

This living document is meant to outline the policies and procedures that Kingston Forest & Nature School (KFNS) has adopted, which we will endeavour to follow, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among participants, staff and community. The policies and procedures outlined in this document are based on guidelines provided by the Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Education, KFL&A Public Health Unit and SickKids. A strong focus will be placed on screening, hand hygiene, sanitation, and education of participants, staff and community.

In this document you will find policies, procedures, reference documents, and a memorandum of understanding that all families, staff, volunteers or visitors must sign before participating in our programs. Please read it in its entirety.

Please note: This is a living document that will be updated as the COVID-19 situation changes. The most up-to-date version of this document can be found at bit.ly/kfnscovid19.

POLICY:

Prevention measures and mitigation strategies involving children should be related to risk with an emphasis on reducing physical contact versus enforcing physical distancing. In other words, unless mandated by a governing body, strict physical distancing will not be emphasized to children in the forest school setting as it is not practical and could cause significant psychological and mental distress. Close interaction, such as playing and socializing, is central to child development. However, additional responsibilities are required of families and staff to prevent further spread of COVID-19 within the community. As mentioned above, a strong focus will be placed on screening, hand hygiene, sanitation, and education of participants, staff and community.

Responsibilities of Families (Including Visitors & Volunteers)

- All families will be required to read the Policies & Procedures and sign the Memorandum of Understanding prior to attending one of our programs and in the event of any updates to this document.
- All families must complete the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below) before the start of each program day.
- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to attend that day's program and will be encouraged to get tested. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be isolated in a safe place with a facilitator and must be picked up immediately. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Participants who test positive for COVID-19 or who come in close contact* with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms (or after contact with that person), and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Participants/families who do not pass the COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire will be asked to keep their entire family home from forest school programming that day and encouraged to seek testing through KFL&A Public Health.
- Seedlings/Saplings families are encouraged to physically distance themselves at drop-off and pick-up, and are required to follow all directions given by staff. Failure to do so may result in immediate cancellation without compensation.
- Acorns & Oaks/The Grove families are encouraged to physically distance themselves throughout the duration of the program, and are required to follow all directions given by staff. Failure to do so may result in immediate cancellation without compensation.
- Families will work with staff to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed.

**Close contact is defined as: being less than 2 metres away in the same room, workspace, or area, living in the same home, being in the same classroom, without medical-grade PPE.*

Responsibilities of Staff

- All staff will be required to read the Policies & Procedures and sign the Memorandum of Understanding prior to facilitating one of our programs and in the event of any updates to this document.
- All staff are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before the start of the session.
- All staff must complete the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below) before the start of each program day.
- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to facilitate that day's program and will be encouraged to get tested. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be sent home immediately. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Staff who test positive for COVID-19 or who come in close contact* with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms (or after contact with that person), and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Staff who do not pass the COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire will be asked to keep their entire family home from forest school programming that day and encouraged to seek testing through KFL&A Public Health.
- Staff will endeavor to physically distance prior to, during and after forest school.
- Staff will work with families to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed.

**Close contact is defined as: being less than 2 metres away in the same room, workspace, or area, living in the same home, being in the same classroom, without medical-grade PPE.*

Closure

- Programs will be cancelled without notice if staff shortages occur or if KFL&A Public Health or the Province of Ontario deems that the site be closed.
- Program cancellation can happen prior to or during a day's programming. In the event that program cancellation occurs during the day's programming, families will be notified and asked to pick their children up immediately.

Refunds

- Refunds will be offered for those programs that are cancelled due to staff shortages or a decision by KFL&A Public Health or the Province of Ontario.
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals that are not permitted at forest school due to illness.
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals or families that fail to properly follow staff instructions during drop-off and pick-up and the duration of the program, or that create an unsafe environment for others.
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals or families that choose not to participate for any reason.

Communication

- All attempts will be made to protect the privacy of individuals.
- KFL&A Public Health will be notified by KFNS staff of any positive cases related to KFNS.
- KFL&A Public Health will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close, should a KFNS participant or staff, or family member/close contact of a participant or staff, test positive for COVID-19.
- Families are required to notify KFNS staff if any family member or close contact tests positive for COVID-19.
- Families are required to notify KFNS staff of any absences, and the reason for said absences, with as much notice as possible.
- Families are required to fill out the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire honestly (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below).

Staff Compensation

- Staff required to self-isolate will be eligible for 50% of their wages for up to two weeks if they provide positive test results (for themselves or the person they came into close contact with) or proof that they were awaiting test results.

PROCEDURES:

KFNS staff, families, visitors and volunteers will work together to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed. It is our collective duty to create a community of trust, and to mitigate risk where possible. According to SickKids, the most effective mitigation strategies or controls are screening/exclusion, contact tracing, cohorting/small unchanging groups, hand hygiene, outdoor education, and cleaning/sanitizing, with PPE listed as least effective. These recommendations are reflected in our procedures below.

