

The Ark Centre

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

Inspection date	11/11/2014
Previous inspection date	03/12/2013

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

- Children are appropriately protected from harm as practitioners are knowledgeable about their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding children. Practitioners regularly update their safeguarding knowledge through appropriate training.
- Children are settled, comfortable and relaxed in the pre-school environment. They form close and warm relationships with the adults caring for them.
- Partnerships with parents and others are strong. Parents are encouraged to play a role in their children's development through effective partnership working. Links with outside agencies are secure, resulting in children who require additional support, benefiting from appropriate and timely interventions.

It is not yet good because

- Leadership requires improvement. Management have not fully embedded monitoring to improve practitioner's practice and to ensure consistent delivery of the pre-school's routines. Monitoring of children's progress is not precise and accurate enough for management to assess and identify progress of particular groups, such as boys or girls.
- Children are not consistently provided with fresh drinking water at all times. This results in children not gaining independence and being well-hydrated.
- Children's health needs are not consistently promoted to ensure their well-being and to prevent the spread of infection.

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 carried out a tour of the pre-school building.
- The inspector observed play and learning activities and spoke to children and practitioners in the indoor and outdoor environments.
- The inspector held a meeting with the centre manager and looked at and discussed a range of policies, procedures and documentation.
- The inspector looked at evidence of the checks used to assess practitioner's suitability and copies of their qualifications.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to at the time of the inspection.

Inspector

Lynn Hughes

Full report

Information about the setting

The Ark Centre was registered in 2005 on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. It is located within the in The Ark Family Centre in Harwich, Essex. It is managed by a voluntary committee. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. There is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play. The pre-school employs 18 members of childcare staff. Of these, 16 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and 3. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday term time only. Sessions are from 9.30am until 2.45pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and from 9.30am until 12noon on Thursday. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 36 children attending who are in the early years age group. The pre-school provides funded early education for 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 leadership by implementing effective monitoring and supervision of all aspects of the pre-school to ensure the consistent delivery of the educational programme and care practices and promote continuous improvement
- ensure fresh drinking water is available and that it is accessible at all times to encourage children's independence to remain well-hydrated
- implement effective and consistent procedures to ensure that children's good health is promoted, for example, by following the pre-school's procedures for children to routinely wash their hands before touching food.

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

- strengthen the monitoring of assessment to ensure managers gather more precise information about the progress of groups of children as well as individuals.

Inspection judgements

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

Children are busy and engaged throughout the pre-school session in a range of freely chosen play experiences. They are provided with opportunities to guide their own learning as they choose resources from low-level storage units. Practitioners are on hand to

support children's play and learning and demonstrate some knowledge of the seven areas of learning and how children learn. Key persons complete frequent observations of the children in their key worker groups. They record their observations in individual learning journeys and link them to specific areas of learning. The observations are used effectively to identify children's next steps in learning. The team of practitioners meet once a week to discuss planning for the following week. They each input activities that they would like presented in order to help each of the children in their groups to achieve their next steps. Parents are provided with regular opportunities to view their children's learning journeys and to discuss their progress with their child's key person. Tracker sheets are used to follow each child's development and provide information about where each child is in relation to their expected development bands. Information available shows that children make appropriate progress in their learning and some make good progress. Evidence regarding children with special educational needs and/or disabilities shows that their progress in relation to their starting points is good.

Children enjoy cooking during their pre-school session. They participate in a range of cooking activities each week, which helps them to explore weight and measure, to discuss how ingredients change through the cooking process and to talk about texture, smell and colour. Practitioners support this learning appropriately by asking children questions about the activity and introducing new and appropriate language. Children's communication and language skills are promoted by practitioners speaking to children clearly and using skilful questioning to extend their thinking and vocabulary.

Children have fun in the pre-school garden. They move confidently from the indoor to the outdoor environments throughout the session. The introduction of a sand kitchen has proven very successful. Children are observed mixing, stirring and creating wonderful cakes and other delights. Children are beginning to develop their skills for future learning and in readiness for school. For example, they make use of the drawing and writing resources presented on the drawing table to make lists and to draw pictures of their family. They learn the importance of sitting quietly when they listen to stories in small groups. Children are encouraged to learn how to put their own coats and outdoor clothing on when they move from the indoor to the outdoor environment.

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

Children settle well into their pre-school life as parents play an active role in helping them to become familiar with the building and practitioners. Parents provide their child's key person with information about their home life, capabilities and interests. Key persons use this information to inform their practices and to begin tailoring their care and education to match their starting points. Practitioners recognise the importance of developing children's self-esteem and confidence through the use of consistent praise and encouragement. Children develop a sense of belonging within the pre-school. For example, they have designated and labelled coat pegs for their coats and bags. Children's health and well-being is promoted reasonably well through the pre-school's policies and practices. However, these are not always followed consistently. For example, procedures to refresh the children's drinking water and cups are not robustly followed to ensure that children are

provided with accessible, fresh drinking water at all times. Children returning from play in the garden are not systematically reminded to wash or wipe their hands before touching food from the snack table. As a result, children's health is not always effectively promoted.

