



SCHOOL CONTEXT STATEMENT

Updated: April 2021

School number: 1426

School name: Arbury Park Outdoor School

School Profile

Purpose statement

Making connections with our environment. Living and learning together.

At Arbury Park Outdoor School, students, parents and teachers from all parts of South Australia, come to live and learn together, in an active and exciting camp experience. We make connections with the natural environment and with each other, through experiential learning in a bush setting.

A residential experience at Arbury Park promotes cooperation, wellbeing, and ecologically sustainable ways of living. Learning at Arbury Park is an inspiring part of ongoing learning for students and teachers alike.

Values

Core values that guide the operation of Arbury Park Outdoor School are curiosity, care and community.

Curiosity is an eagerness to discover new things, to wonder and to learn. When we are curious we explore the mysteries of our world.

Care means giving love and attention to people and things that matter. When we care about something or someone we try to give our best.

Community is about the connections in our lives; connections between each other, with places and with things. Our community is the web of our relationships. It gives us a sense of belonging.

1. General information

- School Principal name: David Doherty
- Year of opening: 1976
- Postal address: Arbury Park Road, Bridgewater, SA 5155
- Location address: Arbury Park Road, Bridgewater,
- Department for Education Partnership: Mt Lofty
- Geographical location 23km from GPO
- Telephone number: 8339 3237
- Fax number: 8339 3313
- School website address: www.arburypark.sa.edu.au
- School e-mail address: dl.1426.info@schools.sa.edu.au
- Child Parent Centre attached: No
- Out of School Hours Care service: No
- February FTE student enrolment data is not applicable to APOS, as the school has no permanent enrolment.
- Student enrolment trends: Not applicable
- Staffing numbers (Full time equivalent currently 13.2)
 - € Principal (0.2 teaching, 0.8 administration) - tenure 7 years
 - € Band B-1 leader (1.0) – tenure 5 years
 - € Teachers (4.0)
 - € School Support Officers
 - Curriculum SSO2 (1.0)
 - Administration/Finance SSO3 - 33hrs per week, term time only
 - Grounds SSO2 / GSE5 (1.0)
 - € Catering staff - 1 @ GSE4, 2.8 @ GSE3
 - € Residential caretaker (1.0)
 - € Groundsperson GSE4 - 15 hrs per week
- Public transport access: The school is not easily accessed by public transport. The only option is bus, a 20-minute walk from the school.

2. Students (and their welfare)

- **General characteristics**

Arbury Park Outdoor School caters for R-12 students from both government and non-government schools, however 98% of students are from primary schools. An average of approximately 4,500 students per year from across the state participate in programs.

The needs of a range of student groups are catered for, including students with disabilities.

- **Student management**

There are some site-specific rules relating to care of the school environment and safety, summarised below. Given the short-term nature of programs, rules that apply in the client school regarding behaviour also apply at Arbury Park. Arbury Park staff aim to be consistent with strategies and consequences of the client school.

On the first day of an Arbury Park camp program, as part of an orientation to the site, all students are part of a discussion of the school's expectations for learning. This discussion ties together the expectations for responsible and safe behaviour and the school's core business of exploration, discovery, and curiosity in the natural world.

Due to the special nature of the school, and the unfamiliar setting to students and staff, safety considerations are given a high priority. In addition to explicit instructions to students, a series of risk management strategies for specific teaching activities (e.g. freshwater studies, hiking, orienteering) and health problems (e.g. diabetes, asthma, allergic reactions) have been documented. This enables Arbury Park staff to have common understandings of the nature of risks in their teaching, and to be consistent in their approach to providing a safe learning environment for all students.

3. Key school policies

- **Site Improvement Plan and other key statements or policies**

The Arbury Park Outdoor Site Improvement Plan is reviewed continuously. Improvement areas are identified or modified annually. The 2020 plan has 2 goals, and targets and actions within these goals.

Goal #1 Improve students' perception of the learning intentions for their camp and individual lessons

Our challenge of practice is to develop agreed understandings and consistent language about what students learn and why it is important, as drivers of learning task and program design.

Goal #2 Improve student engagement and participation.

