

# Arbor Fest



21.05.25

#ArborFest2025



With thanks to our Lead Sponsor

# Welcome to ArborFest 2025!



This year's ArborFest explores the theme "The future of work in schools." From a new government to the rise of AI, schools and trusts have been faced with new challenges and opportunities over the past year. At the same time, the sector continues to brave budget cuts, staff shortages and a workload crisis. In this landscape of change and challenge, it's important that school leaders have the space to explore what the future of work in schools will look like for them.

We're excited to see you here at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre to do just that. Our exciting programme will look at the ways schools can innovate and evolve using Arbor and beyond.

Get ready for a day of inspiring talks from both experts within the education sector and school staff using Arbor, join customer roundtables, and meet other school and trust leaders. ArborFest is a unique opportunity to meet fellow school leaders, and leave with practical tips to take home and apply straight away at your school. It's also a chance to celebrate the great work you do and have fun!

We hope you have a great day,

**James Weatherill**  
CEO at Arbor

**Sonia Leighton**  
Chief Customer Officer at Arbor

# Programme



**The Main Stage**  
The House



**The Innovation Stage**  
The Studio



**The MAT Stage**  
The Door



**The Show and Tell Stage**  
LOB 101



**School & MAT Roundtables**  
The Meeting Rooms



**Ask an Arbor Expert**  
LOB 102



**Arbor Labs, Live!**  
LOB 103

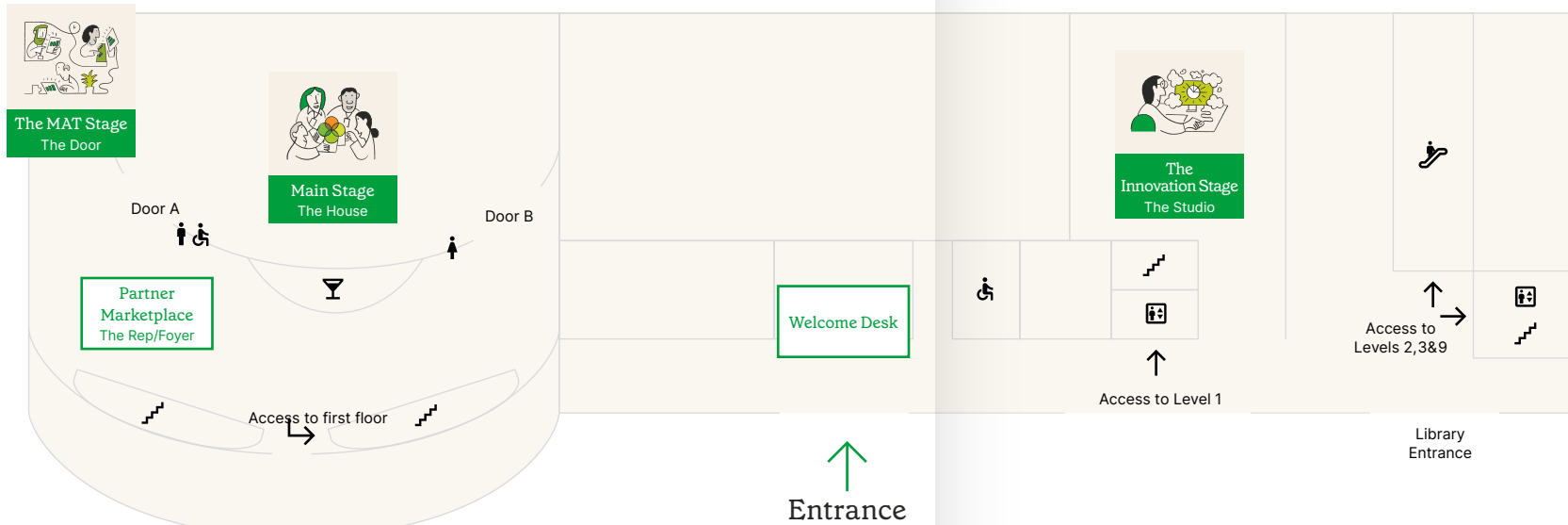


**Meet the Arbor Team**  
LOB 105

