

# Noah's Ark Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	218196
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 February 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	John Vernon
<b>Setting Address</b>	Homecroft Use & Community Centre, Newland Avenue, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST16 1NL
<b>Telephone number</b>	07753 430 399
<b>E-mail</b>	07952 732637 (Playgroup)
<b>Registered person</b>	Homecraft Use & Community Centre
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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](http://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 satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Playgroup opened in 1977. It operates from a large hall in the youth and community centre in the Holmcroft area of Stafford. The playgroup have their own toilet facilities and have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The playgroup serves the local area.

There are currently 25 children aged from two years to four years on roll. This includes seven funded three-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday during school term time only. Sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and from 09:30 until 15:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Five staff work with the children. The playgroup receive support from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are offered an appropriate variety of play opportunities. Physical play is offered to the children everyday and they have access to a secure and suitable outdoor play area during fine weather. Whilst outdoors, children enjoy mark making with large chalks and watching bubbles blow in the wind. Equally, they enjoy skipping and hopping and playing adult-led games. Whilst inside, children enjoy scurrying through tunnels and moving back and forth on rockers. Children have fun moving and dancing to popular music and enthusiastically joining in with actions to songs such as 'The Brave, Brave Mouse', and 'Five little ducks went swimming one day'. Consequently, they are beginning to gain an understanding and appreciation of how keeping active contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

Most staff have undertaken some training in food hygiene and consistently follow appropriate procedures when preparing and serving food or drink to ensure that the children's good health is maintained. Staff have a suitable knowledge and awareness of healthy eating. Children are provided with healthy and nutritious snacks each day which include fresh or dried fruit, cheese and crackers. The snack menu, displayed for parents, along with some posters about healthy eating acts as a visual reminder to children and parents about the importance of following a balanced diet. Snacks take account of children's individual dietary needs and preferences. Children sit together and enjoy their snack with friends naturally as their play ends and they feel hungry. The children are offered milk at snack time and have access to fresh drinking water at all times ensuring that they stay healthy and hydrated.

Staff have an appropriate awareness of first aid and some staff have specific first aid training. All required documents and most consents are in place. Children receive appropriate care if they become ill or have an accident because staff have a suitable awareness of the individual health needs of the children. The accident and incident records are complete, signed and dated by parents. However, permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment has not been gained from all parents. Consequently, in the event of an emergency or accident children's wellbeing is compromised.

Staff remind children to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze and therefore the risk of cross-infection is minimised. Children stay healthy and benefit from appropriate opportunities to learn about good personal hygiene during daily routines, such as washing hands after visiting the toilet, before snack and after messy play. Older children are aware that washing their hands with soap and water helps to wash away germs. All staff have undertaken some training in food hygiene and consistently follow appropriate procedures when preparing and serving food or drink to ensure that the children's good health is maintained.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children can select activities from a suitable range of developmentally-appropriate resources, which meet safety standards. Children are able to rest and play in comfort as there is appropriate space for their needs. Most toys and resources are available at floor level and are accessible to children. Consequently they are able to self-select, and make choices about their play. Play materials are monitored to ensure they are safe and age-appropriate. The regular cleaning of toys and equipment helps to reduce the possibility of the spread of infection.

Suitable fire precautions are in place, and staff regularly practise evacuation procedures with the children to ensure they know what to do in the event of an emergency. Representatives from the local police force and fire brigade have visited the children at the setting. The Fire officer talked to the children about the dangers of playing with matches and about fire safety. The police officer talked to the children about 'stranger danger' and the importance of being safe. Consequently, the children are beginning to develop an awareness of personal safety.

Overall, the children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Staff take some positive steps to minimise risks, for example, they organise themselves appropriately when supervising the children outdoors. However, on occasions, children eat their lunch in the centre's reception/café area. Safety measures installed to protect the children such as door locks are not always used and therefore children's safety is potentially compromised. Equally, the lack of a robust recruitment and vetting procedure impinges upon the setting's ability to fully safeguard all children's welfare.

Staff have a satisfactory awareness of the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Equally, staff have a clear understanding of the procedure to follow should a concern arise. All staff have completed basic training in child protection and one member of staff has undertaken advanced child protection training. There is a written policy in place but at present, this does not include written information about the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff to suitably safeguard the welfare of all.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have adequate opportunities to enjoy and achieve. Planning for children's play is linked to the Foundation stage and provides suitable learning opportunities for all children, helping them to develop their emotional, social, physical and intellectual capabilities. Access for all children to a suitable range of varied play opportunities linked to themes ensures children's development is supported across all areas of learning. Resources are changed regularly to ensure that children have access to different toys and experiences. Photographs of children at play are displayed to show they are enjoying themselves within a varied range of activities. All children's development and progress is adequately promoted under the 'Birth to Three Matters' Framework due to the staff's satisfactory knowledge.

