

The Ark

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY364735
Inspection date	02 July 2008
Inspector	Jane Muriel Laraman
Setting Address	The Ark, Pontesbury C of E Primary School, Bogey Lane, Pontesbury, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY5 0TJ
Telephone number	01743 791 540
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Registered person	Ark Childcare (UK) Limited
Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of 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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

The Ark is an out of school club and is one of two provisions run by Ark Childcare (UK) Limited. It opened in 2007 as a privately run provision and operates from a designated classroom with associated facilities in Pontesbury C of E Primary School. It is situated within the village of Pontesbury, near Shrewsbury, Shropshire. The out of school club offers places to children attending the village primary school, but also offers places to children attending schools in the surrounding rural areas. Outdoor play facilities are available with access to the school playgrounds and playing fields.

The club is open Monday to Friday from 15:15 until 17:55 during school term time only. A maximum of 24 children aged between four and eight years may attend the club at any one time. Older children may also attend the club and are included in the registered numbers permitted. There are currently 18 children on roll. The club is able to support children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are three members of staff employed at the club. Of these, two hold appropriate qualifications. Two additional members of staff assist in collecting children from their classrooms or other schools. The club receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, warm and well-maintained environment. Their good health is promoted because staff consistently follow established health and hygiene routines, which are detailed in policies and procedures, in order to keep the premises and equipment clean. For example, tables are wiped using antibacterial sprays and colour-coded disposable cloths, floors are swept and vacuumed as required and toilets are regularly monitored to ensure cleanliness. Staff encourage all children to follow good health and hygiene routines through role modelling, topic work or lively discussion. Consequently, the children take responsibility for their self-care and they understand the importance of observing sound hygiene practice. Children wash their hands after messy activities and after playing outside. They also know that they need to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating food, to help prevent the spread of germs.

Staff seek relevant information about children's medical or special needs, allergies and dietary requirements prior to them first attending the out of school club. This information is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains accurate and it is used to assist in providing appropriate care. In the event of accidents or medical emergency, children are treated by staff who have up-to-date first aid qualifications and access to a suitably stocked first aid box. Documentation is maintained regarding the recording of accidents and a medication administration system is in place to ensure that any associated requests, relevant information and actions taken are correct and appropriately recorded. This means children's welfare is safeguarded and their parents are kept fully informed. Clear, well-written policies, contracts and good relationships with parents ensure individual children are cared for appropriately should they become ill whilst at the setting and sick children are excluded from the provision until they are well, thus reducing the risk of cross-infection.

Children are offered a wide range of healthy, nutritious snacks and occasionally they have treats of home-made biscuits or cakes. Snack times are flexible and children are able to help themselves to the various food items on offer. Staff skilfully promote children's understanding about healthy eating and the value of good nutrition for their well-being through discussion. Children are involved in planning the snack menu, so their likes and dislikes are taken into account. Staff often introduce different foods for the children to sample and this develops their appetite to try new items and extends their choices. There are suitable systems in place to ensure staff are aware of, and adhere to, children's individual dietary requirements. Children are able to help themselves to a selection of drinks during the session. This ensures that they can freely access a drink when they are thirsty and they do not become dehydrated. Children sit together in the snack area when they are ready to eat and they are encouraged to enjoy good social interaction. This promotes a snack time experience which is relaxed and friendly.

All children enjoy the use of several well-designed outside play areas. They benefit from daily physical exercise in the fresh air as they access the outdoor environment during every session. The children participate with enthusiasm in a wide range of exciting activities. These activities contribute to their good health by developing their muscles, physical skills, body control and co-ordination. Through playing energetic games, such as football, cricket or pass the ball, children are developing their skills of throwing and catching, running, kicking a ball and jumping. They also play gentle, co-operative games, developing their understanding of sharing and turn-taking. On rainy days, the children thoroughly enjoy splashing in puddles or scooting

through them with their scooters. The children love to tackle obstacle courses and the adventure play provision provides them with many physical challenges as they clamber over the equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from playing in a secure environment, where they are made to feel very welcome. Many of the children attend the school during the day and they settle well in the club's familiar surroundings. Staff are deployed effectively and the children are well supervised to ensure their safety. Children's art and craft work is displayed during session times. This gives children a sense of pride in their creative work, and they are happy that their achievements are praised and valued. Staff organise space, furniture and equipment effectively to enable children to move freely and independently between different activities and play areas. Resources and play equipment are suitably maintained and conform to safety standards. This allows children the freedom to make safe choices and independently access resources from the wide selection of good quality equipment made available to them.

