

New Ark Play Association

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	256791
Inspection date	17 March 2008
Inspector	Susan Riley / Diana Pidgeon
Setting Address	New Ark Adventure Playground, Hill Close, Reeves Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 5LZ
Telephone number	01733 340 605
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Registered person	New Ark Play Association Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

New Ark Play Association first opened in 1975 and has been at its present premises since 1981. It operates from a large site in Eastfield, Peterborough which includes a small farm, nature area with eco centre and adventure playground. Along with New Ark Playgroup, the association also includes an open access scheme. New Ark Play Association serves mainly the local community.

A maximum of 38 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 15:00 during school term times. There are sessions from 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:00. The older children have the opportunity to stay for one full day a week from 09:00 to 15:00.

A maximum of 100 children may attend the open access scheme at any one time. This is open each weekday after school until 18:30, apart from Monday and Friday when the scheme closes at 18:00. On a Friday the scheme also offers a session from 18:00 to 19:30 for children over nine years of age only. During the school holidays the open access scheme is open Monday to Friday from 10:00 to 12:00 and 13:30 to 16:30 during the winter holidays and 10:00 to 12:00 and 14:00 to 17:00 during the summer holidays.

For the pre-school there are currently 80 children from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 72 children receive funding for nursery education. For the open access scheme there are currently 272 children from five to under 16 years on roll. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a number of children who have English as an additional language.

The setting employs 26 full and part-time staff who work directly with the children. Of these, 21 hold appropriate qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. There are also a number of volunteers who help within the groups. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is mainly promoted as the setting takes positive steps to promote the children's good health, and encourages them to begin to take responsibility for meeting their own health needs. For example, children are encouraged to wash their hands appropriately, after using the toilet, before eating and after touching the animals. Some positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures are taken when children are ill so that health needs are met. At certain times children are supervised with hand washing and paper towels are used. However, the use of the communal towels in the toilet area does put children at risk from cross-infection.

The children's welfare is promoted because the provider can respond to accidents appropriately as current first aid certificates are held by most staff. The first aid box is up to date and easily available and accidents are recorded. However, some accident records do not contain sufficient information to fully protect children and some records have not been signed by the parents or carers. This puts children at risk as parents are not fully aware of what has happened to their child. Suitable medication procedures are in place to fully protect children and all children have parental consent in place for the seeking of emergency medical treatment or advice.

The children are adequately nourished. They have good opportunities to learn about healthy eating because the setting provides children with regular drinks and foods that are nutritious and comply with their dietary and religious needs. The children are learning about healthy living through a range of good activities that develop the children's understanding of what foods are good for them. Children are provided with a wide range of fruits for their snack and this is presented in an attractive manner with bite-sized portions encouraging children to try all the different fruits and vegetables. The open access children are provided with a choice of evening snack. For example, toast with various toppings and pasta dishes.

The pre-school children take turns in the preparation of the snack and discussions are held as to why fruit is good for them. For the children who stop for lunch, the parents provide a packed lunch and they are advised on the safe storage of these. For example, to put an ice pack inside the lunch bag. Children are learning about healthy living through a range of activities and experiences. For example, they take part in baking activities and children within the eco centre have made 'damper bread' and cooked this for themselves over an open log fire. The children also grow their own vegetables and herbs.

The children have excellent opportunities to experience physical activities and develop their skills. Children's physical development is very well covered throughout the whole facility. The main ethos of the setting is about the natural world and being out of doors. The setting provides the younger children with appropriate clothing for all weathers and children are encouraged to be out in the fresh air and to be active. The older children have access to a large adventure playground.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and are very well cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. This is because the setting ensures that the environment gives children good access to a comprehensive range of facilities that successfully promotes children's development. The premises are very welcoming and child centred. For the pre-school children the premises are secure at all times.

The children always use a wide range of equipment that is suitable and safe. This is because the setting provides furniture, equipment and toys which are appropriate to the age range of children attending. They are of suitable design and condition and are well maintained. Children can safely access resources and make their own choices; this helps to promote their independence. The setting does use natural resources but risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of the children. All equipment is checked daily and a suitable cleaning programme is in place for the equipment, resources and toys. This ensures children are protected.

Children's safety is well promoted because the provider takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting. The provider ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents and minimise identified risks to children. Detailed risk assessments are carried out and daily safety checks are undertaken. Regular fire evacuation procedures are carried out for all children; this helps them to fully understand what they need to do in an emergency. Children are learning to keep themselves safe through the staff offering gentle reminders and allowing the children to take safe supervised risks. For example, children use sharp knives but they are shown how to hold them correctly as they help with the preparation of the fruit for the pre-school children's snack. Children use the 'zebra crossing' as they push their prams over the imaginary road, looking both ways. This demonstrates their understanding of road safety.

The children are well protected from harm because staff have a sound understanding of their role in child protection. They are able to put appropriate procedures into practice. Children are cared for by adults who are vetted and have relevant experience, knowledge and skills. For the pre-school children a keyworker is allocated for each child enabling them to bond and feel safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children are happy and settled. They enjoy their time at the setting, and freely select activities according to their needs and interest. Children are confident to approach the staff to ask questions or for help and support. The younger children enjoy close relationships with their carers and readily seek comfort and contact with them, increasing their sense of well-being. The staff are skilled at encouraging children to extend their experiences, and at listening and talking with them. This raises children's self-esteem and confidence. The daily routine helps and encourages children to be independent.

All children are very involved in their play and learning and demonstrate good levels of concentration. They make their own decisions about their play as they choose from a wealth of activities and experiences. For example, the school-aged children enjoy themselves as they model with clay, make dens and socialise with their friends. All children increase their knowledge and develop new skills throughout their play. For example, through a planned activity the school-aged children are learning about St Patrick's Day. Children make positive relationships as the staff are very interested in what children do and say. The social skills of children are promoted through the joint snack and lunch times, as children sit together in their small social groups. Staff also promote turn-taking and the sharing of resources with the younger children. This helps children build up good relationships with their peers. The younger children are beginning to distinguish between right from wrong through the gentle reminders and the positive praise they receive from staff.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how children learn through play. A particular feature of the provision is the excellent use of the outdoor environment to provide a wealth of exciting opportunities for children to learn through practical activities. Staff recognise that children learn in different ways and plan a full curriculum for the indoor and outdoor areas. Activities outdoors provide opportunities for children to work on a large scale and to experiment with natural materials. Staff make observations of the children as they play and assess their learning. These inform future planning and evidence the good progression children make towards the early learning goals. Planning is in place for each session although the format varies across the different areas. Whilst staff in the eco centre have clearly documented learning objectives and possibilities for differentiating activities for more able children this is not a feature of planning in other areas of the provision. This means not all staff are clear of the identified learning intentions for each day. Overall, teaching captures the interests of the children so that the experiences offered allow them to learn through exploration and independent enquiry. Staff take care not to intervene or impose themselves upon children's play but step in and support children when they are in need of some guidance. At times, staff work closely with small groups of children or one-to-one so that children benefit from an adult's undivided attention. Large group activities are often well led and most successfully keep all children fully engaged.

Children are extremely interested and motivated to learn. They are always busy and keen to get involved, using the resources provided in imaginative ways. Their independence is promoted, for example, as they learn to pour their own drinks and make choices in what they do. Some children concentrate well as they persevere with tasks such as completing a jigsaw puzzle. Older children play cooperatively with their friends, negotiating rules for their games and taking turns to use tools and equipment. They develop a caring nature as they help to nurture the animals on the farm and show respect for the wildlife in the garden. Children's communication skills develop well. They are beginning to learn to listen to others and to take turns in conversations. This is ably supported by the use of a listening bear at group times. Children constantly learn new vocabulary and use spoken language to talk about what they have done and intend to do. Some children make insightful comments that show they learn a great deal from their play. Children enjoy listening to stories and begin to join in with some repeated phrases. They enjoy looking at their home-made books and handle them appropriately, although generally they do not choose to look at books independently. Children enjoy making marks in a wide range of ways and some are beginning to write for their own purposes. All children are beginning to recognise their own names on cards used within the settings, although there is limited further meaningful print for them to see in the main building.

Children competently count by rote and use mathematical language within their play. They recognise and name simple shapes and carefully measure bird seed to make the feeder half full. Children solve problems as they choose the right length of plank to span a gap and estimate how much water to add to make the mud into a required consistency. They use a wide range of natural materials and learn about the environment through the excellent use of the whole centre. For example, children develop a good understanding of seasonal change and have first-hand experience of watching animals grow. Children are observant and quickly spot worms in the soil and know how to handle these with care. They benefit from well-planned activities that widen their understanding of the world and often replicate these in their play. For example, children independently make a volcano by digging in the stones and use water from a hosepipe to show the lava flow. They work out how to fix materials together. For example, they build walls using bricks and their own mud cement. Indoors, children use recycled materials to make their own models and they build with a range of small and large construction sets.