9.30–10.10 am	Arrival, registration and breakfast				Registration and Breakfast				9.30–10.15 am
10.10–10.30 am	Welcome to ArborFest								10.10–10.30 am
10.40–11.20 am	How to make everyone in your school a leader	AI essentials: A guide to getting started at your school or trust	When two become one: How to operationalise a merger	Everything we learned from our first 12 months using Arbor	Roundtables #1	Room opens	Lab opens	Room opens	10.40–11.20 am
11.40–12.20 pm	Our 2025 Product Vision: What's next for Arbor?	Getting curious: How to ask the right questions of your data	What should a MAT of the future look like?	SAMpeople Showcase	Roundtables #2				11.40–12.20 pm
12.20–1.05 pm	Lunch				Roundtables #3	Lunch			12.20–1.05 pm
1.05pm–1.45 pm	Getting Ofsted-ready with Arbor	A data geek's guide to improving attendance	How, when and why to join up your MIS and HR systems at your trust	Pitch Perfect — Choose, vote and decide what we build next in Arbor	Roundtables #4				1.05pm–1.45 pm
2.05–2.45 pm	Solving the Teacher Supply Crisis — Keynote from Baroness Mary Boustad								2.05–2.45 pm
2.45–3.00 pm	Customer Awards and Farewell								2.45–3.00 pm
3–4 pm	End of ArborFest drinks				End of ArborFest drinks				3–4 pm

# How to find your way around ArborFest

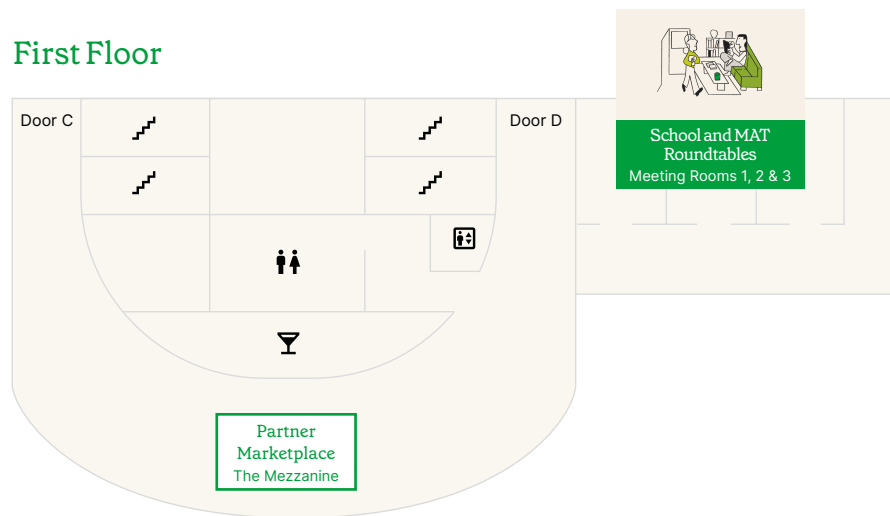
## Ground Floor



## Ground floor

- Entrance
- Welcome Desk
- The Main Stage
- The Innovation Stage
- The MAT stage
- Partner Marketplace

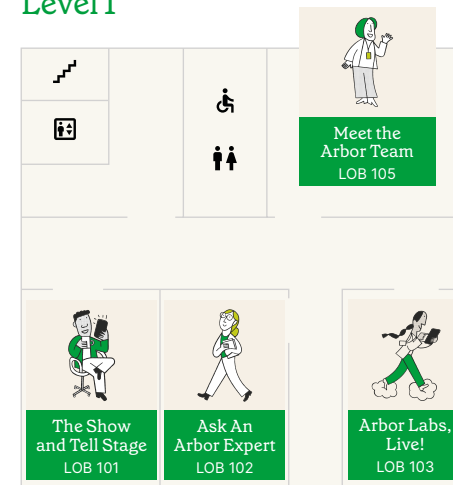
## First Floor



## First floor

- School and MAT Roundtables
- Partner Marketplace

## Level 1



## Level 1

- The Show and Tell Stage
- Meet the Arbor Team
- Ask an Arbor Expert
- Arbor Labs, Live!

