

The Ark Day Nursery

Foundry Road, Stamford, PE9 2PP

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

11/03/2014

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Superb teaching engages children in their learning and ensures they all make rapid progress.
- A variety of imaginative activities support children in their development and offer them the widest possible range of learning opportunities.
- Children's safety is given the highest priority throughout the nursery by the management and staff team.
- Partnerships with parents are excellent and this allows for exceptional continuity of care between the home and nursery.
- The leadership of the nursery is inspirational and the management team stop at nothing in their strive for excellence. This ensures that the nursery continues to maintain the highest possible standards.
- An excellent staff team have expert knowledge of the children in their care. This means that care routines are managed skilfully and children's learning is fully supported in all areas.
- A superb outdoor environment is used exceptionally well by the nursery, furthermore, the nursery's own forest school gives children even greater opportunities to learn from the natural world.

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.

Inspection activities

- The inspector conducted a tour of the premises.
- The inspector observed activities with the babies, toddler and pre-school children and the outdoor area.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- Assessment records, planning documents, policies, qualifications of the staff and their suitability was checked.
- Discussions were held with parents, staff and children.
- A meeting with the manager was held.

Inspector

Ben Hartley

Full report

Information about the setting

The Ark Day Nursery was registered again in 2013 on the Early Years Register. It operates from a purpose built Scandinavian lodge in Stamford, Lincolnshire. The nursery is next door to St. Gilbert's Primary School. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The nursery accesses their own forest school which is located within a few miles of the main building.

The nursery employs 25 members of childcare staff. Of these, 21 hold appropriate early years qualifications. Three staff members hold Early Years Professional Status and two others hold Qualified Teacher Status. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. There are 120 children on roll in the early years age group. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery provides funded early education for two- three- and four year-old children. The nursery employs a qualified Forest school Teacher.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop the very good relationships with schools to provide children with even more opportunities to experience their new environment.

Inspection judgements

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

Teaching throughout the nursery is consistently excellent, this ensures that children are making very rapid progress across all areas of learning. Staff skilfully interact with the children and involve themselves in their play activities; always getting down to children's level to communicate with them. Exceptional use of questioning ensures children's learning is consistently stretched and their understanding is challenged. This means that children are consistently able to explain their reasoning and justify their thoughts. Children have numerous opportunities to develop their own ideas. For example, during talk time, they are given a picture and they make up the rest of the story and act it out. This allows children to become an active part of their learning and gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their creativity. Children are central to the planning and activities are always devised according to their preferences and choices. This ensures that children are constantly engaged in their learning. Rigorous assessments are undertaken quickly and accurately, and this enables the staff to tailor individual learning plans as required. The nursery are giving children other rich learning opportunities, for example, children receive the opportunity to learn French and Greek from fluent members of staff. Staff are consistently devising imaginative ways to fully enhance children's learning and provide

them with the widest possible range of learning experiences both inside and outside. For example, the children create a dinosaur world using various resources that allow them to express their creativity and understanding of the subject. Staff skilfully follow the children's direction during their play. For example, they use a puppet to engage children and skilfully use it to allow them to choose the future direction of the play. Following their interests and using excellent communication to further their learning and understanding.

The nursery is very active in increasing children's readiness for school. For example, there is a strong focus in the pre-school on actively increasing children's independence. Consequently, children serve their lunch and cut their fruit at snack time. This increases their excellent physical skills and means that they are becoming more and more independent. The nursery has regular visits from the school and this enables them to have an excellent understanding of what the class teacher expects from children. The use of the outdoor environment is used extremely effectively to promote all areas of children's learning. Many elements of the forest school are incorporated into the nursery's outdoor environment. For example, children are growing plants, flowers and herbs for the sensory garden, which allows them to learn about how to care for other living things. They have also built a 'bug house' where they are able to observe mini-beasts. Outside, under the shelter of their wooden gazebo, the babies explore natural resources in their 'treasure baskets.' There are opportunities for children to utilise real equipment for its specific purpose. For example, collecting water from the water butt under the 'living roof' of the covered area and using a hose to water different elements of the garden. Additionally, the nursery's forest school has enabled children to begin to make links within their knowledge and learn a great deal from the natural world around them. The children are able to go foraging in the wood for leaves, conkers and sticks and meet the lambs in the field. They make dens, climb trees, swing on the tree swing, grow fruit and vegetables in the allotments and make mud pies in the 'mud kitchen'. The nursery's music teacher leads the children's singing to her own guitar accompaniment; and they listen to stories while sitting in the log circle around the fire pit; or in the belle tent or vintage caravan - if the weather is extremely inclement. In the 'Fairy's Cottage', they invent stories about the wood dwellers. There is even a 'cob oven' (which parents and children are helping to build out of completely natural resources) where the children will learn how bread and pizzas are made. Activities are skilfully led by the trained forest school teacher and include painting with hand-made paints from natural dyes; felt making from the setting's own sheep's fleece; and stick whittling to make bread forks.

