Welcome to Apple Blossoms Forest School! We are excited you have joined our family. If you have any questions about the handbook, school, or our policies, please ask.

We Believe....

Apple Blossoms Forest School offers a play based learning environment in an outdoor setting. We focus on child-led free and open ended exploration where imagination and wonder can thrive. Play is the work of the child and our school provides a space for children to foster discoveries in science, math, literacy and art.

Hours of Operation:

Apple Blossoms Forest School Summer (June & July) hours are 9:15 to 3pm, Monday through Friday

School year (September through May) hours are 9:15 to 3:00, Monday through Thursday, Friday 9:15-1pm.

Curriculum:

Apple Blossoms Forest School implements an emergent curriculum. Rooted in the work of early childhood theorists like Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, emergent curriculum is a process where teachers plan activities and projects in response to a specific group of children they are working with, taking into account their skills, needs, and interests. It can be practiced at any grade level. We also use the rhythm of the seasons and the natural world to guide our play. Summer is all about gardening, trees, weather, and birds. Winter is all about moon phases, hibernation and winter survival skills. Our day looks similar to a Waldorf preschool and our play looks similar to Reggio Emilia preschool. We combine many early education approaches to fit our Forest School classroom.

About Apple Blossoms Forest School:

Apple Blossoms Forest School is a nature preschool program run by Lacey Hemming and Co-teacher Bri Ramsey. We are a very small school with a 4:1 ratio and spend most of our time outside adventuring in our neighborhood. We are located in East Anchorage in the Scenic Park Foothills neighborhood. We love walking to the Baxter Bog for nature walks, hanging out at the scenic park playground, and even have field trips to our local coffee shop.

​Lacey Hemming has been a children's librarian for the last 8 years and decided in 2016 to start a preschool for her son and a few families. "I wasn't satisfied with my choices of child care, I didn't like the large class size and small percentage of time spent outside. I knew my son would thrive better in an environment that was play based and outside in the fresh air." ​

Lacey Hemming has a BA in Art History and minor in Chemistry from Oregon State University and Masters of Library and Information Science with a focus in Early Literacy and Children Services from University of Denver.

Bri Ramsey has worked in child care for the last 7 years ranging from residential outdoor education programs in California to after school programs in Alaska.  This will be Bri’s second year with Apple Blossoms.  “My favorite part of my job is getting to be creative and just plain silly with the kids in the outdoors while still teaching them basic life skills.”

Bri Ramsey has a BS in Environmental Science and minor in Mathematics from University of Massachusetts Amherst.

When Bri is not at Apple Blossoms you can find her working outside as an “adventure nanny” or exploring Alaska’s trails and backcountry with her dog, Kai’a, on foot, bike, skis or splitboard.

Photographs and Videos:

As a way to share what our day was like we will be taking photos and videos of the children doing activities and sharing them on our private Facebook page. The page is private and only available to current ABFS families. Occasionally I will share a photo on our school's social media pages, but the child's face is never shown. If you would like to opt out of photography, please let me know and I will make sure to honor your request.

Emergency Preparedness:

In the event of an emergency ABFS has developed an Emergency Response Plan. Please know that ABFS will make every attempt to notify you, so it is vital you keep your emergency contact information up to date.

Emergency Drills:

We strive to make sure our children are safe at school every day. We do this by making sure that our children are prepared for a variety of emergencies. We will practice fire drills (once a month) and earthquake drills (quarterly) and surprisingly Bear drills (summer months).

Emergency Supplies:

Our classroom is equipped with an emergency backpack. It contains water, prepackaged snacks, gloves, wipes, flashlights, small first aid kit, hand sanitizer, a copy of our Emergency Response Plan, and each child's personal emergency information.

Illness:

Your child may not be accepted for care if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

* Fever of 100 degrees or above
* Contagious skin or eye irritation
* Unexplained rash or sore
* Discharge from eye, nose, or ears
* Vomiting
* Diarrhea, more than 3 times in two hours
* Cough lasting more than 1 week without doctor's note
* Excessive crying, with the inability to be consoled
* Any illness that keeps a child from participating in regular activity:

For example if your child only has a low grade fever but is sluggish and cannot participate in normal play the child should stay home.

\*\*\*\*We follow all the CDC guidelines related to Covid-19 and children 5 and under

Open Door Policy:

Please know that you are ALWAYS welcome to visit or stay and play in our outdoor classroom
during our day.

Snack:

 We will have families bring in one personal snack for each day of care during our summer months. We will cook our morning snack over our fire no snack will be needed during winter months.

Payment:

For enrollment in preschool during the regular school year tuition payments are due the first of the month. We have multiple ways to pay, to enroll at Apple Blossoms Forest School you must join our parent portal. An invoice will be sent out with current tuition to your account on our website. You may pay online through our website for each session, week, or month. You may also pay in person with cash or check. Any payments received after the due date, will result in a ten dollar per day late fee. If your account exceeds one week over due, your child will not be allowed to come to school and will be dismissed from our school.