Our challenge of practice is to design learning tasks and camp programs that differentiate for students' developmental needs (specifically for year 5/6 students).

The Site Improvement Plan is a working document that guides regular review and is reported to the school community through the **Annual Report**.

During the year, all staff (catering, teaching, grounds, administration) work on their own personalised Performance and Development plans on how they can contribute to site improvement.

The Annual Report is tabled at the Annual General Meeting of School Council and forwarded to the Education Director, as required. Copies are made available to the wider community, including Adelaide Hills Councillors and members of the Adelaide and Mt. Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board.

- **Recent key outcomes**

- The COVID19 pandemic dominated 2020, and led to closure of the campsite to students for 9 weeks. A further 7 weeks saw student attending only for day programs. Overnight amps resumed in late term 3.
- In 2020 key indicators of attendance included:
 - 41 schools, 4,158 students and 211 teachers attending camps or day programs
 - 8843 total student program days (*no. of students x days per camp*)
 - 68 mean students per program day
 - 34% bed occupancy (*% of beds occupied per available night*), down from an historic average of close to 70%.
- Recent facilities medium works include a major upgrade of driveway and visitor carpark (2018), dormitory verandah upgrades (2019), and redevelopment of the old tennis court play area including a large all weather covered structure (2020).
- A major upgrade of the school website to make it mobile device friendly occurred in 2019.
- Additional adult supervisor beds were installed in response to new departmental guidelines about adult sleeping arrangements on camps.

4. Curriculum

- **Subject offerings**

The core business of Arbury Park Outdoor School is to provide a supportive setting for outdoor and environmental education learning experiences within Department for Education guidelines and policies that are relevant to, and negotiated with client schools.

The school's curriculum is delivered in an outdoor setting using a range of habitats, including open woodland, stringy bark forest and wetland. These rich classrooms provide opportunities for students to

- learn about ecological processes - **head**
- develop feelings for the natural world - **heart**
- learn about how individuals can contribute toward a sustainable future - **hands**
- develop teamwork and relationships with each other - **community**

Teaching staff of the school provide leadership and specialist support in conducting program activities that focus mainly on three learning areas (Science, HASS, Health & PE), in the context of outdoor and environmental education.

An overview of the school's curriculum offerings can be found on its website www.arburypark.sa.edu.au

- **Special curriculum features**

The curriculum essentially consists of over 20 distinct learning activities suitable for different learning bands. Selected activities are packaged together through negotiation with client teachers into a coherent and themed multiday program, ranging from 2 to 5 days.

Every Arbury Park program is different because the needs and priorities of the visiting teachers and students are different.

The different learning activities are organised into 6 clusters that reflect the mission of the school and the main themes of outdoor and environmental education. The curriculum activity clusters (with examples) are:

Exploring ecology: Freshwater life, Catchment walk, Bird ecology, Animal survival, Weather trail, Web of life game, Hidden World

Group development: Cooperation games, Team Challenge, Mission survival, Bush survival, Drumming, Campfire cooking, Shelter building, Building places

Outdoor recreation: Orienteering, Hiking

Taking action: Landcare/Bushcare, Nesting boxes, Plant propagation

Creativity and imagination: Earth art, Earth walk, Appy Arbury, Forest friends

Aboriginal cultural studies

It is desirable that teaching staff have undertaken, or are involved in, relevant studies and/or training in outdoor and environmental education.

As all teaching is in an outdoor setting, the school supports all teachers to complete HLTAID004 first aid training (equivalent of Senior First Aid Certificate), updated on a bi-annual basis.

- **Teaching methodology**

APOS teachers have developed a statement of common beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching in an outdoor setting. The opening section of this statement begins with a quotation, followed by a local context:

*Do not try to satisfy your vanity by trying to teach a great many things.
Awaken people's curiosity.
It is enough to open minds – do not overload them.
Put there just a spark.
If there is some good flammable stuff it will catch fire.*

Anatole France

“An Arbury Park camp is a relatively short, intense and powerful educational episode within a student's broader education and family experience. Arbury Park staff play a fundamental role in designing and managing the camp program to maximise the learning opportunities for students and staff. For most it will be a unique experience.

