



Parent Handbook

Mission Statement

The Cygnet School's role is to support each child so they may confidently expand their innate talents, develop the skills needed for success in secondary school, and cultivate personal values that will allow him or her to act with thoughtfulness and benevolence.

Vision Statement

The Cygnet School envisions a learning environment which engages every student and empowers them to make decisions about their own learning, both now and as they grow. We value and support all aspects of child development, including social and emotional growth and artistic and creative talents, as well as academic knowledge and skills. This approach inspires our students to thoughtfully connect with and positively impact their communities throughout their lives.

Core Values

Inquisitiveness-

Thoughtful questioning, exploring, commitment to learning about oneself and others, and embracing new experiences, not just for school but for life.

Integrity-

Honesty and accountability to oneself and others, trustworthiness, exhibiting discipline and personal responsibility in all pursuits and relationships.

Respectfulness-

Respecting oneself and others, one's place and surroundings, considering intent and impact of one's actions, and acting in ways that demonstrate empathy and understanding.

Our Structure

The Cygnet School is a non-profit private school primarily serving students in grades PreK-8. Our school is considered a 'micro-school' in that student enrollment is limited to 15 students per class in our multiage academic classrooms, with no more than 60 students on campus at any time. The multiage grouping approach allows children to work at their own level to reach understanding of concepts, with specific time set aside to directly teach new skills or skills with which students are experiencing difficulty.

Our academic program operates Monday through Thursday and includes English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Our Fridays are reserved for elective classes so students can explore and develop their interests. Elective classes for our intermediate elementary and higher students are offered in 9 week long blocks and students build their own day by choosing from offerings including the visual and performing arts, gardening, yoga, cooking, engineering, and gaming.

Our programs are inclusive of students with exceptional learning needs and we strive to follow a natural proportions model. The principle of natural proportions simply means children with differing abilities are included in classrooms in proportion to their presence in the general population. Approximately 20-25 percent of each classroom's capacity is reserved for children with special needs (inclusive of gifted students and students with disabilities).

The Cygnet School School is a non-profit corporation, operated by an administrator and directed by a Board of Directors. It is registered as a private school by the state of Florida (School Code 5039).

How to reach the Director

Dr. Wendy Bradshaw, The Cygnet School
admin@thecygnetschool.org
863-640-4480

Lunch and Snack Guidelines

One of the primary values we have at The Cygnet School is to support children to be independent. With this in mind, please send their lunch and daily snack items in a lunchbox and in containers that they can open and close by themselves. Avoid foods that your child cannot manage independently. Please do not send soda or candy to school. A microwave will be provided for supervised child use.

Please send a refillable water bottle to school with your child each day.

Hours and Attendance

The Cygnet School operates between 8 am and 3pm and is closed on the dates indicated on the Campus Calendar. Parents are responsible for dropping off/picking up children in a timely manner and tracking educational attendance on days they do not attend The Cygnet School to meet Florida compulsory attendance requirements via the attendance form on the school website's Parent Portal. Please see the school director for additional information.

Daily Drop Off between 8:00 and 8:30am. DO NOT drop off students prior to 8am, as there will be no supervision available.

Daily Pick Up between 3:00 and 3:20pm. Students picked up after 3:20 pm will be charged a late fee of \$20 per day.

Parent volunteers are greatly appreciated. If you would like to volunteer to supervise drop-off and/or pick-up, please notify Dr. Bradshaw of your availability. This will count towards your required volunteer hours.

Notification of Absence

Please notify us if your child will not be coming to school due to illness, injury, vacation, or other reason via the parent portal messaging feature.

Hurricane Days and School Closures

We generally follow the Polk County Public School's decisions about weather related late openings, early closings and cancellation of school. As soon as we know, we will put a notice on the Home Page of our website, thecygnetschool.org and contact all parents. Make-up days may be added to the school year to comply with Florida law governing compulsory attendance.

Dress Code

Students play and get messy, students are artistic and get messy, and students explore and get messy. Please let your child dress in clothes that can get messy, too. Children should wear comfortable clothing which they can manage by themselves. We play outdoors, so your child should wear shoes that he or she can run and play in. Please label jackets and other removable outerwear with your child's name.

