



The Ark Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	137365
Inspection date	24 January 2007
Inspector	Michelle Smith
Setting Address	2 Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent, BR2 9HA
Telephone number	020 8460 1660
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Registered person	The Bromley Christian Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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. The premises are located at the southern end of Bromley town centre. Children have access to an outdoor area.

A maximum of 24 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 35 children from the age of two-and-a-half to five years on roll. Of these, 31 children receive funding for early education. The children attend from within the local

community. The group currently supports a number of children with special needs and children for whom English is an additional language.

The group employs seven members of staff of these five are present at each session. The new manager has an appropriate early years qualification and two staff are attending training towards qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy a clean and presentable environment. Children are developing an understanding of good hygiene practice. For example, children wash their hands after using the bathroom. However, children are not fully protected from infection as they share water for hand washing in a bowl after messy activities. In addition the bin in the group room does not have a cover. Staff pay good attention to children's personal health needs, and this ensures children's wellbeing is safeguarded. There is documentation for recording accidents and administration of medication. These are shared with parents. There are clear procedures in place for recording children's dietary requirements. The tables are cleaned before and after snack time. Coughing children are encouraged to cover their mouths to prevent the spread of infection. There are clear procedures for caring for sick children.

Children are developing an understanding of healthy eating. They enjoy snacks that are varied and meet their dietary needs. Children have access to drinks throughout the session. They are provided with choice, their likes and dislikes are taken into account. For example, children have the choice between milk and water.

Children are involved in a range of activities to promote their physical skills. They enjoy hopping and marching around the hall with their friends. Children benefit from opportunities to develop and enhance their co-ordination. The staff are sensitive to children's emotional wellbeing and develop good relationships with them. This means that children are relaxed and comfortable in the group.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children access a generally safe environment that is warm and welcoming. All safety equipment in place is in working order and they are maintained by the appropriate services. There is a basic system for risk assessments and staff complete informal daily checks. Fire drills are not completed consistently. For example, new children to the group since July 2006 are yet to experience how a fire drill is conducted. This results in children's safety being at risk, as some children may not know how to respond in the event of a fire. There are effective procedures in place for children's safe arrival and departure. For example, doors are closed at a particular time in the morning and re-opened for parents to enter the premises to collect their children.

Children have access to a range of toys and equipment that are in good condition. Children are developing a positive attitude towards safety. For example, a child placed the chair under the table after getting up from an activity and was praised by staff for his action. Children move around the play area safely. Most staff have completed child protection training and they are aware of the procedures to follow if they have concerns relating to child protection issues. Staff have access to policies and procedures in line with the 'What to do if your worried about a child' document. This means children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the group. They arrive happy and settle quickly. This is due to the good relationships that the staff build with them. The staff are sensitive and caring towards the children's individual needs. Children responded well to staff and they benefit from the stable relationships. Children benefit from positive relationships built with each other, through their play and interaction.

Children enjoy and benefit from opportunities to access a range of different play experiences. They explore their surroundings, play co-operatively and enjoy being together. The staff use the Birth to three matters framework to promote younger children's learning and ongoing development. However, some activities do not meet the needs of younger children. For example, during circle time younger children become distracted and lose interest.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a basic understanding of the Foundation Stage. They offer children a range of activities and play opportunities, which they enjoy. Children access programmable equipment, like computers. They are developing a understanding of how to use technology. Children are able to make choices about their activities. Children enjoy being together, they play harmoniously and they are beginning to understand the importance of taking turns. Staff understand the positive impact praise and encouragement have on children and they use this effectively to help children become confident learners and communicators. For example, children speak freely and are confident to ask questions. The staff question the children, praise their response and encourage them to think and share their knowledge.