Effective learning in the outdoors is about making connections; connections between an individual learner's conceptual knowledge, connections and relationships between people, and connections between people and the natural world that supports all life.”

The 'Five Es' model of enquiry learning from the Primary Connections Science curriculum has been a useful methodology organiser for Arbury Park Outdoor School. In particular, the teaching sequence of *Engage, Explore, Explain*, fits extremely well with the kinds of methodologies Arbury Park teachers strive to use.

- **Open Access/Distance Education provision**

Not applicable

- **Special needs**

There is appropriate wheelchair access within the immediate building environs.

- **Student assessment procedures and reporting**

As the school has no permanent enrolment of students, no formal assessment and reporting procedures are carried out at the school.

- **Joint programs**

Not applicable

5. Sporting activities

Not applicable

6. Other co-curricular activities

- The school involves itself in local and state environmental activities as they arise, such as the Nature Play SA Festival and significant conferences such as the Australian Association for Environmental Education national conference.
- There are no activities such as choirs, bands and drama productions.

7. Staff (and their welfare)

- **Staff profile**

The school has 5 teaching staff (including leadership positions), and 8.4 FTE ancillary staff. See General Information, point 1 above.

- **Leadership structure**

Principal (0.2 teaching)

Band B-1 leader (0.8 teaching) with performance and development responsibility for teaching staff.

- **Staff support systems**

Program staff meetings, comprising teaching and Curriculum SSO staff, are held Monday mornings.

General staff meetings for the entire staff are held at least once a term. The timing of these varies due to the diversity of work hours for staff, and the availability of student free days.

SSO3 – Administration provides IT support and contributes to staff learning in this area.

- **Staff utilisation policies**

All teaching staff are expected to teach the range of outdoor and environmental activities offered at the school, some of which are physically demanding (including leading hikes of up to 6kms in hilly terrain, sometimes in adverse weather).

School support officers in the areas of curriculum and grounds work collaboratively with teachers to maximise learning opportunities for students.

To meet the needs of the residential school program, teachers are on duty from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm. Early morning, late afternoon and evening teaching duties may be required to meet program needs. Some weekend and evening duties are required to meet training and in-service needs of client schools.

As ancillary staff are closely involved in the delivery of the school's program, and may be called upon in the event of accidents, all hold current HLTAID004 First Aid Certificates. The school financially supports this training which is held on a bi-annual basis.

- **Performance and development**

Performance and development is considered a valuable process in assisting all staff to give, receive and value feedback about their work. The school has a Performance and Development policy that complements departmental policy.

The Coordinator is responsible for performance and development processes with all teaching staff. The SSO3 –administration is responsible for GSE and PSM staff. The Principal also meets 2-3 times per term with all ancillary staff for general management matters.

- **Access to special staff**

Not applicable

8. Incentives, support and award conditions for staff

- **Complexity placement points**

Not applicable

- **Isolation placement points**

Not applicable

- **Shorter terms**

Not applicable

- **Travelling time**

Not applicable

- **Housing assistance**

Not applicable

- **Cash in lieu of removal allowance**

Not applicable

- **Additional increment allowance**

Not applicable

- **Designated schools benefits**

Not applicable

- **Aboriginal/Anangu schools**

Not applicable

- **Medical and dental treatment expenses**

Not applicable

- **Locality allowances**

Not applicable

- **Relocation assistance**

Not applicable

- **Principal's telephone costs**

Not applicable

9. School facilities

- **Buildings and grounds**

Arbury Park is situated on 32 hectares of land comprising stringybark forest, a gully with a series of ponds and ephemeral wetlands, and open woodland areas. The nearby environment includes Mt George Conservation Park, the Heysen Trail, and Cox Creek, the focus of a community Landcare project that the school is currently involved with. Arbury Park is 23km from Adelaide.

The buildings include a large dining room/kitchen with adjoining teaching and administration areas. There are six dormitory units, five with bunk beds for 16 students, and one with 12 bunk beds. Each dormitory has a supervisor's room with some privacy, three of these with double bunks to accommodate a total of 9 supervisors. A total of 101 beds are available. A shower block with 10 showers is centrally located. Visiting staff have a designated separate bathroom. A separate showering/toileting facility exists for students with disabilities, and incorporates a first aid room. There is a gymnasium and an outdoors partially covered tennis court. Sporting equipment being the responsibility of client schools.

A residence on site provides accommodation for the Caretaker.

- **Bushfire refuge**

The dining room is the school's designated bushfire refuge. It meets departmental standards of the highest rating for bushfire safety, including a high-pressure deluge sprinkler system that covers the entire building.

- **Heating and cooling**

Only the administration building and commercial kitchen have cooling systems. The dining room, dormitories, and administration areas have heating.

- **Commercial kitchen**

A commercial kitchen provides clients with all meals from the time of arrival. Lunches can also be prepared and packed for country clients to enjoy on their journey home. Four appropriately qualified catering staff provide a full catering service for client groups.

The Principal is responsible for the sound management and safe operation of the kitchen in accordance with current Food Handling Regulations.

- **Specialist facilities and equipment**

The school has 2 rooms set up with microscopes for student use, as well as video microscopes. Another room, called the *Ecocentre*, has a collection of preserved and living animals. A large covered plant nursery provides a teaching space and propagating areas for a local revegetation program.

- **Student facilities**

There are a number of walking tracks that students can use to explore our 'forest school yard'. There is also a playground area with engineered play equipment as well as natural play elements for informal learning.

- **Staff facilities**

Teaching staff (4) have a communal office/preparation area with networked computers. There is a common staff room adjacent to the dining room and kitchen.

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

Access to facilities for students and staff with disabilities in the immediate building environs is assisted by purpose-built ramps.

- **Access to bus transport**

The only access to bus transport is a 20-minute walk from the school.

10. School operations

- **Decision making structures**

Decision making structures include;

- Weekly program staff meetings (includes SSO curriculum). Grounds staff also attend these weekly meetings once a term, and as required for program planning needs.
- General staff meetings, held at least once a term.
- Personnel Advisory Committee
- School Council. The Arbury Park Outdoor School Council constitution describes membership requirements. All members are nominated for a 2 year period. Council representation includes:
 - Mt Lofty Partnership Principal Lead
 - Community member (local government experience)
 - Community member (Treasurer)
 - Community member (Chairperson)
 - Other community members
 - Local school member
 - Arbury Park Outdoor School staff rep

School Council meets six times during the year and is consulted on all major finance, assets, curriculum and staffing matters.

- **School financial position**

Financially, the school operates on the camp fees paid by visiting students and a Resource Entitlement from the Education Department. School Council, in conjunction with Finance sub-committee, sets student camp fees.

- **Special funding**

The school has been successful in securing community grants for developing outdoor teaching areas and bush rehabilitation work within the school grounds.

- **Regular publications**

A weekly bulletin informs staff of internal and Departmental news. All staff can contribute material to this publication.

- **Other communication**

The Staff Handbook provides information on the school's history, staff roles and responsibilities, curriculum opportunities, Departmental policies and Arbury Park Outdoor School procedures.

In addition, there is a Teacher Handbook containing procedures, lesson proformas and teacher notes for a range of teaching activities.

The website is the outlooking face of the school with sections for visiting teachers, students and parents.

11. Local community

- **General characteristics**

Arbury Park Outdoor School is a state-wide service of Department for Education, and hence serves a very broad community, including metropolitan, country, disadvantaged, small, and complex school communities. Client school groups comprise students, their class teachers, and assisting adults accompanying the group (often parents).

- **Parent and community involvement**

Parental involvement usually comprises assisting with the daytime program alongside visiting teachers and Arbury Park teachers, and supervising students in their dormitories overnight.

- **Feeder or destination schools**

Given the nature of operation, there are no feeder schools.

- **Other local care and educational facilities**

The closest schools are Bridgewater, Aldgate, and Stirling East Primary Schools.

- **Commercial/industrial and shopping facilities**

Bridgewater, 2 kms away, is the nearest town and provides shopping and medical facilities.

- **Availability of staff housing**

There is on-site housing provided for the residential caretaker.

- **Accessibility**

The school is 25 km from the Adelaide CBD.

- **Local Government body**

Adelaide Hills Council

12. Further comments

Not applicable