Termination of Enrollment:

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to discontinue a child's enrollment ABFS, this decision will be based on the best interest for children and staff. Termination of enrollment may be a result of the following:

* Non-payment of tuition
* Abusive, destructive, and/or dangerous behavior to children, staff, or property by a child, parent, or family member.
* Failure to follow our Family Handbook policies and procedures.

Cancellation policy:

Forest Preschool: We need 30 day notice to terminate care. If your child is sick or takes a vacation tuition will not be refunded.

Summer Camp: You may cancel your camp booking 3 weeks in advance and will receive a full refund.

Forest Play-Care: We are unable to refund for drop-in care at this time.

Behavior Management:

Lacey Hemming owner uses the techniques of Kim John Payne's Simplicity Parenting and Soul of Discipline. We build and provide a safe, warm, secure environment so children can grow to be independent and resilient students. We don't believe in bad behavior or shaming any child, we have a no time out policy at our school. We encourage children to take a break and have one on one time with an adult or have a quiet break on their own if they feel they need it.

Thank you for choosing ABFS! We are so excited you are joining our family. We will nurture and respect your child. We will help them grow and develop emotionally, socially, physically, and academically.

FAQ

Are you really outside all day, every day, in all weather?

We aim to be outside almost all day, every day, in all weather. But…sometimes there are storm warnings that we need to pay attention to and in those cases will move indoors. Other times, little fingers and toes need to warm up on very cold days or to dry out on very wet days. We have a temperature-controlled indoor classroom that will be used on average, about 10-15% of the time. Outside our classroom is a large, open-aired area. And 85-90% of your child’s time with us being spent out of doors. That’s where all the good stuff happens!

Is forest school a good fit for my child?

For most children, programs based in nature that is play-based and child-centered will be a wonderful fit helping children grow stronger, with increased confidence and resilience. Keep in mind, our school does not venture far until we are sure that all the children understand rules and boundaries. If you’re unsure, please contact us and we’d be happy to talk it through with you.

What gear does my child need?

In general, your child will need to be prepared for a day outside. Regardless of the season, children will need to wear closed-toe shoes to protect their feet, as well as have rain boots for certain outings. Each child will receive a full set of winter and rain gear for their Forest School days. Please only wear Forest School gear at school, you are allowed to take the gear home and care for it as needed.

Our motto is "There's no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing."

What to bring?

Summer Months:

Small backpack (for nature walks)
1 set of extra dry clothes in back pack
Sneakers
Wellies (provided)
Synthetic/Wool Base Layer (only on really wet cold days below 60 degrees) (provided)
Rain Mitts (this is an absolute must) (provided)
Wool liner mitten if Rain mitts are NOT lined (we rarely use these for warmth but some children don't like the feel of the unlined rain mitt on their hand this adds a soft layer) (provided)
Rain Suit OR Rain Jacket/Pants (Provided)
Swim Gear/Flip Flops/Towel (on Warm days)
Sun hat/Rain Hat
Sunscreen
Hand Sanitizer

Backpack should be able to carry:

Extra Clothes
Lunch
Water
Sanitizer
Sunscreen
Hat
\*You can bring a larger bag to store gear in when not in use and we can use the small backpack for hiking and going on nature trails. We won't require backpacks in the winter months as we will be eating lunch inside.

\* Please don't have children wear "nice" clothes we will get dirty and wet most days.

Winter Months:

Check out our gear guides on our [website](https://www.appleblossomsforestschool.com/school-information)

We will provide all outdoor winter gear

Snow hat (preferable made of material other than cotton)
Long underwear/synthetic shirt and pants base layer on skin.
2 pairs of wool socks (no cotton socks in the winter please)
2 sets of mittens/gloves (I usually buy around 4 pairs for the winter)
Snowsuit/jacket/bibs
Winter boots that the child is able to put on by themselves we highly recommend BAFFIN Boots

Families will take all items home every day. We will store items on designated hooks located in our outdoor classroom and cubbies in our indoor classroom during the school day.

Covid-19 Operating Requirements for Apple Blossoms Forest School

Promoting healthy hygiene and preventing the spread of Covid-19:

* We will keep cohorts static and small to avoid children being exposed to different families on a daily basis. Therefore we will have staggering arrivals/dismissals to avoid crowding.
* We will talk about personal space in a developmentally appropriate way to have children learn about this new skill
* We will be 100% outside and there will be adequate air flow and fresh air, until winter/cold temps approach. Winter months we will be inside from 11:30 to 1pm.
* We will not have any sensory tubs that are shared. We plan on doing several sensory tubs but they will be individual labeled plastic containers for each family to use during the day.
* Families will arrive and enter the outdoor classroom on the South side of the house (you will see a walkway made in the snow) everyday. Please park on the street for pick-up and drop off.