Cleaning & Disinfecting Practices

- Frequently touched surfaces/items will be cleaned with a Health Canada approved disinfectant at the beginning and/or end of each day at a minimum and more frequently as needed (including but not limited to door knobs, taps, handles, toilet lid, table tops, shared tools/items, easy-to-clean loose parts, etc.).
- Disinfectant spray and clean rags/paper towels will be easily accessible to staff and participating adults for use, as needed, throughout the day.
- Difficult-to-clean items will be put away for the time being.

Handwashing Practices

- Participants and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water upon arrival, before departure, and at various points throughout the day (before and after eating, after using the outhouse, after coughing/sneezing/blowing nose, before and after using shared tools/items/loose parts, etc.).
- A Health Canada approved alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be used to clean hands when hand-washing is not an option (i.e. when we are away from the clearing, when it is too cold).
- Posters outlining proper hand-washing and hand sanitizing techniques will be displayed at the hand-washing station.
- Clean hand towels for individual use will be provided to each participant in the Seedlings/Saplings program each day. These towels will be hung with labelled clothespins at the hand-washing station. They will be laundered between program days.
- Acorns & Oaks/The Grove families will be required to bring their own clean hand towels for individual use each program day. KFNS staff will provide labelled clothespins so that the towels may be hung at the hand-washing station. Families will be required to take home and launder their own hand towels.

Physical Distancing Measures

- Staff will endeavour to encourage space between individuals/families when gathering for activities like eating, storytime, sharing circle, collaboration on a project, etc.
- Participants and staff will be encouraged to give each other space throughout the day, particularly with regards to not getting too close to one another's faces. Furthermore, staff will endeavour to discourage physical contact, involving hands and faces, between participants.
- The physical distancing measures mentioned above will be woven into our routines as naturally as possible by encouraging the use of our different spaces for activities (the clearing, the woods, different trails), spreading out within a space, using visual cues (i.e. individual cushions for seating) and offering smaller groups as interest-based options, etc.
- Physical distancing will not be necessary between members of the same family or social circle attending forest school together. Any families wishing to declare other participating families as part of their social circle must do so in writing.
- Whenever a safe physical distance cannot be maintained, face coverings are strongly encouraged for anyone over the age of 2 years (see Safe Use of Indoor Spaces below) .

Mealtime & Drinking Water Procedures

- Our “no food sharing” policy remains in place during this time.
- Participants and staff will be encouraged to clean their hands before and after each meal and before and after using the water refill station.
- Participants and staff will be encouraged to keep their labelled food and drink items away from those of other individuals.
- During meal preparation or cooking over the fire as a forest school activity, the following procedures will be followed:
 - Only staff will be permitted to bring in food/ingredients;
 - Staff and participants will clean hands before, during, and after food preparation;
 - Staff will support participants in individually preparing their own food;
 - Staff will wear a face covering when handling food and supporting participants in food preparation;
 - Participants will be provided with individual materials, ingredients, cutlery, and dishes – items will be used by one participant and then will be set aside to be washed;
 - Participants may choose to bring in their own cutlery/dishes.

Safe Use of Indoor Spaces

- Staff will endeavour to discourage any unnecessary or prolonged use of the yurt and other enclosed shelters during programs. Reasonable uses for the yurt and other enclosed shelters include, but are not limited to, seeking shelter, warming up/drying off, grabbing a resource, consoling a child, quick meals out of the elements, changing clothing layers, and in the case of the outhouse, using the toilet, changing a diaper.
- The windows and doors of the yurt and other enclosed shelters will remain open, weather-permitting, to increase airflow.
- Shared materials typically stored in the yurt and other enclosed shelters that are frequently used will be moved outside as much as possible.
- During Acorns & Oaks/The Grove programs, a maximum capacity and time limit will be strongly encouraged with regards to use of the yurt and other enclosed shelters: 3 families, to a maximum of 10 people, will be permitted inside at one time, with a time limit of 15 minutes per family.
- During the Seedlings/Saplings programs, a maximum capacity and time limit will be strongly encouraged with regards to use of the yurt and other enclosed shelters: 5-6 participants and 1 staff (1 group) will be permitted inside at one time, with a time limit of 15 minutes per group, with the exception of scheduled lunch breaks.
- These time limits will be enforced if other participants are in need of or waiting to gain access to the yurt and other enclosed shelters.
- In accordance with the provincial and local mandated use of face coverings and the Government of Ontario’s COVID-19 Response Framework, the use of face coverings*** is now required for anyone over the age of 2 inside the yurt and other enclosed shelters. The use of face coverings is also strongly encouraged when a safe physical distance cannot be maintained.

****Please see the Reference Documents section below for local & provincial resources related to the use of face coverings.*

Additional Safety Procedures

- Drop-off and pick-up of participants will happen at the parking lot at start and end times, or at the edge of the clearing for those arriving late or leaving early.
- Personal belongings brought to forest school should be minimized. If brought to forest school, personal items should be clearly labelled (i.e. backpack, clothing, water bottles, lunch pail, food containers, etc.).
- Our “no toys at forest school” policy remains in place during this time. However, should a child need to bring a small personal item for security/comfort, we will strive to ensure it is not shared.
- Volunteers, visitors, and others who are not participants or staff will be required to read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding and complete the appropriate online daily COVID-19 screening questionnaire (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below) before they are permitted to be on-site.

