

Noah's Ark Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	511667
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Inspector	Alison Jane Kaplonek

Setting Address	Pack Lane, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG22 5HN
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Registered person	Noah's Ark Pre-School
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Full day care
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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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Pre-school opened in 1987, and has been in its current premises since 1990. It is a registered charity, and is managed by a parent committee. The pre-school operates from two rooms in the village hall, uses the main hall for lunch and occasional play, and has a fully fenced garden. The hall is situated in Kempshott, on the outskirts of Basingstoke, and the preschool serves the local area.

There are currently 60 children from two years six months to under five years on roll. This includes 40 funded three and four-year-olds. The pre-school separates the children into two groups, Noah's and Tigers. Those in Noah's attend for mornings only, while children in Tigers can stay all day. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:00 until 11:30, extending to 15:00 for Tigers, Monday to Thursday; and from 09:00 until 12:30 on Friday. When staying for a full day children bring their own packed lunches.

There are four full-time and 14 part-time staff working with the children. Of these, six have early years qualifications, five are currently on training programmes and five are due to start training soon. The setting receives support from a teacher mentor and Area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, and from other external support agencies.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's physical needs are sufficiently well met because staff follow effective procedures, such as cleaning surfaces and ensuring that children wash their hands after using the toilets. They consult with parents about the children's health needs and keep appropriate documentation on site. They check the cleanliness of areas of the pre-school and keep well organised records of accidents or any medication which they administer. The majority of staff have valid first aid training in place. Older children take care of their personal needs themselves as they independently access the toilet and wash their own hands. The pre-school provides healthy and nutritious snacks. Children choose from a variety of fruits and usually a breadstick. They bring their own packed lunches if staying for lunch club, and these are safely stored in the fridge. Drinks are always available. Children help themselves to the jug of water or ask staff if they are thirsty.

Children are gaining an awareness of the space around them as they move between activities. They are aware of other children who may be playing on the carpeted area. Children are practising their hand-eye coordination as they use a satisfactory range of equipment, tools and materials safely, as they paint, play with dough or complete puzzles. Children sometimes have access to a range of larger equipment such as tricycles, sees-saws and tunnels, although movement and outdoor play are unplanned at present.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in a safe, secure and well maintained environment. Access to the communal premises is monitored by staff, who challenge any adults they do not know. Children move freely within the two rooms, choosing activities and confidently accessing the well maintained toys and play materials which are available. Children can access the toilet facilities independently and are encouraged to do so. Staff supervise children well and reduce the risk of accidents by carrying out visual and written risk assessments on the premises and equipment everyday. Children are familiar with the fire evacuation procedure which they practise regularly.

Children are protected by staff who have a good understanding of child protection procedures and keep local contact numbers accessible. Some staff have completed child protection training and others are booked to attend courses soon. Parents can access information about the pre-school's child protection policy from the folder provided.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have access to a satisfactory range of resources and activities each day. Younger children can help themselves to role play resources, craft materials, books and construction

equipment, from the storage units provided. Older children can access craft materials, books, some construction equipment and puzzles, although these resources are not well organised to enable children to initiate their own play and learning. Some staff interact well with the children, asking questions about how the paint feels on their hands or what colour they are mixing.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff provide a calm learning environment, where children feel secure and able to play. Children are often praised for good behaviour, such as sharing or helping each other. Staff offer clear explanations to those children who find it more difficult to interact with their peers. Past planning shows that children are provided with activities which cover all six areas of learning, however, the current plans do not yet show clear learning intentions or the next steps in children's learning. Assessments are completed for all children in receipt of funding for nursery education, although staff are not secure in their knowledge of the Foundation Stage of learning and often make few observations or over estimate children abilities. As a result, the assessments are not used to inform future planning and children are not always correctly challenged in their learning.

Children enjoy their story time and often request stories to be read to them. Many are confident speakers and converse easily with adults and each other. Some older children are beginning to recognise their name and can identify the sounds of the letters. Children practise pencil control as they draw pictures or write their names, but do not often develop their writing skills during their play, for example making lists or menus. Some children count well to five and above. They know the names of many shapes and learn about size as they construct with lego bricks. They are beginning to use mathematical language, such as big and small, as they sort the compare bears. However, there is overall, little emphasis on maths or problem solving.

