy, supportive, and appropriate boundaries with students and alumni. School adults must be mindful at all times of the importance of their visibility and presence and as positive role models.

Employees are expected to maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students. Employees are prohibited from engaging in grooming behaviors or sexual misconduct with students.

Grooming: as now defined in Section 11-25 of the Criminal Code is "when a person knowingly uses a computer on-line service, Internet service, local bulletin board service, or any other device capable of electronic data storage or transmission, performs an act in person or by conduct through a third party, or uses written communication to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice, or attempt to seduce, solicit, lure, or entice a child, a child's guardian, or another person believed by the person to be a child or a child's guardian, to commit any sex offense as defined in Section 2 of the Sex Offender Registration Act, to distribute photographs depicting the sex organs of the child, or to otherwise engage in any unlawful sexual conduct with a child or with another person believed by the person to be a child."

As defined in Faith's Law, "sexual misconduct" is defined as any act, including, but not limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, by an employee or agent of the school district, charter school, or nonpublic school with direct contact with a student that is directed toward or with a student to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the student. Such an act includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- A sexual or romantic invitation
- Dating or soliciting a date
- Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialogue
- Making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a student
- Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature
- A sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the student
- Employees are strictly prohibited from using any form of communication with students (emails, letters, notes, text messages, phone calls, conversations) that includes any subject

matter that would be deemed unprofessional and/or inappropriate between an employee and student

- Employees are not permitted to transport students in the employee's privately owned vehicle unless the employee has obtained the prior permission of the Head of School to do so
- Employees are not permitted to take or possess a photo or video of a student on their private devices (Student pictures for school sponsored activities used in furtherance of the educational mission are permitted)
- Employees shall not contact a student or meet with a student outside the employee's professional role. If an employee has a familial relationship with a student, that relationship must be disclosed immediately to the Head of School

Our employees are held to the standards of the FBS code of conduct, along with the Illinois Educator's Code of Ethics:

Illinois Educator Code of Ethics

Principle 1: Responsibility to Students

The Illinois educator is committed to creating, promoting, and implementing a learning environment that is accessible to each student, enables students to achieve the highest academic potential, and maximizes their ability to succeed in academic and employment settings as a responsible member of society. Illinois educators:

Embody the Standards for the School Service Personnel Certificate (23 Ill. Adm. Code 23), the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (23 Ill. Adm. Code 24), and Standards for Administrative Certification (23 Ill. Adm. Code 29), as applicable to the educator, in the learning environment;

- Respect the inherent dignity and worth of each student by assuring that the learning environment is characterized by respect and equal opportunity for each student, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language or socioeconomic status;
- Maintain a professional relationship with students at all times;
- Provide a curriculum based on high expectations for each student that addresses individual differences through the design, implementation, and adaptation of effective instruction; and
- Foster in each student the development of attributes that will enhance skills and knowledge necessary to be a contributing member of society.

Principle 2: Responsibility to Self

The Illinois Educator is committed to establishing high professional standards for their practice and striving to meet these standards through their performance. Illinois Educators:

- Assume responsibility and accountability for their performance and continually strive to demonstrate proficiency and currency in both content knowledge and professional practice;
- Develop and implement personal and professional goals with attention to professional standards through a process of self-assessment and professional development;
- Represent their professional credentials and qualifications accurately; and
- Demonstrate a high level of professional judgment.

Principle 3: Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession

The Illinois Educator is committed to collaborating with school and district colleagues and other professionals in the interest of student learning. Illinois Educators:

- Collaborate with colleagues in the local school and district to meet local and state educational standards;
- Work together to create a respectful, professional and supportive school climate that allows all educators to maintain their individual professional integrity;
- Seek out and engage in activities that contribute to the ongoing development of the profession;
- Promote participation in educational decision making processes;
- Encourage promising candidates to enter the education profession; and
- Support the preparation, induction, mentoring and professional development of educators.

Principle 4: Responsibility to Parents, Families, and Community

The Illinois Educator will collaborate, build trust, and respect confidentiality with parents, families, and communities to create effective instruction and learning environments for each student. Illinois Educators:

- Aspire to understand and respect the values and traditions of the diversity represented in the community and in their learning environments;
- Encourage and advocate for fair and equal educational opportunities for each student;
- Develop and maintain professional relationships with parents, families, and communities;
- Promote collaboration and support student learning through regular and meaningful communication with parents, families, and communities; and
- Cooperate with community agencies that provide resources and services to enhance the learning environment.

Principle 5: Responsibility to the Illinois State Board of Education

The Illinois Educator is committed to supporting the Administrative and School Codes, state and federal laws and regulations, and the Illinois State Board of Education's standards for highly qualified educators. Illinois Educators:

- Provide accurate communication to the Illinois State Board of Education concerning all
- certification matters;
- Maintain appropriate certification for employment; and
- Comply with state and federal codes, laws, and regulations.

