



Noah's Ark Pre School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	103827
Inspection date	24 January 2007
Inspector	Virginia Cooper
Setting Address	Luton Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 5BT
Telephone number	01634 842237 (pg hou
E-mail	
Registered person	Noah's Ark Preschool
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?

Noah's Ark Pre-School opened in 1992 and operates from two rooms in a church hall close to the town of Chatham. A maximum of 34 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 09:00 to 11:45 and 12:45 to 15:30, during term times.

There are currently 47 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 45 children receive funding for early education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs eight members of staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a warm, caring environment helping them feel emotionally secure. They are familiar with the daily routine and consequently know what to expect and feel secure, for example they know to wait for a space at the table before going to eat their snack.

Children get the opportunity to learn about health and hygiene through the daily routine and activities; for example, they wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet, use individual disposable towels to dry their hands and are encouraged to blow their noses regularly and dispose of their used tissues. Staff talk to children about germs and explain in a way they will understand the importance of good hand washing procedures. A dental hygienist visits to teach the children the importance of cleaning their teeth. All children are escorted to the toilet, because they are away from the main hall. Steps are provided in the toilet cubicles and at the sinks to help children manage alone when they feel sufficiently confident. They use a communal bowl, however, to wash their hands after art and craft activities which does not protect them from cross-infection in this instance.

The manager has arranged for all staff to attend a first aid course in the next few weeks. They record any accidents and any first aid that is administered whilst the children are in their care; this ensures parents are well informed about what has happened to their child. Staff do not care for children who are contagious, protecting other children's health.

Children are not able to play outside. They have opportunities, however, to participate in physical exercise indoors, for example, by using the slide and climbing frame.

Whilst children can ask for a drink at any time, they do not have easy access to fresh drinking water and usually wait for snack time for a drink. Children do not generally pour their own drinks; the jugs are too heavy for them which is not encouraging their independence. The nutritious content of snacks is variable; whilst fruit is offered every day as a healthy option, biscuits are also available. Most children drink milk because they make flavoured milk shakes, staff are unsure of the ingredients in the milk shake mix. Children who stay over the lunch time period bring a packed lunch. A fridge is available if parents include food that needs to be kept cold.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play happily in a safe, secure environment. Most activity takes place in the large hall, staff work with their key children on small group activities in another, smaller room. Staff undertake a daily visual check to ensure that equipment is in place to ensure children's safety. Staff cordon off an area of the room for children to undertake physical activities, to help them move about safely without bumping into each other. Staff remind children not to run to keep them safe.

Children enjoy a good range of resources; staff check these for their suitability enabling children to play safely. When children play with the dolls' houses they are spoilt for choice in the amount of furniture and figures they have to play with. This enables children to share easily because there is an abundance of equipment. There is a sufficient number of child sized chairs and tables to enable children to manage tasks more easily. There are soft furnishings in the quiet area that provide children with a comfortable place to relax and read.

The premises are very secure and there are procedures in place to prevent unwanted visitors gaining access. Staff ensure children only leave the pre-school with known and approved adults. All staff are familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect; they are encouraged to update their child protection training regularly. They are clear about the procedures to follow if they have concerns about any child to ensure the welfare of children. The manager takes overall responsibility for child protection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are aware of the document Birth to three matters. They have not yet, however, fully embraced this model of good practice. They have developed different assessment records for this age group, but these are still based upon the Foundation Stage. All children have opportunities to undertake tactile activities; they thoroughly enjoy playing with play dough. They regularly have access to natural materials like pine cones and sea shells. The children play happily all morning, the environment is prepared with a variety of activities and children exercise choice over what they do. The children are busy and play purposefully. Children know if they ask to do something that staff will try hard to accommodate them, for example, a child asks to roll the balls to one another in a big circle. The staff are able to work flexibly and include activities spontaneously. The staff are kind and children relate well to them, they chat happily as they play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A key worker system is in place and all qualified staff take responsibility for recording children's progress. Children's individual learning needs are identified and the curriculum plans ensure that relevant stepping stones are included to satisfy these needs. This system is not wholly successful as it can take some time before the relevant stepping stone is tackled, and therefore children may not always be suitably challenged. The staff are still experimenting with the systems they use to record children's progress and how to use these to inform future planning. The plans include activities for all six areas of learning providing a varied and balanced curriculum. Most of the peripheral activities do not relate to the main theme of learning to help compound the children's knowledge. Staff question children skilfully to extract information from them about what they know and can do.

Children are able to select resources for themselves and work independently. They pay attention to staff and most are able to concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. Children generally play co-operatively together and take turns and share successfully. The pre-school are well known in the community and people often stop by to give them things they can use. Each child has their own pocket to place their work for taking home, making them feel an important part

of the group. Staff encourage their independence in some ways and not others. For example, they provide steps in the toilet area so they can wash their own hands, but the jugs they use at snack time are too heavy for children to pour drinks unaided. Children behave well and respect one another.

Children chat with one another and staff as they play; their vocabulary is being increased through regular story telling. They enjoy rhymes and songs and are very familiar with the words enabling them to join in successfully. Most children recognise their own names and have the opportunity to do this every day when they self-register and before snack time. Staff regularly refer to the sounds different letters make and children offer other words that begin with the same letter. Quite a lot of the children can write all or part of their name independently and are forming written letters correctly, however, staff still write their names for them on their art work missing an opportunity for children to experience a real reason to write.

