

Noah's Ark Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY269481
Inspection date	11 December 2007
Inspector	Michelle W. Smith
Setting Address	The Old School, Wharf Lane, Brewwood, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 9BG
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Registered person	Stephanie Burns
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 satisfactory. 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 Nursery opened in 2003. It operates from the old school building within the grounds of St Mary's Church in Brewood, South Staffordshire. A maximum of 16 children may attend the setting at any one time. The setting is open each weekday during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 12:30 and 12:30 until 15:15. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 30 children aged from two to four years on roll. Of these, 16 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and wider catchment area. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs five members of staff, including the owner who works as the manager. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children follow personal hygiene routines such as hand washing consistently and with increasing levels of independence. They squeeze soap into their hand, lather well and then dry their hands competently with individual towels. More able children show a strong understanding of why such routines are important as they talk merrily about washing away the germs, confidently stating that they 'will get sick' if they put 'dirty germs' into their mouth. Clear procedures for sick and infectious children help to prevent the spread of infection. Accident systems are fully understood by all staff and all staff are trained to administer first aid. This safeguards children's well-being. Children are learning about the importance of a healthy lifestyle through well-planned activities which include health, food and hygiene. They grow vegetables such as carrots in a designated patch in the garden which they eat when harvested. In addition, children bring in vegetables from home and use supplies from the setting to make and then eat nutritious soup. Children use resources such as jigsaws which depict healthy and less nutritional food. This helps them to develop a very positive attitude towards food and self-sufficiency.

Children eat a well balanced diet which takes account of their individual dietary needs and preferences. All children bring their own packed lunch from home. Through newsletters and general discussions, parents are asked to provide healthy food, so helping to ensure children receive consistent messages about the benefits of healthy eating. Drinks such as milkshake and fruit such as apples are available to children through regular snack times. All meal times are very sociable. Children sit talking happily to staff and their friends as they serve their own snack, for example, they spoon raisins from a central container into their bowl and pour their own drinks using child-sized jugs. This helps children to develop independence and to begin to manage their own portions.

Children have daily, unrushed opportunities to explore, test and develop their physical skills in the superb outdoor play area. They ride on scooters using their feet to scoot themselves along, avoiding obstacles whilst giggling as they enjoy seeing how fast they can go. In addition, they show delight as they wriggle on specially designed bikes, so helping to further their coordination skills in an innovative way. Through using natural materials such as wooden beams, children develop successful balancing skills. They control their body well, steadily moving from one stepping stone to another, concentrating intensely on their movements. The outdoor play environment is used with success to progress all areas of learning. Children paint the external walls of the setting using rollers as brushes and draw patterns and letters with chalk on the ground. They push their dolls in pushchairs around the delightful garden, taking them into the wooden playhouse to care for them further. This makes outdoor learning fun.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Staff always greet each child with a welcoming smile and take the time to point out to children where their favourite equipment is displayed, so helping every child to feel special. All children play in a consistently clean and well maintained environment. Staff have a dedicated approach to ensuring the suitability of all of the equipment, for example, the surface of the outdoor climbing and balancing area has recently been covered with extra clean children's bark. In addition, bright, colourful wall displays

and child-sized furniture such as comfortable reading benches help to create a space where they can relax and play comfortably.

Children play in a generally safe and very secure environment. Effective measures make sure that no unauthorised person is able to enter the setting and a safe collection policy ensures that children are only collected by named persons. Staff work in a proactive way for the large majority of the time to ensure children's safety. Consequently, children are beginning to understand how to keep themselves safe, for example, they know where they need to wait whilst preparing for outdoor play and regularly take part in fire drills. However, on occasions obstructions such as tables and chairs prevent the playroom fire door from opening fully. This means that children's safety is not maximised in the event of a fire.

Children are reasonably well protected from harm. Staff have attended child protection training and a designated person has responsibility for liaison with external agencies. All staff demonstrate through discussion a good awareness of what action they are required to take if they have concerns about any of the children. However, the written child protection statement does not have full regard for the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. In addition, the procedure for staff to follow should a colleague be alleged of abuse is not individual to the setting. This potentially compromises children's welfare in the event of a child protection concern.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy in the setting's welcoming and caring environment and they have positive relationships with staff. Staff give careful consideration as to how activities and play opportunities help to further younger children's learning in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework. In addition, staff observe children as they play and keep written assessment notes, so helping to build a clear picture of each child's progress. Consequently the care, learning opportunities and play experiences, for children under three years are good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities and imaginative experiences. They come inside from outdoor play and go immediately to a large tray full of foam, animals and building blocks. They giggle as they say 'shall we put our hands in', searching for tigers. They excitedly explore the foam, rubbing their hands together saying 'I am going to make a snowman'. Children further their own ideas as they take their animals covered in foam to the child-sized sinks where they wash them, focusing intently as the foam drips off their hands. They show delight as they carry a tree covered in foam saying 'hello' to the tree. Other children enjoy time to be still and relax as they quietly drive a train with carriages around a track whilst making the sound of the engine.