Children form good relationships with staff members and each other. Most children identify their name and self register at the setting. Most children arrive happy and settle well. Other children are sensitively comforted by members of staff. Children are given appropriate opportunities to learn about what is right and wrong and in general are developing an awareness of their own needs and those of others. Children are beginning to gain an understanding that their actions, along with the actions of others, have consequences.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are offered an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated play which ensures they are engaged in a suitable range of developmentally appropriate activities. Children's progress is shared verbally with parents. Staff engage the children in educational play and as a whole, the team are developing their understanding of how children learn through play. In turn, staff are beginning to increase their understanding and knowledge of the Foundation Stage, so that they are able to focus upon specific learning objectives with the children. Across the staff team, particular knowledge and

understanding of the stepping stones in relation to the children's development is less secure. This means that not all staff enable all the children to gain the most from their play and learning.

On occasions, staff are confident to abandon written planning and alternatively involve the children in activities that appeal directly to their interests at that moment in time. Although the current topic is a study of animals, children so enjoyed planting activities last term, that staff have turned the role play area into a garden centre. In this area, children co-operate and work well together whilst digging, raking and sifting compost. They have fun mixing compost and squeezing compost between their fingers and also enjoy carefully measuring amounts of compost into different sized pots. Consequently, opportunities for learning are high, as children's interest is maintained as they actively engaged, for long period of time, in activities that build on their natural curiosity as learners.

Staff take time to ensure they are available to talk to parents about their child's progress and development at the start of each day. They build positive relationships with both the children and their parents to facilitate a good understanding of individual needs and home circumstances. Staff make satisfactory observations about what the children can do. These observations are communicated to parents and entered into the children's progress records. These records are stored by each key worker at home. Unfortunately, all members of staff are not currently involved in planning. Consequently, the written observations of what children can do, are not consistently used to inform future planning for learning.

Children enjoy their time at the setting. They have a positive attitude to learning and are developing increasing levels of confidence in their play. In general, the children interact well with staff and their peers to share experiences and ideas, for example actively seeking out staff members to show them what they have made. Most children confidently recognise their own name and make good use of the toys and play resources offered. Children are suitably supported as staff take time to talk and listen to the children, as they each share what they have been doing at the weekend or during holidays.

Registration and group time at the beginning and end of each day is often used to deliver adult focussed activities such as group counting, reading stories or talking about the weather. At these sessions all children are grouped and sit together. However, there is a vast range of development needs and ability across the range of children who attend the play group. The delivery, pace and language used is not always suitable for all children. At times, certain children in the group quickly lose interest in the story or activity meaning that their developmental needs are not always fully met.

Children's physical development is promoted sufficiently through the use of a suitable range of outdoor equipment. The children enjoy the opportunity to play outdoors and go outside to play every day, as the weather allows. Some children enjoy 'writing their names' and making marks with large colourful chalks and also freely running, hopping and skipping about. Other children, whilst outside, equally enjoy joining hands, forming a circle and singing popular nursery rhymes together, whilst benefiting from the fresh air.

Children have recently been studying the weather and its effect on people and places. Each day at registration, children talk about the weather, and use small muscle control to help to dress a bear appropriately for the current climate and sing weather songs together. Staff involve the children in weather related experiments and children become fascinated by the effects of heat from a hairdryer as it melts ice. They have fun touching and feeling ice and staff challenge

children to predict which cube of ice will melt first, an ice cube in cold water or one in hot water. Staff ask open questions to enable the children to ponder upon the reasons why.

Children have opportunities to count each morning at registration and during everyday play activities and are developing some understanding of mathematics. Children play counting games such as 'The Kangaroo Song' to help with the sequencing of numbers. However, currently, mathematical development is mainly focussed upon number work and opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding about space and shape is limited.

Children use their imagination as they pretend their fingers are caterpillars, whilst listening to the story of 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. They make noises and pretend to eat fruit and munch on lettuce as they animate the story. Other children enjoy exploring and investigating living things. For example, at inspection, a parent brought along her pet tortoise who has recently woken up from hibernation. Children are captivated and fascinated to be so close to an animal they had previously only seen in books or on the television and closely watch the animal's movements and mannerisms.

Planning shows that children have enjoyed using clay and salt dough, as well as twisting, squeezing and shaping malleable materials into designs of their own choice. Children use their senses and imagination to create their own work and to express their feelings. They use a widening range of materials and tools to help them to express their creativity. Children carefully cut out pictures of flowers and plants from seed catalogues and garden centre brochures and stick these to envelopes to form their own seed packets and 'write' a label. Staff attach the children's name to their work, praising each child's individual efforts, enabling them to feel valued.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children are welcomed into the setting and staff value their individual personalities. For example, staff have designed and made a 'Special Tree' which is displayed upon the entrance door into the setting. The 'Special Tree' is a visual record of the children's achievements each week. Children are acknowledged for being helpful, kind, polite and for playing well together, for example. Overall, children behave well and staff sensitively challenge children whose behaviour hinders the enjoyment of others. Children, who of their own volition, are particularly helpful for example, whilst tidying toys away or are particularly kind, are given merit stickers as a thank you from the group. As a result, children's awareness and understanding of the needs of others, along with positive behaviour, is successfully promoted through such activities to the benefit of all children.

