

The Ark Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY312761
Inspection date	06/02/2009
Inspector	Lynn Denise Smith
Setting address	The Ark Centre, 36 Main Road, Harwich, Essex, CO12 3LU
Telephone number	01255 502063
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

The Ark is committee owned and managed. It opened in 2005 and operates from a room within a community centre in Harwich. The premises are on ground level and accessible. A secure enclosed outdoor area is used for outdoor play activities. A maximum of 26 children aged from two to five years may attend the setting at any one time. The group is open five days a week from 09:30 to 12:00 on Thursdays and Fridays and from 09:30 to 14:45 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

There are currently 31 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) years. They live in the local area and a number of children also attend a childminder or early years unit of the local primary school. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register.

The setting also offers care to children aged over five years to 11 years. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary childcare registers.

There are six members of staff, including the manager. Five staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is satisfactory. A secure knowledge of each child's needs enables staff to promote their welfare and learning appropriately in a caring and inclusive setting. Children play in a safe and caring environment, however, provision for rigorous risk assessments need to be reviewed. Parents share relevant information with staff about their children's starting points and home backgrounds which provides staff with a base on which to plan their future learning, however, at present there are no formal procedures in place for sharing information about the children's progress and achievements. The procedures for reviewing and monitoring the provision to provide a culture of self-evaluation is in its infancy.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- lead and encourage a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to involve all staff in identifying the setting's strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of provision for all children
- develop the use of risk assessments to cover anything with which a child may come into contact including each individual outing
- continue to develop a systematic and routine approach to using observations in order to plan the next steps in children's developmental progress
- review the organisation and planning of the indoor and outdoor learning

environment to provide children with opportunities to initiate their own play and follow their own interests

- develop partnership working to provide opportunities for parents to share in their children's learning and consider ways of liaising with other providers delivering the EYFS to ensure progression and continuity of care.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Effective procedures are in place to ensure that children are cared for by caring and appropriately vetted adults. All new staff are employed through the setting's clear recruitment procedures to determine their suitability. The staff team consists of some established staff and some newer members. They all work well together and draw on each other's strengths and different skills. The setting is managed by an overall manager who oversees the operations of all facilities within the centre. The day to day activities are planned and organised by the supervisor and her team. Children are safeguarded through the setting's policies, however, some staff have yet to complete up-to-date safeguarding training.

A set of written policies and procedures are available and shared with parents. Staff also spend valuable time discussing the policies verbally with parents when they come to register their children. At present the procedures for sharing information about the children's progress is limited to verbal discussions, although, parents spoken to identified that they felt comfortable to approach the staff at any time to discuss about their children. Links with other settings are being considered but at present these are limited to the other agencies the staff work closely with. Until a recent meeting with the local Early Years Development Worker, the setting had not been reviewing or evaluating its provision to identify areas for improvement. Following this meeting a number of issues are being explored such as further staff training and developing the planning and observations in line with the EYFS.

The setting has a clear inclusion policy which is understood by staff. Each child is viewed in terms of their individual needs and staff work effectively with parents to develop close trusting relationships in which relevant information can be confidently shared.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are provided with a range of activities which help them to make progress across all areas of learning. Their welfare needs are suitably met to enable them to stay safe and healthy. Children gain knowledge about keeping well as staff talk to them about the importance of hand washing and healthy eating. Children experience outdoor physical play most days whereby they have opportunities to develop their running, riding, throwing and catching skills. Children enjoy a substantial mid session snack which generally comprises of a range of fruit and bread based snacks. They are beginning to develop independence as they pour their own drinks, carefully supervised by a member of staff. Some children stay at the setting for a packed lunch on three days of the week whereby they sit with

their friends and share this important time of the day.

Children play and learn in a large room of a community based centre offering a range of facilities to local families. The environment is bright and welcoming providing a good amount of natural light. Toys and resources are presented on floor mats and child height tables for easy access, children wander confidently from one activity to another. A fully enclosed outdoor area provides space for a range of resources and is easily accessible from the playroom. Although children play outdoors regularly the provision for them to make choices about whether they play indoors or outdoors is not yet available throughout the session. Children are safe within the setting as staff carry out a daily safety check, however, risk assessments and fire evacuation practices are not rigorously carried out.

Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the children's individual needs and talk confidently about how they endeavour to meet them. The setting offers an inclusive provision whereby each child is individual and staff work closely with their parents to identify and recognise any areas for further development. Information about the children's progress is shared verbally with parents on a daily basis and plans are underway to include some information about the learning activities and objectives in regular newsletters. Links with other settings providing for the EYFS are not effectively established, however, staff are considering ways of developing these links. Staff follow a very set daily routine which involves clearing all of the toys away mid session to make room for snack, large group activities, singing time and outdoor play time. Rigid procedures such as these limit children's opportunities to make free choices over their play and learning and are not always effective for younger children.

Children participate in a wide range of play and learning opportunities which enable them to extend their knowledge. Staff are beginning to make more effective use of the planning by demonstrating which activities are adult-led and which are child-initiated. Observations are being made of the children's achievements, however, at present these are not effectively linking to inform future planning. Children's language development is well-promoted through the use of appropriate vocabulary, visual aids and Maketon. Staff encourage children to extend their thinking by asking open ended questions. Children's interests in books is promoted through the large, relaxing area set aside as a quiet book corner. Children enjoy being imaginative as they freely access the role play materials and dressing up clothes. They proficiently bandage the dolls attending the doctors surgery and use the note pad to book further appointments. Opportunities are missed during everyday activities such as snack time to extend children's problem solving, reasoning and numeric skills. They actively participate in singing their favourite songs and joining in with any actions.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	3

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Met

Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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.