Reporting:

Forest Bluff School employees are mandated reporters and required to comply with all reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/) and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 et seq.). The Head of School must be notified anytime a mandated report is made.

Training:

We require our employees to become Mandated Reporters, take the State of Illinois Sexual Harassment Prevention Training, read and acknowledge Faith's Law definition of Sexual Misconduct in Schools, and take the Sexual Abuse Response and Prevention Training.

One of the goals with Faith's Law is to give parents/guardians notice regarding allegations of sexual misconduct that involve their student; equip schools across Illinois with better information regarding the employment history of an applicant or employee of a contractor; give schools the resources necessary to make well-informed decisions about who they are employing/contracting with; and protect students from acts of sexual misconduct by school employees, substitute employees, and employees of contractors.

These guidelines in conjunction with The Illinois Educator Code of Ethics, adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education, will be honored by all staff.

Violations:

Any employee found to have violated the requirements of this policy or the conduct standards referenced herein, or who fails to report observed violations, shall be subject to discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment.

Links:

<https://www.isbe.net/faithslaw>

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Faiths-Law-Resource-Guide.pdf>

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Faiths-Law-Guidance-FAQ.pdf>

APPENDIX C

Expectations of Student Behavior, Prevention of and Response to Bullying and Harassment, and Reporting of Bullying/Harassment

Expectations for Student Conduct

Classroom Procedures

If a student feels uncomfortable with a situation, with a fellow classmate or with an adult, our classroom procedure is for the student to speak up to the person involved, explain their feelings and what change they would like to see. When the matter is serious, the student will ask a chosen friend or teacher to be present. If the student wants some help thinking through what to say, or wants someone else to be aware of the situation, the student should go to a teacher and ask for their guidance. This process respects the nature of the trusting relationships in school. The goal is clear, honest communication that helps the student to take the best care of themselves, while respecting others at the same time. This is Grace and Courtesy for successful relationships in adulthood. Feelings of harassment of any kind, whether physical, verbal, or emotional, should be addressed as soon as possible and in this manner. This is our procedure for handling complaints of any kind at Forest Bluff School, which is consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights.

Apologizing is an important step in healing for all parties. Therefore, if a student learns from a classmate that their behavior, action, or words are disturbing or hurtful, a verbal or written apology must be given. The teacher(s) will be with the students to help with this task as needed. If, in the rare case, the teacher(s) find that a student's behavior continues to be decidedly negative or disruptive to the good of the school, they may suspend or even ask a student to leave Forest Bluff School permanently. Of course, such cases are handled individually and with confidentiality.

We firmly believe that children are in their formative years of life and will make mistakes. When this occurs, our teachers will collectively decide the school's actions to best aid the students involved and collaborate with their parent(s). In order to help their children, as they grow and learn, parents are asked to place their confidence and trust in our teachers to handle situations and to make decisions that will benefit, protect, and support all our students in their specific development. Simultaneously, we are open to hearing parents' feelings and insights, and we ask Forest Bluff parents to exercise a supportive attitude so that we can keep all energies focused on serving our children. In addition, the student(s) bringing an alleged offense to the attention of adults will not face retaliation or consequences. If a student is found to have falsely accused another, that will be handled in the same way as stated above, individually and privately.

Forest Bluff School's Bullying Policy is consistent with the policies of the school and the Montessori pedagogy in that it maintains respect for every child.

Prevention of and Response to Bullying and Harassment

Forest Bluff School complies with the Illinois State Board of Education, which mandates that we publish our bullying policy here.

Forest Bluff School finds that a safe, civil, and healthy school environment is necessary for all students to learn and achieve. Bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students which interferes with this safe, civil, and healthy learning environment. Additionally, bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping, or dropping out of school, fighting, use of drugs/alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited.

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policies of Forest Bluff School.

No student shall be subjected to bullying:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This item (4) applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

A. Definitions:

Bullying: Includes “cyber-bullying” and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s or students’ person or property.
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s or students’ physical or mental health.
3. Substantially interfering with the student’s or students’ academic performance.

4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges, provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyber-bullying: Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Restorative Measures: A continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school, and (vii) increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

School Personnel: Persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

B. Bullying Report Process:

Students, parents, and school personnel are encouraged to immediately report bullying to any administrator within **Forest Bluff School**. Alternatively, reports may be made orally or in writing to the bullying report manager:

Name: Lynn Jessen

Title: Head of School

Phone Number: (847) 295-8338

E-mail Address: office@forestbluffschoo.org
Address: 8 West Scranton Ave. Lake Bluff IL 60045

Anonymous reports are accepted by calling the contact listed above and specifically indicating that you would like to remain anonymous. However, formal disciplinary action cannot be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

C. Response to Bullying Reports:

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, **Forest Bluff School** will investigate whether such reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, within 24 hours after the school's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident. As appropriate, the school's administration shall also discuss the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. The school shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period.