Children explore and investigate with a range of materials and resources, such as dough, sand and water. They build and construct with blocks and junk materials. They are all involved in events in the community, such as collecting food for the elderly during Harvest festival. Opportunities to use information technology are good and many children confidently complete simple programmes on the computers. Children know their colours well and enjoy planned painting activities. Role play resources and musical instruments are sometimes available but as they are not easy to access, opportunities for imaginative and creative play are limited.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are all treated with respect and their individual needs are met by supportive staff. They are often praised and are gaining in confidence and self-esteem. They can independently access the resources available to them, although resources which promote equality of opportunity or teach children about differences are limited. Most children are developing good relationships with staff and talk about their families and events in their lives, such as their birthdays or holidays. Some of the older children are learning to share and take turns with resources, such as waiting patiently for their turn on the computer. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or English as an additional language are also welcomed and included at the setting. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents are able to gain information about the policies and procedures, long term plans and topics, via newsletters, information boards and folders which are freely available. They are not however, encouraged to be involved

with their children's learning. Planning is not available for them to see and as a consequence they do not know what their children are learning each day. Younger children have home/pre-school diaries which enable parents and staff to share information about the children's daily routines. Parents find staff approachable and feel able to discuss their child's care and welfare.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are settled and happy in the pre-school environment. They are cared for in safe and secure premises where staff are appropriately checked and some are qualified. Many staff are improving their knowledge and understanding of child care as they undertake National Vocational training courses and short courses run by the local authority. Staff work directly with the children, and are reasonably well deployed. They discuss their roles and responsibilities each day, ensuring that children's individual needs are met. Appropriate records are kept for each child and shared with the parents, ensuring that children's welfare and care are of a satisfactory standard. Staff are getting to know the children well and complete daily registers at each session. However, these are not completed until the children have been on the premises for some time.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. There is a clear management structure in place. Staff do not receive regular appraisals to correctly identify their own training needs or the needs of the pre-school as a whole. However, many are presently attending training courses which will benefit the children and the pre-school. Although they are working on a new planning and assessment system, the present inaccuracies in the assessments and lack of identification of the next steps in children's learning, means that not all children are reaching their full potential. Overall however, the nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the pre-school were asked to ensure that all necessary documentation and records relating to day care activities are in place, readily accessible on the premises and available for inspection at all times. These are all now available on site.

They were asked to ensure that sufficient quantities of construction equipment are available to meet the needs of children and materials such as Lego, blocks, and junk modelling are available now.

The pre-school were also asked to increase the committee's awareness and understanding of the National Standards and Guidance and they have recently employed an administrator to support the committee and pre-school leader.

To improve the education for children, the pre-school were asked to improve planning, by giving sufficient detail in short term plans to show how learning aims are to be provided for, and possible extension activities. This area shows no improvement.

They were also asked to provide opportunities for children to use writing in various practical play situations indoors and outdoors and to promote the use of calculation during daily practical activities. This has also not been addressed.

Lastly, they were asked to support children's craft activities through the provision of an increased range of materials, and provide stimulation when necessary by helping them think through their craft projects, making suggestions and offering options. Staff have provided children with access to some craft materials and a craft activity designed by staff is set up each day. Children are still however, not fully able to initiate their own imaginative or creative play or learning.

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.

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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):

- increase the range of resources and activities which enable children to learn about differences.
- ensure that registers are completed as children arrive and depart.
- ensure that all staff receive regular appraisals to identify accurately their own developmental and training needs and those of the pre-school as a whole.

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 devise and implement an assessment and planning system which shows clearly the next steps in children's learning, includes movement and the outdoor environment and ensures that children are correctly challenged.
- ensure that children can access a broad range of equipment, make choices and initiate their own learning.
- increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and the emphasis on children's learning of mathematics and in particular, problem solving.
- keep parents informed of the activities which are planned and involve them in their children's learning.

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