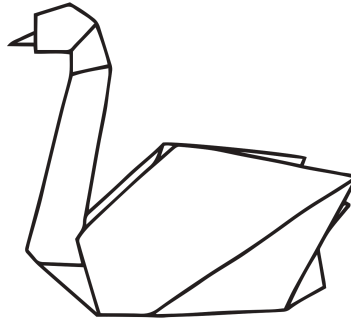




# Family Handbook



## THE CYGNET SCHOOL

### Family Handbook 2024-2025

#### **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 small non-profit private school serving students in grades K-12. Our school utilizes multi-age academic classrooms, prioritizing limited class sizes and a low teacher to student ratio. The multi-age grouping approach allows for daily small group direct instruction and independent practice where children work at their own level to reach understanding of concepts.

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  
[wbradshaw@thecygnetschool.org](mailto:wbradshaw@thecygnetschool.org)  
863-606-6341

#### **Lunch and Snack Guidelines**

One of the primary values we have at The Cygnet School is to support children in their ability to be independent. With this in mind, please send ready to eat lunch (students do not have access to microwaves) and daily snack items in a lunchbox and in containers that they can open and close by themselves. Be sure to send all necessary utensils with your student. Avoid foods that your child cannot manage independently. Do not send soda or candy to school. Gummy snacks basically turn to concrete when they come into contact with linoleum floors, so please avoid sending them if at all possible.

**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 administrative software, Blackbaud. You may check your child's attendance records from your Parent Account with Blackbaud. Please see the school director for additional information.

BLACKBAUD LOGIN PAGE: <https://thecygnetschool.myschoolapp.com/app#login>

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

Daily Pick Up is 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. Alternatively, you may text/call the school at 863-255-9440.

### **Hurricane Days and School Closures**

We generally follow Polk County Public School's decisions about weather related late openings, early closings and cancellation of school. As soon as we know, we will contact all parents via a Blackbaud text alert and email. Make-up days may be added to the school year to comply with Florida law governing compulsory attendance.

### **Dress Code**

Students must wear Cygnet school shirts **Monday-Thursday**. Jackets, sweatshirts, and sweaters may be worn over Cygnet shirts, but any other long-sleeved items must be worn underneath their Cygnet school shirt.

Students may wear choice shirts meeting the below criteria on Fridays:

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 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. Students must 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 writing on student choice attire must be appropriate for the school environment. For example, if your shirt has a phrase on it that causes debate amongst students, this is a distraction from class and considered a violation of dress code. Also, even though your anime shirt is comfortable, it is not okay to wear to school if the character's outfit would not also meet our dress code-see items 4 and 5 below. Please don't make us restrict the dress code further.
4. Clothing should be of the appropriate size to support a full range of motion and not need frequent adjustment.
  - a. Clothing must not be so baggy that it falls off or drags on the ground.
  - b. Clothing must not be overly form fitting or tight.
  - c. Clothing must **fully cover** the torso and buttocks through the full range of motion.
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:

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

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)

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 school staff is 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 or backpacks.

## **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 groups, 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 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 and threats of physical harm 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 suspend or dismiss any student who we feel compromises that safety. Dismissal can occur 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.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICE/CELL PHONE POLICY**

Although students have the privilege of bringing electronic watches and/or cell phones to school, the following rules must be adhered to in order for a positive learning environment to exist.

Students may not use apps to share photos/videos during school hours (such as BeReal, Tiktok, Snapchat, Discord, Roblox, Reddit, etc).

Students may not take photos or videos of other students without permission.

Electronic devices and/or cell phones will remain off and out of sight during the school day. Only devices used for educational and/or communication purposes will be permitted during the school day.

**Students may not receive any phone calls or text messages during instructional class time.** This includes communication between students and parents. If you need to reach your student during instructional hours, please contact the office instead of texting or calling your student. (See “**Contacting the School Office**” section below) Cell phone use is permissible ONLY during a recess or lunch period.

The teacher has the right to request all student cell phones and keep them until such class is deemed finished.

Violation of the electronic device/cell phone rules will result in the confiscation of said electronics. A parent/guardian may retrieve the device at the end of the school day from the teacher or office.

**If there is a second violation, the student will lose the privilege of having an electronic device/cell phone in the school building.**

#### **Other Non-School items**

Video game systems, trading cards (such as Pokemon), tablets, jewelry, candy, and toys should not be brought to school as they can be lost and frequently cause distractions and arguments. These items will be confiscated and parents/guardians will have to retrieve the items from the teacher or office at the end of the school day.

#### **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. A Medical 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 Blackbaud system as our [Parent Portal](https://www.thecygnetschool.org/cygnnet-families-1) to share information with parents. The login page is linked on our school website (<https://www.thecygnetschool.org/cygnnet-families-1>) Unfortunately there is not a mobile app at this time, so your account must be accessed via computer or your phone’s browser.

Your Blackbaud 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  
Attendance  
Grades  
Permission slips and forms

### **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 is listed on the school website and their contact information will be made 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 parent conference windows (November and May), and the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement-3rd Edition conducted in May. Teachers are available throughout the year for additional conferences upon request.

### **Special Learning Needs**

If a child has a disability as documented by a physician, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or 504 Plan, we can support that child by working together to develop a service plan to target particular skills. Additional fees may apply when a child needs specialized learning support 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).

Secondary (6th through 12th grades) students may be assigned more regular homework, such as reading a chapter, online skill practice, or completing research/writing assignments. This homework should not take a child more than an hour nightly 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 family is required to complete 10 hours of verified service to The Cygnet School related activities between June 1, 2024 and May 30, 2025.

Parents may opt to pay a \$20 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 activity sign-ups on Blackbaud, via email, or in the office. Complete directions are available on our school website.

Any family that has not completed their 10 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 to chaperone children or work on campus with children **must** complete a Florida Department of Law Enforcement Level 1 background check at their own expense (\$42). Please obtain our FDLE background check form from 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, and as previously stated, a background check is required.

**kidsPACK:** We work with the United Methodist Temple to feed disadvantaged children; giving them a backpack of nutritious food each Friday to sustain them on weekends when they do not have access to subsidized school meals. To do this, we meet one evening each month for 2 hours to assemble approximately 300 packs. Volunteers may also sign up for a weekly Thursday delivery and take packs to the two schools we serve (Cleveland Court Elementary and Southwest Elementary)

**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.

Special scheduled activities: We need volunteers to assist with several of our special activities throughout the school year, including 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 must 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 three hundred dollars (\$300.00) 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 by 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 (Blackbaud)

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, gender, or 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. In completing enrollment paperwork, a parent/guardian may refuse to let the school designate any information as directory information and deny or restrict consent to share the student's image for school media purposes. In an emergency, school officials may disclose, without consent, education records, including personally identifiable information from those records, to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals.

### **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 from an accredited college or university. Strong preference is given to individuals with certification in Education or Child Development and classroom experience.

Elective Teachers have demonstrated a command of their subject area appropriate to the level of course being taught.

All employees of The Cygnet School undergo a Level 2 Background Check conducted by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and their fingerprints are actively retained for the duration of their employment.

**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.

**Contacting the School Office**

You may reach the school office in the following ways:

- Call or send a text message to the school office at 863-255-9440
- Send an email to [admin@thecygnetschool.org](mailto:admin@thecygnetschool.org)

Please understand that administrative staff is often called upon to help in classrooms or common areas, and may not always be immediately available. However, we do our best to respond to calls, messages, and emails in a timely manner.