Children develop coordination and control of their bodies as they use a wide range of small and large equipment in all areas of the setting. For example, children learn how to master the use of sticky tape when making their models. They cut using scissors, roll dough and use cutters with increasing confidence and control. Outdoors, children push prams, ride wheeled toys and work on a large scale. For example, children construct a bridge using large wooden blocks and planks. They practise their balancing skills as they walk across the bridge they have built. Children understand that to play outdoors in all weathers they have to wear appropriate clothing. They also understand why it is important to feed birds in winter and why some animals hibernate. Children enjoy being creative as they paint outdoors on a large scale. They show a good understanding of colour and predict accurately what will happen when colours are mixed. They begin to make up their own tunes as they use natural materials such as coconut shells and old tins to make music outdoors. Children also enjoy singing familiar rhymes, joining in action songs and dancing with streamers. Some children develop imaginative scenarios within their play and photographs show how the role play area is varied, for example, a 'shop' and a 'hospital'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. They are cared for by staff who work very well with parents to meet individual needs and ensure all children are fully included in the setting. For example, key words and picture cards are used to help children communicate. Children gain a sense of belonging as they join in the group time activities, or find their name when they enter the pre-school, or see their photographs and artwork displayed around the different areas.

Children's good behaviour is appropriately fostered by the staff's sensitive intervention and positive reinforcement. This helps to raise children's self-esteem and respect for others. Children help to care for the animals in the farm and plants in the eco garden, this helps children become aware of the needs of living things. Children are encouraged to help each other. For example, having found their own two discs for the 'Easter Egg Hunt' they willingly help their friends to find theirs.

Children are being made aware of the wider society through the activities and resources that the staff provide. For example, books and posters around the setting, and the dolls and small world play figures that the children use within their imaginative play. The younger children are beginning to play harmoniously with each other, through the staff's reassurance and encouragement. Older children play cooperatively with their peers. Staff use positive praise to

reinforce children's good behaviour. Consequently children develop an understanding of right from wrong. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. The children who attend the open access scheme have devised their own rules and these are displayed for all to see. This ensures that children have a good understanding of what is expected from them and others.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. They have frequent, informal discussions with staff about their children's progress and regular opportunities are provided for parents to come into the setting to help or for social occasions. Parents receive valuable information about the current themes for learning through regular newsletters and notices. Children benefit from being able to take home a book to share with their family and parents are involved in the organisation of these library sessions. Also children enjoy inviting a pre-school bear home to spend time with them and then sharing their adventures with the whole group of children. This also contributes to children's wider understanding of the world. Parents speak positively about the group and the steps taken to prepare children for the transition into school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are protected because the recruitment and vetting procedure are rigorous and ensure that all staff and committee have been vetted and are safe and suitable to be in contact with them. Children benefit because managers, staff and volunteers have the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience to do their jobs which ensures that children's needs are met.

Children benefit from effective organisation of the setting. It ensures that children's health, safety and well-being are met. The management of the setting is mainly proactive in ensuring the practice of all staff contributes positively to children's good health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. Staff are well deployed whilst caring for the children. Appropriate ratios are maintained at all times. The setting has suitable cover arrangements in place and additional staff are employed as required. For example, a cook who comes in the evening to prepare the tea for the children who are attending the open access scheme, a cleaner and an administrator. This ensures that the qualified staff spend their time with the children.

All policies and procedures protect children sufficiently and are effectively implemented by staff to promote all the outcomes for children. Records are readily available, suitably organised and kept confidential. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management is good. The manager has a good overview of the setting as a whole and most day-to-day responsibility is delegated to the three supervisors who each manage their own team of practitioners. Each group runs generally effectively with their own particular strengths. However, there is currently limited sharing of good practice and cooperative working. For example, sometimes one group packs away activities after a morning session and the afternoon group then bring these out again only a short time later. Staff evaluate their planning and children's responses to the activities on a daily basis and discuss their findings at the planning meetings for their group. Overall, the setting takes some action to monitor their own practice and takes on board advice from the local authority.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school agreed to record the arrival and departure times of the children if they arrive late or left early from the session. The staff now record these times if they are outside the normal session. This ensures the safety of the children as the staff are fully aware of who is on site at any one time.

At the last inspection of nursery education the pre-school agreed to consider improving the evaluation of activities. Currently, staff evaluate the effectiveness of activities on a daily basis and take this into consideration when planning for the future. This helps staff focus on what was successful and where children need more time to consolidate their learning. It has an overall positive impact on children's long-term achievements.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection Ofsted received a complaint which raised concerns about National Standard 2: Organisation and National Standard 6: Safety. Ofsted conducted an unannounced visit to the provision. As a result of the investigation the provider was given actions under National Standard 2 to ensure that accurate times of arrival and departure are recorded for children attending the after school club; and National Standard 6 to assess the risks to children, and take action to minimise these; this particularly refers to protruding rusty nails in the outdoor play area. Ofsted received a satisfactory response from the provider and they continue to be qualified for registration.

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 the registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection, with reference to the use of the communal towels in the toilet area
- ensure accident records contain sufficient information to fully protect children and that all records are signed by parents.

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 the planning for the pre-school sessions to better inform staff of the intended learning objectives and to show how activities can be differentiated for individual children
- develop further the monitoring systems to ensure good practice is shared between the groups providing nursery education.

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