



# Noahs Ark Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123613
<b>Inspection date</b>	02 February 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Suman Willis
<b>Setting Address</b>	Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5RD
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<b>Registered person</b>	Gwyn Record
<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 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 Playschool has been operating under its present name for nine years. It is situated in Crabtree Church hall in the Crabtree area of Harpenden. Children have access to an outdoor play area. The pre-school mainly serves the local area but some children attend from the wider locality. The group opens five mornings a week during term time. Sessions are from 9.15am to 12.00 noon and should the numbers increase afternoon sessions will also be offered.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 35 children on the register aged from two to under five years. Of these, 15 receive funding for early education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualification and one is working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are engaged in a wide range of age-appropriate physical activities on a daily basis. Activities are varied to provide a good balance. For example, children enjoy practicing their pedalling, pushing and pulling trolleys, and ball throwing skills. One child is delighted as he successfully throws a ball into a basketball net and is applauded by staff for his achievements. Some children are fully supported as they practice their balancing on beam skills, while another group of children enjoy skipping over wavy skipping ropes. Consequently children are developing physical skills, gaining in confidence using a range of large and small equipment safely, and developing a positive attitude towards physical exercise and the outdoors. Children use a variety of tools to develop their fine motor skills. They manipulate with dough to form shapes, and develop their writing skills as they use felt pens, crayons and chalk. Children develop good hand and eye co-ordination as they hammer nails into small shapes on a board. Their knowledge of changes that occur to their bodies after exercise and how to stay healthy is extended through organised activities.

The group have developed good policies and procedures to monitor children's health, such as a clear policy for sick children which is understood by all parents. Permission from parents to administer emergency aid and medication is in place to ensure children's health is appropriately monitored. Most staff have covered training in first aid to ensure that there is always someone at hand to provide emergency aid should the need arise, some staff have also covered training in the use of an epi-pen thus ensuring children stay healthy. Children independently access the toilets, and most manage their own personal hygiene. Staff members are always nearby and able to offer support and to remind children to wash their hands after toileting. Children are developing their knowledge of the importance of good hygiene practices and are able to initiate these independently.

Valuable dietary information about individual children is provided by parents to ensure their children stay healthy and their individual needs are fully met. Children enjoy the social occasion of sitting in small groups with a member of staff having a drink choosing between milk or water and happily selecting slices of fruit from a wide selection. Therefore, children begin to understand what foods are healthy and to make healthy choices for themselves.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very child friendly environment. The hall is well organised to ensure children can participate in a wide range of interesting and age-appropriate activities. Their independence is promoted as they choose their own resources which are appropriately stored in clear plastic boxes on shelves in low units. All areas are clearly labelled and there is an excellent range of posters and children's work displayed at all levels throughout the hall. All resources

are well maintained and checked regularly to ensure their suitability. Children move freely and safely selecting their own activities. All areas are risk assessed to ensure children's safety. The entrance door is secured to ensure children play safely inside, and high gates are shut and well monitored during outdoor play. Fire drills are regularly carried out, however these are not logged appropriately, therefore children are potentially at risk. A record of all visitors is kept on site, and parents and carers are expected to sign their children in and out.

Children are developing a good understanding of staying safe through topic work and during outdoor play. For example, children learn to manoeuvre their wheeled toys around the roads sketched in the playground. They also know why they must not go beyond the zig zag lines. Children also demonstrate through their role play their understanding of staying safe when pretending to be in a police van; they say 'don't forget to put your seat belt on before we go'. Therefore, children are learning to keep themselves safe.

Children are safeguarded by staff who have good knowledge and understanding of child protection. Procedures to ensure children stay safe are understood by all staff. Effective monitoring of volunteers ensures that they do not have unsupervised access to children.

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

The provision is good.