Children play and learn in one main pre-school room, although, there are some smaller rooms which are used for quiet, focused activities. The pre-school environment is bright and welcoming. Recent improvements to the way in which the setting is organised have proven successful. For example, children now have access to a comfortable and well-equipped cosy corner, where they can read a book, chat to their friends or take a rest. New role-play resources have excited children's imaginative minds and are being used continuously throughout the session. Development in the outdoor provision means that practitioners now consider the outdoor area as part of their daily planning. They have developed a sand kitchen, which may in the future become a mud kitchen. This enables children to explore sand and water using a wide range of real kitchen equipment and vessels. Those children who learn more effectively outdoors are provided with books to look at, construction toys to build with and painting easels to express themselves creatively. Children's behaviour is generally good as the pre-school operates to a high adult to child ratio. This means that children are always well-supervised and supported. Children requiring additional help are supported on a one-to-one basis to ensure their pre-school experiences are positive and purposeful.

Children enjoy a mid-session snack, which generally comprises of fresh fruit and other healthy snacks. They are encouraged to develop independence skills when they choose and pour their own drinks. Practitioners encourage children to think about foods which are good for them through lively discussions. Children's physical skills are promoted well through the use of large scale physical play equipment, such as balancing beams. Children enjoy fresh air and exercise daily when they move freely between the pre-school building and the garden. Key persons help to prepare children for changes in their lives through effective communication with parents and by considering what support each child may need to make these changes as smooth as possible. Children's personal needs are appropriately met. Key persons check and change nappies for the children in their key groups. This means that children are always changed by a familiar adult who knows them well. A chart on the wall close to the changing area provides evidence that children's nappies are regularly checked and changed. Practitioners follow the pre-schools procedures for dealing with any accidents and keep a clear record of accidents and injuries. Parents are informed about all accidents and asked to sign the record.

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

Children remain safe and appropriately protected from harm within the pre-school as practitioners demonstrate good knowledge of their responsibilities with regards to protecting children. Practitioners and designated persons regularly updated their safeguarding knowledge through appropriate training to ensure they fully understand the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child's welfare. The pre-school has clear written policies on safeguarding children, which are shared with parents and

carers. The centre manager has completed Safer Recruitment training and uses her knowledge of assessing applicant's suitability when recruiting new practitioners. Children play and learn in a, generally, clean and well-organised environment. Throughout the pre-school day, some areas of the environment, such as high shelves and corners of the room, close to the entrance door for the nursery garden become cluttered. There is currently no effective monitoring of this practice by the overall manager or room supervisors to ensure that these areas are regularly cleared and remain safe and well-organised.

The pre-school is long-established and has been operating in the same building for many years. The centre manager and some of the practitioners have worked there for many years. The management team comprises of the centre manager, a room supervisor and a deputy. At present the room supervisor's role is being covered by two practitioners job sharing the responsibilities, while the main room supervisor is on maternity leave. The new room supervisors are new to management and are currently in the process of embedding the knowledge they need to fulfil this position effectively. There are some systems in place for supervision and coaching of the team, however, these are not yet effectively delivered from top management to the next tier. Consequently, the middle management, comprising of the room supervisors and the newly appointed deputy are unclear about their roles. This results in inconsistencies in the monitoring of the provision. Systems for supervision of the rest of the practitioner team are beginning to be introduced and the room supervisors have time set aside to meet with each practitioner. This aims to provide some opportunities for coaching and mentoring, however, these coaching systems are not yet embedded in practice, so that all children's learning is fully supported. There are currently limited systems in place for senior management to obtain a clear overview of the progress of individual children, as well as groups of children, such as boys or girls. The pre-school practitioners and management are beginning to use reflective practice to drive improvement. They have worked closely with representatives from the local authority since their last inspection to review and evaluate the organisation of the environment, to develop planning and assessment and to gain knowledge on how to evaluate the success of teaching and learning. As a result, the pre-school environment is now more effectively presented indoors and outdoors, the systems for planning and assessment are more precise and management are beginning to build in processes for developing teaching and learning practice. Parents have some opportunities to feed their views of the pre-school into the self-evaluation process through discussion with practitioners and occasional questionnaires.

Partnerships with parents are strong. Many of the families using the pre-school have had family connections with the setting for many years. They fully trust the practitioners and managers to care for their children and to support the whole family. Parents spoken to compliment the friendliness of the practitioners and state that their children are happy and content there. Many share their views of the proficient way the pre-school team have sought appropriate interventions for their children and how this has helped their children to make good progress in relation to their starting points. Partnerships with other professionals and agencies are very secure. Effective ongoing communication helps the pre-school to work closely with these professionals to ensure children are proficiently supported. The pre-school has close links with the local schools and other early years settings in the area. They use their effective links to work in partnership with schools to ensure children leaving the pre-school and entering school are well-supported through this

process.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met
(with
actions)**

To meet the requirements of the Childcare Register the provider must:

- ensure children have access to drinking water (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)

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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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	EY312761
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	962799
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	36
Name of provider	The Ark Family Resource Centre
Date of previous inspection	03/12/2013
Telephone number	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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