

The Little Ark

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY391487
Inspection date	26/02/2010
Inspector	Jenny Kane

Setting address	The John Wesley Church of England Methodist Primary School, Wesley School Road, ASHFORD, Kent, TN23 5LW
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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.

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Description of the setting

The Little Ark nursery has been registered since August 2009. It is managed by a committee made up of representatives from the school and the nursery manager. The nursery operates from a self-contained, single storey building in the grounds of the John Wesley Church of England Primary School in the Singleton area of Ashford. Children have access to a secure enclosed decking and garden area for outdoor play and also have the use of the school playgrounds and playing fields. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm, term time only. The premises are readily accessible and suitable for wheelchair users.

The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 60 children on roll aged between two and four years. Of these, 41 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs eight nursery staff and an administrator. Five of the nursery staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and three are working towards a qualification. The staff receive support from the local authority Early Years Advisory team and have close links with the head and teaching staff of the school.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are making good progress in their learning and development because staff have a sound knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and take into account children's capabilities when planning activities. The setting places a high emphasis on children's well-being and safety. Strong partnerships with parents and working with other professionals ensure staff meet children's individual needs and provide continuity of care. Good teamwork and a clear commitment to identifying strengths, areas for development and continuous improvement help the nursery to provide a welcoming and inclusive service.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to develop the observation and assessment systems
- consider how to develop the systems for sharing information regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage with parents so they can fully support their children's learning at home.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff are friendly, approachable and professional. They work effectively as a team; they deploy themselves very well and this ensures they meet the welfare needs of all children. The head of the school supports the manager and staff well and provides resources and expertise. The support of an administrator to concentrate on the office work helps the staff to get on with the day-to-day running of the nursery and enables them to give their full attention to working with the children.

The management demonstrate an excellent understanding of their responsibilities with regard to child protection. Senior staff are fully aware of their roles and are confident about raising concerns. All staff have a clear understanding of the child protection procedures and have attended recent training. This ensures the setting safeguards all children in their care.

All mandatory records and documentation are in place and maintained to a high standard. Children's records are confidential, shared appropriately with parents and contain relevant and useful information. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and shared with the parents. Parents receive clear, well-produced information about the nursery at the beginning of contracts. However, the information about the Early Years Foundation Stage and the areas of learning is limited. Written information and the parent packs are regularly updated and reviewed. The manager understands the value of self-evaluation and assessing the quality of the service provided in order to identify areas for development. She encourages parents to make their ideas and opinions known through regular discussions and questionnaires. Staff demonstrate a good commitment to their development, training and sharing of information on good childcare practice.

Staff have quickly developed highly effective systems of communication with parents and carers which ensures they are fully involved in their children's care. Parents happily share information with staff. In return, staff give parents plenty of information about issues relating to their children and aspects of their development. Parents are extremely happy and their positive comments clearly demonstrate their satisfaction with the provision. In addition, a parents group run by the parents for the parents is developing. This means that parents and carers can be involved in decision making on matters that involve their children. It also enables parents to meet socially and organise fundraising events.

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

All staff who work with the children have a good awareness of the learning and development and welfare requirements. Staff plan activities taking into account children's individual interests and ideas. This ensures children are challenged and enjoy their play. Since the recent opening of the provision, staff have strived to ensure that all children attending have good opportunities to make progress in their learning. As a result, children are achieving very well in relation to their

starting points.

The key person system works well and helps staff to meet children's individual needs. Staff make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles during activities. They make notes, which are later transferred into children's individual folders, and the information is used to help with future planning. The development records hold useful information for parents about how their children are progressing. However, although parents have access to these, they do not all look at them on a regular basis, which means some parents are not fully involved in their children's learning at home.

Children are settled, happy and enjoy a relaxed environment. They have equal access to the play materials, several of which reflect diversity and positive images. The extensive range of good quality resources and the thought given by staff to the layout of the environment help to support children's learning and development. Self-selection is very good with all play materials easily accessible. In addition, the labelling of the trays helps children to identify the written word. There are good supplies of books and the children learn how to respect them by returning them to the bookcase when they have finished looking at them. Staff enhance children's enjoyment of books by operating a library where they choose and take home a book each week. This week, children each received a pack of books from the local authority treasure chest, which they take home. Children show their creativity by making good use of the empty cardboard boxes which the books come in, sitting in them, pushing them about and lining them up.

There are good opportunities for children to develop their understanding of problem solving and numeracy during play. For example, children use the construction set to make vehicles. One child gathers all the wheels and makes a long structure, proudly showing staff who help to count up to forty wheels. They use their imagination well during activities such as music and dancing, in the role play area, playing outside and during art and craft. Although some of the art sessions are focused on a particular topic, others are very much free choice, allowing the children to make their own art.

The staff give high priority to children's safety and promoting their welfare. Risk assessments are clear, thorough and all staff take responsibility for these. Children understand rules about using the equipment safely and the need to clear away items when they have finished with them. When they are using the bikes in the garden, they have a system to prevent riding into each other and show a good awareness of where other children are. They practise fire drills on a regular basis so they know how to get out of the premises in an emergency. This helps to ensure all children are safe and feel secure.

Staff support children well and give them responsibility for deciding what they do and when. Consequently, children's behaviour is excellent. They are motivated, engaged in activities and keen to join in. This good support also encourages children's independence. For example, they choose if they want to play outside in the garden. Children use the outdoor area on a daily basis regardless of the weather. They put on their coats and outdoor shoes for themselves. Staff have

plans to develop the garden to include a recycling, composting and planting area. Children are developing an understanding of good hygiene practices, healthy eating and the need for regular exercise. The staff promote the health of the children by maintaining high standards of hygiene and sharing tasks of cleaning and preparing healthy snacks. During the morning, the 'café' is open; one child is the helper, wearing a plastic apron, and helps to hand out cups and pour drinks. Children automatically wash their hands, find their name card and sit together to eat their snack. They enjoy spreading their own toppings on their toast. Those who stay for longer periods partake in a cooked lunch in the main school where they mix with the older children. Children understand the rules about walking quietly into the school, staying together for the short walk. Eating in the dining hall with the older children helps children to establish links with teaching staff and make a smooth transition from the nursery into the school.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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

Met