Positive steps are taken to ensure the safety of the children as staff implement appropriate precautions to prevent accidents. For example, electrical sockets are covered and cleaning materials are kept out of reach. Suitable fire safety equipment is in place and is appropriately maintained. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to promoting the safety and welfare of all the children and follow written policies, procedures and guidelines, which are continually reviewed. Children's safety and security is given utmost priority by vigilant staff, who carry out daily safety checks and formal risk assessments. These measures ensure that any hazards are identified and effectively minimised. When planning activities, both indoors and outside, staff carefully consider any safety issues that might arise, so that they can be addressed effectively. Children are actively involved in developing the club's safety rules and are consequently aware of how to protect themselves. The staff consistently teach and reinforce safety precautions to be observed by the children. There are clearly defined procedures for emergency evacuation of the building and children are also learning how to keep themselves safe as they participate in the regular fire drills. Consequently children's safety is suitably promoted.

Access to the building is very carefully monitored and clear procedures are in place for the collection of children by named adults. Consequently, children are suitably protected. All members of staff have a good awareness of child protection issues and know the possible signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. The person in charge has accessed recent child protection training and is confident to record, discuss and appropriately pass on any concerns about a child's well-being. She has the relevant contact numbers available and all staff have access to a written policy and Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures to follow if they have any concerns about any child in their care. As a result, children's welfare is safeguarded. Parents are made aware of the responsibilities of the staff to report any concerns through access to the child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are very happy and settled in the out of school club environment. They arrive full of enthusiasm and relate very well to the staff, as they cheerfully tell them about the experiences and activities that they have enjoyed at school during the day. They laugh and joke with the

staff, sharing their ideas and thoughts openly, in the friendly and inviting atmosphere. The philosophy of the staff is to ensure that children have the opportunity to unwind after being in school all day, as they would if they were going home. Staff work hard to ensure that the club offers a different experience to the school day and they have a very good understanding of all the children's needs and interests. For example, staff know that some children are feeling tired towards the end of the busy school day and others are feeling the need to be boisterous and to exert some energy.

The staff plan exciting activities and these activities are very flexible to adaptation and development. Many of the activities that take place are child-initiated and staff facilitate the children's choices effectively by helping them to set up games and by providing additional resources to extend activities in line with the children's interests. Children's thoughts and suggestions are respected and listened to and they are encouraged to contribute their ideas when planning topics and associated activities or when staff order new resources. The regular group discussions give children opportunities to listen to the suggestions of other children and they learn to value one another's views, differences and ideas. Everything that happens at the club is a direct reflection of the children's needs, interests and preferences and children say that they like being able to choose what they want to do.

Due to the varied and enjoyable range of activities and opportunities, children are able to fulfil their differing needs and preferences to be energetic, relaxed, creative or reflective. For example, they enjoy modelling with recycled materials, piecing together puzzles, creating clay models, making presents for their family, designing wrapping paper, using construction sets and playing board or Playstation games. Children have the option to complete their school homework in an allocated quiet area, if they prefer not to leave it until when they are at home. Outdoor games activities, walks around the school playing fields and nature area, playing in the willow tunnel, dance, music and outdoor theatre productions are thoroughly enjoyed and children recall their past play experiences vividly. They have created picture boards and photograph albums of play experiences or special events and they use these to share memories with their families and visitors to the club. Children particularly enjoy the outdoor environment and show considerable respect for living things. For example, whilst playing outside, some children discover a baby owl, which has landed in a puddle in the corner of the school playground. The owl seems very still and the children react sensitively and with concern for the creature's plight. Through prompt discussion with the staff, they realise that although the owl seems uninjured, it may need special help from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Children benefit from high quality interactions with the staff. This is because the staff are intuitive and skilled in knowing when to stand back and let the children express themselves and when to join in. It is evident that the staff and children see the club as the children's club and children take great pride in what happens, which has a positive effect on their behaviour. Consequently, children thrive in a fun, purposeful environment that fosters independence and respect.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff have a very good understanding of equal opportunities issues and implement the relevant policies effectively. All children have equal access to the variety of activities and resources available and each child is treated with equal concern. The staff make time to get to know each of the children and their families, thus building strong and trusting relationships with them. Children's differing abilities and needs are well catered for within the provision because staff