Children develop good early communication skills. They walk around the room carrying telephones in their hands saying 'bye', continuing to walk whilst resting the phone on their shoulders. They become increasingly confident in their speech as they begin to use language to express their thinking, for example, they say 'night, night' to a play figure, laying them gently onto a bed in the dolls' house. Children's vocabulary is extending as staff introduce new words in meaningful ways such as the word 'trunk' as children talk about 'Mommy and Daddy elephants'.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage and a good appreciation for the many ways in which children learn. They exercise open-mindedness and are innovative in their approach. They introduce activities such as wrapping boxes to represent Christmas presents, modelling the wrapping process whilst asking children if their wrapping paper is big enough. Children thrive on the lively, practical teaching methods. They giggle as they say 'no' recognising that the staff 'need bigger paper'. Staff build on children's ideas positively, saying 'that's a really good idea' when children suggest putting the box onto the paper and then cutting the wrapping paper to measure the required size. Consequently, children are inspired to learn.

Staff implement their knowledge of the curriculum with success to plan, observe and assess children's learning, so helping to ensure positive outcomes for children. Their aim is to cover all areas of the Foundation Stage through the general organisation of activities, opportunities and resources. This aim is largely met with long, medium and short term plans forming the foundations of children's daily learning experiences. In addition, staff intervene appropriately in children's play. They sit and talk with children at relevant times, challenging children's thinking through use of conversations, carefully framed questions and consolidation techniques. A rigorous system is in place to make sure every child is making good progress through the stepping stones for learning. As a result of the effective teaching and carefully structured curriculum, children are consistently stimulated and behave well. Therefore, there are only minimal areas for improvement.

Children become confident and self-assured in their play, negotiating and interacting with others to share their ideas and experiences. They show high levels of concentration as they persevere with tasks such as locating keys into padlocks. Through group times such as the daily register, children learn to respect themselves and others. They wait patiently to hear their name in the register, responding appropriately by saying 'good afternoon'. In addition, they wait for their turn to go to the front of the group to find the numerals that represent how many children are present. Children develop independence as they make choices about their activities. However, at times the creative materials children work with are chosen by adults. This limits children's independence and their ability to fully test and develop their own ideas. Consequently, children's thoughts such as using glue to stick wrapping paper are not always explored.

Children are active communicators. They talk with confidence about a wide range of subject areas. They often self-initiate discussions with each other, for example, they ask their friend 'where is your blue one?' when talking about the colour of their clothes. Through the regular use of name cards many children are able to hear and say the initial sound of their name with some more able children writing correctly formed letters. Imaginative role play areas such as a post office help children to develop an interest in writing for many purposes. Children enjoy stories. They sit on soft cushions in the attractive book corner to leaf through books, talking with their friends about what they see. Children are actively involved in group story time. They develop their speaking and listening skills by lifting flaps and connecting their own experiences to the story.

Children use numbers independently and with great confidence. They eagerly ask if they can count the amount of children present and calculate how many cups they will need for snack. Throughout many conversations, children use mathematical language, for example, they talk about having three pairs of shoes whilst displaying three fingers to their friends. Through pouring their own drinks at snack time, using scales and filling play cars with dolls furniture children learn about shape, space and measure. The regular use of numerals and fun teaching techniques help children to recognise numbers of personal significance, for example, staff help

children to remember that the number two looks like a duck. Children do use simple equipment such as telephones within their daily play and a computer is situated within the main play room. However, they are not sufficiently able to access technological equipment within free play and outdoor experiences. This restricts their understanding of the role of information and communication technology within everyday lives.

Innovative role play areas such as a construction site help children to learn about the world around them and to explore real life situations. They work with sand in an area that is cordoned off with signs such as 'danger' and 'no entry'. In addition, they use natural materials such as wood to join construction pieces together using child-sized play screwdrivers and hammers. Through an established investigation area children begin to use real life objects to learn about how and why things work. They learn about the natural environment through planting flowers which they see in pots as they arrive at the setting and caring for caterpillars, releasing them as butterflies in the field. Children enjoy imaginative play. At times they introduce a narrative into their play, pretending that farmer is driving the tractor to the fields whilst solving problems such as repairing the barn roof that has broken off. Children explore musical sounds as they bang on large drums and sing familiar rhymes with their friends.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from excellent continuity of care when they start in the setting as there is a effective settling in policy. Staff value and acknowledge the uniqueness of every child. They adapt activities, routines and activities to make sure the environment is tailored to suit the needs of the children, for example, keeping higher risk equipment such as scissors safe when young children are present. In addition, staff work extremely well with external agencies and parents to ensure children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for whom English is an additional language play and learn in an inclusive environment.

