

The Ark Montessori Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY319634
Inspection date	10/06/2009
Inspector	June Fielden
Setting address	Carshalton Beeches Baptist Church, Banstead Road, Carshalton, SM5 3NL
Telephone number	020 8660 1921
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 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 Montessori Pre-school is one of two pre-schools that are privately run. It opened in 2006 and operates from Carshalton Beeches Baptist Church Hall. Children have access to two adjoining rooms and two outside play areas. It is situated in a residential area in Carshalton Beeches. It is open each weekday during term time from 09.30 until 12.00. An optional 09.00 Club operates from 09.00 to 09.30, and a lunch club is available from 12.00 until 13.00, according to parents needs.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and a maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 30 children aged from two years to the end of the early years age range on roll. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting is also registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

There are six members of staff, of whom five hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ at level 2. In addition, a member of staff who works at both settings owned by the provider has recently achieved Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). The setting works within the Montessori philosophy.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory. Children are cared for by friendly, approachable staff, who promote children's learning and welfare needs. They make good progress in their learning, as the opportunities provided for children are based on staff's observations and assessments of them. There is an effective partnership with parents and local schools, and through self-evaluation the pre-school are able to identify their main strengths. Although the pre-school did not notify Ofsted of a significant event, this does not have a significant impact on the provision.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that hazards in the garden area are included in the risk assessment
- continue to develop further the partnership with childminders that are involved in children's care, to ensure that these links are as effective as those already established with local schools

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Parents are kept well informed of children's progress and events and activities that take place at the pre-school. A wide range of information is available to them, including the groups policies and procedures, and details of the Early Years

Foundation Stage (EYFS). Also, the planning and photographs show the activities children regularly engage in. This enables parents to follow up on tasks children participate in at the setting and be involved in their learning. They are also welcome to volunteer to assist at the pre-school sessions. Letters from previous parents and comments from the parents of children currently attending the pre-school are all positive about the care and opportunities provided for children. Parents receive regular newsletters, are invited into the setting for special events and are involved in the fundraising. Staff arrange dates when parents are invited into the pre-school to look at their child's records, and meetings are held to make them aware of the options available to them when their child transfers to school. When staff identify children with learning difficulties and disabilities they liaise appropriately with other professionals and ensure that the parents are involved. The pre-school maintains effective links with local schools, and arranges for children to meet the teachers from the school they will be transferring to. Although, the links with other providers involved in children's care are not currently so fully established. Staff have an appropriate understanding of how to protect children from harm, and the procedure to follow should they have any concerns.

The member of staff with EYPS works in an advisory role at both settings owned by the provider and is involved in staff training and introducing improvements within the setting. She promoted the use of learning stories, which staff at the pre-school now use as a record of children's achievements. A staff appraisal system is in place and appropriate opportunities are provided for them to access training. There are suitable contingency arrangements to ensure that cover staff are available if anyone is absent. Staff identify their key strengths through effective self-evaluation. These include their relationship with parents and the way in which staff get to know their key children really well. This is promoted at circle time and snack time, when staff sit with them while they eat, using this opportunity as a social occasion and a further learning experience for children. The way in which children are made more aware of the wider world through raising money for events, such as comic relief, and celebrating festivals from other cultures is also seen as one of their strong points. The pre-school have addressed all the recommendations raised at their last inspection, including evaluating their planning. Parents' comments to assist staff in evaluating the provision are welcomed through a suggestion box, to encourage their involvement in this process.

The provider has committed an offence by failing to notify Ofsted of a change to the person who is managing the early years provision. This is a specific legal requirement in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS. Ofsted does not intend to prosecute on this occasion. This occurrence was due to an oversight by the provider, who believed that she had appropriately informed Ofsted of this event. The current manager has the required experience and qualifications.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children experience a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Effective planning covers all areas of learning and includes activities arranged by staff to address children's needs, their interests, and suggestions made by parents.

The learning story that staff complete for each child includes the regular observations they make on children and identifies their next steps in learning. Children's records also include photographic evidence of their achievements, and comments from the child and their parents. Children engage in a wide range of tasks. They start the day with circle time when they greet staff using sign language, ensuring that all can be included in this activity. Staff develop children's knowledge of the needs of living things by growing tomato and strawberry plants with children, and observing tadpoles and snails that are brought into the setting for them to observe. Children rest and relax in the cosy book corner and move freely around the setting, choosing the activities they wish to engage in for themselves. Staff introduce counting into everyday activities, such as the number of children present at registration time. One child is asked how many carriages there are on the train set they are playing with, and is able to tell the member of staff that there are nine. Children show that they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. For example, when staff ask them what they need to maintain their health, their answers include exercising and not eating too much chocolate.

Children have access to water at all times, to ensure they are not thirsty. They are offered healthy options at snack time, including various fruit, toast and raisins, which they help themselves to from a bowl they pass around the group. Staff are aware of children's allergies and a list of these is easily accessible in the kitchen. Children use liquid soap and paper towels when they wash their hands, to prevent cross contamination. They are taught good manners by staff, who are always positive with them, and as a result children behave well. Staff effectively prepare children for the future, developing their communication skills by continually talking to them and holding discussions with them. They collaborate as they play on the wooden train set and use other games that involve turn taking. The Montessori equipment available to children also enables them to be inquisitive and develop their problem solving skills. All the appropriate resources and toys are available to children, and various safety measures are in place, including a written fire evacuation plan, which is practised with them. Although there are currently some hazards accessible to children in the outdoor play area, which are not currently included in the pre-schools risk assessment.

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.	2

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?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	3
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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