Children count regularly and staff use everyday situations to improve their mathematical skills and to make simple calculations. Staff often refer to shape, size and quantity familiarising children with these concepts. Some children know all the names of regular two dimensional shapes, but their key workers have not considered teaching them the names and properties of three dimensional shapes. Most children know their colours; this skill is well practiced because staff naturally make reference to colours as children play.

Children discuss the weather and seasons every day; it is part of their continuous provision. They also learn the days of the week, the months of the year and discuss the date. Staff familiarise children with the concept of time by discussing things they have done in the past and their plans for the future. There is a variety of construction toys that children enjoy using along with small world play equipment enabling children to use their imaginations. Staff spontaneously take opportunities to enable children to experiment and learn how things work. For example they help them make paper aeroplanes, and discuss which designs fly best. Children use the computer competently; they have good mouse control. Children celebrate different festivals from around the world improving their understanding of other cultures.

Children move confidently and safely negotiating the space about them. They often play ring games and staff discuss the physical changes that take place as children exercise. They use scissors competently, and other hand held tools whilst they paint, stick and shape and mould malleable materials.

Children use their imaginations when they play together and enjoy acting out various situations. There are big dolls' houses with a very large collection of figures and furniture, the children love to decorate the rooms and make up stories as they play. The small world play includes a good selection of toys that reflect diversity positively. Children use instruments to explore rhythm, tone and pitch. They enthusiastically join in singing rhymes and songs encouraging their language skills. Staff encourage children to appreciate different textures and teach them appropriate language, for example, rough and smooth. Children are encouraged to decorate art and craft activities in their own way, encouraging their creativity. However, they rarely make their own decisions about what materials and tools they think they may need to complete a self-chosen project. This eliminates the need for children to discover what works through experimentation.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff greet children on their arrival; the children and parents are familiar with the self-registration system, come in happily and settle quickly. This method of welcoming the children allows family members and staff to share information easily each day about anything that might influence the children's care. Staff value the children and demonstrate this by listening to them carefully. The children enjoy a routine that allows them to be active and relax throughout the day. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff are aware that some children may have learning difficulties and can identify children who may need additional help. The member of staff nominated as the special educational needs co-ordinator is still waiting to secure a place on relevant training. The manager works with other professionals to ensure children with special needs are provided with an appropriate service, for example, staff will implement programmes set by other agencies like speech and language activities.

Children generally behave well, staff notice when children are good and praise them, encouraging desirable behaviour. Some children develop close friendships and work co-operatively with one another. They all help to tidy up throughout the session, encouraging them to take responsibility.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. There is a welcome pack for new parents with lots of information about the provision and regular newsletters keep them updated about the service. They have contact with the staff each day and communicate easily with them. The pre-school send the children's assessment records home each term; however, there is no consistent method of parents contributing to their child's records.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The pre-school is a church committee run group, who employ a manager who takes responsibility for the day to day running of the group. The manager is well supported by a very capable deputy and staff. All the staff work well as a team; it is a very happy group. Staff continue to experiment with the systems they use to record children's progress, they find keeping the assessment records up to date an onerous task. They are, however, committed to improving the care and education for all children. To continually improve service delivery all staff are encouraged to update their knowledge and attend courses regularly. Staff are expected to attend a minimum of three courses a year and often do more. If only one member of staff is able to secure a place on a training course they cascade the information so that all staff members benefit.

The pre-school has comprehensive policies and procedures that are always available for parents to read. The recruitment procedure ensures all staff hold a current criminal records check, and are suitable to work with children. Staff meetings are held regularly and they use these meetings to review their practice.

The daily routine is organised to include quiet times, active times, snacks and time for staff to work specifically with their key children. All mandatory documentation is in place, for example, details about the children, accident records and records for the administration of medication. Staff appreciate and understand the importance of confidentiality. The setting meets the needs of the range children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection three recommendations were made that relate to Standards 2, 6 and 7. They were asked to ensure effective safety measures are in place, indoors and out, to safeguard children at all times; ensure medication records meet with requirements and ensure Ofsted are notified in writing, of the transfer of registration.

They have introduced a daily, safety check list to improve the safety measures and to safeguard children; they ensure all medication administered to children is recorded and they ensure they inform Ofsted of changes to their service delivery.

At the last education inspection they were asked to increase staff understanding of early learning goals and stepping stones, improve the recording of the evidence of children's learning and provide parents with opportunities to meet with their child's key worker and have some input into future learning goals.

All staff have some understanding of the early learning goals and the stepping stones, and they use these to record children's progress. However, some staff still find maintaining the assessment records hard. They continue to experiment with different methods. Parents are welcome to visit at any time and are introduced to their child's key worker when they first begin; at this initial meeting they inform staff the skills children already have. Although staff recognise that parents are children's first educators they have not been wholly successful in encouraging parents to take a more active part in their children's early education.

These changes have generally had a positive effect on the service delivery; a recommendation remains about parents contributing to their children's assessment records, enabling staff to identify children's next steps in learning using information from pre-school and home.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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.

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 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):

- consider how children can access fresh drinking water easily throughout the session and how children can wash their hands after art and craft activities without using a communal bowl to help prevent cross infection
- continue to improve staff knowledge of child development, for example, by familiarising yourself with the framework Birth to three matters
- secure suitable training for the special educational needs co-ordinator

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):

- consider how children's individual learning needs are incorporated into the plans so that the stepping stones they are working upon are relevant to them and they are suitably challenged
- consider how some of the peripheral activities can be used to compound the children's learning by relating these to the main theme
- provide parents with more opportunities to share what they know about their child, and encourage them to be involved with their child's learning

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