

The Ark Children's Centre Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Deirdra Keating

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Introduction

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Description of the setting

The Ark Children's Centre Nursery was reregistered in 2009 and is managed by the St Edmund & Waveney YMCA Services Ltd. The facility operates from three rooms in a single storey, purpose built building. Both rooms have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The children's centre is in the northern area of Lowestoft and houses a range of extended facilities for families and young children. It is open each weekday from 8.00am to 6.00pm for 51 weeks of the year.

The centre is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 51 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 102 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part time places. The nursery has a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

There are 19 members of staff, all of whom hold early years qualifications to at least Level two. One member of staff is a qualified teacher and one has recently achieved Early Years Professional Status. The setting provides funded early education for three and four year olds.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are provided with very good levels of care and make consistent progress in the inclusive and well designed nursery. They are settled, independent and enjoy a stimulating range of play opportunities that organised well to meet most of their needs and interests. The partnerships with parents and local schools are a key strength and are significant in meeting children's needs. The monitoring and analysis of the nursery is rigorous and gives an accurate diagnosis of the key strengths and weakness. Actions for improvements are well targeted and have brought sustained improvement to the setting.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve support for children learning English as an additional language by using a wider range of tools and resources
- ensure that staff appraisals identify the training needs of all the staff and that specific training supports staff in meeting the children's individual needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The nursery has clear policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of all the children. All staff are suitably checked prior to

starting and demonstrate high levels of commitment to protecting children. In addition, they attend safeguarding training and are fully aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a concern about a child. Children's safety is a high priority and daily checks ensure the rooms are ready for use and any potential hazards are removed. The building has been designed to ensure that all areas can be easily accessed and any potential barriers have been removed to offer equality of opportunity to all children. The resources in the building are checked daily and deployed well to promote children's confidence, safety and independence. For example, at snack time furniture is at the right height for young children to comfortably help prepare the snack. Children skilfully use small safe knives, colourful plates and pour from small jugs of drinks. The deployment of these well chosen resources helps very young children learn to pour, cut, spread and enjoy a social snack time where emphasis is placed on the acquisition of new skills and good table manners.

Staff work well together using their combined skills and experience with a clear sense of purpose and common aims. Children benefit from high quality staff who are well qualified and want to attend further training. There is a strong focus on ongoing professional development which is generally fostered well by the management team. However, the training does not fully reflect the needs of all the children who use the nursery, leaving some areas where staff are less confident in how best to support children.

Staff at all levels drive and secure improvement. The management and staff, are committed to continuous improvement and have demonstrated this very clearly in their comprehensive and focused self-evaluation. Strong emphasis is placed on reflecting on the service provided and setting targets for continual improvement that have direct links to outcomes for the children. For example, the garden area for the younger children has been subject to re-design and landscaping to make it more accessible throughout the seasons of the year.

The setting's designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) works with parents and other professionals to provide tailored support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Other professionals are also based at the centre from where the nursery operates providing specific support to children, staff and parents. The nursery also liaises very well with external agencies and schools, including the local authority, to ensure every child receives the support they require. Transitional meetings with schools and other early years staff ensure children's smooth transition can be planned according to their individual needs. These partnerships are securely established and make a strong contribution to children's achievement and wellbeing. The nursery have also developed an extremely good relationship with parents and carers of the children who attend. Parents are very positive about the nursery and staff try exceptionally hard to provide well planned opportunities for parents to be fully involved in their children's learning and development. There is wide range of information and support for parents regarding children's development stages and any concerns or worries they may have.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are given warm and responsive care by trained staff who have a good secure knowledge of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The purpose built building provides a vibrant and inclusive environment that is reassuring, comfortable and accessible for all children. It is very well equipped and has been designed to promote children's choice, independence and safety. Children are given responsibility by adults who have high expectations of them, this helps them gain a sense of belonging as they accomplish small and realistic tasks. Children of all ages take responsibility for small tasks, washing their cups and plates at a low sink after they have eaten, they competently put away resources working together to tidy away at the end of the session. Children become increasingly independent as they start to manage coat fastenings and put on their winter boots, staff know the children well and are able to judge when they are ready to be taught these new skills.

Children have a good relationship with staff who are adept at tuning into children's ideas and watch and listen carefully before intervening in play. Consequently, children sustain long periods of play directed by their own imaginations and supported extremely well by staff. Children play eagerly as a group in the large sand pit making ice creams from sand. Cones are requested to hold the ice creams in and quick thinking staff provide newspaper and tape. Children enthusiastically prepare and sell ice creams moving around the garden using their imaginations and language to recall ideas and develop their play. They work as a team as they plan a trip to the beach improvising resources and using one item to represent another on their imaginary journey.

Staff help children learn an awareness of the relationship between numbers and items and know that numbers can be combined to make a larger number through practical activities. Children thread conkers onto coloured string, they predict how many they will thread and compare the amounts of conkers they have. This activity is undertaken outside in the fresh air which has a positive impact on children's wellbeing and helps all aspects of the children's development. Children spend long periods of time outside where they have first hand contact with the natural world, they are physically active and exuberant as they run around in the fresh air. Babies also access an area specifically designed to enable them to crawl outside and explore sensory resources and materials safely. This is one of many opportunities children are given to help them develop an understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They grow vegetables and herbs and are offered a wide range of fruit at snack time. Activities to encourage healthy eating are planned by staff, children make smoothies using a blender which prompts discussion about different types of fruit and encourages children to try exotic fruits. Children can all access drinking water independently, younger children are offered regular drinks and are guided to their beakers and bottles and older children competently use the water dispenser when they are thirsty.

Older children regulate their own play with help from staff who set limits and boundaries to ensure children feel safe. The environment is safe and supportive

and staff remind children about using resources safely and moving safely. Babies can move safely around the floor where well placed resources encourage them to investigate and explore. The floor is soft and kept hygienic by staff who take good preventative measures to promote a clean environment. For example, they have a policy of wearing inside shoes only whilst in the room. Babies sleep in a quiet and designated area and are checked rigorously by competent staff who record this to monitor children's safety. Staff have developed close and tactile relationships with babies which helps them form strong attachments and positive, secure relationships. Consequently, they are secure and are confident to explore different materials in messy play. Babies and young children are animated and happy, they are strongly encouraged to communicate and make gurgles and early words which are understood by staff who encourage children's speech and language well. Established routines support babies and toddlers to begin to make choices and decisions for themselves. They develop the personal qualities that enable them to take responsibility for small tasks such as helping collect the snack and taking their beakers and plates to the sink after they have eaten, developing their skills for the future.

The staff promote equality of opportunity throughout the setting recognising the strengths of professional relationships in creating an approach that best meets each child's individual needs. Children are able to have the help they need at the right time, because staff work closely with a wide range of professionals some of whom are also based in the centre. The local community contains many families who speak English as a second language. Whilst staff warmly welcome all children, children with English as an additional language are not consistently supported as there are few resources and staff lack confidence and knowledge in how best to support young children in this area.

Strong partnerships with parents and carers means that they are well informed and involved in their children's care and educational progress from the start. Parents input is highly valued by staff who have built a very effective two way flow of information. In addition, parents attend open evenings where they share their children's written records and discuss their progress. Staff work closely with parents to identify needs for additional support as early as possible, this enables children to progress well in relation to their starting points and capabilities.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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