



Noah's Ark Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Unique Reference Number | 251580 |
| Inspection date | 16 January 2006 |
| Inspector | Hazel Meadows |
| Setting Address | St Johns Church Hall, Cauldwell Hall Road (North East), Ipswich, Suffolk, IP4 4QE |
| Telephone number | 01473 721252 |
| E-mail | |
| Registered person | Noah's Ark Pre-School |
| Type of inspection | Integrated |
| Type of care | Sessional 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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Noah's Ark Pre-school opened in 1985. It operates from two purpose-built rooms in the modern church hall of St John's Church, in north-east Ipswich. A maximum of 36 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open on Monday to Friday mornings from 09:15 to 11:45 and Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 12:30 to 15:00, term-time only. All children share access to a secure

enclosed outdoor play area which is partly safety surfaced.

There are currently 61 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these, 54 children receive funding for nursery education. Children predominantly come from a local catchment area. The pre-school supports a number of children with special educational needs and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight staff. Six of the staff, including the play leader hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a recognised early year's qualification. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are adequately protected from cross-infection as staff mostly follow appropriate environmental health and hygiene guidelines. For example, tables are wiped before and after snacks and staff wear gloves when changing nappies and soiled clothes. Children follow simple good health and hygiene practices when encouraged or reminded to do so. For example, they wash their hands after toileting, although this is not always checked by staff. Children begin to learn about healthy living through regular hygiene routines such as using wet wipes before snack, however, no explanation is given to them as to why they clean their hands or about healthy foods.

Children's wellbeing is adequately promoted as accident procedures are followed and records are maintained and there is a reasonably stocked first aid kit in each room. Children are reassured and appropriately cared for if they have an accident. Children's medical needs and prior parental consent are well documented through liaison and written records from parents, however, there is no means of recording any medication administered.

Children's physical skills are adequately developed by outdoor activities such as throwing and catching balls, ride on toys and opportunities to run, jump and climb. However, the outdoor area is currently under utilised and does not offer sufficient variety and challenge, particularly for older or more able children to extend their skills and competence. Indoors, children take part in action rhymes to taped music and obstacle courses, developing their flexibility and coordination. Children develop smaller, manipulative skills as they do painting and drawing, threading and puzzles and cut with scissors.

Children are reasonably well nourished and enjoy some healthy snacks such fruit and cheese, although they often have biscuits. They are offered milk or water to drink at snack time, however, children are unable to help themselves to water if they become thirsty during the session, as the water jug is too heavy and cumbersome. Children

have their health and dietary needs met because staff work with parents and any allergies or intolerances are recorded on child's initial registration record. Reminder charts for staff are discreetly kept for quick reference ensuring children's allergies or dietary needs are not overlooked when preparing snack.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are reasonably well cared for in a bright and secure environment and visual risk assessments are undertaken of the premises. However, children are exposed to potential hazards when handbags are left on the floor or within easy reach and not all low-level sockets are covered. Staff lack understanding and awareness of potential hazards and their procedure for risk assessment is therefore not effective in practice.

Children enjoy a reasonable selection of toys, which are selected by staff and are easily accessible to the children on low level tables or on the floor. Toys and equipment are in good clean condition and meet suitable safety standards enabling children to play safely. Children's welfare is adequately promoted as the emergency evacuation routine is practised every term, however, no fire log is maintained.

Children occasionally learn about keeping themselves safe, for example, they are reminded to hold on when using the trampoline and to walk within the pre-school. However, at times when they become bored or there are insufficient resources available, children tend to run around the playroom which compromises their safety. For example, one child fell over and banged their head during the period after snack and was initially not noticed by staff.

Children are sufficiently safeguarded because most staff have some understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

There are major differences between the quality of experiences offered to children in the smaller room and those in the large room, which caters for funded children. Children are developing confidence and most come happily into the playgroup. Younger children benefit from a quieter, smaller and calmer room which is conducive to them settling in and gradually separating from their parent or carer. They are treated with kindness and offered reassurance by staff. For example, a child in the small room is able to clutch a bag which helps him feel more secure.

All of the children play together outside and they also come together in the large room for story or rhyme time, offering them opportunities to interact with older children. However, this can be counter-productive as the group is so large that many children cannot see or hear the story and become bored and fidgety. They lose interest and a few wander away from the main group to look at the few resources left

out in the room. At times, some of the children, particularly the younger ones, appear anxious and confused. Staff are not attentive to this and make little effort to rectify the situation. The large group time therefore, does not promote children's development, learning and enjoyment. Conversely, a group of eight children in the smaller room thoroughly enjoy circle time, completely focussed and engaged in a story involving them using rhythm sticks as sound effects.

In the larger room the majority of the children show interest in what they do for the first hour of the session. Many of them play purposefully, concentrate and are absorbed in the activities available. For example, exploring the play dough and paint and playing for sustained periods with the small world. However, their concentration and interest wanes once they have explored the available toys and they are not sufficiently challenged. Children have little opportunity to initiate and develop their own play and very limited opportunities for self-selection. Children's enjoyment and achievement at the setting is limited by the lack of opportunities to respond to challenges or to use their own initiative.

