

Noah's Ark Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205332
Inspection date	12 June 2007
Inspector	Christine Lynn Williams

Setting Address	Matchborough Church Centre, Ryton Close, Matchborough, Redditch, Worcs, B98 0EW
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Registered person	Elizabeth Mary Kuriger
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Nursery opened in 1996 and is a committee-run group that is linked to a local church. It operates from five rooms within Matchborough Church Centre, in a residential area of Redditch. A maximum of 35 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:15 to 16:30 during school term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery serves the local area.

There are currently 70 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, 50 children receive funding for early education. This includes funding for two-year-olds. Children attend from the local area and for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 10 staff who work directly with children. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications. In addition, three support staff are employed, along with a part-time sports teacher. The setting receives support from a local authority mentor teacher.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Constant evaluation highlights the importance of maintaining children's good health and is given an exceptionally high priority within the nursery. All aspects of children's health has been carefully considered and positive steps taken to prevent the spread of infection. Children are offered sensitive and highly effective support when learning about good personal hygiene such as hand washing and toileting and so move to independence at an early age. Nappy changing is carried out in a way which recognises and respects children's privacy and written advice sheets are given to parents to help them to effectively encourage their children towards toilet training. Most staff are first aid trained and there are excellent procedures in place for dealing with any accident, administering medication and initially gathering information from parents concerning individual children's health needs.

An excellent range of activities and learning opportunities ensure children are developing extremely positive attitudes to the importance of staying healthy. They show highly advanced levels of physical skills due to the time and support they are given to practise coordination, control and moving their bodies in different ways. Each day children are offered a wealth of robust physical exercise, both indoors and in the nursery garden. Weekly dance and sports sessions from specialist teachers, movement and music sessions and action songs are enjoyed with joy and excitement. Three and four-year-olds are physically very confident due to the many activities provided for them to move creatively. For example, they ran around the garden pretending to be butterflies, used ropes to create large patterns and crawled and scrambled when hiding in their den. They practise balancing, crawling and climbing on large apparatus and show a keen sense of personal space as they play alongside each other, pedalling their bikes skilfully to avoid obstacles and controlling their speed so that they do not bump into their friends. There is a vast range of different and interesting tools to use and this helps children to develop co-ordination and excellent hand and finger control. For example, they use hammers and woodwork tools in the garden, often plant, rake, water and dig in the vegetable patch and use scissors, paint brushes, rollers and pens freely throughout the day.

An exceptional level of innovative and creative ideas have been used to encourage children to know what foods are good for them and to expand their understanding of how food and regular exercise go hand in hand with good health. For example, they enjoy a variety of healthy and nutritious snacks which are often linked to their learning topics and have mini sports sessions each week when exercise and what they eat and drink are linked together. A collaborative approach is used between home and the nursery to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables, with newsletters and healthy eating workshops effectively helping parents and staff to work together. Children also plant and grow their own vegetables such as carrots, radishes, beans and tomatoes, which are then taken home to share with their parents. Children have a choice of bringing packed lunches from home or enjoying well balanced hot meals each day and positive actions and meaningful discussions are used extensively to promote a healthy lifestyle. Drinks are always available and older children are able to independently pour out their own drinks of water throughout the sessions. Mealtimes are relaxed, social occasions when children sit together to eat and build on their socialising skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

A rich and stimulating learning environment is provided which has been specifically designed to make the most of all learning opportunities and is based around developing the best outcomes for each child. Colourful displays and children's craft work are used extensively throughout the building to provide interest, stimulation and to show children that what they do is valued. Children benefit from using a stimulating range of toys and resources that are carefully selected to reflect their individual learning needs and to provide rewarding and exciting experiences. There is a high ratio of well qualified adults to the number of children present, and staff are carefully deployed, ensuring children are always well supervised.

Staff are extremely proactive in their approach to protecting children and this results in safety being carefully considered in relation to the children attending. Accident records are carefully reviewed each term and evaluated so that staff are aware of which children are more likely to experience minor accidents and the areas of the nursery in which these are likely to happen. As a result, staff can take extra precautions or plan ahead to help individual children develop the strategies and skills that will help them avoid bumping their heads or falling over. Children are constantly well supervised and taught safety as part of their everyday activities. Easily understood signs, such as warning triangles and think symbols, are used effectively around the nursery to highlight possible dangers and to help children understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, directional arrows are placed on the stairs to remind children to walk on the right hand side when going up and down, so that they do not bump into someone coming in the opposite direction. Topics and themes further enhance children's understanding of safety and are used effectively to introduce them to road safety and to know which adults they can trust, such as the local policeman.

