



PRESCHOOL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Updated: Mar 16

Centre number: 6510

Centre name: Akuna Kindergarten

1. General information

- Preschool Director
Brooke Winterfield
- Postal address
10 Ramsay Ave, Mt Gambier, SA 5290
- Location address
'As Above'
- DECS Region
Limestone Coast
- Geographical location – ie road distance from GPO (km)
Located in North Eastern Quadrant of Mount Gambier, approx 450kms from Adelaide.
- Telephone number
(08) 87259146
- Fax number
(08) 87239681
- Preschool website address:
<http://www.akunakgn.sa.edu.au/>
- Preschool e-mail address
dl.6510.leaders@schools.sa.edu.au
- Enrolment/Attendance

Enrolments are kept between 75-88 children.

As the kindergarten is situated in an area of Mount Gambier that is rapidly developing, Akuna Kindergarten operates a Priority of Access procedure to manage enrolments where the demand for preschool places exceeds the sites' capacity. This aims to support all local preschools and equitable access by families to a preschool service, when limited vacancies exist.

- Co-located/stand-alone
Stand-alone
- Programs operating at the preschool
Sessional Kindergarten for eligible children –

At Akuna Kindergarten, access to preschool is provided over a two week cycle totalling 30 hours per fortnight. In keeping with parent choice we offer the following two options for access to preschool at Akuna Kindergarten.

Option 1 –

One week = Monday / Wednesday 9.00am – 3.00pm,

Following week = Monday / Wednesday 9.00am – 3.00pm and **either** Tuesday or Thursday 9.00am – 3.00pm.

Option 2 –

One week = Tuesday / Thursday 9.00am – 3.00pm

Following week = Tuesday / Thursday 9.00am – 3.00pm and **either** Monday or Wednesday 9.00am – 3.00pm.

Families are asked termly to nominate how many hours they wish to access of their entitled 15 hours, keeping in mind that staffing is based on the hours children attend.

Every effort has been made to establish attendance schedules to suit individual family needs. However, preferred choices are not always be possible, as group sizes need to remain inside the recommended maximum limits.

Bilingual Support

Children from non-English speaking backgrounds including Aboriginal children may benefit from a bilingual person to support their development of English and maintenance of their home language.

It is applied for as needed through the Bilingual Support Program and depends on availability of a suitable worker and funding.

Preschool Support

There is a long history of high levels children with special needs and of support and advocacy for these children and their families at Akuna Kindergarten.

Funding for Preschool support is applied for on a termly basis according to the needs and progress of the individual child.

Support workers implement a program designed by teaching staff in conjunction with Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists and/or Physiotherapists. Children are supported to work on specific skills on a 1:1 basis and then to apply those skills within the small group/large group/free choice experiences.

Playgroup

A centre run playgroup operates on Friday mornings from 10.00 – 11.30pm. Families are welcome to attend throughout the term, with not playgroup being held on the last Friday of each term.

2. Key Centre Policies

• Akuna Kindergarten Philosophy Statement

The Vision of Akuna Kindergarten is to provide high quality teaching and learning in a safe, caring, supportive and welcoming environment where there is a general sense of belonging. Our aim is to provide a curriculum that is play based, child-centred and emergent, based on children's individual strengths and interests and guided by 'Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. We are committed to empowering children and families to pursue their life journey with confidence, through the implementation of our values in all activities associated with the kindergarten.

We believe.....

- The most powerful way children learn is through play, through a rich, active learning environment that is reflective of their strengths, interests, desires and abilities. It is child centred and emergent as well as promoting their agency, wellbeing and involvement.
- Families are children's first and most influential teachers. The development of respectful and caring relationships whilst working collaboratively with families and community enriches children's lives and learning.
- Learning is dynamic, complex and holistic, focusing on children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning.
- In focusing on the development of each individual child, and groups of learners encouraging the growth of skills and feelings of independence, interdependence and competence.
- Each child is unique and we are committed to equity, inclusion and diversity to ensure we provide fairness and justice for all.
- That children need to feel connected to others, valued and welcomed, needing a sense of belonging in order to reach their potential.
- Ongoing learning and reflective practice are an integral part of providing a quality early childhood programme.
- Best practice, innovation and reflection are important to inform our growth and influence, now and into the future.
- Children need opportunities to develop responsibility, independence and other life skills, including practices that contribute to a sustainable future.
- In the value of promoting continuity of learning, where children, families and educators all contribute to successful transitions between settings.

We do this by.....