Children show good levels of respect for each other. They say 'sorry' when they have accidentally hurt their friend and offer cuddles in the garden, showing warmth and care. They behave very well throughout the day, waiting patiently on the designated rug for all children to sit down in readiness for story time. Through a diverse range of play opportunities and experiences children develop a superb understanding about their local community and the wider world. With the support of staff and visitors, they attempt to use chopsticks and wear oriental style clothes as they learn about Chinese culture. In addition, they dance to Asian music wearing a sari with a bindi beauty spot painted on their forehead. There are many resources, for example, dolls and play figures that are used actively throughout the setting to reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. This helps children to begin to embrace peoples similarities and differences. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff work proactively with parents to ensure they are kept up to date and well informed about their child's care and learning. They display information cards which tell parents all about 'Birth to three matters' within the main playroom, so helping parents to understand the framework the setting uses to help children under three years thrive. Parents are also invited to attend key events such as watching their child take part in a Christmas performance. The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is good. Parents receive a copy of the medium term Foundation Stage planning which includes prompts on how they can further support their child's learning at home and short term plans are prominently displayed in the entrance foyer. Through the effective use of newsletters parents know what

their child will be learning and when. In addition, informal methods are used to encourage parents to be continually involved in their child's learning, for example, children regularly take books from the setting to share at home. Staff inform parents that they are welcome to discuss their child's progress at any time. This helps to further children's learning as they receive a coordinated approach to education.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who are experienced and committed to their well-being. Staff work very well as a team, providing a stimulating and interesting environment conducive to the care, teaching and learning of all children. The ratio of adults to children is good and an effective key worker system is in place. In addition, staff are very well deployed, for example, they are always close by to offer help and support to children as required. As a result, all children receive a high level of individual attention. The recruitment procedures are clear, for example, all staff undergo suitability checks. New staff members take part in an adequate induction training package, so helping them to understand how the setting works and how they fit in. The level of qualified staff working with children is good and there is a commitment to ensure staff develop their skills and knowledge by attending training courses. This has a generally positive impact upon children's care and experiences.

Children's records and staff details are stored securely and available for inspection. The large majority of legally required documents are in place. Most additional supportive documents such as an admissions policy and written statement about caring for children with special needs are up to date, clearly written and easy to understand. Parents are given a copy of all of the relevant policies and procedures, so helping to provide children with consistent care.

The leadership and management is good. Staff are well motivated and have developed a supportive team approach, aiming for good quality education for all children. The manager, who also owns the setting, offers useful guidance and is committed to improving nursery education. Staff are helped to work together as they all meet to share ideas for future planning. The monitoring and evaluation of the nursery education provision is successful, for example, staff evaluate children's learning throughout each session. As a result, there are only minor areas for improvement within the curriculum. Staff use the information gained from such assessments to ensure children are making good progress throughout all areas of the Foundation Stage. This significantly improves practice and positively supports children's learning and progress.

Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to: develop and implement procedure for lost or uncollected children; obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children and keep a written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children; ensure that children have an appropriate range of activities and resources that promote diversity and to make available to parents a written statement that provides details of the procedure to be followed if they have a complaint including Ofsted's address details.

The setting now has a statement of the procedure to be followed in the event of a parent failing to collect a child. However, they do not have a mandatory procedure for staff to follow if a

child is lost which compromises children's safety. This remains an area for improvement and, as a result, will be carried forward following this inspection.

Staff have reviewed the policy for recording medicines. Consequently, a written record is now kept of all medicines administered to children and parents sign the record book to acknowledge the entry. All parents are informed of the procedure to follow if they wish to make a complaint as they receive a 'complaints, comments and compliments' booklet which includes Ofsted's contact details. This helps to ensure parents are fully informed, enabling all to work together to support the children's well-being.

Children learn about diversity through a broad range of innovative and exciting play opportunities and experiences such as tasting food from around the world, for example, they eat spring rolls from China. In addition posters and books are displayed at a low-level which helps them to begin to appreciate and value each others' similarities and differences. The setting was also asked to provide a suitable range of toys and activities in order to meet the developmental needs of children attending out of school hours. This recommendation is no longer applicable as there is no longer an out of school club based at the setting.

A recommendation was raised at the last inspection which was relevant to children's care and education. This recommendation asked the setting to develop staff's awareness and understanding of effective ways to manage children's behaviour, taking into account their age and stage of development and to evaluate and review the behaviour policy to ensure a consistent approach when children are disruptive. All staff now use a written statement which guides them on how to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a very positive way. Every day a child is selected to receive a 'special mention' in the form of a card which tells the child why they have been so special today. Children receive this gift with great pride as they smile with happiness. All children receive stickers for behaving well, for example, on returning from a local outing children are given a star to wear. They show a good understanding of why rewards are given, commenting that their star is for 'sitting nicely and being good'. This helps to boost their self-esteem and provides a positive environment in which they are clear of the rules and behave very well.

At the last education inspection the setting was also asked to evaluate and improve the use of daily routines to consolidate the children's mathematical development. Staff now use daily routines such as register time and regular activities such as matching to inspire children to use mathematics independently. Consequently, children are becoming confident mathematicians as they consolidate their learning in fun ways throughout the day.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are 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 a lost child policy is in place
- make sure the written child protection statement complies fully with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and includes procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff that are individual to the setting
- ensure that fire doors are not obstructed.

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 further children's understanding of the many uses of information and communication technology within everyday lives
- increase opportunities for children to develop their independence, challenging them further to make real choices and to express themselves freely during creative activities.

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