Adults have a comprehensive understanding of how to protect children, and recognise that this is their first priority. They are vigilant, aware of the signs and symptoms of possible abuse and know the correct procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff develop warm and caring relationships with the children in their care and this is very evident. The keyworker system is exceptional in identifying children's strengths and weaknesses and in providing regularly reviewed information that helps staff to provide children with individual support and personalised learning. Younger children's needs are well met as staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to specifically plan for this age group, and all activities are adapted to ensure they are able to join in at their own level. Key workers ensure young children's learning needs are identified and targeted and provide a caring and supportive atmosphere that helps them to settle quickly and begin to grow in confidence. Staff are attentive, join-in with children's activities and playfully respond to children's actions, expressions and what they say. As a result, young children learn to socialise well, and are busy and engaged in stimulating and challenging activities. This ensures the younger children have a wealth of opportunities to develop and build on their existing skills and knowledge as they play alongside and learn from their older friends.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Three and four-year-olds are making excellent progress in all areas of learning. They are curious and inquisitive and staff encourage them to think for themselves and to develop their skills. A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's active listening skills, confidence and self-esteem and this has a very positive impact on all areas of their learning. Planning is comprehensive and highly effective, because it builds on what children have learnt in order to move them forward. Children contribute to their own learning during weekly planning meetings with staff, and on-going observations and assessments of learning successfully ensure that staff gain an in-depth knowledge of each child's strengths and any areas for development. As a result, children's learning is planned for effectively, using exciting and stimulating activities that children want to become involved in. Staff work closely with children to join in and spark their imaginations. They value children's creativity and independent learning and organise the day to make the most of their concentration. They are attentive, responsive, give clear explanations and offer challenging questions that make children think.

Personal, social and emotional development underpins the rest of children's learning and is a particular strength within the setting. As a result, children are confident, self-assured and often show excitement and pleasure as they play and learn. They are given a strong voice, their views, feelings and opinions are valued and acted upon and this makes them eager to learn and independent. They are always treated sensitively, given choices, asked for their opinions and so show closeness, trust and a fondness of the adults who support them. A variety of toys are used creatively and effectively to develop children's sense of responsibility, pride and the sharing of experiences or to create a quiet, caring atmosphere when children can listen and respond effectively. Children's self-care and independence is supported exceedingly well and they behave exceptionally due to the wide praise they receive. For example, they are chosen to carry out simple jobs such as taking messages to adults and are then applauded for successfully completing the task.

Children's learning in the area of communication, language and literacy is exceptional. Children are confident speakers who use language widely during all activities to negotiate and express their ideas and feelings. They listen enthusiastically to stories, joining in with familiar phrases and predicting what may happen next. They learn that words have a real purpose as they are shown new words in books and on the weather board and many children have learnt to recognise their own names and those of their friends or family. Book trails around the nursery and in the garden encourage children to refer to story and information books as they discover new things and imaginative and effective methods help them to link sounds to letters through a phonic learning system. A wealth of inspiring activities are used to help them to make marks and many four-year-olds can form recognisable letters and write their own names.

Children are becoming very confident mathematicians who practise and refine their counting skills with a wealth of stimulating first-hand experiences. Number rhymes, puppets and games are used creatively to help them predict and recognise numbers and count in sequence. As a result, some four-year-olds are able to count to 20 or more and are beginning to solve simple, practical number problems such as placing the right number of ladybirds on a numbered leaf and understanding how this changes when one or more is added or taken away. Staff support this extremely well, helping the older and more able children to recognise that there are different ways of finding a solution, and listening and valuing children's ideas and suggestions. Children see numbers, use number squares, match, sort and count at every opportunity. They constantly hear staff using mathematical language and show a good understanding of shape and size, such as circles, spirals, big and little.

Opportunities for children to explore and experiment are extensive and fully support their learning in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world. They have free access to paint, water and sand play, use many different paint techniques and use the garden widely to discover new things, observe and question. For example, children planted geraniums in the garden, watered the plants, noticed that the carrots and beans they had planted had grown and became fascinated as they rubbed mint leaves through their fingers and enjoyed the strong smell. Trips to the park and local pond further enhance their experiences as they hug trees or feed the ducks and they find out about the wider world as they discuss where they have been on holiday and pin up postcards next to a map. They bring their pets into the setting to discuss how they are cared for and learn the importance of being gentle with the plants and insects they encounter in the nursery garden. Children have excellent opportunities to design and make things with a variety of different shaped and sized resources and they make wide use of remote control and programmable toys as well as desktop and laptop computers.

Children's creative development is highly valued and is threaded through everything they do. They express themselves freely through paint, drawing, music and they often make up their own games and stories and act out familiar roles or pretend to be the characters they are learning about during topic work. For example, children showed real delight in dressing up as a butterfly and running freely around the garden. A garden den sparks their imagination and helps them to express their different ideas, thoughts and feelings as they crawl inside to make up a game and act it out in their 'secret' place. Music is used effectively to inspire children during dance sessions or to help them know when it is time to tidy away their toys and they join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes and often sing spontaneously as they play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individuality is highly valued and staff help children feel good about themselves by constantly providing positive support, praise and encouragement that builds self-esteem and makes children feel important. Children's interests, understandings and emotions are given a top priority and their individual needs and personalities are always recognised and affirmed. Staff work closely with the children to develop new ideas and skills. They are given a high level of choice and their views and opinions are listened to and acted upon. Special relationships are built between children and adults due to the exceptionally high staffing levels and the dynamic key worker system. This results in children developing an extremely positive sense of themselves within a close knit, caring community. Children behave exceptionally well as they learn to consider others, make strong friendships and grow in self-esteem. They know what is expected of them because staff explain this and use lots of praise, signs, symbols and stickers to reward their positive behaviour. Four-year-olds are given a strong sense of responsibility as they are encouraged to carry out simple tasks, set good role models to the younger children in the group and show concern and respect for others.

Children develop positive views about others because of the excellent use of topics and themes which help them to value the different aspects of their own and other people's lives. Different festivals and cultural celebrations are planned to be meaningful and many interesting resources, playthings and artefacts are provided to help children consider and recognise the diversity of the wider community. For example, the children carried out a dragon dance during Chinese New Year celebrations, practised Chinese writing and enjoyed noodles, crispy seaweed and prawn crackers eaten with chop sticks. Some children attending have English as a second language and staff work closely with parents to help support these children and to gain an understanding of their backgrounds and cultures. Arrangements for helping children with

learning difficulties and disabilities are also highly significant in ensuring that all children are fully included and that the outcomes for their overall development and learning are exceptional. Staff are confident in using a variety of techniques to meet the differing needs of children and constantly evaluate their progress. This means they are able to identify any possible problem areas early, and to work collaboratively with both parents and outside professionals to gain the best possible support for each child in their care. As a result, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The relationship developed with parents is quite exceptional and they make many positive comments about the level of care and involvement offered. This results in parents and staff working together to provide the best possible outcomes for children. Staff are very proactive in involving parents in their children's learning and in the life of the nursery. Parenting workshops, offered on such things as behaviour management, healthy eating and how children learn through their play, help parents to work alongside their children and develop an understanding of how they learn and develop. Parents as helpers sessions further encourage parents to become fully involved in their child's life at nursery, while special 'Dads and Lads' sessions aim to encourage fathers to become more actively involved. Parents receive high quality information about the setting's aims and practice as well as details about the Foundation Stage curriculum. They are kept well informed about what their children do and the progress they are making and extensive links have been developed between home and the nursery. For example, parents take home books to share with their children and build on what their children have learnt at nursery through special home activity sheets. Parents are welcome in the nursery at any time and daily chats with staff and key workers ensure a constant flow of two-way information. Open days and special sessions to talk about children's achievements are regularly arranged and parents of three and four-year-olds receive a written report on their child's progress and a copy of the local authority's Nursery Education Transfer document before their children move on to school. Parents' views and concerns are always respected and acknowledged and effective systems are in place for ensuring any complaints are handled in a timely and efficient manner.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

All aspects of the nursery's organisation is outstanding. Staff and parents are highly valued and work collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for children is achieved. Staff are experienced, knowledgeable and clear about their roles and responsibilities. The staffing group is exceptional in terms of their dedication and knowledge base and this is reflected in the very high commitment to training and on-going staff development within the nursery. Managers have a clear vision for the future and work tirelessly to ensure the learning outcomes for all children in their care are exceptionally high. Extensive self-assessment and reflective practice lies at the heart of the nursery's organisation and this ensures practice is constantly evolving in line with the individual needs of the children attending.

Leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding. The setting is run by well qualified and experienced joint supervisors who lead and inspire staff. There is a considerable commitment to assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the educational programme offered and high levels of dedication and enthusiasm shown by all adults who work in the setting. Staff work closely together to focus on all aspects of children's learning and to reflect the strong commitment made to the local community, including children's parents. This ensures all children make excellent progress, irrespective of their starting points. Records, documents, planning and assessments of children's learning are extensive, purposeful and systematic in ensuring

that all children reach their full potential and become self-motivated and confident learners who relish the wide range of stimulating and thrilling learning experiences offered. Innovative and imaginative leadership and management lies at the heart of this highly successful nursery. Views about the setting's strengths and weaknesses are constantly sought from staff, parents and the children themselves and this encourages continuous improvement and a high level of forward thinking. Overall the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that food consumed by children was stored at a correct temperature. Children's health has been further protected by ensuring that refrigerator thermometer readings are now taken twice a day and recorded along with the temperature probe readings for hot food provided from an outside caterer. This ensures that all children's food is stored at the correct temperature and so reduces the risk of tummy upsets.

Nursery Education.

In addition the provider agreed to consider developing opportunities to allow young children to develop their sense of personal space. Excellent progress has been made in helping young children to learn how to prevent bumping into each other. Lots of 'stop' and 'start' games have been introduced to help young children learn to look carefully as an aid to knowing when to stop moving, while mini sport sessions have been used effectively to help children learn how to manoeuvre around objects and to control their speed.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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