- Providing a program, curriculum and active learning environment that provides opportunities for children to become successful, confident learners who are given the opportunity to develop holistically in a stimulating environment.
- Utilising spontaneous 'teachable moments' to scaffold children's learning
- Promoting children's success in learning through having a positive sense of self, respect and support from others in an environment that is safe, caring, supportive, interesting and empowering.
- Actively promoting the underpinning principles and key practices of early childhood pedagogy that are expressed in the Early Years Learning Framework.
- Planning an emergent and inclusive curriculum, guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and is responsive to all children strengths, abilities and interests as well as promoting their wellbeing and involvement.
- Having high expectations for children, their families, educators and our centre.
- Using 'Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia' to plan, assess, report and gather information on children's learning.
- Providing opportunities for uninterrupted periods of play and utilising opportunities for intentional teaching experiences.
- Developing secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children, families and the community to enrich children's lives and learning.
- Building on the experiences children and families bring to the centre to help all children feel secure, confident and included and to experience continuity in how to be and how to learn.
- Encouraging all educators to engage in reflective practices to gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision making about effective teaching and children's learning.
- All educators continually seeking ways to build their professional knowledge and share roles and responsibilities and work as a co-operative, collaborative and supportive team.
- Providing a safe and stimulating environment that focuses on practices that contribute to a sustainable future.
- Creating a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators. This is supported by the development of strong partnerships – past, present and future.
- Maximise the use of both indoor and outdoor learning spaces to encourage children's ability to observe, take risks, explore, investigate, imagine, make discoveries, problem solve and connect with nature, promoting opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning.
- Meeting the National Quality Standards

Our beliefs become a shared commitment between families, children and educators. By working together with open communication, respect and understanding, and by sharing ideas and striving for continued improvement and excellence, all parties will reap the benefits.

Centre Priorities

- a) Nature Play and Outdoor learning including sustainability
- b) Literacy & Numeracy through playful pedagogies
- c) Community Connectedness

Further information on centre directions can be found in the Quality Improvement Plan.

3. Curriculum

- **Framework used:** The curriculum at Akuna Kindergarten is play based, child-centred and emergent, based on children's individual needs and interests. It is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF), named **Belonging, Being, Becoming.**
- **Core Values:** The basic values that guide the way Akuna Kindergarten operates are: interdependence, integrity, truth, responsibility, respect, equity, honesty, acceptance, trust, fairness, independence and diversity.
- **Specific curriculum approaches:** We use the EYLF document in conjunction with observations of children, knowledge of the child supplied by families, knowledge of families who attend the centre and the community in which they live as a basis for developing a balanced and developmentally appropriate programme that is socially and culturally inclusive

The types of teaching practices we use involve providing a challenging setting that encourages children to perceive a problem, think of possible solutions, select appropriate options and to act on their choice ie: to see themselves as problem solvers and decision makers.

When developing the program we plan for active learning that integrates all areas of a child's development. Teaching practises are a combination of inclusive practices that model acceptance and support of all children, their families and the broader community.

We aim to provide a program that is resource rich to excite and stimulate/ engage children as they search for understanding. This involves presenting ideas and information in a range of styles to cater for the different learning styles that children have.

We routinely use collaborative language and negotiation to promote teamwork and promote an understanding of other peoples' needs and perspective amongst children. We coach children with problem solving techniques that will enhance their learning and social development. We focus on social skill development in the context of individuals, small groups and large groups. A wide variety of communication skills are promoted and explicitly taught.

Staff keep up to date with recent research into children's learning and acknowledge the findings that kindergarten aged children learn best as active learners and promote children's active engagement with their peers, their interests and their surroundings.

In collaboration with the Governing Council, staff and parents plan to continually improve the physical learning environment.

Comprehensive individual folders, compiled in chronological order, demonstrate the child's interests, development, types of activities and experiences they have been part of while at kindergarten.

4. Centre Based Staff

- **Staff Profile**

Our centre is funded for and employs 1.0 Early Childhood Trained Director, 1.0 Early Childhood trained Teacher/s, 1.0 ECW2, 0.5 ECW1, as well as other part time Early Childhood Workers. Preschool support workers and Bilingual Support workers are also employed termly based on site allocations.

- **Performance Management Program**

Staff meet with the Director in the first term to set goals for the year based on the QIP and the National Professional Standards of Teachers linking these to their own areas of growth they want to pursue. Follow up termly meetings with the Director to monitor progress, seek and provide feedback and report successes unless negotiated more often between Director and staff person.

- **Access to special support staff**

We have regular and ongoing contact with the DECD Disability Support Service which includes access to an Early Childhood Psychologist, Disability Co-ordinator, Speech Pathologists and Hearing Impairment Services. As well as South East Regional Community Health Service (SERCHS) Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists, Physiotherapists, Dietetics, Podiatry and the Child Development Unit (CDU) based at the Mount Gambier Hospital. Families can also access private support through a range of local services. At times, depending on the children currently attending the kindergarten, we have contact with Support Services from Adelaide like Townsend House Visual Impairment Service, Crippled Children Services, Kilparrin Special Services, Crippled Children's Association, Down's Syndrome association. The support services from Adelaide are usually only available once a term.

5. Centre Facilities

- **Buildings and grounds**

The kindergarten building was erected in 1982 on a double housing block. Building extensions were completed in 1990 and 2006 as the culmination of incredible fundraising efforts of the hard working Director and parents of the time. It is a brick veneer building that currently comprises storage areas, toilets, kitchen/wet area separated from a large room that is divided by movable screens, a library, withdrawal room and office. Heating and cooling is provided by reverse cycle airconditioners and ceiling fans. The centre is accessed through a large open verandah with locker space for storage of children's belongings.