Children generally benefit from opportunities to develop their physical skills through planned indoor activities. They enjoy opportunities to ride tricycles, run, jump and hop. This means children are developing their physical and co-ordination skills. The children enjoy sack races and are beginning to develop a understanding of spatial awareness. Children enjoy a range of different creative activities using different materials. They are developing a understanding of different textures. Children enjoy painting activities using a range of secondary colours. For example, different shades of pinks, purples and orange. Children enjoy opportunities to dress up and take on different roles. For example, children dress up as nurses and doctors using dolls and teddy bears as patients. The children are well behaved. Children enjoy singing songs. They are learning to recognise and use numbers, including learning the concepts of basic subtraction in a fun manner. Children can identify different shapes on the wall chart. For example, a child

confidently identified a square, circle, triangle and rectangle. Children can freely access reading materials. For example, a child sat in the book corner and read to herself, turning pages from left to right. Children are beginning to understand that print carries meaning. There are opportunities for children to write and draw freely. Older children receive additional support on Thursday afternoon to help them prepare for school. However, due to staff's basic understanding of the foundation stages not all aspects are covered. Staff encourage children's learning through play and they provide both staff led and free play activities which children enjoy. However, there are missed opportunities for children's learning due to inadequate support for children during free play.

Children are not helped to maximise their potential due to inconsistent planning and learning opportunities are missed. Planning does not focus on the early learning goals in detail, and do not identify how children will progress through the stepping stones. This does not ensure that all children particularly the more able are sufficiently challenged. Children's progress is not consistently recorded and monitored and as a result there is not an overall clear picture of where children are in their learning. Children who have special needs receive very good support. There is a special education needs co-ordinator in place, who completes individual educational plan's for children and works with the area inclusion officer.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children enjoy mutually respectful relationships with the staff and each other. They develop a positive self-esteem and confidence as they voice their opinions, make choices and decisions. Children are well behaved and they are beginning to understand the difference between right and wrong.

Children are beginning to develop a sense of belonging and self assurance through close relationships, built with each other and the staff. For example, children are eager to play with their friends and ask them to join in with their chosen activity. Children move around the group confidently and take part in a range of activities. They participate and contribute positively. They play well with their friends and enjoy their company. Children access a good range of play provision that reflects positive images of different cultures and disability. However, they received insufficient support to help them learn about equality issues. For example, girls tend to go for the girly costumes and boys tend to go for the more masculine costumes. During a physical activity where children were marching one child did not march, when asked why her reply was 'I'm a girl remember'. This was not challenged by staff. Parents are welcomed into the setting to share their cultural celebrations with the children. Children with special needs and English as an additional language are integrated well within the group.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Children benefit from the friendly relationships built between parents and staff. Parents take an interest in their children's progress. Staff provide workshops for parents to understand how children learn through play. However, parents are not provided with adequate information on the Foundation Stage curriculum and on how they can contribute to their child's progress along the stepping stones.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children access an organised environment. There's a qualified manager in place and staff have many years experience of working with children. Children are cared for by staff who have been checked to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Relevant policies and procedures are in place and they contribute to the running of the setting. Most required records are kept.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. Staff work well together and are aware of their roles. All staff benefit from opportunities to access training and update their childcare knowledge. They are developing systems for recording children's progress. However, children's next steps of learning are not recorded consistently so gaps in learning are not clearly traceable. Planning, assessments and evaluation of the planning are not clear and do not always link to the stepping stones. The group has secured the support of the local authority early years department to work with the new manager and staff to identify and prioritise areas for improving the provision.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The nursery has taken satisfactory action to make improvement in the areas identified at the last inspection. There is a manager with a level 3 qualification, two members of staff are accessing level 2 qualification training. They have booked sessions with the local authority early years department to help them address weaknesses in the nursery education provision. For example, they have completed Birth to three matters training.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required 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.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure fire drills are carried out in line with the fire officers recommendations
- ensure that staff help children to be aware of equality of opportunity within their play
- ensure appropriate hand washing facilities are in place for children at all times, in order to prevent cross contamination and that bins in the group rooms have covers.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure staff are able to identify and use opportunities to extend children's learning during free play activities
- ensure planning and assessments for children's learning and development is consistent and clearly linked to the stepping stones; also children's next steps of learning are clearly identified and recorded
- ensure that parents are provided with adequate information on the Foundation Stage curriculum and on how they can contribute to their child's progress along the stepping stones.

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