



PRESCHOOL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Updated: Mar 21

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 62-66 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 / Thursday or Friday 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 / Wednesday or Friday 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 utilised through the centres allocated IESP grant and additional funding can be applied for individuals 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 9.30- 11.00pm. 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. We are committed to empowering children and families to approach their learning and future with confidence, through the implementation of our values in all experiences associated with the kindergarten.

IMAGE OF THE CHILD

We respect and value children as unique and powerful individuals who bring a wealth of knowledge and ideas about the world. Educators hold a strong image of the child believing they are capable, competent,

curious and active contributors to both their own learning, and through the learning encounters, they experience when connecting with adults and children.

Educators view children as active citizens valuing their contribution as decision makers and critical thinkers, through sharing their views/opinions and questions as participants in our kindergarten community. We believe children bring wonder and delight to our centre and make valuable contributions to the wider community.

RELATIONSHIPS

Our priority is to ensure each child feels safe, secure and supported, fostering a sense of belonging and the opportunity to flourish. We are committed to the development and nurturing of warm, responsive and mutually respectful relationships with children and families to promote their sense of wellbeing and belonging.

We recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers and work together to develop genuine, trusting and collaborative partnerships with families to enrich children's lives and learning and encourage family participation.

ENVIRONMENT

We recognise the value of the environment as the 'third teacher' and environments are intentionally and purposefully planned to be warm, inviting, inclusive, aesthetically beautiful spaces that nurture children's spirit of inquiry and a lifelong love of learning. We provide beautiful and dynamic materials which are irresistible and fun invitations to learn and is balanced with planning for sameness and change.

They allow children to be active contributors within the environment and are designed to evoke and further develop connections and collaboration, exploration, investigation, problem solving, thinking, wonder, creativity, imagination as well as opportunities to engage in supported risky play.

We advocate that the most powerful way children learn is through play. Along with educators intentional planning of their roles and the environment, periods of uninterrupted time to play where educators scaffold children's learning supports children to find inspiration, joy and gain a sense of wellbeing. We ensure documentation of learning allows children's voices to be heard and educators support children to develop and extend theories and ideas about their learning.

We strongly value a culture of nature play and our engagement with the outdoors empowers children to connect with nature facilitating their social, spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional learning as well as fostering a love and appreciation for the natural environment.

We have a strong commitment to creating a sustainable environment that promotes children as partners and collaborators in their learning. Our learning environment supports their understanding of the environment, sustainable practices, connection with the land and provides a foundation to becoming responsible citizens of the world, enabling them to make a difference.

COMMUNITY

We respectfully honour and acknowledge the Boandik people as the traditional owners/custodians of the land on which we work, play and learn and provide opportunities for the children to learn from the experiences and knowledge of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. We recognise that our local community is rich in diversity and we seek to be respectful, responsive and inclusive of this to support children in deepening their sense of identity.

Educators embrace the Mount Gambier Children's Charter for children by supporting children to be active and visible in the community. We aim to work collaboratively with community members by learning together, connecting with community experts and actively using community spaces as places that support children's sense of belonging and learning. We build relationships with future families by offering a supported playgroup and educators develop and engage in strong partnerships with schools to support children's transition and continuity of learning.

EDUCATORS TEACHING AND LEARNING

Educators view themselves as lifelong learners and researchers, challenging thinking through ongoing professional development and reading and participate in professional dialogue and critical reflection to support continuous improvement. Educators share roles and responsibilities and work as a co-operative, collaborative and supportive team. We are a community within a community. Our values 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, childcentred 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 with a strong focus on nature play incorporating challenge and risk.

SEESAW online portfolios share with families children's learning throughout their time at kindergarten.

4. Centre Based Staff

- **Staff Profile**

Our centre is funded for and employs 1.0 Early Childhood Trained Director, 1.6 Early Childhood trained Teacher/s, 1.0 ECW2, 0.2 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 DfE 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 air conditioners 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 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- 2020.

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

- **Capacity (per session)**

44 children per session

- **Centre Ownership**

Department for Education (DfE)

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

The building and grounds are accessible by wheelchairs. The centre has nappy changing facilities and an adult disabled 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 Lutheran 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 & Qantas-link operates 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/>.