



Noah's Ark Childcare Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY272287
Inspection date	12 September 2005
Inspector	Leoarna Mathias
Setting Address	133 Babbacombe Road, Torquay, Devon, TQ1 3SR
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Registered person	Noah's Ark Childcare Centres
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Childcare Centre is a long established nursery which was taken over by new management in September 2003, and is now part of the Noah's Ark childcare group. The nursery is situated in the centre of Babbacombe, on the outskirts of Torquay. The nursery operates on two floors and has an enclosed garden to the rear.

The nursery is open from 08:00 until 18:00, Monday to Friday, all year round. After

school care is also offered. There are currently 50 children on roll, including 10 children in receipt of funded nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and children for whom English is an additional language.

There are nine members of staff, all of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification. The nursery receives support from the Early Year's Development and Childcare Partnership and is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a nutritious and healthy diet as they eat freshly prepared meals and snacks that regularly include fruit and vegetables. Their special dietary needs are well met through a regular exchange of information between parents and childcare staff. Children also have regular access to drinks. Children's hygiene is promoted well by staff who implement appropriate procedures for reducing the risk of cross infection. For example, aprons and gloves are worn during nappy changing. Surfaces used for eating meals are regularly wiped down by staff, all of whom hold a food hygiene certificate. Children are also encouraged to wash their hands before meals and after using the toilet. Children health needs are also well met as staff are diligent in recording accidents and administered medicines. Extra training is provided in order that staff can effectively support children with particular conditions. Children have good opportunities to play outdoors, getting regular exercise and fresh air, and enjoy using peddle cars, trikes and slides.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean spacious environment. They have access to a varied range of good quality equipment, most of which is readily accessible. Children are well protected by staff who are vigilant in following the nursery's thorough procedures for the safe collection of children, and recording the presence of visitors to the setting. Children's safety is also generally well promoted by staff who undertake regular risk assessments; however, some issues have not been identified or addressed. For example, there is an inconsistent approach to keeping gates to the garden area locked. Nevertheless, other procedures for ensuring children are safe, such as carrying out monthly, fully evaluated fire drills, are appropriately implemented. Children's welfare is properly promoted by staff who understand their child protection responsibilities and are familiar with the setting's comprehensive child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are broadly content and settled within the setting. They have the opportunity to enjoy the care of consistent staff through the day, and key working systems ensure that parents and carers work together for the benefit of children. Nevertheless, at times, staff respond to a child's distress or other need with insufficient speed. Staff working with younger children are beginning to use the Birth to three matters framework to develop their understanding of how children progress. As a result, they plan a reasonable range of activities for these children, such as treasure baskets for children's exploration. However, the grouping together of two year olds with three and four year olds for the majority of the day is not well managed by staff. This prevents staff from being able to fully support those children as they participate in activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff working with three and four year old children have a satisfactory knowledge of the foundation stage curriculum. However, at present, the written plans for activities designed to promote learning lack critical detail, and do not give staff sufficient guidance on the learning intentions for each activity. Recently introduced changes to planning systems are designed to resolve this weakness, but as yet, staff do not link clearly enough, assessments of what children already know and can do, with identified next steps in their learning. Staff have an awareness of some teaching strategies that are effective for three and four year old children, but are often prevented from using them, as their time is too much taken up with managing and supervising children from a broad age range who are grouped together. The behaviour of children in this group often deteriorates as a consequence, and conflicts are often mismanaged or go unnoticed by staff. Staff find it difficult to manage time effectively or to display all resources so that they are appealing to children. As a result of these collective weaknesses, children are often prevented from engaging in the learning process, and are making slow progress in the development of their concentration skills and willingness to persist.

Children struggle to listen well at story time, do not use books independently, and enjoy only limited opportunities for conversation and vocabulary development with staff. There is little encouragement for children's mark making and writing, although some writing materials are available throughout the session. Children participate in counting songs, but naturally arising opportunities to extend children's understanding of number are not taken up by staff. Resources that allow children to construct are well used by children, as are information technology resources. However, children are not, as yet, given sufficient opportunities to develop their curiosity about the world around them, or to learn about other cultures and beliefs. Similarly, children do enjoy using a variety of materials to create art and craft work, but their thoughts and ideas are not extended through discussion, or through access to a well resourced home corner for imaginative play. As a result, children do not progress well enough through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery cares for children with a broad range of needs and staff work hard to

