

Noah's Ark Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY269854
Inspection date	26 November 2007
Inspector	Suman Willis
Setting Address	Shephall View, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 1RR
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Registered person	Noah's Ark Day Care Nursery
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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 Nursery registered in 2003. It operates from a single storey purpose built building, with an office and staff accommodation comprising of a kitchen, children's bathroom, an open plan pre-school and toddler area, as well as an enclosed baby area. It is situated in the Bedwell area of Stevenage in Hertfordshire. A maximum of 73 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30, for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to the secure enclosed outside play area.

There are currently 74 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these 14 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the Stevenage area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 22 staff. Of these 15 of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and two staff working towards a qualification. The nursery have input from a qualified teacher and Early Years Development worker.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are engaged in a range of physical activities which promote their development. They have access to a well resourced outdoor play area. Children confidently use the climbing frame to climb, crawl through tunnels and slide down. They learn to ride bikes and demonstrate their pedalling skills. Staff in the toddler room ensure that children enjoy being in the fresh air because they plan both creative, such as chalking and physical activities for outdoor play. Babies are taken out for walks in their buggies and mats are used in the outdoor playground for babies to lie on or sit in the fresh air. Toddlers enjoy swaying to familiar musical rhymes. They develop their jumping and rolling skills as they use a variety of soft foam shapes during physical play. Consequently, children stay healthy because they have regular fresh air and exercise.

Babies sleep according to their individual routines and all others sleep according to the nursery's routine, on individual bed mats, after lunch. There are cosy areas for children to relax in if they are feeling tired. This enables children to participate in activities feeling fresh and ready.

Children's health needs are appropriately monitored between parents and staff. Records of children's accidents are shared with parents and clear procedures are in place to administer emergency aid and medication. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid should the need arise to ensure children stay safe and healthy. Cross-infection is minimised as staff use disposable gloves when changing nappies and mats are wiped down with disinfectant. Older children independently access the toilets and are supported in washing hands. Younger children are supported by staff as they wash hands before and after meals. Therefore, children are learning to manage their personal hygiene.

Children's individual dietary needs are met because parents provide information about any individual dietary needs based on allergies or religions. Children are generally well nourished as they eat hot meals such as chicken supreme with rice and fresh fruit for snacks. However, their independence is not promoted during snack and mealtimes as they have little opportunity to pour drinks and serve themselves. They enjoy the social occasion of mealtimes as they sit with their friends and share personal information about their likes and dislikes. Drinks are left out in all areas so that children can independently manage their own thirst.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

All children are cared for in a safe and secure environment and have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Clear security procedures such as key pad entry system and monitoring screens provide security for children. All areas are organised to enable children to move around safely accessing activities of their own choosing. Babies learn to crawl safely because the room is well laid out. They have lots of cushioned and carpeted areas to enable them to lie on the floor and play with adults. Babies have appropriate resources which keep them safe such as high chairs and low-level table and chairs.

Children independently access their play materials, which enables them to make their own choices. They have access to a range of resources which are age-appropriate and provide some challenge. However, children in the pre-school have a limited range of resources available on a daily basis. All resources are hygienically maintained and toys used by babies and toddlers

are washed more frequently. Some toddlers struggle at the dining table because the tables and chairs are high and do not support children appropriately to promote a positive attitude to mealtimes.

Daily risk assessments are carried by the manager and staff have some understanding of keeping children safe. However, during outdoor play activities there are sharp pieces of broken plastic on the ground. The area was not checked for safety by staff and some staff appear to lack understanding of their role in ensuring children's safety at all times. During indoor play staff are deployed to monitor children's safety. Children learn to stay safe as staff explain how to use the outdoor resources safely. For example, children are asked to hold on when climbing up the frame and to slide down so that they don't get hurt. Children learn about road safety through topic work.

Procedures are in place so that children are never left alone with adults who have not been vetted. However, children's safety is compromised as staff lack knowledge and understanding of child protection and are unfamiliar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers enjoy a variety of activities which are age-appropriate. They engage in their chosen play because they are appropriately supported by staff. For example, toddlers move from playing musical instruments into the home corner and a member of staff joins in. They use their imagination as they play in the home corner and their language skills are extended as staff point out what the objects in the box are such as different vegetables and crockery. Toddlers are also encouraged to join in tactile activities such as playing with sand and making patterns with 'cornflakes' in a tray. Babies enjoy exploring different rattles and soft play materials as they independently pull themselves up and choose from what they see through the clear plastic. Staff are on hand to support and hold the babies allowing them to practise their weight bearing skills. All children enjoy looking at books and ask to be read to knowing that their needs will be met. Children enjoy playing with musical instruments and singing familiar rhymes. They learn about volume as they play with wet sand and fill buckets.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Staff plan the curriculum to help children progress towards the early learning goals and show differentiation for the inclusion of all children. However, these do not show how staff are adapting activities to meet the needs of all children. Children are often in large groups for organised activities which hinders their learning as they have to wait a long time to have their turn which impacts on their behaviour. Some staff provide children with challenges by asking extending questions and getting children to predict outcomes, however, this is not consistent. Consequently, children are not always challenged and may not make sufficient progress through the stepping stones. Assessment records are regularly completed but the information gained is not used to inform planning or to influence teaching. As a result, most children are making insufficient progress towards the early learning goals given their capabilities and starting points.

Children's physical development is appropriately promoted during outdoor play as they use the climbing frame, trikes and crawl through tunnels. They move with control as they pretend to be bees, caterpillars and butterflies. Children develop their small manipulative skills as they use pencils during organised activities, complete jigsaw puzzles and build with Lego bricks. Children

are sociable and confidently approach adults for support. Children generally behave well and staff reinforce politeness by reminding children to say 'please' and 'thank you', although some children do this without prompt. Children are beginning to form firm friendships and enjoy sharing information about their home life as they make puppets of their families. They work well in their chosen groups as they build a train track. They show pride in their work as they show visitors their puppets and lego models.

Children use language to communicate their needs and ask visitors what they are doing. Their language skills are extended as they freely access books from a limited range and ask staff to read to them. However, staff do not challenge children and extend their mark making skills as staff write children's names on their work and they are not encouraged to use pencils freely. There are insufficient resources to promote children's understanding of the alphabet and numbers. Children recognise numbers as they read 'What time is it?'. Staff do not use daily routine opportunities to promote children's understanding of numbers. For example, heads are not counted as children queue to go out, or at snack time. Although children count up to two when measuring cups of flour, those who are able to count more were not challenged. Staff do not use this opportunity to extend other areas of learning, for example, volume, changes that occur when water is mixed with flour or how oil floats when mixed with water.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of time through their daily routine. They learn about festivals and other cultures by celebrating festivals such as Diwali. Children have access to basic technical resources such as toasters and cookers in the home corner. There is a computer in the area, however, this is currently not working therefore, children are unable to extend their technical knowledge. They use their creative skills as they make rockets and castles out of Lego bricks. Children use dressing up clothes to pretend to be super heroes or fairies and princesses. They are developing an understanding of different textures as they play with wet and dry sand and during supervised access to painting activities. Children play a range of musical instruments during organised circle times, although this is sometimes inappropriate because younger children are eating. Intense music time is provided once a week by an outside organisation, which limits children who attend on set days taking part.

Consequently, children's progress in most areas of the early learning goals is hindered because they have limited opportunities to practise independently what they already know. Staff are unclear about how to challenge children to extend their knowledge through their daily activities and routine.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled and familiar with their daily routine which helps them to feel secure. Parents provide valuable information about their children to enable staff to meet their individual needs. Babies' routines are supported by the strong link from home and nursery and parents receive a written record of their daily routine. Babies and toddlers are given opportunities to make individual choices and are supported as they move freely from one opportunity to another. However, children in pre-school are restricted to set times for organised activities and choice of resources daily are limited.

Sufficient activities and procedures are in place to develop children's knowledge and understanding of their local community and some children are taken out for walks around the local grounds. They learn about the wider world through topic work and organised activities. Children who have English as an additional language are not sufficiently supported because

staff do not plan for individual learning. Policies and procedures are in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities.

Babies and toddlers are supported and their behaviour appropriately managed by staff as staff understand their level of development. For example, as toddlers are bored at music time they move onto another activity and staff gently follow and join in their alternative play. However, activities are not effectively organised to provide a calm atmosphere. For example, during mealtimes the children in the pre-school participate in a musical activity using loud musical instruments, while toddlers are being seated for their lunch. For some young children, mealtimes can be very fraught and they require a calm environment to help promote their social skills which some staff do not seem to appreciate. Therefore, this causes some toddlers to be very upset and unable to eat their meals.

Staff in the pre-school are supportive of children and children generally behave well. However, staff appear to lack knowledge and understanding of the differences between promoting independence and managing behaviour. For example, staff do not allow children to freely access pencils and crayons because children may draw on the walls and furniture. Children are also removed from activities because staff are unable to manage the size of the group. Therefore, children's learning is hindered by staff's lack of understanding of how to manage behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is inadequate. Parents responded with a positive feedback to the care their children receive at the nursery but also reported that they were not familiar with what their children are learning and how this is promoted. Children's assessment records are shared with parents at open evenings once a term. Parents receive basic information about the Foundation Stage in their parent pack and the plans of activities are displayed in the pre-school. However, the area of learning is abbreviated and there is no key to explain what the abbreviations stand for. The plans do not indicate how parents can be involved with their children's learning. Therefore, partnership with parents is not used to promote children's learning.

Overall, the children's spiritual, moral, social and emotional development is not fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Children's needs are not always met through the organisation of the setting. There are procedures in place to ensure that adults who are not vetted are never left alone with the children. Most staff are sufficiently qualified in childcare and attend regular training. However, training is not prioritised and staff attend training according to their own interest. Therefore, management are not monitoring training needs in order to promote children's care, learning and play. During indoor activities the ratio of adults to children is maintained. However, the ratio during outdoor play is not always maintained, this compromises children's safety. Staff in each area work well within their team and are supportive of each other, but they do not all work collectively together to provide a calm atmosphere for all children. This refers to the noise level of the open plan nursery which is often very noisy and upsetting for some children. Therefore, staff do not always contribute to children's good health, enjoyment and achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting.

The leadership and management of funded children is inadequate. Funded children are not adequately supported in their play or learning. Many planned activities lack challenge and are badly organised to motivate children, although staff are kind, warm and friendly and generally

foster children's self-esteem. Planning and assessment structures are in place, however, these are not being used effectively to help staff plan for the next steps in children's learning. The nursery has experienced some managerial changes and this has impacted on the smooth running of the nursery. They are reviewing their practice to provide a more robust managerial procedure so that teaching systems are appropriately evaluated to promote children's progress.

Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery agreed to: deploy staff effectively at all times to ensure that the safety and welfare of the children; provide opportunities for the children to encourage their independent and social skills during snack and mealtimes; restructure the organisation of snack and mealtimes to ensure that all children benefit from it being a happy, relaxed and sociable time and review the operational plan to include the changes in the National Standards and regulations as set out in the October 2005 addendum to the National Standards for under 8's day care and childminding.

Children's care, learning and play is still being compromised as staff are not always appropriately deployed to monitor children's safety. Children's independence and social skills during snack and mealtimes are still not promoted. Snack and mealtimes are still not organised to provide a happy, relaxed and sociable time for children. Staff continue to review the operational plan.

At the last nursery education inspection the nursery agreed to: extend opportunities for all children to have an increasing awareness of letters and sounds through structured play and focused learning; ensure that planned and everyday activities are appropriate to enable children to play and learn effectively and develop systems to evaluate and monitor how children are challenged and ensure that their learning potential is met at all stages of their development

Children are making little progress in the learning as staff still lack knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage to organise activities effectively to challenge children.

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.

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure adult to child ratio is maintained at all times
- ensure that positive steps to promote safety within the setting and ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents
- ensure that the child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

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

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:

- ensure that staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage to enable children to make progress
- ensure that all children are challenged and that staff have a high expectation of what they can achieve
- organise groups effectively to ensure that children make progress towards the early learning goals

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 *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