



**Office for Standards
in Education**

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 123613

DfES Number: 546060

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	29/11/2004
Inspector Name	Christine Pettitt

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	Noahs Ark Playschool
Setting Address	Crabtree Lane Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 5RD

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Mrs Gwyn Record
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ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Noah's Ark Playschool has been operating under its present name for 9 years. It is situated in Crabtree Church hall in the Crabtree area of Harpenden. The pre-school mainly serves the local area but some children attend from the wider locality.

There are currently 41 children on the register ages from 2.5 years to 4 years. This includes 19 funded three year olds. There are currently no funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently no children with Special Needs attending the group, and several children with English as an additional language.

The group opens 5 mornings a week during school opening times. Sessions are from 9.15am to 12.00 noon.

Nine part time staff work with the children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ levels 2 and 3. One staff member is currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early years Development and Childcare partnership.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Noah's Ark Playschool is of good quality overall. It enables children to make very good progress in personal, social and emotional and creative development and generally good progress in the other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. The indoor environment is well organised and effectively resourced to maximise opportunities for children to learn independently. Staff are very involved and support activities, working directly with the children often on an individual basis to promote learning. Effective methods are used to enable children to progress and there is a proactive approach with regard to special needs. However, opportunities for children with English as an additional language are not currently prioritised.

Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and manage them extremely well. They show they value and respect the children which encourages positive behaviour.

The key worker system enables staff to be involved in curriculum planning, observations and extending learning. The planning and assessment recording are in the developmental stage and do not currently include outdoor physical play, ICT or an overall picture of the child's progress relating to the stepping stones.

The leadership and management of the provision is generally good. It enables the staff to work well as a team. They are developing knowledge about the Foundation Stage through the leaders cascading the information. Areas for improvement are identified through effective monitoring and evaluation of practice.

The partnership with parents is generally good. Parents receive detailed and ongoing information regarding the group and curriculum. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning and have opportunities to do this. They are well informed about their child's achievement and progress.

What is being done well?

- Personal, social and emotional development is a strength of the setting. The children are confident and enthusiastic in the environment. Staff are effective role models and show they value children, by listening to them, responding appropriately, and individually. Children are supported well by the staff. Praise and encouragement is an evident priority which promotes the children's positive behaviour.
- The planned programme for creative learning encourages children to express themselves through a range of activities. They explore colour and texture through a range of materials and tools, suggested ideas, but not a prescribed end result. This gives opportunities for children to explore different properties

and use these to create individual work. Opportunities for role play are extensive. Children use the props enthusiastically, playing out stories and their experiences. An attentive and responsive approach in group activities, stories, singing, musical instruments and the use of Beaky the puppet illustrates the staff abilities to hold the children's interest.

- The high priority given to communication indicates a commitment to building effective partnership with the parents. Parents have commented positively on the displays and information they receive regarding the curriculum, activities and topics. Parents are encouraged to participate in their child's learning through being a parent helper, providing developmental and individual information, sending in objects for the weekly letter and by attending mornings to discuss their child's progress.
- The staff are committed to providing a stimulating, exciting, attractive environment to promote the learning potential for the children. The staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work very well as a team. Their action plan highlights their ability to evaluate their own areas to improve, which are in line with the inspection findings.

What needs to be improved?

- the planning records to include all aspects of the stepping stones.
- the assessment recording to provide an overall view of the child's progress relating to stepping stones.
- the planning and practice with regard to outside play and ICT activities.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This is the first 122 inspection.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children show excitement and are motivated to learn. They feel safe and secure in the calm, stimulating atmosphere. Children express ideas confidently and are valued. They seek out others to share experiences socially and co-operate and take turns willingly. Children understand and respond well to the staff's high expectations of behaviour e.g. in tidying up, musical instrument activity. Independence skills relating to personal hygiene are progressing e.g. putting tissues in the bin.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children show an interest in books. They listen and respond to stories intently, individually and in groups. Children independently act out the stories, using available props, e.g. nativity story. Some children can relate sounds to letters and objects, through concentrating on a letter/sound each week. Some children recognise their names but opportunities for children to begin to write their names are missed. Labelling in the environment helps children to understand that print carries meaning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Some children are able to count and recognise confidently numbers 1 to 10. Children access the maths area where there are opportunities for counting, calculating, shape recognition, sorting and sequencing with adult input. e.g. Some children are beginning to differentiate between shapes and are able to sort and count different sized jar lids. Mathematical language is used by staff in other activities. e.g. the star activity, but a focus on weight and measure is not currently evident.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children remember and readily talk about significant family related events e.g. babies, Eurostar and through the routine, begin to comprehend a sense of time. Children enjoy following through play activities based on current community events. e.g. the adjoining building works and play with small building lorries. Children confidently try out a range of tools and techniques safely. e.g. the CD mobile. Children do not have sufficient opportunity to build confidence with regard to ICT skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Children have ample opportunities to develop manual dexterity through gluing, scissors, painting, chalking, puzzles, dough etc. They show increasing skills in these areas, using safely and confidently a range of tools. Children are aware of others personal space indoors and outdoors. Children's skills relating to hand/eye co-ordination are progressing well but opportunities for challenge to extend children's large gross motor skills are limited.	

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children enjoy using musical instruments and singing in unison. Some children are proficient in keeping rhythm. Children excitedly explore a range of media and freely use these, ensuring interesting and different results with the same materials. Children use their imagination enthusiastically, using props to follow through their own ideas. Children express themselves freely and respond well to a puppet, "Beaky," to share feelings and experiences.	

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- improve assessment recording to ensure an overall view of the children's progress
- review planning and practice with regard to outdoor physical play and ICT
- review the recording of short term plans to include all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum offered in the provision.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.