Further, the administrator or report manager will promptly investigate and address the report of bullying by doing the following:

1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.
2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
3. Notifying the principal, school administrator, or his/her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received (if the principal or administrator is not the person who received the report).
4. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing the parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal, school administrator, or his/her designee to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The principal, administrator, or his/her designee may implement interventions to address reports of bullying. This includes, but is not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. Additionally, Forest Bluff School shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. Such reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences. No person will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report of bullying. However, making a false accusation of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying is prohibited and will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences.

D. Policy Evaluation

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians. Furthermore, the policy is consistent with the other policies of **Forest Bluff School**.

This policy will be posted on **Forest Bluff School's** existing, publicly accessible Internet website. Additionally, it will be included in the student handbook and where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school. The policy will be provided periodically throughout the school year to students and faculty and will be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

Forest Bluff School shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of this policy every two years to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy and shall make any necessary and appropriate revisions. As part of this process, **Forest Bluff School** shall review various factors including, but not limited to:

1. The frequency of victimization.
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at school.
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs.
4. The types of bullying utilized.
5. Bystander intervention or participation.

Forest Bluff School may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the Internet website of Forest Bluff School. If an Internet website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students. No later than September 30 of the subject year, the policy must be filed with the State Board of Education after being updated.

Date of Adoption (mm/dd/yyyy): 09/30/2025

Date of Most Recent Review/Re-evaluation (mm/dd/yyyy) : 06/16/2025

E. References:

105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 – Bullying Prevention 23 Illinois Administrative Code § 1.295

APPENDIX D

Forest Bluff School Technology Information

Technology is widespread in our culture, but our experience, along with a substantial and growing body of research, makes clear that its use is harmful for children. While many maintain that a moderate amount of technology is acceptable, the interpretation of “moderate” varies widely, with detrimental effects on our younger generation. Thankfully, there is increasing awareness of these effects, and we believe that our culture is ready to significantly decrease children’s exposure to it in the near future. Based on Jonathan Haidt’s work in *The Anxious Generation*, there is a current call to restrict smartphone use until high school, restrict social media access until 16, and remove phones from schools. We believe this is the bare minimum necessary to preserve children’s mental health, social abilities, and intellectual capabilities.

As a part of our ongoing efforts to maintain our school as an extremely low-tech community, we have put together this information so that you can make carefully considered decisions about the use of technology in your home.

Young Children’s Community through Lower Elementary (0-9 years):

For these ages we recommend absolutely no smart devices for children (phones, watches, tablets). Phone calls or video calls are excellent ways to stay in touch with family and friends, under the supervision of a parent or guardian.

Upper Elementary (9-12 years):

For this age we recommend absolutely no smartphones. A landline is an excellent option for allowing your children to make and receive calls to friends and family from home. We recommend against watches and tablets, but understand that there are circumstances where parents want their child to have a way to communicate with their parents when they are independent. For these cases, we recommend a Gizmo or Gabb watch, which can receive calls and texts from parent-approved contacts and does not currently have internet access (See Device Suggestion List in the final section for more details on the differences between the two watches). Regardless of the device they use to be in touch with you or your approved contacts, it is of the utmost importance that you review their communication and other activity on these devices **regularly**. Remind them that the digital world is not private. You must teach them how to communicate and use these devices responsibly and kindly.

- *Note: Before you assume your child needs a way to contact you when they are not with you, remind yourself that if you are allowing them to be independent in your community, then they have probably already shown that they have good judgment at home. Additionally, keep in mind that you probably live in an area where your child is surrounded by responsible adults who would be happy to allow your child to borrow their phone if they need to reach you. Your actions reveal your belief system to your child. When you allow them to be independent and use their own faculties to problem solve, and when you reveal a basic trust in the world, you are encouraging them to grow in confidence and competence.*

Secondary Level (12-14/15 years):

We continue to recommend absolutely no smartphones for this age level. The portability of a phone combined with the access to information, entertainment, and connection make it highly addictive and problematic. For this age, as children are looking to be more in contact with their peers, we suggest a Gizmo or Gabb watch or a tablet or computer with messaging capabilities that is stored in a public area of your home (See Device Suggestion List on the last page for more details of the differences between the two watches). An Apple Watch can work for communication, but, because of its internet access and smaller size, will require more supervision for its use and to ensure your child is not using it when they are not supposed to be.