The outside area has 2 distinct levels accessed by a steep slope. There is a large barked area with fixed playground, a huge octagonal pergola designed and built by parents that covers a deck area and sandpit. On entrance to the kindergarten is a large tree house and barked area for climbing.

New outdoor storage sheds were funded and installed on site during 2010 as well as hard working staff and children working together to create a vegetable garden at the rear of the kindergarten. Major renovations to both the natural outdoor learning environment and indoor spaces occurred during 2015.

The Governing Council is constantly in the process of improving the outdoor area.

- **Capacity (per session)**

44 children per session

- **Centre Ownership**

Department of Education and Child Development (DECD)

- **Access for children and staff with disabilities**

The building and grounds are accessible by wheelchairs. The centre has nappy changing facilities and an adult disable toilet including shower with seat.

6. Local Community (intended for country preschools)

- **General characteristics:**

Mount Gambier is the largest city in regional South Australia. 436kms from Adelaide and 441kms from Melbourne. Located on the slopes of a dormant volcano Mount Gambier services a population of 30,000 and is one of the fastest growing cities in South Australia.

As the largest city in regional South Australia, Mount Gambier has a wide industry base. This ranges from primary industries, such as softwood timber, livestock, crops and fishing, to manufacturing and transport.

The culture is primarily Australian/European with migrants from South East Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe. The kindergarten is in a mixed socio economic area that has families from the housing trust area on low incomes or pensions mixed with families on double incomes

The kindergarten is the closest to the two outlying small country towns of Mil Lel and Glenburnie. As well as the closest for children from over the Victorian border whose families choose Mount Gambier as the place for pre school education because of the shopping, public and government services available. Many go on to South Australian Government schools, particularly Glenburnie.

The kindergarten provides a venue for a Playgroup run by participating parents on a Friday morning, which gives an opportunity for local community contact among families with children 0 - 5 years.

- **Parent and community involvement in the preschool**

Governing Council supports the Director and staff and contributes to decision making about finance, fundraising, maintenance, policies and future directions. Parents are invited to participate at the level they are comfortable with. We have a parent cleaning roster with parents rostered on once or twice a term as well as parents helping with lawn mowing.

Parents are encouraged to contribute to the learning program with skills and expertise they feel they can share with the children.

- **Schools to which children generally transfer from this preschool**

50% of children attending this kindergarten go to the local government school - Mc Donald Park Primary School. Glenburnie Primary School and Mil Lel Primary School are small schools 10 to 15 minutes away that are also considered to be our 'main feeder schools'. Other public schools accessed by children include Yahl Primary School and increasing numbers of children are being accepted to attend Reidy Park Primary School. A small percentage of children go to private R-12 schools Tenison-Woods College and St Martin's Luthern College.

- **Other local care and educational facilities,**

Families can choose from many preschools or Child Parent Centres in Mount Gambier, some offering Occasional Care services. There are 6 Child Care Services operating as well as Family Day Care. Out of School Hours Care operates at some of the schools. There are nine large and small primary schools in and around Mount Gambier, 2 public high schools and 2 R-12 private schools. Gordon Education Centre provides education for school aged children with disabilities. Further studies with TAFE and University of South Australia are available through the Mount Gambier Campus'.

- **Commercial/industrial and shopping facilities**

Mount Gambier is well renowned for its excellent shopping facilities. The Main Street (Commercial Street) has been redeveloped and enhanced to compliment the old world charm of the lovely heritage buildings. It presents many shopping opportunities from large general stores through to small specialty shops and is a great place to wander, with numerous eating places in and around the area.

Other large chain stores and specialty shops are situated just off "The Main" including Target and in the Lakes Village Shopping Centre which provide parking under cover, air conditioned shopping. Most shops open 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Saturday and to 9.00 pm Thursday nights.

- **Other local facilities**

Mount Gambier is serviced by public and private hospitals and a variety of medical specialists as well as two large medical clinics and private doctors.

There is also a range of different sporting leagues and clubs in Mount Gambier and surrounding regions, including but not limited to soccer, netball, basketball, tennis, hockey, cricket, swimming, cycling, triathlon and golf.

There is a selection of recreational and sightseeing opportunities around the local area including a large number of National Parks which are dotted around the South East.

Mount Gambier has a well designed Theatre and an active Arts program attached to the theatre. A triple cinema complex, Oatmill Cinema Complex, has a wide range of popular movies available on a daily basis

- **Availability of staff housing**

Government Housing is available in Mount Gambier as well as private rental properties. There are many real estate agents locally with listings of properties available for purchase.

- **Accessibility**

Mount Gambier has a domestic airport, from which Rex Airlines operates daily services to many major centres, including Adelaide and Melbourne. There is an intra-city public transport bus network, and a coach service operating to Adelaide and other nearby towns. VLine offer a daily coach/rail service to and from Melbourne via Warrnambool or Ballarat.

- **Local Government**

Mt Gambier City Council
10 Watson Tce
Mount Gambier SA 5290
Phone 8721 2555

Other tourist information available from
Lady Nelson Visitor and Discovery Centre
Jubilee Highway East
Phone: 8724 9750

Alternatively online at <http://www.mountgambiertourism.com.au/>.