

Inspection of The Ark Centre

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

Inspection date: 16 September 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children enjoy their time at the centre. They enter and part from their parents and carers with ease. Staff are on hand to provide a reassuring smile and to greet both children and parents. Children behave well and are kind and caring towards their friends. Staff act as good role models, speaking to children and each other in a calm and friendly manner.

Children, including those who are new to the centre, show that they feel safe. They move confidently between the playroom and outdoor learning space. Children guide their own play and learning. They access resources from easily accessible storage units. Staff encourage children to learn to respect their environment and keep it safe, for example, by clearing away the toys that they are no longer playing with.

Leaders and managers are ambitious. They have made a number of positive and successful changes to the centre since the last inspection. Staff use the knowledge they gain from training, such as 'best practice', to improve and enhance the learning environment. They now plan more effectively for children's learning and demonstrate a secure understanding of how children learn. This helps children to be well prepared for their next stage of learning.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Staff know the children well. They work closely with parents to establish clear ongoing information about children's changing needs, likes and dislikes. Key persons use this information effectively to plan activities that are tailored to children's interests. For example, following children's keen interests in dinosaurs, staff introduce a selection of plastic dinosaurs into the mud kitchen. They turn the play dough table into a bakery after children share their knowledge and interest in making cakes.
- Staff support children to develop their communication and language skills. They speak clearly to them and encourage children to engage in conversation. However, occasionally, some staff do not use skilful enough questioning to fully challenge children in order to develop their language skills even further.
- Children understand the centre's routines. They listen carefully to staff's instructions and manage their own self-care skills.
- Staff plan effectively for children's learning. They use the information they already know about the children to build on their capabilities and skills. However, some staff miss opportunities to enhance children's mathematical skills further, for example, during everyday activities and routines.
- Staff promote children's early literacy skills well. They encourage children to use equipment to make marks and develop their physical skills in preparation for

writing.

- Leaders and managers support the staff well. They encourage them to pursue their professional development, for example, through research and training. Leaders encourage a working environment where staff feel confident to give each other feedback on their practice.
- Leaders and staff offer an inclusive provision for children. They work closely with outside agencies to support all children, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Staff are kind and caring and help new children to settle in to the centre. They reassure and encourage children who become upset and distract them, for example, with a story.
- Children's independence is effectively promoted. For example, staff encourage children to pour their own drinks and make choices about their snacks. Staff are knowledgeable about children's dietary needs and preferences. They work closely with parents to devise individual care plans to help them to meet children's care needs.
- Staff encourage parents to play an active role in their children's learning. Leaders provide parents with regular newsletters, invite them to attend open evenings and encourage them to learn songs and nursery rhymes that their children sing at nursery.
- Children have opportunities to develop their large physicals skills as they roll tyres to each other, balance on low beams and use tools in the construction area.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and leaders demonstrate a sound understanding of their responsibilities to protect children. They are aware of the main types of abuse and the known indicators that might suggest a child is at risk of harm. They know how to report any safeguarding concerns to the appropriate agencies and have clear procedures for recording safeguarding concerns. Staff regularly update their safeguarding knowledge through training and also through their weekly team meetings. Staff ensure that the environment remains safe and well organised and encourage children to develop their understanding of risk.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- develop staff's expertise further to improve their questioning skills and raise the quality of education even higher
- enhance teaching to provide more opportunities for staff to promote mathematical concepts in everyday activities and routines.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY312761
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10082876
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	40
Name of registered person	The Ark Family Resource Centre
Registered person unique reference number	RP524682
Telephone number	01255 502063
Date of previous inspection	19 October 2018

Information about this early years setting

The Ark Centre registered in 2005. The nursery employs 19 members of childcare staff. Of these, 12 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the nursery supervisor who holds a qualification at level 5. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions are from 9.30am to 2.30pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lynn Hughes

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector observed adult-led activities and evaluated them with the nursery supervisor.
- The inspector held a number of discussions with the provider, managers and staff. She looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working at the setting.
- The inspector spoke to children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to at the inspection.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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