

# The Ark Centre

The Ark Centre, 36 Main Road, Harwich, ESSEX, CO12 3LU

## Inspection date

03/12/2013

Previous inspection date

06/02/2009

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

**This inspection:**

3

Previous inspection:

3

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 3

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 3

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 3

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

### This provision requires improvement

- The leadership has a strong commitment to further develop and improve the pre-school, to promote high quality teaching and care for all the children.
- Staff proactively work with parents and other professionals to support children's individual care and learning needs.
- Staff sensitively settle children into the pre-school and build positive relationships with them. Consequently, children are happy, confident and secure in the pre-school. Their transitions on to school are also well supported.

### It is not yet good because

- The planning and the selection of resources available for the children, both indoors and outside, does not always offer sufficient interest, variety or appeal to the children, to engage them to promote purposeful play and encourage positive behaviour.
- The quality of planning and teaching does not always ensure activities offer sufficient interest and challenge, particularly for older or more able children, to promote their best progress.
- Self-evaluation is not systematic, or sufficiently robust, to identify, and promptly rectify, weaknesses, for example, using more positive strategies to engage children's attention, and does not focus enough on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Outdoor activities sometimes lack imagination and variety and opportunities for children to make discoveries about the natural world are limited.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

## Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the main play room and outdoor area and interacted, when appropriate, with the children.
- The inspector spoke with the pre-school manager, and the staff, at appropriate times throughout the inspection and discussed activities with them.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the manager and had a discussion with the manager and nominated person.
- The inspector looked at children's learning journey development records, planning documentation, the setting's self-evaluation and a selection of policies and children's records.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of the staff.
- The inspector also took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day.

## Inspector

Hazel Meadows

## **Full report**

### **Information about the setting**

The Ark Centre Pre-school was registered in 2005 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. It operates from a room within the The Ark family centre in Harwich, Essex and is managed by a voluntary committee. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The pre-school employs ten members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 9.30am until 2.45pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and from 9.30am until midday on Thursdays. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 27 children attending who are in the early years age group. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### **What the setting needs to do to improve further**

#### **To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:**

- improve the availability, choice, presentation and appeal of resources, to ensure children are offered sufficient activities to interest and inspire them, to encourage more focussed and purposeful play
- improve the quality of teaching so that planning and activities are engaging and tailored to the individual needs of all children. For example, ensure that older and or more able children are offered sufficient challenge to promote the characteristics of effective learning.

#### **To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:**

- implement a more systematic and rigorous method of self-evaluation to effectively identify, and promptly address, aspects of the provision which require improvement. For example, improving the quality of the play and learning environment and considering more positive ways of attracting children's attention
- pursue plans to enhance the outdoor area to enable children to become active and inquisitive learners, and make discoveries about the natural world, through rich and engaging activities.

## Inspection judgements

### How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Staff establish children's initial capabilities through discussions with parents, new visit documents and their own observations. This helps them to ascertain children's starting points and plan for the next steps in their learning. Individual learning journals are used to record and monitor children's ongoing progress. Written observations, often supported with photographs or examples of the children's work, are used by staff to identify any possible lines of development and inform future planning. Staff are currently reviewing their method of planning and considering ways of making improvements to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. All the areas of learning are covered and children's development is supported in the prime areas. In the main, children are acquiring the basic skills they need for the next stage in their learning, and, ultimately, school. However, activities and resources are not always sufficiently challenging or interesting, particularly for older or more able children, to promote their ongoing learning and pursue their potential. There are few opportunities for them to develop their own ideas or solve problems.

Parents are encouraged to contribute what they know about their child from home and are kept informed about their child's progress and learning through regular discussions with their child's key person. Parent afternoons enable them to look at their child's learning journal in more depth with the key person. Staff work closely with parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to support and enhance their progress. Consequently, children with additional needs are making continued progress and any gaps in their learning and development are effectively reduced. Staff undertake the progress check at age two, for children in the two to three year age range, to ensure children are progressing within the expected range for their age. These summaries are shared and discussed with parents.

Children enthusiastically choose and sing their favourite nursery rhymes and good use is made of finger puppets, by staff, to hold their attention. Some opportunities are used by staff to promote children's emerging mathematics skills. For example, they are encouraged to count toy pieces, as they help tidy them away. Children delight in playing outside where they have space to run and move freely. However, on occasions they begin to run aimlessly around the marked roadway. While one member of staff is watchful of their safety, the activity is not initially used purposefully. When another member of staff comes outside, she joins in with the children and encourages them to move their bodies in different and imaginative ways, jumping, skiing and hopping. She invites them to make suggestions of movements and therefore, they become fully engaged and their energy is channelled into a positive learning and development experience. Children have occasional opportunities to make marks and draw pictures. For example, one child draws a clear picture of her family and freely talks about it with staff. However, resources are generally poor and limited. For example, pencil crayons are blunt and paper is not easily available to the children. A role-play shoe shop is set up in one area, consisting of a variety of pairs of shoes and three computer keyboards. The area is not used at all by the children, however, it is not changed or improved by staff to attract more children, until mentioned by the

inspector. Children concentrate for considerable periods as they play in the compost kitchen outside, exploring the different texture and use a variety of tools, promoting their physical skills.

### **The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children**

Staff work closely with parents to introduce children sensitively and gradually to the pre-school. This ensures their transition from home is a smooth and positive experience, which helps them settle well. Each child is allocated a key person to support them and a new visit sheet is completed in consultation with parents, to promote their well-being. Staff use information gathered from parents and their own observations, to help them understand and meet each child's particular needs. The pre-school is very inclusive and welcomes all children. Extra staff are deployed, as required, to offer additional support for children with special educational needs. Staff are caring and attentive and they get to know children very well as individuals. Positive bonds and secure attachments are established between children and their key persons. Children are happy and settled in the group and comfortable with all the staff, which supports their emotional well-being.

The environment is safe and secure and staff are well deployed to ensure children's safety. Children are beginning to learn about how to keep themselves safe through reminders from staff, for example, to walk indoors. The group cupboards are well stocked with resources. However, staff do not always make best use of the resources and space available. The playroom does not offer children much choice or variety as a limited amount of activities are offered at a time. Areas such as the book corner and writing area are not attractively or invitingly presented, well maintained or well stocked. Consequently, children do not access these areas. Resources are not routinely changed between the morning and afternoon, therefore fresh activities are not available for children who stay all day. Children become more focussed, and play more purposefully, when, after prompting from the inspector, staff introduce a fresh activity. Many children flock to play with the trains and track as it stimulates their interest. Positive behaviour is promoted through ongoing reminders and a consistent approach. However, when children are not motivated and engaged in their play, or when there are not sufficient resources to go around, their behaviour deteriorates. Staff are patient and predominantly good role models. They mostly offer calm and clear explanations to children to help them begin to learn what is acceptable and how to manage their own behaviour. However, on occasions staff raise their voices to make themselves heard, rather than using more positive strategies to gain the children's attention.

Children have daily opportunities for fresh air, daylight and exercise in the outdoor area, promoting their health and physical development. However, the activities available outside sometimes lack imagination and variety and opportunities for children to make discoveries about the natural world are limited. Staff recognise that some children prefer to play outdoors and there are plans to improve the variety of resources and activities available to children in the garden area. Children need to be escorted to the toilets because of their location. Nevertheless, children manage their own personal needs well, according to their age and stage of development, with older children competently and independently using the facilities. Staff promptly and sensitively change the clothing of any children who have

toileting accidents, to ensure they remain comfortable and fresh. Reminders and consistent routines promote children's understanding of good hygiene habits, for example, they wash their hands after toileting and use wipes prior to eating. A healthy variety of snacks is provided by the group and children are encouraged to try a variety of tastes and textures, while staff remain acutely mindful of any dietary needs. Children's independence is encouraged, as they pour their own drinks at the open snack, with adult help available if required. They are gaining confidence and independence, helping them to be emotionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning or for their transition on to school. Staff promote discussions about school and children play with school uniforms. Visits are arranged to the schools the children will attend and some teachers visit the pre-school. This helps to ensure that the majority of children are emotionally well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children are kept safe from harm as the leadership fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard children. Robust recruitment procedures work effectively in practice to ensure suitability of staff and there is a thorough induction and probationary period, to ensure staff are clear of their roles and responsibilities. All staff have attended safeguarding children training and policies and procedures are understood and effectively implemented in practice to promote children's welfare. The inspection took place following a concern being reported to Ofsted that children were not being suitably supervised, resulting in accidents and that accident documentation was not being suitably maintained. The inspection found that effective risk assessments are undertaken and staff are well deployed and watchful of the children, both indoors and outside, enabling them to play freely and safely. Accident forms are promptly and clearly completed and shared with parents. In discussion with staff it was found that very minor accidents had not always been recorded. However, following a recent incident in the outdoor area, staff now clearly record all instances of accidents, including minor bumps or marks, and share them with parents. Keypad entry prevents unauthorised entry to the pre-school and arrival and departure times are monitored, to ensure children are kept safe and only leave with authorised carers. The emergency evacuation routine is practised regularly, ensuring it works in practice and helping children to become familiar with the procedure, without being fearful.

Since being appointed two years ago, the manager has worked hard to make significant improvements to the pre-school. For example, a key person system has been established and a method of monitoring children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and has been introduced. Ongoing staff development is strongly encouraged and staff are keen to attend training to enhance their practice with the children. Regular supervision meetings, and annual appraisals, also promote staff's individual development. The manager has begun to evaluate the quality of teaching and practice through supervisions and peer observations. An action plan timetable ensures that most identified tasks and improvements are not overlooked. However, not all the recommendations from the previous inspection have been fully addressed. Self-evaluation is not systematic nor

sufficiently robust, to identify and swiftly address weaknesses and it does not focus enough on the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff work hard to establish positive and effective partnerships with parents. Parents receive an initial information pack and are kept regularly updated, both verbally and by newsletters. Staff communicate regularly with parents about their child's well-being and learning and development. This promotes a consistent and cohesive approach to supporting children's progress. The majority of parents spoken to on the day of the inspection are very happy with the quality of care provided and how well their children were helped to settle. They confirm that they receive regular feedback about their child's development, progress and learning. Close and purposeful links have been established with local schools to support children's transitions on to school. The nursery works and communicates closely with other early years professionals, both within The Ark Centre building and the local area. This helps to focus cohesive support, as required, to children, and their families as a whole, to promote all children's welfare and development.

### **The Childcare Register**

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

**Met**

## What inspection judgements mean

### Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.



## Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY312761
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	942261
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 8
<b>Total number of places</b>	26
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	27
<b>Name of provider</b>	The Ark Family Resource Centre
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	06/02/2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01255 502063

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## Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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