Just prior to snack, children wait for long periods for their name to be held up. They therefore miss potential social interaction and relationship building as some have finished and left the tables by the time others have got their names. Staff sit apart from the children, supervising rather than engaging with them. Following snack time no toys are available resulting in children becoming bored and aimless. The remainder of the session consists of outdoor play or adult directed activities indoors which do not always provide sufficient challenge and interest to engage the children.

Most staff are not aware of 'Birth to three matters' and it is currently not being utilised to support and enhance the care of children under three years.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

Children are making inadequate progress towards the early learning goals. Very few of the staff have had training in the Foundation Stage and some are not aware of what it is. Planning is undertaken by the main play leader and is not shared and understood by all the staff. Short term plans do not identify the learning intention and are not based on observations of what children can do. Plans mostly identify the resources required out each day and do not relate to the stepping stones. Insufficient attention is paid to the social and learning needs of children of different ages.

There is currently no system in place to ascertain what a child knows, understands and can do when they first come to the pre-school. Some of the funded children have an assessment record in their folders but few of these contain regular entries and some are blank, even though children may have been attending for up to a year. A key-worker system has been implemented to help staff focus on particular children, however, at present observations are not being undertaken systematically and children's current capabilities and, therefore, their next steps are not clearly or regularly identified

Assessments undertaken are not used consistently to inform planning or move

children on to the next step in their learning. A small number of the adult focussed activity sheets clearly state the learning intention and are reasonably well evaluated, however, practice is not consistent and information gathered is not used to inform future planning or assessment. There are many missed opportunities to promote and extend children's thinking and learning. For example, staff tend to answer their own questions and children do not have sufficient time to think and respond.

Most children come confidently into the pre-school and are initially keen to explore the activities on offer. Children work cooperatively together for brief periods and some are forming positive relationships, for example, two children playing with a train track and two friends hunting for a toy cat together. Children have a level of independence and are sometimes able to think for themselves, for example, toileting and choosing from available toys. However, opportunities for them to initiate their own play and learning and to develop independence and practise their skills are limited. For example, staff mostly pour children's drinks and do up their coats for them.

Some children competently communicate with one another and a few children confidently speak to staff and some with visitors. However, many children are saying very little to their peers or staff. The development of children's thinking and communication skills is limited by the lack of open-ended questioning and interaction from some staff. Children mostly handle the books well but, apart from the book time after snack, they rarely independently access the book corner. Children enjoy making marks in the sand and with paint or chalk. They freely access the writing table, which has somewhat limited resources, however, they have very few opportunities to write for a purpose in their play.

Children are becoming familiar with simple mathematical language such as 'big' and 'little' and are able to make simple comparisons, for example, when playing with the balls outside. Children have some opportunities to count, for example, at registration and when singing counting rhymes. They are also encouraged to count during adult focussed activities such as 'Counting Octopus', however, there is limited evidence of numbers on display around the playroom. Opportunities for engaging children in simple problem solving are missed, for example, at snack time no comparisons are made between number of children and cups needed. There is very limited reference to or evidence of shapes, space and measure.

Children have some opportunities to explore and investigate using all their senses, such as sand play and painting their hands. However, these opportunities tend to be somewhat limited and children ask few questions about why things happen. Children play with a toy till and telephones but overall have very limited opportunities to use technology or programmable toys. Children occasionally learn about their own culture and enjoy activities connected with festivals, for example, Christmas crafts and songs, however, there are very few opportunities to learn about the diversity of the wider community.

Children have access to different materials such as paint and sand, however, most activities are adult-initiated. They have no opportunities to self select and explore craft materials to make discoveries and express and communicate their own ideas. Some crafts tend to be repetitive and offer little development of skill and challenge.

For example, one day the activity is sponge printing and the next, ink pad printing, which require similar skills. Children sing some simple songs from memory and have access to a range of musical instruments, although these are not utilised by staff to explore rhythm and sound. Children use the home corner/role play area for brief periods although this is not a distinct area and play is not always purposeful. Some children enjoy solitary role play, for example, one child talks expressively on a toy telephone for short while and another plays with the toy till.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children usually work harmoniously with others and some are forming close friendships, for example, playing together in the sand tray and painting together at easel. Some children are developing self-esteem and respect for others. For example, one or two of them speak openly to the group at registration time and they listen attentively to the contributions of others. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered

All children are welcomed into the group and children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with special needs attend. Most staff work well with parents to meet children's individual needs and ensure they are included, particularly in the smaller room. Individual education plans are set up in close liaison with parents and professionals to ensure children's particular needs are met and their abilities extended. However, few of the existing resources reflect positive images of the diversity within the pre-school and local and wider community. Staff do not always actively explore methods to support and include children who speak English as an additional language.