Children's awareness and understanding of the needs of other people are successfully promoted through talk as well as inclusion within the play group. Children have suitable opportunities to learn about the world beyond their immediate experience. They have access to a suitable range of resources that enable them to find out more about other people and places around the world. Equally, children partake in activities to introduce them to world festivals celebrated by other nations and cultures. At Chinese New Year, the children made Chinese lanterns, hats and celebration cards. Independently, children have access to some resources which address wider diversity within society and therefore are developing some understanding of how everyone contributes positively in society.

Children are able to play with toys and equipment which meet their individual needs and on the whole, children play well together. They are encouraged to take turns and are offered praise and encouragement when they are helpful and kind. Staff have satisfactory knowledge of how to manage children's behaviour and in general, children do follow the boundaries established by staff. Equally, the children are developing a suitable understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Any incidents regarding sharing or turn taking are calmly dealt with by the staff to ensure the children are fully supported and that the management of their behaviour promotes their welfare. There is a written behaviour management policy in place which contains information about how the setting would manage instances of bullying, should this arise, to adequately safeguard the welfare of all. Records of incidents are recorded and shared with parents and stored in individual children's files to ensure confidentiality.

The provision has appropriate arrangements in place to care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff work in partnership with parents and other professionals to ensure children's specific needs are met. Children's individual welfare is effectively provided as staff form good relationships with parents to ensure the continuity of care of the children. Parents receive a 'Welcome Pack' when their child starts at the nursery which includes details and information about routines, policies and procedures. Individual children's records are sufficiently detailed to maintain the welfare of the children. Most information is exchanged verbally on a daily basis to ensure children's needs are met.

The partnership with parents and carers for children in receipt of funding for nursery education is satisfactory. When new children first start at the play group, staff talk to parents about what children already know and can do. Staff make some written notes and complete some informal observations of each child. Parents receive some written and some verbal information about the foundation stage and what children will be learning. Parents are provided with a letter each half term, which inform them about the topics and activities involving the children. This letter contains some suggestions as to how parents can continue the children's learning, at home.

Satisfactory procedures are in place to encourage parents to share or contribute to their child's records. Parents commented that staff are friendly and approachable and are happy to discuss their child's progress. Parents are complimentary about the standard of care and education provided. Should they wish to make a complaint, parents are made aware of the procedure to follow. Equally the group is aware of their duty to log complaints, should such matters arise thus ensuring the welfare of the children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

The registered provider's awareness and understanding of their role and responsibilities as providers of care to children is inadequate. The registered person has failed to ensure that adults looking after children are suitable to do so. Few documents relating to the suitability of all staff and their continued suitability to work with children were available at inspection, such as references or copies of qualification certificates. Consequently, the registered provider is unable to demonstrate that there is a robust recruitment and vetting procedure in place to fully ensure the safety and welfare of all children.

There is a system for registering children and staff attendance on a daily basis, showing hours of attendance. The name, address and date of birth of each child who is looked after on the premises is recorded to safeguard the welfare of the children.

The leadership and management of children in receipt of funding for early years education is satisfactory. Staff are made aware of training opportunities and are encouraged to develop and extend their own knowledge and skills. Satisfactory support and appropriate guidance is given to ensure that they are clear in their roles. At present, not all staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and therefore are not fully involved with the planning and assessment of the children's learning. As a consequence, not all staff are currently equipped to extend children to their full potential.

The nominated person is required to inform the regulator of any significant events, such as any changes to the operational plan. The particulars of any change in the childcare category, with specific regard to a change in operating from sessional day care to full day care, has not been notified to Ofsted. Consequently, Ofsted does not currently hold the correct details regarding the setting's opening hours. Overall, children's needs are not met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, no recommendations were raised to improve the standard of education. Three recommendations were raised to improve the standard of care.

A recommendation was raised to ensure that electrical sockets accessible to children are inaccessible at all times when children are present. Staff use socket covers and ensure that all electrical sockets are inaccessible at all times when children are present. Consequently, children's safety is assured.

A recommendation was raised to include the name and contact number of the regulator in the complaints procedure. The complaints procedure has been revised and now includes the name and contact number of the regulator. As a consequence, parents are aware of who to contact should they have a complaint thus safeguarding children's welfare.

A recommendation was raised to obtain written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment. The setting does not currently have written permission from all parents to seek emergency medical advice or treatment. Consequently, this recommendation has not been fully met and as a result, this area for improvement will be carried forward following this inspection.

### **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.

## **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 satisfactory.



## 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 all adults looking after children are suitable to do so. This is with specific regard to robust vetting procedures of staff
- notify Ofsted of any significant events.

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 further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- use the observations of what children can do to directly inform planning for children's next steps in learning
- increase staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage to enable them to take a greater role in its delivery and in turn responsibility for planning and assessment
- improve the organisation of group time to ensure all children respond appropriately, allowing them to develop their concentration and maintain interest
- provide a varied range of opportunities for children to develop knowledge and understanding about space and shape.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)