



## The Ark Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	137365
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 September 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Claire, Alexandra Parnell / Lara Hickson
<b>Setting Address</b>	2 Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent, BR2 9HA
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Bromley Christian Centre
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Ark Pre-School is a committee run group managed by the Bromley Christian Centre. It has been open since 1981 and operates from a hall and adjoining room situated on the ground floor of the Christian Centre premises that are located at the southern end of Bromley town centre. The group has use of the kitchen and toilets. The group use an isolated area of the car park for outside play.

A maximum of twenty-four children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group serves the local community and is open Monday to Friday during school term time from 09:30 to 12:00 and from 12:45 to 15:00 on Thursdays.

There are currently forty-five children from the age of two-and-a-half to five years on roll. The pre-school receives funding for nursery education for most of these children. The group supports

children who have special educational needs and children for whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven members of staff. Three of the staff, have appropriate early years qualifications. The group is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn from gentle reminders to wash their hands after toileting and are encouraged to use anti bacterial gel before eating. They understand about the importance of hygiene due to the staff's explanations about germs. However, children are not fully protected from cross-infection and germs due to the limited checking of toilet facilities after children have used them, resulting in toilets not being flushed and left in an unhygienic state.

Children's ongoing health requirements are met well. Children with known medical conditions are cared for effectively as staff gain relevant information and training about individual children's treatment. Staff carefully monitor children's health throughout the session and act according to the children's needs if they become sick at the setting. The remaining children in the group are carefully protected from illnesses.

Children benefit from mostly healthy snacks and drinks. They can choose when to have a drink of milk or water from the drinks trolley during the first part of the session. In addition they also have drinks during a long snack period in the latter part of the session. Children are offered one type of snack such as a biscuit, fruit, toast or pitta breads but are not given a choice to enhance their understanding of healthy eating. Children's dietary requirements are carefully considered and extra care is taken during cooking activities to protect children from reactions.

Children benefit from a range of activities to promote their physical development and gross motor skills. They show established and new skills when using equipment such as trampolines and slides. They benefit from regular opportunities for fresh air which promotes their wellbeing. Children learn about the effects that the weather has on their bodies and understand the need to use sun-cream, and wear hats in hot weather.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a secure and generally safe environment. They are not able to leave the premises unaccompanied due to the stringent security systems in place at the main door and the children are well supervised when using the outside area. Children's ongoing safety is promoted due to regular risk assessments to ensure potential hazards are identified and action is taken. However, children do have access to unprotected sockets throughout the setting that present a risk to children's safety.

Children learn to use equipment safely due to the reminders and clear explanations from the staff. Children learn about the effect that their actions may have on others. They teach the children to hold and carry scissors correctly and remind children to tuck their chairs under the table to ensure others don't trip over them. Equipment such as fire extinguishers are checked annually to ensure that they are in good working order.

Children's safety is enhanced by regular fire drills which are recorded and monitored for their effectiveness. Effective procedures are in place for the safe collection of children at the end of the session. Staff encourage parents to use a system that promotes communication with the staff but does not impact on the safety of the children.

Children benefit from effective child protection procedures that promote their ongoing welfare. Staff have a good understanding of the systems in place to monitor, record and gain support for such issues. There are also procedure in place for allegations against staff.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a variety of pre-selected activities, equipment and resources to promote all areas of development. They quickly settle into the familiar routine and show confidence in their play, choosing what they want to play with. This is enhanced by the staff engaging the children's interest in the activities and interacting well in the children's initiated play as well as adult lead activities. Children's characters and personalities are taken into consideration by staff who are aware of children's likes and dislikes. They encourage children to take part in one to one sessions and as well as small group and large group play, encouraging their social skills and confidence to communicate with others. The group does not use Birth to Three Matters Framework to promote the younger children's ongoing development. Younger children's needs are not effectively promoted in large group activities as they quickly loose interest in the purpose of the activity which leads to other children becoming distracted.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Children are making adequate progress within the Foundation Stage. They receive support in some areas from staff to extend their learning, particularly the more able children in their own session on a Thursday afternoon. However, within normal sessions the activities are planned towards one ability. Staff have a basic understanding of the curriculum but have a limited understanding of strategies to extend and simplify resources and activities according to children's levels of development. Therefore less able children loose interest in activities that are too complex or too long; such as circle time; and more able children are not always extended to enhance their development further.

Children's activities are planned according to the areas of learning but the plans are very basic and detail the activities to meet the area of learning rather than the intention for children's learning. The planned activities are not adequately evaluated to show their effectiveness towards the children's learning.

Children are given some choice of activity but most resources are pre-selected for them to cover most of the areas of learning. However, children are not able to select further resources without requesting, although most children can confidently carry this out.

Staff make regular observations of the children and use these to plan the next stage of their learning, although there is no clear link between these next steps and future planning. Children's development at the point of entry is not assessed, therefore their initial development cannot be planned and provided for.

Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive excellent support to ensure that they are included in all activities. Their particular needs are carefully monitored and even the smallest of achievements is recognised. Staff have received training and guidance from professionals to support these children's needs and enhance their development.

Children communicate well with each other and other adults throughout the pre-school session. They try new skills such as Makaton to extend their communication. Children access books independently and with support from staff. They learn to use books with respect, turning the pages appropriately and putting them back where they came from. They use writing resources which are available for handwriting at each session learning to form letters correctly to label and recognise their written name. Some children are beginning to associate some sounds with letters with staff support. They are developing an understanding for sequencing letters within the alphabet.

A variety of number puzzles are available which children confidently complete. They are developing an understanding of associating numbers with amounts and numerals. Children count by rote, learning to sequence numbers, although there are limited practical situations where children can learn to understand the concept of numbers. Children learn mathematical concepts mainly through adult lead activities that are pre-planned, such as number work, pattern and shape. They are beginning to learn about preposition, size and shape through practical and planned activities such as parachute games and descriptions of themselves.

Children learn about a range of different cultures throughout the year which benefits their understanding and respect for diversity. They are beginning to develop a sense of time and place by describing what they are doing next, where they live, where they lived before and what happened when they were younger. Children learn about caring for animals through trips to the farm and caring for the pre-school fish. They have a basic understanding of growth and where food comes from due to trips to the farmers market. However, this is only concentrated on for topical work rather than as part of daily discussion. Children have limited resources available to them to develop an understanding of how things work and why. Although through discussion, children learn about the changes in the environment and how this can affect them; such as the weather.

Children are growing in confidence when using tools and materials such as, pouring drink, using scissors and pencils. They gain good levels of support from staff to help them progress their dexterity skills. They develop good spatial awareness due to the layout of the room, equipment and accessibility of additional space both indoors and outdoors.

Children access pre-selected creative resources independently, choosing what to create and how. They freely self-represent. Some pieces of work are celebrated by having the child's own explanations written on them. Children mime out rhymes at singing time as well as singing it through to show their understanding of expressing themselves through music and mime. Children occasionally act out roles but have access to a limited amount of props throughout the session. Resources are available but staff do not use these effectively to promote children's imagination in role play.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's individual needs and background are respected and reflected in their care. This is due to staff using information from parents effectively. Children experience diversity through a good range of resources that portray positive images of today's society.

Children with disabilities and learning difficulties are supported well by an effective staff team.

Children learn about right and wrong, they are quick to remind others of this fact in all aspects of play and social activities. They understand simple rule and boundaries. Children show good manners towards each other and the staff due to the role models set by the staff. Staff ensure that all achievements are celebrated, however small, to build children's self esteem and pride in their play and work. Children are confident and settle well into the pre-school choosing activities independently. They appear interested in the range of resources and activities available and demonstrate good levels of concentration. Children are confident at speaking to adults and their peers, interacting and cooperating when playing. They negotiate and work well as a team and are encouraged to share and take turns and do this very well. Therefore, children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. They receive a basic welcome pack that introduces the parents to the pre-school and contains information about their routines and aims. There is very limited information for parents about the Foundation Stage, therefore some parents have a limited understanding about how their children learn through play. Some parents are aware of their children's observations and development profiles but some are not, therefore parents lack clarity towards their children's levels of development and progress. Parents receive good levels of support and reassurance in settling their children, therefore children settle quickly and confidently. Parents can talk to staff at each end of the session. They are invited into the setting where they receive verbal information about their child's day, look at displays of children's achievements and participate in celebrations. The parent's of the more able children who attend the afternoon session receive information and activities to extend their children's development at home. This is not so for the other children attending the group. Therefore the majority of children do not always have the opportunity to share and extend their learning within the home setting.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

Children are cared for by staff who hold relevant clearances to allow unsupervised access to children. Effective recruitment systems are in place to ensure new staff are suitable to work with children. However, the qualifications of some staff does not meet the National standards of day care requirements. Therefore, this impacts on the quality of care and nursery education during some aspects of the group's routine activities. The setting does not have the necessary contingency plans to always ensure the correct amount of qualified staff are on duty each day.

The children's routine and the staff are familiar to them, therefore children settle quickly and confidently. The setting's routine does not always support children's needs as sometimes children lose interest in some activities which results in disruption and distraction for others.

Most of the necessary documentation is carefully completed, made safe and secure. Records are only made available to authorised people therefore promoting children's welfare. Some documentation is not accurately recorded; such as the children's attendance at the time of entry.

The leadership and management is inadequate.

The staff are all aware of their daily responsibilities within the daily session, therefore they are appropriately deployed for most activities, particularly planned adult lead activities to support children's learning. However, this is limited for child initiated activities such as the water and construction activities and large group activities, resulting in limited challenges for children and ineffective planning.

All staff have an input into staff meetings giving suggestions towards topics and activities. Members of the committee take an active role in the running of the setting as they work as a member of staff for some days. However, the team as a whole do not take on the responsibility of effectively evaluating the education system to assess its strengths and weaknesses. They do not make effective changes to recognised weaknesses, particularly those that were identified at the last inspection.

Staff attend a variety of training but these are not related to the recognised areas for improvement. Therefore the educational system is not progressing to meet the individual abilities and developmental needs of the children. The lack of formal qualifications of supervisory staff does impact on the children's development due to the limited understanding and implementation of up to date strategies and curriculum practices.

The management structure fails to recognise the impact that some aspects of the daily routine has on the children's learning, with particular regard to the organisation and effectiveness of large group situations such as register and snack time. Staff understand their responsibility to observe children's achievements but do not use this information effectively to link to the stepping stones to show the child's true level of development. Therefore some children's record of achievements show little evidence of what they have achieved and how.

Overall, the setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the group were given two recommendations to achieve towards the care of the children; to produce a lost child statement and to ensure all children's full details are recorded when accidents occur. They also receive three key issues to address towards the nursery education of the children; to increase parent's access to their children's records and to give parents opportunities to discuss their progress; to evaluate planned activities, the learning intention and how these activities meet children's developmental needs; to re-organise and deploy staff effectively throughout large group activities.

Children's accidents are now clearly recorded with full details of the incident and the child involved. Parents are informed by asking to sign the accident book after reading the recorded details.

A lost child procedure is now written and implemented within the operational plan.

There has been limited improvements in the organisation and effectiveness of large group activities such as registration circle time and snack time. Little planning goes into these activities with limited purpose. Younger children, with limited concentration, lose interest quickly, therefore other children's concentration is disrupted.

Parents receive regular information about their child's development in the form of a written report at the end of each term. Some parents are aware of asking staff about their child's development and some receive basic feedback at the end of each session.

There has been limited improvement on the evaluation of planned activities, therefore there is little evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness. This results in the limited links between evaluation and future planning for children's development.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that requires the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.



## WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop and implement an action plan detailing how the supervisor will achieve a level 3 qualification
- develop and implement an action plan detailing how at least half of all childcare staff will hold a level 2 qualification in childcare

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure the management team address the identified weaknesses in the education system and continuously evaluate its effectiveness.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)