Screening & Exclusion Protocol

- All individuals, including participants, parents/guardians, staff, volunteers and visitors must be screened, including daily temperature checks, at home prior to arrival at forest school. This will be done independently using the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire:
 - All programs Fall 2021 – bit.ly/kfnscovidfall2021
- Any individual who does not pass the COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire will be asked to keep their entire family home from forest school programming that day and encouraged to seek testing through KFL&A Public Health.
- Individuals displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to attend that day's program and will be encouraged to get tested. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Families are required to fill out the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire honestly and promptly.

Management of Suspected Cases & Exclusion Protocol

- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be isolated in a safe place with a facilitator and must be picked up immediately. They will not be permitted to return until 10 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be sent home immediately. They will not be permitted to return until 10 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health, unless negative test results are provided.
- When there is a suspected case on-site, a 2-metre distance will be enforced, or face coverings will be worn, until that participant can be picked up. We will have clean cloth and disposable masks of various sizes available for use should the participant/staff not have their own.
- KFL&A Public Health will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close, should a KFNS participant or staff, or family member/close contact of a participant or staff, test positive for COVID-19.

Testing & Exclusion Protocol

- Symptomatic staff and participants, and those who do not pass the COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire, will be excluded from the program and referred for testing.
- Those who test negative for COVID-19 must be excluded from the program until 24 hours after symptom resolution.
- Those who test positive for COVID-19 must be excluded from the program until clearance has been received from KFL&A Public Health.
- Those who choose not to get tested must be excluded from the program for 10 days, and may return only if symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours.
- Should any participants or staff, or family members/close contacts of a participant or staff, become infected, KFL&A Public Health will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

Memorandum of Understanding (See below)

[Reopening Ontario](#)

[COVID-19 school and child care screening](#)

[COVID-19: Keeping schools safe](#)

[KFL&A PH Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[KFL&A PH Mandatory Face Coverings](#)

[PHO Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - How to Wash Your Hands](#)

[PHO Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\): Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

[COVID-19: Stop the spread](#)

[ONTARIO REGULATION 82/20](#)

Provincial resources related to the use of face coverings:

[Ontario Implementing Additional Public Health and Testing Measures to Keep People Safe](#)

[COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#)

[Face coverings and face masks](#)

Local resources related to the use of face coverings:

[KFL&A Public Health's Section 22 Order](#)

[Mandatory Face Coverings](#)

NOTE: for all other KFNS Policies & Procedures, not directly related to COVID-19, please see the [Parent Handbook](#).

Memorandum of Understanding

COVID-19 has a lower infection rate in children, and in Ontario only 16.6% of positive cases have been children and youth 19 and under. Furthermore, there is evidence that indicates that the majority of children and youth who become infected with COVID-19 are either asymptomatic or have only mild symptoms, such as cough, fever and sore throat. Despite this knowledge, and the lower-risk presented within an outdoor setting, it is important that we all take extra measures to ensure that we prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. This means that we all have added responsibilities while a global pandemic has been declared.

Children who have, or live with someone who has, an immune-compromising condition or other medical complexity should discuss the safety of attending forest school with their health care provider.

The policies and procedures outlined in this document are meant to provide a safe environment for participants, their families, and staff while staying as true to our values and quality of programming at KFNS as possible. This is a challenging line to walk, especially when we want the participants to feel these safety measures as little as possible, so we will endeavour to work these policies and procedures seamlessly into our daily routines.

This memorandum of understanding must be signed by all families, staff, volunteers and visitors before participating in our programs and in the event of any updates to this document. Please read it in its entirety. *All policies and procedures are listed in the document above.*

Please note: This is a living document that will be updated as the COVID-19 situation changes. The most up-to-date version of this document can be found at bit.ly/kfnscovid19.

I, _____ (parent or guardian/staff/volunteer/visitor), have read, understood and agree to accept and follow the policies, procedures and additional responsibilities outlined above, and acknowledge and agree to the statements outlined below:

- 1) The coronavirus disease COVID-19 has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization and COVID-19 is extremely contagious. KFNS has put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and requires all participants to adhere to the policies and procedures described in this document.
- 2) The participant is attending or participating voluntarily and understands the risks associated with COVID-19. The participant(s) agrees to assume those risks, including but not limited to exposure and being infected.
- 3) The participant(s) will NOT attend a KFNS program if they and all members of their household have not completed AND passed the COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire.
- 4) The participant(s) is following recommended guidelines, including but not limited to, practicing physical distancing, adhering to recognized hygiene best practices, using face coverings when required, and otherwise limiting exposure to COVID-19.
- 5) This document will remain in effect until the staff at KFNS, per the direction of the provincial government and provincial health officials, determine that the acknowledgements in this Memorandum of Understanding are no longer required.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Child(ren): _____

**You may be asked to sign this again should there be any major updates throughout the session.*