Student dress will be considered acceptable if it does not violate the following principles:

1. Articles of clothing must not cause a distraction nor be a health or safety hazard. Please ensure students are dressed appropriately for the weather. Students should also wear closed-toed shoes for safety.
2. Student appearance must not interfere with the instructional program. For example, your dinosaur costume may be really cool, but it is too distracting to wear to school. We schedule themed days and events to share special attire.
3. Pictures, emblems or writings on student attire must be appropriate for the school environment.
4. Clothing should be of the appropriate size.
 - a. Clothing must not be baggy or saggy, worn low on the body, nor drag on the ground.
 - b. Clothing must not be overly form fitting or tight.
5. Clothing must be opaque in color and fit so that undergarments are not visible through clothing and in any position (ie: with arms raised, in sitting position).

Required Health and Vaccination Records

The school is required to have on file for each child:

A Florida Department of Health School Entry Health Exam (form DH 3040)

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/school-health/enrollment.html>

AND

EITHER- Vaccination records that comply with the Florida Department of Health schedule and requirements. This needs to be updated each time your child receives more vaccinations. The schedule and requirements can be found at

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/immunization/children-and-adolescents/documenting-immunizations/index.html>

OR - A Certificate of Exemption from School Immunization Requirements. This needs to be updated each August for the next school year. The form and directions for filing can be found at

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/immunization/children-and-adolescents/immunization-exemptions/index.html>

Illness Policy

We appreciate your assistance in following our illness policy to keep all children and teachers in the best health possible. Illness travels quickly in a school, and germs go home with staff and students, who may have immunocompromised family members. Additionally, with a small staff, finding classroom coverage in the event of teacher illness is challenging.

Please keep your child home if they have experienced the following within the past 24 hours:

Vomiting (two or more times in 24 hours)

Rash, lice or nits (body rash, especially with a fever or itching)

Diarrhea (3 or more watery stools in 24 hours)

Eye infection (thick mucus or pus draining from the eye)

Sore throat (with a fever or swollen glands)

Fever (temperature of 100° F) or more, taken under the arm)

Also, we strongly urge you to consider keeping your child home if they are just not feeling very good (unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused or cranky), as it is difficult for them to learn while coping with feeling ill.

Children Becoming Ill at School

Children who become ill while at school will be brought to a room where they can rest and the parents will be called to pick them up.

Medications

The teachers are authorized to administer medicine only if accompanied by a signed and dated note from the parent and the container is labeled with the correct prescription. Please complete a medication release form (from the director) and hand this directly to one of the teachers. No medication of any kind should be put in children's lunch boxes.

Discipline

The Cygnet School approach to discipline is founded on developmentally appropriate expectations and is mindful of children's individual needs. We encourage self-awareness, personal responsibility, and consideration for others through development of respectful relationships and provision of supportive guidance when conflicts or frustrations arise. Teachers, staff and volunteers are required to document on an Incident Report any behavior which may result in harm to self or others. Parents/Guardians will be notified of any behavioral concerns, which will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Appropriate behavior is taught when children are not in a stressful situation, through class meetings small group, or individual lessons as needed. We use peer problem solving whenever possible when children have disagreements. Children who are having difficulty controlling themselves verbally or physically may be required to sit at a table by themselves to work for a period of time. They may lose specific privileges related to their behavior (for example, losing access to materials they are not using respectfully). If a child's behavior (for example: temper tantrum) is disruptive to the classroom the child will be taken out of the classroom. Parents will be notified of these situations either by email, phone call, and/or incident report.

If the student repeatedly needs office support to deal with his or her behavior, the parent will be called to take the student home. There will be a conference with the parent before the student returns to the classroom.

Physical violence will not be tolerated.

Verbal and/or physical bullying will not be tolerated. Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive interactions with the intent of being hurtful or threatening.

Our first priority is the safety of our students and staff and we reserve the right to dismiss any student who we feel compromises that safety. This can be done without notice if necessary, or with 30 days' notice, at the discretion of the director. Our goal is to ensure the safety of the children, teachers and families in our school community.

Safety Rules

Students may not engage in any games or behavior likely to result in an injury to themselves or others (e.g. hitting kicking, tripping, tackling others, throwing rocks or running with sticks). Students must walk while inside the building. Jewelry, toys, and small objects should not be brought to school as they can be lost and may present a choking hazard.

Injuries

Parents will be notified if their child sustains an injury that results in crying, bruising, or bleeding, or if their child appears ill or fatigued. An incident report will be filed for such injuries.

Communication Policy

At The Cygnet School, families are the backbone of the learning community and are regarded as experts on their own children and partners in learning. We know that good communication is critical to creating positive school experiences. All official school communication will come to you through email. We will automatically add your email once you are enrolled at the school. Please check your email regularly for important information.

We use the SchoolCues system as our Parent Portal to share information with parents. The login page is located on our school website (www.thecygnetschool.org) There is a mobile app you may download, and your account may be accessed via computer.