Parents are extremely positive about the excellent overall quality of the nursery, commenting that no aspect could be improved and they could not be more satisfied. They are especially pleased about the warmth of the reception that they and their children receive. Additionally, they feel that the communication and the food offered is exceptional. The nursery uses a wide range of strategies to engage parents on all levels within children's learning and ensure that there is continuity between the home and nursery environments. These excellent partnerships are well established and contribute positively to the excellent progress of the children.

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

The stimulating and high quality environment is extremely well planned and there is a vast range of interesting opportunities for the children. This means that they remain happy, settled and highly engaged in play throughout their time in the nursery. There is an extremely wide range of resources and activities for the children to take part in, both inside and outside. This includes the nursery's forest school located within a few miles of the nursery. Children form extremely secure attachments with warm, affectionate and caring staff. This is partially facilitated through an excellent key person system that allows children to move freely through the environment while being supported by this familiar person. Additionally, it supports families forming meaningful relationships that support children's learning and continuity of care. This means that children have an extremely positive emotional well-being. Children are learning to take manageable risks and this is a particularly important element of the nursery. For example, a tree top house has been built within the pre-school room, which enables children to develop their physical skills by moving skilfully up and down the rope. Additionally, children are learning to manage their movements, confirming rules to each other, for instance, only one child using the stairs at any given time. This supports children in learning to maintain their own safety within their play. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of allowing children to manage their own risks while maintaining their safety.

The nursery is extremely active in teaching children about maintaining a healthy lifestyle as well as providing them with a very healthy, locally sourced menu. For example, meat is sourced from the local butcher, bread from the bakers and fruit and vegetables from a local supplier. The nursery caters for children's individual dietary requirements skilfully. Children have daily opportunities to engage in physical exercise. The nursery is an extremely safe and secure environment that keeps children completely protected. Robust risk assessments are completed for the indoor and outdoor environment on a daily basis and this ensures safety is at the forefront of the nursery's practice. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to keep children totally protected, furthermore, they demonstrate an ongoing commitment to keeping their knowledge as up to date as possible. For example, all staff attend safeguarding training as part of the induction procedure, this training is then kept up to date. Staff are deployed extremely successfully around the environment to allow children to fully explore and ensure their safety. This allows the nursery to provide an excellent range of activities that are tailored to each child's individual needs.

Behaviour is managed expertly by staff throughout the nursery and children, therefore, make extremely positive choices. For example, staff use effective strategies in an extremely calm manner that is consistent with the nursery policy and children respond positively to this. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the children in their care, this allows them to tailor care routines to their individual needs. For example, there are several areas for children to sleep based on their preferences. Other care routines are also expertly undertaken to cause minimal disruption to children's play as well as being treated sensitively. While changing children's nappies, there is consistent and meaningful communication with them, including occasionally singing to them. This means that children enjoy these times.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years

provision

There is a highly skilled management team that work well together to ensure an outstanding overall quality throughout all areas of the nursery. The nursery is managed exceptionally well, this includes giving the highest priority to keeping children completely protected. For example, all staff undertake safeguarding training, in order to further their understanding. The environment is extremely secure and safe. There are robust procedures in place to recruit staff safely and ensure their suitability. The nursery take up both verbal and written references, once the right candidate has been identified. There is a constant strive to achieve excellence throughout all areas of the nursery, this comes from the management team and is a vision shared with all the staff. Consequently, the nursery is consistently reviewing their provision, in order to maintain the highest possible standards across all areas. Staff demonstrate their desire to achieve these standards through their own evaluations of the quality of their practice.

The highly qualified and skilled management team constantly review the quality of teaching throughout the nursery. This ensures that teaching is of a very high standard in all areas of the nursery. There are a range of strategies employed to achieve this consistency, including regular reviews, observations and yearly appraisals. The extremely high qualifications held by the staff team also ensures this very high standard. Additionally, they all have the utmost commitment to develop professionally, this is demonstrated through the additional qualifications that staff are seeking to attain to support them in their role. The manager monitors the educational programme extremely effectively to ensure that children encounter the widest possible range of experiences and activities. Planning and assessment are regularly reviewed, consequently, they are very accurate. This enables the nursery to identify any areas of development for specific groups of children and put measures in place to close any gaps in learning.

The nursery has established excellent partnerships with parents and this allows them to meet children's individual needs as well as providing exemplary continuity of care. Parents comment very positively on daily communication with the nursery. They also go an extra mile to ensure all parents are engaged within their children's learning. For example, they provide photographs by email for parents that are working overseas, in order to enable them to keep up to date with their children's progress. In addition to verbal communication, younger children's parents are provided with a written diary to inform them about sleep, nappy changing and food intake. Additionally, there are very good links with the onsite school, including regular visits from the teacher to support children in their transition. However, opportunities for children to engage in additional experiences within the new environment are occasionally limited. The nursery is actively looking to reaffirm these comprehensive relationships across all schools. The nursery has established excellent partnerships with agencies, in order to provide additional support for children as required. This includes working with the local authority advisors, speech and language therapist and health visitors.

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

Unique reference number	EY468264
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	959391
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	65
Number of children on roll	120
Name of provider	The Ark Day Nursery Partnership
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01780482113

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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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