# The Main Stage

## The House

### What's happening on the Main Stage at ArborFest

In-person and live streamed



## Welcome to ArborFest

10.10am–10.30am

Live streamed ✓

Speakers:

**James Weatherill**  
CEO at Arbor Education

**Sonia Leighton**  
Chief Customer Officer  
at Arbor Education

Join Arbor's CEO, James Weatherill, and our Chief Customer Officer, Sonia Leighton, as they officially kick off ArborFest and introduce this year's festival theme: **"The future of work in schools"**.

Find out how to make the most of the talks and workshops throughout the day and what to look out for.

It's set to be a great kick off — you won't want to miss it!

## How to make everyone in your school a leader

10.40am–11.20am

Live streamed ✓

Speaker:

**Diana Osagie**  
Leadership Coach and Trainer,  
Consultant Headteacher, Author

When she first started as a headteacher, Diana Osagie confessed to thinking that networking and collaboration were for people who had too much time on their hands.

Years later, and based on her changing experience, she is opening our Main Stage with a talk on why she was wrong.

Her inspiring session will cover:

- Why collaboration within your school community is paramount for success
- How we define leadership — it's not a title or role, it's a mindset that applies at every level of the school structure
- What you can do at your school or trust to encourage leadership from every member of staff

You'll leave Diana's session feeling inspired, awake, and excited to implement her insightful, but practical, ways of thinking about leadership.

## 2025 Product Vision: What's next for Arbor?

11:40am–12:20pm

Live streamed ✓

Speakers:

**Bex Campbell**  
CPO at Arbor Education

**James Weatherill**  
CEO at Arbor Education

At Arbor, we're on a mission to transform the way schools work. We believe that better systems can make the future of work in schools more efficient, impactful and joyful.

Our Product and Engineering Team have been hard at work building new and exciting features based on your feedback. But where next?

In this special ArborFest session, Bex Campbell (Chief Product Officer at Arbor) will take you through the vision for our future roadmap. You'll hear about the big releases we have in the pipeline, but more importantly, you'll leave this session with a sense of how the Arbor School Management Suite will come together to support your schools and trusts in the near future.

## Getting Ofsted-ready with Arbor

1:05pm–1:45pm

Live streamed ✓

Panel host:

**Chris Kenyon**  
CEO at The Key Group

Panellists:

**Alex Jones**  
Chief Analyst and Director  
of Insights and Research  
at Ofsted

**Carly Holness**  
Assistant Principal at  
Haberdashers' Borough  
Academy

**Lewis Dinsdale**  
Headteacher at English  
Martyrs Catholic Primary  
School

**Tim Mockford**  
Data Lead at ACE Schools

In 2024, the Chief Inspector at Ofsted pledged "real change" to the way Ofsted inspects and regulates schools. As part of their "big listen", Ofsted found that:

47% of professionals said they would be uncomfortable raising concerns with an inspector during an inspection

More than 3 in 5 providers felt inspection placed undue pressure on their workload

Only 28% of providers supported the single word judgement

All of these insights will be used by Ofsted to help reshape and deliver their new framework, due to come into effect in 2025.

We know that single word judgements are being scrapped in favour of report cards, but what else can we expect Ofsted to announce? And how can your school or trust rely on Arbor to best showcase your school under the new framework?

In this special panel, we'll be speaking to Ofsted's Chief Analyst and Director

of Insights and Research, Alex Jones, who will talk on what Ofsted are hoping to get out of this evolution, and what it means for schools. Joining him will be Carly Holness (Assistant Principal at Haberdashers' Borough Academy), Lewis Dinsdale (Headteacher at English Martyrs Catholic Primary) and Tim Mockford (Data Lead at ACE Schools) who will share their on-the-ground insights of how Arbor can directly support with an inspection. Plus, we'll discuss how we can change the culture in schools around Ofsted, with top tips from our panel who have all been inspected recently.

You'll come away with deeper insight and understanding around Ofsted's goals as an organisation, and a set of practical top tips to help your school or trust get inspection-ready using Arbor.

## Keynote – Solving the Teacher Supply Crisis

2.05pm–2.45pm  
Live streamed ✓

Speaker:

**Baroness Mary Bousted**

Teaching has been called a 'weakened workforce.' Sweeping numbers of teachers are leaving the profession earlier in their careers, cutting the supply line through to middle management and leadership, and leaving pupils without the qualified teachers they need and deserve. Above all, the supply crisis is harming children's prospects, most

of all the least privileged.

The Teaching Commission aims to identify the causes and solutions to this growing problem. It has been working closely with expert witnesses and produced a report with recommendations for government, and for school leaders, on how to recruit and retain teachers.

In her exciting keynote, Baroness Mary Bousted will share exclusive insights into the work of the Commission and highlight its strongest recommendations to transform teachers' working lives.

This is a crucial conversation to be had, and fitting to round off a day spent thinking about "the future of work in schools."

## Customer Awards and Farewell

2.45pm–3pm  
Live streamed ✓

Speakers:

**James Weatherill**  
CEO at Arbor Education

**Sonia Leighton**  
Chief Customer Officer  
at Arbor Education

To close off a day packed with talks and workshops, James and Sonia will end ArborFest with our highly anticipated customer awards. We'll be recognising schools and MATs whose Arbor gurus have been making the most out of our systems to drive real impact in their organisations.

Make sure you stick around for the drinks reception afterwards too!

# The Innovation Stage

## The Studio

### What's happening on the Innovation Stage at ArborFest

In-person only



#### AI essentials: A guide to getting started at your school or trust

10.40am–11.20am

Speakers:  
**Stephen Higgins**  
Head of Data and AI

**Tim Clarke**  
Headteacher at Cornerstone Primary School

**Helen Storey**  
Headship Team Admin at Cornerstone Primary School

**Tom Walch**  
Head of Data at Harbour Learning Trust

**Will Teece**  
Headteacher at Brookvale Groby Learning Campus

AI: it's already changing the world of education as we know it.

At Arbor, we believe that AI has the potential to transform the lives of school staff by doing the heavy lifting when it comes to repetitive tasks and busywork.

This hands-on session, led by former teacher and current Arbor Head of AI, Stephen Higgins, is designed to show you:

- How to identify and map out the areas in your school that will most benefit from AI
- What you can do to bring your team onboard
- The sorts of AI tools you can use to drive operational efficiency
- How Arbor AI can support you on this journey

Plus, Stephen will be joined by Tom Walch, Head of Data at Harbour Learning Trust, Will Teece, Headteacher at Brookvale Groby Learning Campus, Tim Clarke, Headteacher at Cornerstone Primary School and Helen Storey, Headship Team Admin at Cornerstone Primary School, to share real-life examples of how they've embedded AI into their school's way of working.

Be ready to leave this session with practical advice on how you can use AI to drive operational efficiency at your school or trust, and feeling inspired to explore what AI could mean for your organisation beyond ChatGPT!

#### Getting curious: How to ask the right questions of your data

11:40am–12:20pm

Host:  
**Damian Brooks**  
CTO at Arbor

Panellists:  
**Andrew Proctor**  
Executive Lead for Education at Amazon Web Services

**Dewan Chowdhury**  
Head of Data at Co-Op Academies

**Jonathan Lloyd**  
Data Manager at Moorside High School and Trust Data Manager at Potteries Educational Trust

It's no secret that schools and trusts house millions of datapoints, which can be overwhelming for data leaders. How do you get a handle on your data, whilst also being curious and asking the right questions?

This exciting panel at ArborFest will bring together voices from across the education sector to unpack:

- How to store and organise your data in a way that just makes sense

- The questions you should be asking as a leader to get the most out of your data
- The most impactful datasets to join together — think Ofsted, SEF, national benchmarks

And how all of this can feed back into your strategy as an organisation

Plus, there will be a chance to ask questions, so you can hear directly from leaders who have been through the process.

**aws**  
Amazon Web Services (AWS)  
is the Lead Sponsor of ArborFest 2025

#### A data geek's guide to improving attendance

1:05pm–1:45pm

Panel host:  
**Damian Brooks**  
CTO at Arbor

Panellists:  
**Andy Lowe**  
Director of Information Management and Attendance at Marches Academy Trust

**Jenny Bates**  
Deputy Headteacher at Cleobury Mortimer Primary School

**Nick Morley**  
Headteacher at The Harbour School

Attendance has been a headline concern for schools since the pandemic. Not only has persistent absenteeism increased, but so has the absence gap for more vulnerable children.

Some see this as a breakdown of the school-parent relationship, while others look through the lens of students' mental health. In this ArborFest session, we've invited three school and MAT leaders to share how they've turned to their data for answers on absenteeism.

Andy Lowe, Director of Information Management and Attendance at Marches Academy Trust, Jenny Bates, Deputy Head at Cleobury Mortimer Primary School, and Nick Morley, Headteacher at The Harbour School, will share the systems and processes they've built in Arbor which unearth the hidden reasons for absence in their organisations.

Plus, they'll give practical advice on how you can set these up in your school or trust so that you too can proactively improve attendance for your students.

# The MAT Stage

## The Door

### What's happening on the MAT Stage at ArborFest

In-person only



#### When two become one: How to operationalise a merger

10.40am–11.20am

Panel host:  
**Phillippa De'Ath**  
CRO at Arbor

Speakers:  
**Luke Mulhall**  
Digital Strategy at King's Group Academies

**Dr. Paula Holbrook**  
Consultant and Lecturer

**Gary Chown**  
CEO at Harbour Schools Partnership

Unlike their predecessors, the Labour government hasn't been pushing MAT growth. Despite this, Schools Week reported in July 2024 that there had been a "boom" in trust mergers.

Quite often, when we talk about mergers, the headlines focus on the impetus for change, policy and the difficulty of completing a deal. But once the papers are signed and two groups of schools are set to become one, how do you actually operationalise a merger?

As well as having two different cultures, schools and trusts will often have disparate systems, embedded digital strategies and particular processes which are unique to their organisation.

This exciting panel on the MAT stage will take a peek behind the curtain at the ways in which MAT leaders have successfully reworked and united the operations and digital strategies of two trusts, into one.

Joining us for this behind the scenes discussion will be Luke Mulhall, Digital Strategy at King's Group Academies, Dr. Paula Holbrook, consultant and lecturer, and Gary Chown, CEO at Harbour Schools Partnership.

You'll leave with insights on how to be best prepared for growth through mergers and acquisitions, and how to overcome possible challenges that others have faced in a similar position.

#### What should a MAT of the future look like?

11.40am–12.20pm

Panel host:  
**Phillippa De'Ath**  
Arbor Education

Panellists:  
**Laura McPhee**  
Director of Education at University Schools Trust

**Summer Turner**  
Deputy CEO at Broad Horizons Education Trust

**Nav Sanghara**  
CEO at Woodland Academy Trust

MAT leaders often tell us that no day at work is the same. In a landscape that is always changing, trusts are exciting, varied and fast-paced places to work.

At the same time, everyone in the education sector is struggling in the context of a prolonged recruitment and retention crisis.

So, how do you balance driving operational excellence with creating a joyful place to work? What does the structure of the "ideal" central team look and feel like? Where do we start with flexible working and reducing workload?

In this forward-thinking panel discussion, we'll be joined by Laura McPhee, Director of Education at University School Trust, Summer Turner, Deputy CEO at Broad Horizons Education Trust and Nav Sanghara, CEO at Woodland Academy Trust. They'll share what they think a MAT of the future will look like for its employees, and what you can start to do now as trust leaders to make sure you're ready for whatever the next few years bring.

#### How, when and why to join up your MIS and HR systems at your trust

1:05pm–1:45pm

Panel host:  
**Phillippa De'Ath**  
CRO at Arbor

Panellists:  
**Louise Barber**  
Director of Operations at Discovery Schools Trust

**Danny Garton**  
MIS & Reporting Manager at The Consortium Academy Trust

**Kathy Birch**  
CEO at SAMpeople

Trust leaders will often say that people are their organisation's most important asset.

However, there are huge variations in how trusts approach HR: some trusts have the capacity for an HR Director while others don't, sometimes data is across multiple systems and sometimes trusts have no HR system at all. All of this means that MAT's people strategies can easily become siloed away from the rest of your operations.

That's why we're bringing this panel of data, system and HR experts together at ArborFest. We'll be asking:

- How do you unite your HR data with the rest of your data in a meaningful way?
- What impact will this have on your people strategy?
- What data insights are you hoping to unlock by joining up your systems?

You'll leave this session with a greater understanding of the importance of joined up systems and excited to explore the opportunities this will open up for your trust.

# The Show and Tell Stage

LOB 101

## What's happening on the Show and Tell Stage at ArborFest

In-person only



### Everything we learned from our first 12 months using Arbor

10.40am–11.20am

Speakers:

**Zoe Marshall**  
Head of Customer Success at Arbor

**Yesim Aylward**  
Office Manager at at High Beech CofE Primary School

**Jon Turner**  
Assistant Head at John Hampden Grammar School

**Becky Nightingale**  
Trust Data Manager at STOCCAT

At Arbor, we want the schools in our community to hit the ground running and be confident that they're getting the most out of our software from day one. And there's no better way to learn than from schools and trusts who have been through the process themselves.

That's why the first talk on our brand new Show and Tell Stage will be from three Arbor users, here to share their top tips on the first twelve months as a new Arbor user.

Yesim Aylward, Office Manager at at High Beech CofE Primary School, Jon Turner, Assistant Head at John Hampden Grammar School, and Becky Nightingale, Trust Data Manager at STOCCAT will talk through:

- The challenges they faced in their first 12 months, and how they overcame them
- Resources they leaned upon to help them get the most out of Arbor
- Top tips and tricks which have made their lives easier
- Hidden gems in Arbor that have changed their ways of working for the better
- Their change management insights

Plus, we'll open up the floor at the end of the session so you can ask your burning questions directly to those who have recent, first-hand experience of the onboarding process.

### SAMpeople Showcase

11.40am–12.20pm

Speakers:

**Kathy Birch**  
CEO at SAMpeople

**Kevin Sarsfield**  
Partnership Manager at SAMpeople

In July 2024, we welcomed SAMpeople into the Arbor School Management Suite!

Nearly a year on at ArborFest in May, we're dedicating this session on the Show and Tell stage to an in-depth showcase of SAMpeople's leading HR system for MATs.

Whether you're actively exploring your options, or just want to better understand how an HR system could help your trust or school, this demo will give you a thorough overview of SAMpeople's features. The team will cover popular features like:

- Absence management
- The employee portal
- The MAT Dashboard

Designed by education HR specialists, SAMpeople is the UK's fastest-growing education HR system, helping over 1,800 schools and trusts to transform the way they do HR, recruitment and payroll for their staff.

to day as they shape their roadmap.

Most importantly, your voice will be heard! The idea which receives the most support from this exciting session will get developed in the next product roadmap cycle.

Come along to this session ready to get stuck in, work as a team and excited to experience a day in the life of our Product Managers.

### Pitch Perfect *Choose, vote and decide what we build next in Arbor*

1.05pm–1.45pm

Host:

**Bex Campbell**  
Chief Product Officer at Arbor

What should we build next? You decide!

In this hands-on session, you'll work in teams to choose what our Product Team works on next.

We'll start with a quick showcase on our brand new way of making suggestions about Arbor, now built seamlessly into our MIS.

Teams will then be tasked with prioritising, pitching and voting on the ideas we've received over the past month from users across the country. You'll get real insight into how our Product Team works day

# School and MAT Roundtables

Meeting Rooms 1-3

## Customer Roundtables at ArborFest

In-person only



### Our School and MAT Roundtables are back by popular demand!

Join a roundtable with up to ten of your peers doing a similar role for an in-depth, peer-to-peer discussion. It's a great opportunity to learn how your fellow schools are using Arbor to change the way they work for the better, discuss different ways of tackling common challenges, and to grow your network of Arbor users.

This ArborFest we're running roundtables for the following staff:

- Primary School Admin / Office Staff and Business Managers
- Secondary Admin / Office Staff
- Data Leads
- School SLT
- MAT Central Teams
- Special school staff

You'll leave with new ideas to take back to your school, based on other Arbor schools' tips and advice. Perfect for schools looking to share best practice, or who want to learn from others.

These will be hands-on, interactive sessions, so please come prepared to join in.



# Ask an Arbor Expert

LOB 102

In-person only



Got a technical question about Arbor? Are you looking for advice on one of our modules?

This ArborFest we're bringing back Ask an Arbor Expert for speedy support from our Customer Education and Support team. It's a great way to get snappy, in-person advice.

# Meet the Arbor Team

LOB 105

In-person only



Join us to have a strategic discussion about the way you're using Arbor.

Our friendly and knowledgeable Customer Success Partnership Teams will be on-hand to talk about:

- How you've found Arbor so far, and where you want to go with it next
- Your contract, including how to add training packages and new features
- Questions on pricing, growing with Arbor, or your licence

# Arbor Labs, Live!

LOB 103

It's Arbor Labs... brought to life!

In-person only



At this year's ArborFest, you're invited to step into the brand new Arbor Laboratory.

Drop in throughout the day to:

- Be the first to see and test brand new features not yet available to schools
- Experiment with our latest AI functionality
- Feed back to the Arbor Product Team in real time

Come prepared to get experimental and to have your say on the big ideas we've got planned for the future of Arbor.



# Continue the conversation over on **Arbor HQ**

Arbor HQ is your go-to space to network with fellow Arbor users, share top tips, and learn from each other.



Over 11,500  
Arbor users  
are already  
on Arbor HQ

- ✓ Join exclusive Arbor HQ meetups and webinars
- ✓ Meet and network with other Arbor users
- ✓ Ask questions to each other and share best practice
- ✓ Be the first to know about new features and product updates

Notes



21.05.25

BARONESS

MARY BOUSTED

DIANA OSAGIE • ANDREW PROCTOR (AWS)

ALEX JONES (OFSTED) • DR. PAULA HOLBROOK  
• THE ARBOR LAB SCIENTISTS

ANDY LOWE • BECKY NIGHTINGALE • CARLY HOLNESS • DANNY  
GARTON • DEWAN CHOWDHURY • GARY CHOWN • HELEN STOREY •  
JENNY BATES • JON TURNER • LAURA MCPHEE • LEWIS DINSDALE •  
LOUISE BARBER • LUKE MULHALL • NAV SANGHARA • NICK MORLEY •  
SUMMER TURNER • TIM CLARKE • TIM MOCKFORD • TOM WALCH •  
WILL TEECE • YESIM AYLWARD

CHRIS KENYON • DAMIAN BROOKS • JAMES WEATHERILL •  
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STEPHEN HIGGINS • SONIA LEIGHTON • ZOE MARSHALL

#ArborFest2025

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:  
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MADIHA MUBARIK, NATASHA COBBY, NICOLA WEST-JONES, STEPHANIE MEYER-SCOTT



# We hope you enjoyed

## #ArborFest2025

[arborfest@arbor-education.com](mailto:arborfest@arbor-education.com)



Arbor Education



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