consider and act upon their individual requirements and respect parental wishes. Staff actively seek children's views about current activities and the introduction of new ones. The children are also encouraged to say how they think the club can be developed or improved. Through the positive example of being made welcome and treated with respect by staff, children are helped to develop positive attitudes towards others. They also develop confidence to share their thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas openly, as they know they will be valued.

Children's understanding of diversity and the world around them is promoted very well through discussion, thematic topic work and through accessing a good range of resources, such as books, multicultural pictures, board games and jigsaws, which reflect positive images of diversity in society and the wider world. There are plans for the children to participate in the celebration of a wide range of community and cultural festivities throughout the year.

There are good arrangements in place for meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The needs of children who speak English as an additional language can also be catered for. Whenever necessary, staff can adapt the environment and activities so that all children can take part. Individual learning plans can be carefully implemented to ensure that appropriate activities are provided, which meet the child's developmental needs. The staff are committed to providing an inclusive environment and are aware of the importance of working sensitively with parents. With parental consent, they are willing to work with other professionals who may be involved in the child's life.

Strategies used to manage children's behaviour are positive and take into account the age and maturity of the children. Good behaviour is promoted as the staff give lots of praise and encouragement to the children for their efforts and achievements, thus enhancing their self-esteem. Children learn about right and wrong as the staff explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable, and they help the children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. The children respond very well to the high expectations and clear boundaries set by the staff and with their help, they have drawn up a series of club rules, which are very similar to the school rules. As a result of implementing consistent strategies, the standard of children's behaviour is very good.

The relationships with parents and carers that have been developed by the staff are friendly and professional. Children benefit from the strong partnerships forged between their parents and the staff. Parents are given useful written information about the provision and are kept well informed of events, activities and developments through newsletters, posters and the documents displayed on the information desk in the club room. Personal information parents are asked to provide about their children is respected and acted upon and clear contractual agreements are in place. Continuity of care for the children is supported very well because the staff liaise effectively with parents and each of the schools attended by the children. Relevant information that parents or staff may need to know from any event during the school day is indicated by the school on a carefully devised confidential form. This form is then passed on to the parent when they collect their child. Parents are made very welcome whenever they have contact with staff. The opportunity to exchange verbal or written information before, during or after each session helps to promote the children's well-being and also helps parents to develop trust and confidence that their children are well cared for and that they have fun whilst at the club. Parents indicate that they are happy with the provision and that their children are keen to spend time at the club. There is a written policy in place regarding complaints, which includes the procedures to follow and the contact numbers and address of Ofsted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit because the staff are suitably qualified and use their knowledge and experience to organise a good variety of activities and opportunities. The provision is well resourced and the available space is used effectively so that children are able to play and relax in comfort. Good adult to child ratios mean that the children are appropriately supervised and well cared for. Robust registration systems ensure that children's arrival and departure times are accurately recorded and that staff know who should be present at all times. The staff team works well together, they support one another and are clear about their roles and responsibilities, which helps to contribute towards the smooth running of the club. Staff demonstrate enthusiasm for creating a warm, welcoming environment that stimulates and motivates the children. This means the children can enjoy activities and feel secure, happy and settled.

Good recruitment and induction procedures are in place, which ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Consequently, children benefit from being cared for by vetted staff, with a range of qualifications and experience and who are dedicated, friendly and very caring. Staffing records with details of training and qualifications are kept in personnel files. The staff demonstrate a positive attitude towards training and they are able to attend regular training to develop their professional practice. Their commitment to evolving and continuously improving the provision is evident in their written action plans, which are in the process of being implemented. All children are well known to the staff, resulting in their individual needs and preferences being met.

Policies and procedures are used effectively and the required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place. All personal documentation is stored securely, ensuring confidentiality is maintained.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

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):

- monitor the implementation of action plans and evaluate their effectiveness in developing the provision.

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