Your children are older and savvier now, and are likely more interested in exploring the digital world and the different ways they can communicate with their friends than when they were younger. ***Please do not assume that just because they exhibited responsibility and restraint when they were eleven that this means they will have the same relationship with technological devices as adolescents.*** They have entered a new plane of development and have different priorities, interests, and characteristics during this time. It is of the utmost importance that you ***regularly*** check any devices they have access to and go over any worrisome findings. This includes:

- Screen time history and data
- Message conversations
- Browser history
- Email
- Maps
- Music
- Photos

Additionally, we recommend reaching out to the parents of your child's peer group and asking them to let you know if they see anything worrisome from your child on their child's device.

If your child has access to a device that is connected to the internet, then you should restrict access to those apps, but it is important to realize that ***parental controls are not reliable***. There are many ways that app companies *and* your curious, bright children will find ways around controls. In the past few years, this has included:

- When the system resets after an update, parental controls can disappear.
- Even if you limit browser use, a child can access the internet through maps apps.
- If you restrict downloads on their device, but *you* have a particular app on *your* device, then they are able to go into the "Family" settings and download any app that you have, *even if you have restricted it*. Then, if you have not restricted the deleting of apps on their device, they can delete the app and it will not show up under their screen time history.
- If a particular app company changes what "category" their app is stored under, then your parental control may no longer be valid.
- A child can delete individual messages that they don't want you to see.
- You may restrict a website on their device, but if a friend sends a link, then they can view the site after it is sent.
- Your child is able to view TikTok videos through the Spotify app.

- Much extremely problematic (violent, sexual, etc.) content on Spotify is not labeled “Explicit” so an explicit filter will not protect your child.
- Your children can change the time zone on their device to get around “downtime” schedules.
- The software and hardware is constantly changing, so even if you are able to make parental controls work for you for a brief time, you can be assured that something new will come up within the next month!
- ***Regularly Google and / or search on ChatGPT “Ways around parental controls” and “Ways around screen time limits” to find the new methods that companies and children are using to circumvent efforts to manage screen time and usage.***

For all these reasons, we highly recommend that parents exercise extreme caution and prudence before allowing their children access to devices connected to the internet. It is *impossible* to turn a smartphone into a “dumb phone” (or a smart device into a dumb device).

Remember: Phones and apps have *no* incentive to restrict your child’s use of the phone except where laws apply. The more time your child spends on their phone and apps, the more money companies make. This is what motivates them.

Given whatever decision you make for your family, we strongly encourage the following rules if your child has access to any device:

- The device *belongs* to the adults.
- The device lives in public areas and never goes to the child’s room.
- Remove the browser from phones, or any device that your child is left alone with.
- If it is an item that sometimes travels outside the home with the child, then you should always discuss whether it is necessary for a particular excursion.
- No use during meals, family time, social time, or on short car rides.
- Discuss internet activity and usage for devices that have access to a browser. When they want to look something up it should be primarily under direct supervision, or at least with an adult present in the room for frequent checks.
- Enact app limits for all apps your child may express interest in and any overall limits that are possible with the device.
- Enact “downtime” so that the phone shuts down during the night.
- Block adult content, and block addictive sites, such as YouTube (and keep in mind that there are other ways to access these sites even with controls!).
- No group texts beyond a small group for planning purposes. We find that group texts are a precursor experience for social media, and children are likely to engage in spamming, teasing, and other inappropriate behavior and language, including removing classmates from conversations and adding them against their will.
- ***Absolutely no social media, including Snapchat and TikTok.***
- ***Regular and thorough checks, followed by conversation. Make sure your children know that you will check their devices, and remind them that the digital world is not private.***

Device/Communication Suggestions (that *currently* do not have internet access—borrowed from *The Tech Exit* by Clare Morel):

- A landline
- Gizmo watch (requires Verizon service and can only text with other Gizmo watches or phones that have the Gizmo app downloaded, also works for phone calls)
- Gabb watch (does not require Verizon service and can text with any number that is pre-approved by the parent, also works for phone calls)
- TickTalk watch
- The Gabb phone
- The Light phone
- The Wisephone
- The Bark Phone
- The Pinwheel phone
- Flip phones
- The Nokia 6310

For Further Reading:

- *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt (in particular, Chapter 12: “What Parents Can Do Now)
- *The Tech Exit* by Clare Morel (in particular, the Appendix)
- *10 Rules for Raising Kids in a High Tech World* by Jean M. Twenge, PhD

FOREST BLUFF SCHOOL

Family Handbook Agreement 2026-2027

Note: Please complete this page and return it to the School Office before the first day of school. I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the policies and procedures of the Forest Bluff School Family Handbook.

Parent 1

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Parent 2

Printed Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____