

Fanshawe

Nature School Guidelines

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*Connect With
Nature*

UPPER THAMES RIVER
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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1. What is Fanshawe Nature School

a. Guiding Principles

Learn and grow in nature through play and exploration. Every trip to Fanshawe Nature School will be its own adventure! Each visit will start with a grounding in the surroundings and a reminder of nature awareness routines and best practices for spending time outside.

There will be planned options for activities, but what actually happens will be child-directed and depend on the day. This may include songs, stories, play, exploration, journaling, sit spots, shelter building, hiking, using tools, and more! At the end of each visit, we will gather again to share reflections and plan for the next outing.



Documents used to support the Fanshawe Nature School Program include:

- *Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children*. Angela J. Hanscom, 2016. Print.
- *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature*. Young, Haas, McGown, 2010. Print.
- *EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth*. Dan Chiras, 2015. Print (paperback).
- *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning*. Forest School Canada, 2014. Print.
- *Free-Range Kids, How to Raise Safe, Self-Reliant Children (Without Going Nuts with Worry)*. Lenore Skenazy, 2010. Print.
- *How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature*. Scott D. Sampson, 2016. Print.
- *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Richard Louv, 2008. Print.
- *Natural Curiosity: A Resource for Teachers: Building Children's Understanding of the World through Environmental Inquiry*. Laboratory School at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 2011. Print.
- *Risk and Adventure in Early Years Outdoor Play*. Sara Knight, 2011. Print.

b. Trip Outline

Each Fanshawe Nature School meeting may include:

- **Arrival** - Adult and Child Arrival (welcome, sign in procedures completed with parent/ guardian, participants free play in area).
- **Opening** - Gathering Circle (which may include introductions, storytelling, and sharing best practices for spending time in nature).
- **Body Break** - Physical preparation for spending time in nature, such as using washrooms and checking apparel.
- **Activity** - Programming (a balance between child-led, inquiry-based activities, and activities pre-determined by staff).
- **Closing** - Gathering Circle (which may include reflections on the day, sharing stories, asking questions, and planning for next visit).
- **Departure** - Body Break (responsibility for collecting all belongings, goodbyes).



c. Location

Fanshawe Nature School takes place at Fanshawe Conservation Area, 1424 Clarke Road, London. This multi-use park covers 800 hectares and has more than 24 km of trails with forest, stream, and meadow ecosystems as well as a day use area. Fanshawe Conservation Area is part of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

Conservation Authorities are local, watershed-based agencies that are unique to Ontario. Conservation Authorities work in partnership with all levels of government, landowners, and many other organizations.

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority works to:

- Protect people and property from flooding and erosion, and support safe development,
- Deliver landowner stewardship,
- Make science-based decisions,
- Provide natural spaces and recreational opportunities,
- Empower communities and youth.

GEARING UP FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING





2. Terms and Conditions

a. Program

Owls and Owlets (Adult and Child program)

- 6 week session
- 10:00 am - 11:30 am
- Participants aged 24 months - 5 years old, with an adult
- All participating children must be accompanied by an adult (maximum 3 children per adult)
- \$150 per participant, per session

b. Registration and Payment

- Register and pay for each session through Eventbrite. Please note that Eventbrite charges a non-refundable administrative fee.
- A waiting list will be kept, and additional concurrent sessions may be added based on demand.
- Sessions may be cancelled due to insufficient registration.

c. Refunds and Cancellations

- Please note that the fee is for the entire session, not on a day-by-day basis. Refunds will not be given for any missed/cancelled outings. Any missed outing cannot be made up.
- If a program is cancelled due to insufficient registration, we will refund program fees (minus Eventbrite's non-refundable administrative fee).
- Any participant who is removed from a session due to behaviour will not be refunded.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

a. Participants

Participants will:

- Respect all living things including self, others, plants, and animals,
- Respect the learning environment including routines, materials, and site,
- Listen and respond to safety instructions and boundaries.

b. Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians will:

- Ensure participants, including themselves, are equipped with the proper clothing, outerwear, and other supplies according to the season and duration of scheduled visit,
- Provide any and all information necessary to meet the needs of participants, including themselves,
- Support participants in play and exploration of the natural world by both playing with and closely observing them, understanding that getting wet and dirty is part of healthy play, as is taking part in risky play,
- Follow all Fanshawe Nature School Guidelines set out in this document.

c. Staff/Volunteers

Staff/volunteers will:

- Ensure the physical safety of participants, including Parents/Guardians, by co-assessing and co-managing risk together on an ongoing basis,

- Provide an opportunity for all participants to feel connected to and comfortable in the natural world,
- Consider the social and emotional safety of participants, and endeavour to foster a caring and respectful community so that the risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry-based learning can occur,
- Model care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of tools and other materials,
- Play with and closely observe participants to build on observations and experiences.

d. Inclusion and Accessibility

Fanshawe Nature School seeks to maintain an inclusive and respectful environment for all participants in the program regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language, physical ability or financial need.

Requests for modifications or accommodations will be considered.

e. Behaviour

Fanshawe Nature School staff members are able to deal with mild to moderate behaviour issues as they occur.

Strategies might include the use of redirection, removal of privileges, and/or time away from the group. If issues arise with a participant's behaviour beyond implemented strategies, staff will communicate with Parents/Guardians in person, over the phone, and/or by email as appropriate to the situation. If a participant's behaviour proves to be an ongoing issue, staff will work with all involved to develop a plan to help resolve the issue. In the rare case where this process is not successful, the participant may be asked to leave the program, temporarily or permanently, if their behaviour proves to be unsafe for themselves, other participants, staff or the environment.

f. Lost Items

Fanshawe Nature School is not responsible for any lost or stolen items while on site. Parents/Guardians are asked to label all belongings and encourage participants to leave all toys and other treasured items at home. Any items left will be kept until the end of the session and then donated, if not claimed.

g. Preparing for Nature School

Participants are outside for large blocks of time, in all types of weather. Comfort is very important when active outdoors, and good apparel makes all the difference between a child who is engaged in the outdoor environment, and a child who is uncomfortable and unhappy. Depending on the weather and season, participants will need a variety of gear. Please refer to "Gearing Up for Outdoor Learning."





4. Health and Safety

a. Privacy

Access to participant information is restricted to authorized staff and is not shared with third parties, unless legally required. Staff will have with them at all times a copy of each participant's personal information, including allergies, health concerns, and contact information, to be used in the event of an emergency.

Please contact Fanshawe Nature School immediately if there are any concerns about the privacy of your child.

Parents/Guardians will have the option to grant permission for photographs and/or video recordings (including voice recordings) to be taken during activities and programming by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority for promotional purposes online (website, social media) and/or in print.

b. Staffing Ratio

The ratio between Fanshawe Nature School staff and the number of participants varies depending on the participants' age. The maximum ratio of

unaccompanied preschool/primary school-aged participants to staff is 8:1; the maximum ratio of unaccompanied junior/intermediate school-aged participants to staff is 10:1.

These ratios allow staff and participants to have optimal experiences, connections, and learning opportunities.

In the event of staff illness or emergency, Fanshawe Nature School may be cancelled if the ratios cannot be met and/or maintained.

c. Illness

- In any of the following cases, participants (including adults) are to stay home for at least 24 hours after their last symptom has subsided:
 - Temperature over 101° F or 38.3° C;
 - Vomiting;
 - Diarrhea (watery, profuse stools).

Should any of the above-mentioned situations arise while at Fanshawe Nature School, arrangements will need to be made for immediate pick-up of the affected participant.

- Any participant affected by communicable diseases, including but not limited to measles, chicken pox, mumps, flu, strep throat, viral

pneumonia, and conjunctivitis (pink-eye), is asked to not attend Fanshawe Nature School until their health care provider has communicated that it is safe for them to return. Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to Parents/Guardians via email.

- Head lice are not considered a communicable disease but rather a nuisance condition which can spread rapidly. If a participant is affected by head lice we ask that:

- Fanshawe Nature School staff be contacted immediately so that other families can be informed (the affected individuals will remain anonymous);
- Parents/Guardians follow treatment suggestions provided by Middlesex-London Public Health.

d. Medication

- Parents/Guardians are to complete a Fanshawe Nature School Medical Form at the beginning of the first session to indicate any specific medical needs of participants.
- Parents/Guardians are to bring any required medication to Fanshawe Nature School each session. Medication is to be administered by the accompanying Parent/Guardian.

e. Food and Drink

- All participants are required to bring nut-free snacks and water. All food and drinks should be packed in reusable containers or be litter free, where possible, to minimize waste.
- Participants will be directed to wash their hands with soap and water or use provided hand sanitizer before and after snacks/lunch.
- Water bottles should be full upon arrival.
- Fanshawe Nature School cannot guarantee



an allergen-free environment due to its location in a publicly accessible Conservation Area. Participants are encouraged to consider those with potential sensitivities and life-threatening allergies and will be notified about any concerns within their group. On special occasions, snacks may be provided or shared by other families for the group. In these cases, all allergies and intolerances will be taken into special consideration.

- All participants that have known allergies and regularly carry an EpiPen® are asked to please bring one in-date EpiPen® for their outdoor experience.

f. Washrooms

- Washroom facilities are limited and will only be used occasionally. This may include indoor or outdoor facilities.

5. Risk Management

a. Site Risk

Staff conduct regular daily, seasonal, and annual on-site risk assessments to minimize injury and maintain participant safety. This includes conducting daily risk assessments with participants, such as boundaries, and tool safety. Risks and benefits are evaluated in each assessment, as Fanshawe Nature School programming focuses on making judgments and identifying measures that manage risks while securing benefits.

Staff implement a variety of risk assessments based on need:

- Seasonal risk assessments,
- Activity or experience risk assessments,
- Daily risk assessments,
- Dynamic risk assessments.

b. Risky Play

Fanshawe Nature School provides a variety of opportunities for participants to explore risk – actual or perceived – through activities such as tool use, fire building, and navigating the landscape, while also practicing strategies to assess, manage, and overcome risks. Staff take all steps possible to

manage risk so that participants are exposed to its health benefits rather than its hazards. Healthy risk management is modelled, and participants are taught to encounter and manage the risks that being outdoors presents.

Risks at Fanshawe Nature School may include the following:

- Minor injuries from strenuous physical activities such as log or tree climbing,
- Injuries from improper tool use,
- Reactions from environmental allergens (e.g., stinging nettle),
- Reactions to insect bites or stings (e.g., mosquitoes, bees, wasps, ticks),
- The potential for wild animals on site (e.g., raccoons, groundhogs, foxes),
- Inclement or extreme weather conditions.

c. Tool Use

Participants may be provided with opportunities to use tools such as mallets, saws, hand drills, knives, etc. The use of tools enables them to develop practical skills that help with motor development and self-confidence. These opportunities are presented by experienced Fanshawe Nature School staff members who have a thorough understanding of the specific tool and can work with participants individually to ensure a safe experience. Tools are stored in a secured space and are inspected before and after each use.

Participants can only access tools with staff permission when under direct 1:1 supervision and in a designated tool use area.

d. Inclement Weather

It is important that participants are dressed appropriately for outdoor activities and remain comfortable regardless of the weather conditions. Fanshawe Nature School staff regularly check weather forecasts and monitor the weather when making decisions about activities for the day.

In the case of extreme cold (below -20°C) or extreme heat (over 35°C), staff will limit participant's length of exposure based on age/preparedness and will continually assess participant's comfort and safety throughout the program.

In the event of high winds (sustained or gusting above 40 km/hr), programming will continue away from forested areas and other overhead hazards.

If dangerous weather develops during programming, Fanshawe Nature School staff will immediately seek shelter for the group and remain there until weather subsides.

e. Cancellation Due to Weather Conditions

In the event of prolonged extreme weather, Fanshawe Nature School reserves the right to cancel or modify programming until it can safely be resumed. If the decision to cancel is made while Fanshawe Nature School is in session, participants will be kept in a sheltered area. Staff will remain with participants until all have departed.

There are times when it would be unsafe and/or undesirable to carry on as planned. Parents/Guardians will be notified of cancellations via email at least one hour prior to the program start time. No refunds will be issued for cancelled days.

f. Emergencies

Fanshawe Nature School staff carry an emergency bag at all times, containing emergency procedures, emergency contact lists, and a regularly stocked first aid kit.

Parents/Guardians must provide appropriate emergency contact information prior to the first session. Staff will carry this information with them at all times to ensure that, in the case of an emergency, the appropriate contact can be reached. Each staff member also carries a cellphone.

At minimum, Fanshawe Nature School staff and volunteers will maintain the following certifications:

- Current Vulnerable Sector Check,
- Current Standard First Aid and CPR-C/AED.

6. Communication

Fanshawe Nature School will communicate primarily via email. In the event of an emergency, Parents/Guardians will be contacted by telephone.

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