Children arrive with their parents or carer and happily change into their indoor shoes with ease. Most children are confident as they wave their parents good bye, and engage in their chosen activity with their friends. They are able to concentrate and sustain their interest in their chosen activity. Children initiate their own play and staff use their observational skills to join and extend. For example, a group of children created their role play of a police van, loading and preparing excitedly as they arranged seats, and packed a picnic before setting off. Children are challenged as staff ask how many seats will be required or what they need to take on their picnic. They use their imagination well to extend their play packing a variety of pretend food items before getting on their bus. Children have developed very good relationships with staff, and confidently approach adults with books and enjoy being cuddled as they are read to. This enables children to learn most effectively because they feel supported by adults they trust.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff have a generally good understanding of the Foundation Stage, and the stepping stones, and how children learn. This enables them to plan a wide range of interesting activities which relate to children's interests. Plans show what the learning intentions for the children are across six areas of learning. Staff use their observations to monitor the progress children are making through the stepping stones. However, plans do not identify what the children can do, limiting their progress in some aspects of their learning. Staff use effective methods such as ensuring group time is well planned to make maximum use of time when children are fully engrossed and are excited to learn. For example, all children are very attentive as they listen to the story of 'Goldilocks'. Children enjoy having their learning extended as staff support them in their activities and ask open ended questions such as 'how?' and 'what do you think?' This encourages children to think and extend on the knowledge they already have. However, as the plans do not clearly identify the learning objective,

reflect the children's starting point or how they are to be challenged, therefore monitoring children's progress is not effective.

Children show a good awareness of space as they manoeuvre furniture such as small chairs within the hall. They confidently build towers using various shapes and filling in gaps such as the inner semi-circle into one whole circle. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. They have developed a very good relationship with staff and have a positive attitude towards others and themselves. Some children have made firm friends and enjoy negotiating role play. For example, two girls enjoyed taking their pretend babies for a walk to the park and then when they were back in the home corner they decided together that they would dress up. Some children confidently manage their own self-care as they successfully put on their outdoor shoes in preparation for outdoor play.

Children use language well to communicate and share with the group items beginning with the letter 'q' brought from home. Other children are interested and listen to what their peer groups have to say. Children use books effectively as they turn pages when read to in a cosy book corner. They enjoy being told stories and listen with interest. They enjoy linking sounds of letters and their names and practice saying the letters in their names. Most children recognise their names and are eager to collect their name cards from the mat upon arrival. Some children are beginning to write letters. Children are given opportunities to practice their writing skills in the writing corner. However, older and more able children are not consistently challenged to develop their interest in letters. Children are developing a good understanding of size as they listen to the story of 'Goldilocks'. Props are effective in developing children's mathematical language such as bigger and smaller than. They learn to calculate as they sing familiar rhymes such as 'Five Little Ducks'. Children are delighted as they correctly guess 'four' when one is taken away. Children develop a good awareness of shape and space as they freely complete jigsaw puzzles and construct with soft foam shapes. They learn to group numbers appropriately using small teddies. Some children successfully count to '20'. However, there are missed opportunities during their daily routine such as snack time and group time to build on combining and comparing numbers.

Children are developing their knowledge and understanding of the world as they learn to explore technology. They are keen to use the pretend microwave to prepare food in the home corner, make toast and pretend to iron. Some children are able to demonstrate how competent they are at using the computer. Children develop a good sense of time as they talk to the staff about their home life or about their journey to pre-school. They enjoy stencilling paintings of their homes and link their drawing to their homes effectively. Children develop their knowledge of other cultures through topic work. Children enjoy being creative and are developing their skills. They carry out a variety of art and craft work and have free access to painting. They freely explore the texture of dry sand and use a variety of tools in the sand tray to extend their imaginative play. Some children enjoy creating different sounds using a variety of musical instruments such as a triangle, drums and tambourines. Most children use their imagination very well as they play in the home corner and dress up in a variety of outfits such as a bride carrying a bouquet of flowers.