ensure that many children's needs are met, for example, by attending extra training. However, a small number of children's needs are not responded to as efficiently. As such, staff are occasionally inconsistent in their attempts to support all children within the setting, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Nevertheless, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator is enthusiastic about her role and keen to develop her understanding. Resources that promote children's understanding of difference and diversity in society are in place, but are not always displayed and used in order that children can fully access them. Staff regularly praise and encourage children, but they are not always consistent in dealing with conflict, limiting children's ability to develop an understanding of how to manage their own behaviour. However, when taken overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There is a satisfactory partnership with parents. Parents access informative notice boards, and are provided with daily written information about their child's participation in activities, food intake and general welfare. Parents of three and four-year-old children also receive termly reports about their child's educational progress, which promotes their involvement in their child's education. At present, activity plans are not as easily accessed by parents, making it harder for them to be aware of what their child is currently learning about. However, a programme of parent's evenings has recently been introduced, enhancing the continuity of care children enjoy as relationships between staff and parents are built.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by staff who have undergone all the necessary vetting procedures and have received a thorough induction. As such, the nursery's policies and procedures are, in general, properly implemented. Staff also have good access to further training. The manager works hard to ensure that documentation remains in good order and is regularly reviewed, as well as developing good systems to ensure the smooth running of many parts of the nursery. As a result, children's health and welfare needs are generally well met. Well designed registration forms allow staff to be familiar with each child's particular needs from the beginning of their time at the nursery. The nursery is organised so that children aged between two and four years are together most of the time. Staff working with these children use their time and the nursery's resources less well, and do not balance the differing needs of this broad group effectively. As a consequence, these children enjoy less individual attention and support for their learning and development. When taken overall, therefore, the setting does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery is inadequate. The nursery owner and her manager have worked to improve standards within the nursery. Together with the foundation stage supervisor, they have a clear vision and have brought about positive changes in many aspects of the provision. However, although they are able to identify many of the remaining challenges and weaknesses, they have not recognised the full impact of these on the quality of nursery education for three and four-year-olds. For example, they have failed to ensure that organisational decisions,

such as the grouping of two-year-olds with the older children, does not negatively impact upon some children's learning. Staff have also thus far received insufficient guidance in evaluating their own practice, which for the time being limits their ability to improve the quality of provision for children over time.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of the quality of care, the nursery was asked to increase staff's access to training, to keep parents well informed about children's progress and to increase children's access to resources that promote equality of opportunity. Staff now regularly attend training, and parents receive daily written information about their child's welfare, increasing children's access to continuity of care. The nursery has improved the provision of equal opportunities resources, but does not yet always consider how best to make these accessible to children, preventing children from having the fullest opportunities to develop an understanding of difference and diversity.

At the last inspection of nursery education the nursery was asked to make effective use of assessments when planning future activities, to increase staff's knowledge of teaching strategies and the early learning goals in order to promote children's learning, and to increase the amount of information parents receive about their child's educational progress. Parents do now receive a termly report and are invited to discuss their child's progress at parents evenings. Recently introduced changes to written plans are designed to ensure that assessments are linked more closely to the next steps in each child's learning. However, these changes have not yet improved the quality of activity planning overall. Staff have a reasonable knowledge of the early learning goals, but are not always using effective teaching strategies to challenge and extend children. As a result, children continue to receive inconsistent support for their learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 Ofsted have received three concerns relating to a number of standards.

In July 2004 a concern was raised under standard 4: Physical environment and standard 6: Safety that parts of the nursery building were not safe to be used for the care of children. Ofsted wrote to the registered person asking them to investigate the concern. A review of the information provided by the registered person concluded that no breach of the national standards had occurred. The registered person remains qualified for registration.

In July 2005 concerns were raised under standard 1: Suitability, standard 2: Organisation, standard 3: Care, learning and play, standard 7: Health, standard 10: Special needs and standard 12: Partnership with parents and that a member of staff had laid down with a headache while supervising children, that a child had gone home with excrement on his body after a flooding incident in the nursery. An unannounced visit took place during which staff were interviewed, documentation

was reviewed and observations of childcare practice were made. The registered person was assessed to be complying with the national standards, and the registered person remains suitable for registration.

In August 2005 concerns were raised under standard 1: Suitability, standard 3: Care learning and play, standard 7: Health and standard 11: Behaviour, that unvetted students were changing nappies, that a child was sent home with a dirty nappy, that a child had been taken outside to play without shoes and that children's needs were inconsistently met by staff. An unannounced visit took place during which staff were interviewed, documentation was reviewed and observations of childcare practice were made. The registered person was assessed to be complying with the national standards, and the registered person remains suitable for registration.

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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):

- ensure that all staff act promptly to meet the emotional, physical, social and intellectual needs of children
- increase the rigour of ongoing risk assessments to include all potential hazards
- improve children's access to resources that promote equal opportunity
- ensure all children with special educational needs are effectively supported

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- make the links between the assessments of children's progress and the plans for the next steps in their learning more clear
- increase staff's opportunities, through better use of time, resources, and strategies for managing children from a broad age range when grouped

together, to use more effective teaching methods that will ensure all children are sufficiently challenged

- ensure staff use appropriate and timely behaviour management strategies

These actions are set out in a ***notice of action to improve*** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk