

Noahs Ark Playschool

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	123613
Inspection date	10/03/2011
Inspector	Sheila Harrison

Setting address	Crabtree Church, Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5RD
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Telephone number	01582 469308
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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

Noahs Ark Pre-School is run by the trustees of Crabtree Church Trust and has been operating for approximately 30 years. It is situated in Crabtree Church hall in the Crabtree area of Harpenden. The setting mainly serves the local area but some children attend from the wider locality. The group opens five mornings a week, during term time. Sessions are from 9.15am to 12.15pm. The setting is accessible to all children and there is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 47 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The setting provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. The group supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs ten members of child care staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 2, three at Level 3 and two at Level 4. Three staff have nearly completed Level 3 qualification and two members of staff are working towards an early years degree. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children clearly benefit and thrive as a result of the setting they are in. The setting is consistently well organised and staff provide excellent support for individual children's welfare and development and their protection is assured. Children make excellent progress with their learning. There are outstanding partnerships with parents and others, which provide excellent support for the children. The very effective leadership and the excellent team work of all the staff ensure that all adults are closely focused on monitoring and evaluation and the setting has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve. All staff are closely focused on making the provision the best it can be.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- enhancing the learning environment outside.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded effectively because the entire staff team have an exceptionally good understanding of child protection procedures and know how to implement them to protect the children in their care. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that everyone working with the children are suitable to do so. The ongoing suitability of all staff is monitored through regular meetings, training opportunities and appraisals. All new staff are required to complete a thorough induction programme, ensuring everyone is fully aware of how the setting works and the high expectations of the management team. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place, including rigorous risk assessments. The risk assessments are reviewed regularly and when the needs of the children, including their health requirements, change. Consistent staff vigilance ensures children are extremely safe and secure at all times. There are robust collection procedures to ensure only specifically designated people collect the children. There are excellent systems to ensure that staff and children with allergies are well protected. Children display an excellent awareness of safety issues and recognise and understand how to keep themselves safe.

The leaders provide clear, ambitious aims which are shared by the team. Monitoring and evaluation is robust, which contributes to maintaining and improving the setting's effectiveness. Staff have a clear understanding of what the setting does well and are wholly committed to continuous improvement. Staff demonstrate this commitment with a well planned programme of professional training and development. Some of the training is linked to the individual needs of specific children and undertaken as the children start in the setting. Children make exceptional progress in their language and thinking skills. Staff ask open ended questions and, following the implementation of information from a short course, staff are aware that they should wait for children to answer their questions.

Children's welfare is significantly enhanced and they clearly benefit from the setting they are in. They benefit greatly from access to a highly stimulating and well prepared play environment. The accommodation is well suited to its purpose and conducive to learning. There is a highly qualified and knowledgeable staff team that work within a generous staff to child ratio. This ensures they are very effectively deployed to challenge and support children's welfare and learning. The key worker keeps careful records of children's development and progress and responds sensitively to their feelings and behaviour. Children independently access much of the plentiful, high quality equipment and confidently move it around the setting to extend their play. For example, the cot and dolls are taken from the imaginative play area to the comfortable book corner.

Staff are highly skilled in ensuring that all children are well integrated and they are highly effective in taking steps to close identified gaps in children's achievements. Excellent partnership working takes place to ensure every child receives high levels of support at an early stage. The setting makes frequent attempts at contacting the children's other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage by inviting them into the setting and discussing each child's progress.

The setting effectively and actively promotes equality and diversity and tackles unfair discrimination. Children celebrate their festivals and those of their friends and they acknowledge the festivals of others. Parents are encouraged to take part in the celebrations and their contributions are valued. Their home language is respected and encouraged within the setting. The setting is highly successful in taking steps to close identified gaps in children's achievements as they have an exceptional knowledge of each child's background and needs. Staff happily make home visits and the wider church community is available to support families with practical help.

The setting has a highly positive relationship with parents and actively engages with them. They are well informed about the work of the setting and with the progress their children make. They are encouraged to contribute to their child's assessment and have regular meetings and receive reports on their child's progress. Their views are actively sought and acted on through the frequent questionnaires. Parents speak very highly of the partnership with the setting and there are many touching testimonials from parents.

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

The setting is outstanding because it is tailored to meet each child's individual needs so that they make excellent progress in all aspects of their learning and development. Staff ensure children's favourite toys are easily available to help new children to settle quickly. Children are developing a positive sense of themselves and a respect for others. They take part in the 'shoebox collection' for children less fortunate than themselves at Christmas. They make cakes to contribute towards fundraising events. Children are forming friendships and a sense of belonging. They can see their own name and photograph on their shoe box and their independence is encouraged and supported as they put on their shoes and coats to go outside. Children are sensitively helped to share as there is plenty of equipment and staff can quickly offer alternatives. Children are learning about the wider world through the current theme of 'around the world'. They greatly enjoy story time following a large book about the jungle with excitement. They look at a map of the world and a poster of flags. Staff sensitively and gently encourages young children to extend their concentration and experiment with different materials when making a flag. Staff use the comfortable and well stocked book corner to help children freely express their feelings.

Staff have embraced the Early Years Foundation Stage with enthusiasm and have a very good understanding of the learning requirements. Their assessments are made through high quality observations and the information gained is used very effectively to guide planning. They keep comprehensive records, including notes, samples of work and photographs. Parents are engaged in their child's assessment as soon as they join the setting. They complete detailed information on the stage of development their child has reached before they start and they discuss the observation and assessments the staff have made during the settling-in process. Parents have regular details of the planned themes and staff give ideas for parents

to continue in the home. Children greatly enjoy choosing a book to take home to share with their parents. They receive a book bag and library card when they start and immediately see writing as useful.

All children thrive in the rich learning environment available to them. They have access to a plentiful and varied range of indoor activities that stimulate their interest and help to develop enquiring minds. Staff are diligent in supporting learning through conversation and questioning that helps to develop and extend communication skills. Children experiment sliding toy cars down a long cardboard tube. Staff and parental helpers assist in extending children's thinking as suggested questions for them to ask are written on the tubes. Inspirational and innovative teaching motivates children. They are entranced by a music and movement activity. They listen intently and follow the instructions to walk and bang their percussion instruments rhythmically, making the sounds of rain and thunder and then quietly as the 'rain' stops. Older and more able children are effectively challenged as they confidently express a wish to write their own names without help.

Children show an exceptional understanding of healthy living. They learn about healthy eating and contribute fruit and vegetables for snack time. They are introduced to different tastes linked to the current theme and this week they are tasting breads of the world. Older children show high levels of independence as they pour their own drinks and younger children are encouraged to adopt basic routines of sitting at the table and they confidently drink from a cup. Children have many opportunities for fresh air and to explore the outdoor environment. Their physical development and co-ordination is promoted as they move around freely and with control. They use challenging equipment outside to develop and practice new skills, such as balancing using the low beams and the, more difficult, 'dinosaur feet'. Staff use the outdoor space to encourage children's first-hand contact with the weather, seasons and natural world. Children explore the properties of the wind with long ribbons and bubbles. Staff's plans to improve the outside area will fully extend all areas of children's learning. Staff implement secure hygiene procedures throughout the setting to prevent the possible spread of infection. Children learn how to keep themselves safe through discussion, activities and routines to promote their own awareness of potential risks, for example, They have a road safety song, reminding children to 'hold an adult's hand'. Staff supervise the outside trampoline, encouraging children to take care. Children move assuredly around the premises inside and are reminded to walk. Staff sensitively discuss delicate issues arising from personal care to ensure children are confident to raise their concerns.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
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	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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