Your SchoolCues account gives you access to the following:

- Online payment
- School Calendar
- Text alerts
- Messaging to/from school staff
- Scheduling family/teacher conferences
- Announcements
- Incident reports
- Permission slips and forms
- Reports and homework

Concerns

Parents/guardians are advised to voice any concerns (concerning children, teachers or other families) to the director of the school in order to pursue an acceptable resolution. All concerns will be taken seriously; however, to respect confidentiality and preserve trust, families may not be apprised of all actions taken in response to their concern. If the complaint is regarding the director, a parent may contact another member of the Board of Directors. The current Board of Directors and their contact numbers are available to parents/guardians upon request.

Assessment and Progress Reporting

At the Cygnet School, the primary purpose of assessment is to inform instruction and teachers use a combination of formal and informal measures to gauge student growth and needs. Progress is reported to families using multiple measures to best capture a true picture of the child's ongoing development. Annual assessment includes quarterly written progress reports,

two standards/benchmark reports, and two parent conferences (November and May). Teachers are available throughout the year for additional conferences.

Special Learning Needs

If a child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, we can support that child by working together to develop a plan to target particular skills. Additional fees may apply when a child needs specialized learning supports above and beyond what is provided to every student. In the event that a child requires more support that we can provide, we will refer the family to appropriate outside resources.

Homework

According to the American Educational Research Association, “Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time that should be devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents.”

In keeping with this belief, The Cygnet School has a limited homework policy.

Homework for elementary students will be limited to the following:

- special family projects
- reading for book clubs
- daily work not completed during the school day due to factors within the student’s control
- limited practice for skill maintenance (e.g. 10 minutes math fact practice nightly).

Middle school students may be assigned more regular homework, such as reading a chapter, online math practice, or completing research. This homework should not take a child more than an hour and should be completed independently. If you find your child is unable to complete their homework independently, please contact your child’s teacher.

Volunteer Requirements and Policies

It takes a lot of work to keep a small school running smoothly, and we expect families at The Cygnet School to pitch in as part of the team. Each 4 Day Academic or Full Time family is required to complete 20 hours of verified service to The Cygnet School related activities between June 1, 2019 and May 30, 2020.

Parents may opt to pay a \$10 per hour fee to waive the service-hour commitment. For this option, please contact the director to submit payment. Monies collected here will go directly to a specific need predetermined by the school’s board and administration to benefit both the school and students. You can submit volunteer hours online via our parent portal or in the office. Complete directions are available on our school website.

You can submit volunteer hours online via our parent portal or in the office. Complete directions are available on our school website. Any family that has not completed their 20 hours prior to May 15, will be emailed with a detailed report of all unserved hours as well as an invoice. Payment must be made within two (2) weeks and no later than, Friday, May 30.

All individuals who volunteer in the school with children present must complete a Level 1 background check at their own expense (\$30). Please arrange your background check with the school director or administrative assistant.

Ways to Volunteer:

Field Trips: Chaperoning a field trip is a great way to get to know other families. You may be asked to drive students to the location (with written permission) and/or supervise small groups of students during a trip. If you agree to transport children other than your own for a field trip, you will be required to provide your valid driver's license and proof of insurance, to be kept on file.

Classroom Activities: You are welcome to volunteer in our classrooms by coordinating with your child's teacher(s). The classroom is the student's workplace. Adults must be respectful, unobtrusive, and quiet, please. Allow the teacher to keep his or her attention on the students. If you would like to conference with the teacher, please schedule a time when the teacher is not supervising students.

Arrival and Dismissal Supervision: Extra eyes and ears are always beneficial during transition times to assist our staff in keeping students safe.

Campus Beautification and Maintenance: There will be several scheduled campus workdays throughout the year with the goal of keeping our campus beautiful and safe inside and out. There are opportunities for both the skilled and unskilled to achieve this goal. Please notify the director if you have a special skill-set to share. Additionally, volunteers are needed for regular maintenance tasks such as mopping bathrooms and common areas and blowing/sweeping sidewalks.

Specially scheduled activities: We need volunteers to assist with several of our special activities throughout the school year, including the annual Christmas Tree sales partnership with the United Methodist Temple (carry/set up trees/cut stumps to size), school programs (serving/set up/break down/cleaning), and special school events (e.g. downtown First Friday, rummage sale, holiday sales, birthday celebrations).

Field Trips

The Cygnet School schedules various field trips for educational, cultural, physical and humanitarian experiences. Some field trips involve the entire school, and some only include specific classes (academic or elective).

Some of the trips may require fees.

Some trips are invitational or limited by our host to students and teachers only. Most trips will include opportunities for parents (approved volunteers) to accompany us. Students are strongly encouraged to wear a school shirt on field trip days.

Tuition Policies

At the time of regular registration, payment of a non-refundable Registration Fee in the amount of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) per child is required. The mandatory Curriculum and Supply Fee (see tuition agreement) is also due upon registration and shall be paid together with the Registration Fee.

Tuition payments are due and payable every 1st day of each month and will be considered delinquent if not paid after the due date. If a tuition payment is ten (10) calendar days (or more) overdue, The Cygnet School may impose any or all of the following sanctions, at the School's sole discretion, unless special payment arrangements have been made in writing signed by the Family and the School Director. Sanctions include:

1. Immediate Dismissal from the School
2. Withholding of School Academic Records
3. Referral to an Attorney or Collection Agency

In the event that tuition or any fees remain in arrears and unpaid upon the published due date and the School retains an attorney or collection agency to collect the money due, the undersigned parent(s) or guardian(s) agree to pay reasonable attorneys' fees and collection agency costs.

Parent(s) or Guardian(s) may pay through any of the following:

- Cash
- Personal / Company Checks
- Online Secure Payment Portal provided by School

If tuition is paid in full on or before the 1st day of the school year, the parent(s) or guardian(s) is entitled to a 5% discount of the Annual Tuition. Discount may change from one school year to the next.

A parent(s) or guardian(s) with an unpaid balance for the previous school year(s) is not allowed to register their child(ren) until such balance is paid in full.

Explanation of Fees and Tuition

The Registration and Curriculum and Supply Fees will help pay for the following items:

School Furnishings and Equipment

Curriculum materials (e.g. student books, professional books, workbooks, lab kits, manipulative sets, online subscriptions)

Assessment tests and materials

Playground Equipment and Mulch

Paper/Pencils/Crayons/Journals

Project Materials and Supplies

Art materials

Elective class supplies

School Programs

Cleaning & First Aid Supplies (band-aids, paper towels, toilet paper, soap, disposable rubber gloves, etc.)

Office Equipment and Supplies (folders, envelopes, copier, phone, copy paper, etc.)

Required Training and Professional Development for Teachers

Background Checks for Teachers and Substitutes

Your monthly tuition will help pay for the following items:

Teacher and Staff Salaries

Payroll Expenses

Licensing Fees

Liability Insurance

Fire Extinguishers

Utilities (electricity, water, internet and phone service)

Custodial services

Facility Lease
Building Maintenance and Improvements

30 Days' Notice of Withdrawal

If you decide to withdraw your child, for any reason, please give the school 30 days notice.

The parent(s) or guardian(s) is responsible for the prorated annual tuition through the end of the month in which the student leaves, withdraws, or is dismissed, including other fees if any. Notification of withdrawal must be in writing and received by the school office.

Emergency Procedures

In case of emergency requiring evacuation of the building or the playground, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Children will be alerted by the smoke alarm sirens, and will follow the teachers in an orderly fashion (walking in line) through the playground and across the road to a parking space.
2. The last teacher will check the building to ensure all people are out.
3. The teachers will call 911.
4. Parents will be notified if children need to be picked up early.
5. Children will return to the classrooms once it is safe to do so.

Fire Drills will be held once a month. Emergency Preparedness Drills (lockdown, evacuate to playground or evacuate to the neighbors) will be held quarterly. A copy of the school emergency plan is on file in the office for viewing.

If emergency personnel direct us to leave the property, we will bring our emergency supplies and cell phones to the safe area they designate. Parents/Guardians will be contacted once we are there.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Cygnet admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Confidentiality Policy

The Cygnet School will keep all personal information about the students and families that attend the school confidential.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Staff members at The Cygnet School are considered mandated reporters under Florida law. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a felony and carries criminal and financial penalties. As such, staff members are required to complete Florida Department of Children and Families training in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. If child abuse or neglect is suspected, the staff member will notify the director and will file a report with the Florida Abuse Hotline.

Professional Qualifications

Academic Classroom Teachers have received a bachelor's degree or higher in Education or Child Development from an accredited college or university. Elective Teachers have demonstrated a command of their subject area appropriate to the level of course being taught.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The Cygnet School is committed to continually evaluating and improving upon our current programs and services through research and continuing education regarding our work with students and families. All children will have access to a variety of services and supports that are inclusive and respectful of each child's experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities and circumstances. Families may be asked to take part in interviews, questionnaires, and/or surveys pertaining to their experiences to be used to improve programs and services.