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

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled. They are warmly greeted by staff who are very well deployed and make themselves available to both parents and children, which makes the children feel valued. Valuable information about children individual needs are included in the children's records. Parents share information informally on a daily basis when dropping off their children or when collecting them, this ensures that all carers are working together to meet the needs of the children. Consequently, children feel secure and begin to feel a sense of belonging. Children have access to a wide range of resources which promote positive images and children extend their knowledge of the wider world through topic work such as group story time about 'myself'. Children are excited as they correctly acknowledge and compare the differences in people, which helps children to develop a positive attitude towards others and feel valued themselves. Staff are very well deployed to ensure that all children can take part in all activities at their own level.

Children generally behave very well, and staff use good strategies to promote children's behaviour. For example, staff give clear explanations of right and wrong allowing children to think for themselves and encouraging children to apologise and share. Staff are very good role models and provide a calm and caring atmosphere and show how much they value the children by constantly praising and encouraging children. Children relish being given responsibilities such as the groups helper of the day which develops their confidence. They are polite at the snack table and are heard thanking staff and each other as they are handed a drink or the plate of fruit. They patiently wait at the snack table for their turn and all engage happily in sharing conversations with each other or with adults. Children confidently approach adults for support, such as asking staff for help when changing shoes and putting on coats. As a result, children are learning right from wrong, they are respectful, and have a positive attitude to others.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of nursery education is good. Parents are provided with information about the setting. Information about the Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' framework is displayed in the hall. Parents are invited to coffee mornings and the group is set up as a working pre-school so that all parents are given the opportunity to see the activities their children are involved in. Information about the children's progress is kept in individual children's folders which the parents can see on request. A parents' rota enables parents to be involved in their children's care and gives them an opportunity to see how the group is run. Parents receive regular newsletters which informs them of the topic their children are working on, which encourages them to be actively involved in their child's learning. Most parents reported that they received sufficient information about the group. They also said how happy they are with the group, and found staff to be very supporting.

Parents are fully informed of the group's complaints procedure which is in line with the current regulation and included in the parents' policies and procedures.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children's care and welfare is very well promoted because staff clearly value children. Most staff have a good knowledge and understanding of child development. Effective procedures to safeguard children such as carrying out appropriate checks and monitoring staff are in place. A high ratio of staff and an effective key group system enable children to leave their carer or parent with ease and the consistency in care leads to children feeling safe and secure. Therefore, children's care, learning and play is positively supported by staff. Staff are very well deployed, thus contributing to children's good health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Most required documents to promote children's welfare and support the good practice are in place, and effectively shared with parents.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. All members of staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and this underpins the smooth running of the group. All staff work very well as a team, and reported how supportive the management team are. Training needs are constantly reviewed at meetings and the training manual is available at all times. All staff are fully included in the planning of activities, and team meetings ensure that they are kept up to date of any changes. All staff cascade down any training they have attended to the rest of the team.

Overall, the provision meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the provider agreed to: extend the observation sheets; review the staff induction programme and daily staff attendance records; improve assessment recording to ensure there is an overall view of the children's progress; review planning and practice with regards to outdoor physical play and ICT; and review the recording of short term plans to include all areas of the Foundation Stage.

The provider has developed individual folders for children to monitor the progress children are making through the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage and is currently reviewing the monitoring the progress of younger children by using the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Therefore, observations of children's progress are well recorded to ensure that there is an overall view of the children's achievements. Staff attendance records continue to be developed to ensure records are appropriately maintained to keep children safe. There are clear induction procedures in place to ensure that all staff are clear about their roles, which enable them to actively participate in promoting children's care.

Outdoor activities are now incorporated into the daily planning to ensure children stay healthy. Children freely and competently access the computer, and freely play with pretend electrical play resources such as a microwave, telephone and toaster, thus developing their knowledge of technology. The provider continues to develop their Foundation Stage planning to ensure that all areas of learning are covered and will include children's starting point and how the older or more able child is to be challenged.

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

Since the registration 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):

- develop the fire drill procedure to ensure it is appropriately logged

#### **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):

- develop staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage
- develop planning to show how staff build on what children know already, and how activities are adapted to suit the different ages and needs of all 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)