



Noah's Ark Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	110006
Inspection date	28 February 2007
Inspector	Susan Mann
Setting Address	Townhill Farm Community Centre, Townhill Way, West End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 3NN
Telephone number	0788 7623981
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Registered person	Noah's Ark Pre-School
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Pre-School has been registered since 1990. It is a community pre-school owned and managed by a parent committee, and offering sessional care to children aged two years six months to under five years. The pre-school operates from the Townhill Farm Community Centre at Townhill Way, West End, Southampton. The Centre offers disabled access and toilet facilities. The pre-school has the use of the main hall, side room, kitchen and toilets. There is a fully enclosed outside play area. The pre-school serves the area of West End and wider community.

There are 38 children on roll, including 19 funded children. The pre-school is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. There are six staff, five of whom work with the children. Two staff have relevant qualifications for their roles.

The pre-school is open each day during term time from 09:30 to 12.00. The pre-school receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn routines that promote their good health. They enjoy a flexible snack time when they can choose from a variety of fruits, and milk or water to drink. Staff liaise closely with parents to ensure that dietary needs are known. These are strictly adhered to in an inclusive way so that no child feels different or left out. Children develop their independence as they wash their hands before they eat. However, their health is occasionally put at risk because the water they use to wash is not always sufficiently clean. Children are able to rest and play quietly when they wish. They use a comfortable cushioned area to look at books and rest for a while before moving back to the other play areas.

Children enjoy outdoor play each day. They benefit from daily planned and spontaneous activities outside, and they are able to free flow between indoors and outdoors as they wish. On a blustery day, children laugh with delight as they blow bubbles and run along holding coloured flags in the wind. On another day, children skilfully pedal tricycles or 'paint' the walls with water. Activities such as these enable children to develop their levels of physical fitness and help them to improve their co-ordination and controlled movement.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play in a welcoming and well organised environment where they have lots of space to move around. Children are warmly welcomed by staff when they arrive, and they quickly settle to their play. The atmosphere is happy and relaxed. Children choose from a very wide range of equipment that is well maintained and inviting to use. These resources are carefully organised and presented in low level storage units which allows children to access them independently, and so encourages them to use their initiative.

Children's safety is promoted because the pre-school has developed a range of effective policies and procedures that identify and minimise risks. Staff are vigilant when children are arriving and leaving the session to ensure children do not leave the premises unaccompanied.

Children are protected from harm because all staff have a thorough knowledge both of the symptoms of possible abuse, and of how to record and report concerns. These procedures are underpinned by a comprehensive child protection policy which is shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wealth of learning opportunities. They are enthusiastic in their participation of the exciting activities available to them. The younger children are relaxed and happy at the

pre-school. These children benefit from playing alongside the older children, who are sensitive to their needs and who provide good role models. When a younger child comes along to the cookery activity wishing to join in, there is no space for her at that moment. An older child immediately moves over and invites the child to share her space so that she can join in too. The older children are particularly self assured and are confident to make decisions and take responsibility for their own actions. For example, when a child finishes playing at the soil tray, he takes the dustpan and brush and sweeps up the soil that has fallen onto the floor. Children develop a caring attitude to one another and with the staff. Staff show a genuine interest in what children say and do, and this helps to build children's confidence further.

Nursery Education

Teaching and learning is good. Older children who are following the Foundation Stage enjoy multiple opportunities to progress in all areas of learning. Children who are aged under three years are given appropriately tailored learning opportunities. The setting has begun to use the Birth to three matters framework to ensure that these younger children are given gentle challenges to help them develop their knowledge and skills. Some observations and assessments are made of younger children's development to help staff plan their next stage of learning, although this system is not yet sufficiently used to benefit children all the time.

All children are able to choose which toys and activities they wish to play with. This helps to develop their independence which helps them to build their self-esteem. Children are engaged in their play. Many concentrate on games and activities for long periods of time because they are interested in what they are doing. Children are involved in their play and learning because the curriculum is carefully planned to suit all their needs. Written planning is comprehensive of the aspects of the Foundation Stage. Links are made with the Birth to three framework, which allows all children to benefit from a wide-ranging curriculum. Staff are confident in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage and have a good understanding of how to progress children's learning through stimulating curiosity and encouraging children to think. For example, children are following a topic on New Life. Children talk about how much potato shoots have grown since the week before, in preparation for planting them in the garden. All children's learning is observed and monitored through detailed assessments which are made of their progress. Staff have a clear understanding of the level of attainment each child has reached. Furthermore, staff have begun to identify 'termly targets' as areas of the curriculum that children can work on next. However, there is not yet a consistent system in place to use these assessments to identify and record the next steps of learning for each child on a regular basis. This means that some children may not progress as well as they might. It also means that there is no system in place that ensures parents are consulted on the intended next steps of development.

Children are able to learn because staff provide clear explanations of activities and questions. There is a good balance of free play and activities, such as cooking and planting seeds. All staff are very patient and encouraging. They frequently praise children for effort and achievement which helps children to challenge themselves and try new activities. For example, a member of staff supports children to successfully manoeuvre Daisy, the remote controlled duck, between a selection of farm pictures. As each child of the small group takes a turn, the member of staff gives clear direction to them on how to use the controls. Children share willingly and encourage one another as they concentrate on operating the duck. Staff are well deployed around the

room to ensure that children receive appropriate support as they play and so making the activity more satisfying and beneficial for the child.

Children engage easily in conversation with one another and with adults. Staff listen carefully to what children say, and encourage them to voice their thoughts. Children enjoy a range of books and stories. The pre-school is organised to encourage them to begin to recognise familiar words. Children select their names at self registration and on a Birthday Ark display, whilst a variety of notices label items around the room. Children demonstrate good calculating skills when making cookies. They learn how to count through fun activities, such as counting seeds in a daisy game and they recognise numbers on the price labels of items in the 'garden centre shop' role play area.

Children are encouraged to explore and investigate the natural world on a daily basis. They have planted bulbs in the garden, and watch the shoots grow. They also measure the amount of rainfall in rain gauges they have made from plastic bottles. Children demonstrate good co-ordination when using a variety of tools, and can manipulate the hole punch and pencils in the writing area to their own satisfaction. Children benefit from being able to express themselves freely throughout the session. Many children enjoy using their imagination through dressing up or playing in the role play areas. In addition, children use art and design to paint, glue and build models whenever they wish. These activities help children develop their creativity. They also enable them to socialise with their peers and develop their language and independence whilst having fun.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children demonstrate a considerate and confident attitude at the pre-school. They are keen to join in group tasks, such as tidying up, and are helpful to one another as they play. Their confidence is enhanced because the routine is designed to foster their independence. They make choices about when and what they eat at snack time, what they wish to play with, and whether they play outdoors or inside. Children enjoy a range of activities and resources which reflect our diverse society. The pre-school works closely with parents of children who have English as an additional language. Staff make sure that children receive the correct support, enabling them to make good progress and to integrate successfully into the group. Staff give high priority to providing an inclusive environment where all children feel valued and individual needs are fully respected. Children's spiritual moral, social and cultural development is being fostered.

Children's behaviour is managed well. They participate in drawing up 'Golden Rules' which outline preferred behaviour, and this task gives them a good understanding of how to behave when at pre-school. Staff are consistent in their expectations of the children, and this enables children to appreciate what is expected of them. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support to enable them to progress. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator liaises closely with parents and external agencies to meet children's needs. This allows children to benefit from a co-ordinated approach which is successful because the family and pre-school are able to work together.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are welcome to visit and stay at the pre-school to settle their children. Children settle well at the pre-school because there is a great deal of information shared between home and pre-school. Members of staff visit children and their parents at home prior to starting. This allows children to become familiar with staff whilst in their familiar environment, and it also provides a valuable opportunity for parents and staff to discuss the individual needs of the child. An informative welcome pack provides detailed information about the pre-school which parents find useful. Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's learning. They contribute to the running of the pre-school through joining the management committee, and they give valuable additional help in sessions. Parents receive information about the curriculum from newsletters and the notice board, as well as from talking to staff. Parents are complimentary about the care and education provided at the pre-school. They see their children's assessment folders on a regular basis, and this enables them to keep abreast of their child's progress. This effective communication between home and pre-school makes children's learning a two-way process which is extremely beneficial to the child and enjoyable for the parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from the well planned provision. All required documentation is in place. Robust policies and procedures are highly effective in promoting children's safety, health and well-being. Some staff hold relevant childcare certificates, whilst the remainder are currently studying to achieve their qualifications. All staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of how children learn and develop, which means that they provide a good level of appropriate support for the children in their care. Overall, the pre-school meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. The parent committee provides effective management which benefits all families at the setting, and ensures that the pre-school is involved in the local community through visits and events. The committee and supervisor work closely together to provide a coherent and forward thinking approach to the running of the pre-school. This focuses on providing a high quality provision for all children who attend. Future areas for development are identified and resulting actions are planned. For example, further implementation of the Birth to three matters framework is intended to provide enhanced planning and assessment for the younger children.

Procedures, such as recruitment and induction, are comprehensive to ensure that adults working with children are suitable and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The quality of the provision is greatly enhanced because staff have frequent opportunities to meet. They share ideas and training experiences, as well as plan the curriculum and future activities. Children benefit from this considered approach because it produces a coherent and successful provision which actively promotes their development.

Improvements since the last inspection

The pre-school had a number of issues to address that resulted from the previous inspection in 2004. All have been fully addressed. Staff have developed their knowledge and understanding

of the National Standards and the Foundation Stage. All staff are either qualified or in the process of becoming qualified. All demonstrate a good knowledge of the curriculum and how children can make progress towards the early learning goals. Staff also show a great level of expertise in providing for children with a range of different needs and abilities. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support by the special educational needs co-ordinator to ensure they settle and develop in the group successfully. In addition, the supervisor has comprehensive knowledge of the National Standards which ensures that children are properly cared for and that childcare regulations are met.

Documents, such as the attendance register, complaints procedure and policies are readily accessible at the setting for parents' use and for inspection. The range of toys and resources available for children is now very good. These resources allow children to choose from a wide range which reflect diversity of culture, whilst covering all areas of learning. The management committee and staff team have a productive working relationship which benefits the pre-school. Key personnel, such as the chair and the supervisor, meet regularly to discuss relevant issues, and to plan future developments.

Parents are given a great deal of information about what their child learns at pre-school. They are able to see their children's assessment records at any time, and are able to take them home to view if they wish. Parents are welcome in the session, to help settle their child, and to stay as a helper. This helps parents become involved in their children's learning. The curriculum is planned to cover all areas of learning in an appealing and fun way. Children's learning is carefully observed and assessed to ensure that they are making progress. Children show great interest in books and mark making, and their interest is maintained by well resourced areas, such as the writing area. Children are able to develop their imagination through a wealth of activities which promote freedom of expression throughout the session, such as role play or craft activities.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

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 that children's hygiene is promoted through providing clean water for children to wash their hands before snack

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):

- continue to develop a system which uses observations and assessments of children's development to plan their next steps of learning
- develop the use of the Birth to three framework to provide a system to plan and assess learning opportunities for the younger children.

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