Many of the children understand responsible behaviour and most behave well whilst they are interested and absorbed with the activities on offer. During lengthy periods of re-organisation or when there are no resources available, they become restless and unsettled, sometimes running around the playroom. Staff are not proactive to avoid this situation or to rectify it. Children are not always clear of expectations, as either they are new or the routine is not clearly explained to them or they do not speak/understand English, and this can result in unwanted behaviour. For example, new children copy others running around.

Younger or unsettled children benefit from their parents being welcomed to stay and settle them before they leave. Liaison between parents and staff promotes continuity of care for the children. Termly newsletters and notices keep parents well informed of the pre-school "rules" and fundraising events. However, partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is inadequate. Parents are provided with very limited information about the Foundation Stage and how it relates to their children's learning through play. Children's progress with regard to the stepping stones is not regularly shared with parents and this limits their progress and learning potential. Although some parents are aware that development records are kept on their children, very few have ever viewed them, therefore children do not benefit from sharing between parents and staff to enhance their learning.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Members of the current management committee are enthusiastic and committed and are endeavouring to update the documentation, policies and procedures. However, these are not always carried out in practice within the pre-school, for example, health and safety procedures, fire log, the Foundation Stage and resources reflecting equal opportunities. Staff appraisals are planned for the forthcoming year. Recruitment procedures are in place to ensure children are cared for by staff who are vetted and have reasonable levels of experience and training.

Children are not always appropriately supervised and staff are not always effectively deployed therefore children are not always adequately supported. For example, immediately following snack there is sometimes just one member of staff with the children. The current organisation of the sessions results in a large group of up to 36 children with just 2 members of staff and periods when there is little to interest and engage the children, which results in them becoming bored and unsettled. Staff mostly have a high regard for the well-being of all children, however, at times, they just supervise the children rather than interacting and engaging with them and miss opportunities to extend children's play and learning.

Leadership and management is adequate which has an adverse effect on children's learning. Most staff working directly with funded children have insufficient knowledge of the Curriculum guidance to the foundation stage to enable them to help all children progress through the stepping stones and achieve well. The lack of clear direction within the group and insufficient monitoring of children's progress means gaps in children's learning continue unnoticed. Recording systems are not systematic so staff have very little useful information about children's achievements.

Staff have received advice from their early education advisory teacher to promote children's progress towards the early learning goals. However, children's progress and the quality of teaching are not monitored and evaluated to ensure ongoing improvement of practice to enhance children's learning. As a result the progress of children in different age groups is inconsistent.

Overall, the pre-school does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the group had four key issues to address. To review staff training and understanding of the Foundation Stage, to improve observation, assessment and planning and increase opportunities for children to extend their problem solving skills.

The setting has made some limited attempt to address these issues. There is now a key worker system, there is some evidence of planning and evaluating,

predominantly on a small number of adult focussed activity sheets. Each member of staff has a copy of the Foundation Stage Curriculum folder, however, most staff still have very limited knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and it's practical application within the pre-school.

The setting has not sufficiently, consistently nor effectively addressed the key issues to have a significant, positive impact on the children's play and learning experiences.

The group also received actions regarding children's hand-washing, provision of drinking water and administration of medication. Children are now encouraged to use wet wipes prior to snack time. Drinking water is now provided, however, the jug is not easily accessible to children. Records with regard to the administration of medication have been partly addressed but require further improvement.

It was also recommended that the group reviews resources in relation to the Foundation Stage and to promote equal opportunities, also to review the organisation of snack time. Neither of these areas have been addressed.

Children's safety has been improved, however, there is no fire log, no records of risk assessments being undertaken and some current practices put children at risk. Staff awareness and understanding of child protection has improved as some staff have attended training, however, this information is not shared with all staff.

Many of the actions and recommendations of the previous inspection have not been addressed in practice and very little or no action has been taken to rectify them.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since 1 April 2004.

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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are inadequate - notice of action to improve.

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):

- review the organisation of the session and ensure staff are appropriately and effectively deployed at all times to promote the safety and wellbeing of the children and to provide a stimulating routine for the children both inside and outside
- review the content and the availability of resources and activities to encourage children's independence and discovery and to provide increased levels of interest and challenge throughout the session
- ensure resources and activities positively reflect and promote the diversity within the group and the local and wider community
- develop staff's knowledge of 'Birth to three matters' and utilise to enhance the existing good practice with children under three years old
- ensure policies and procedures are carried out effectively in practice and the required documentation is in place to promote the health, safety and care of children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- improve staff's knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and encourage its practical application when planning and when engaged in the session, to ensure that all areas of learning are being effectively covered
- develop consistent and systematic methods of observation and assessment, improve partnership with parents of funded children, and utilise this information to inform planning and provide for the next steps in a child's learning
- develop consistent and systematic methods of monitoring and evaluation of practice, to ensure effective methods of teaching offer children challenge and interest and enable them to make progress in all areas of learning.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk