

# Inspection of The Ark Centre

Ark Centre, 15 Springfield Lyons Approach, Springfield, Chelmsford CM2 5LB

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Inspection date: 8 December 2023

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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children enthusiastically enter this unique setting, greeted by incredibly warm and nurturing staff that they build trusting and secure attachments with. Staff specialise in providing exceptional, multidisciplinary care and education for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children's happiness and well-being is paramount. Staff use motivational teaching strategies, such as blowing bubbles to retain children's attention and focus during adult-led activities. Children giggle excitedly, popping the bubbles and learning new skills in a fun way. As a result, they thrive in this therapeutic and safe environment.

Children significantly benefit from one-to-one teaching. A robust key-person system means staff know children remarkably well, adapting resources and activities in accordance with their mood and social cues. Staff expertly support children's physical and emotional health. When a child becomes overwhelmed, empathetic staff encourage them to visit the gymnasium. Swinging on a large, padded swing the child relaxes and learns to self-regulate effectively.

Children learn about the diverse world as staff plan thoughtful visits from people who help us in the community. Staff deliver consistent routines, such as group registration and story time. This helps children develop a deep sense of belonging. Children cheer themselves and their peers when placing their picture on the visual registration board, showing confidence and positive attitudes around their peers.

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

- Experienced staff provide exceedingly high-quality teaching. Parents and children's viewpoints are welcomed from the start. Staff consider individual children's learning needs and interests superbly well and bespoke activities and experiences means children make rapid progress from their starting points. Children's progress is regularly reviewed with managers and external moderation. Any gaps in learning are identified swiftly and interventions and additional support is put in place. Collaborative working with outside professionals, such as speech and language therapists, ensures staff continuously reflect on children's progress, observe and set targets for children's next steps in learning.
- Staff implement a curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced. It builds on what children know and can do, preparing them for developing new skills to support their future learning. For example, children who previously disliked water play, happily touch a dampened cloth and wipe their mouths with it after eating. Staff intuitively follow children's lead. They set up a water play activity to build up children's tolerance of wet materials. Children delight in pouring water from one container to another. This helps to extend children's physical skills that

support their future independence, such as pouring their own drink at mealtimes.

- Staff specialise in using visual tools to support children to communicate in their preferred way. These include picture exchange systems that encourage the use of spoken language. Staff extend children's language development by repeating words and introducing lots of clear and specific commentary alongside their play.
- Children develop their understanding of good hygiene practice. Mealtimes are sociable events and children learn to be independent and gain self-care skills, such as washing their hands before eating and feeding themselves.
- Partnerships with parents are undeniably valued. Parents compliment staff's in-depth, daily face-to-face, and online communication with them. They report on the remarkable and significant progress their children are making in their social communication, particularly in speech and language development. Parents attend monthly, interactive sessions alongside the dedicated staff and their children. Consequently, parents express how they feel knowledgeable and confident to further support their children's next steps in learning at home.
- In small groups, children enjoy counting rubber ducks together during an interactive singing activity. Staff start taking away ducks and purposely pause during the song, where children relish in shouting out the number of ducks left. Children build self-esteem with staff's positive praise for their efforts. Additionally, they learn to take turns with their peers and mathematical concepts such as counting skills and number recognition.
- The management team are awe inspiring and passionate about delivering inclusive care and education to all children. They ensure transitions between settings are tailored for each child. Effective communication between settings, parents and outside professionals ensures children make seamless transitions to their next educational setting. Staff go to great lengths to help settle children by offering to help support them in their new settings.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance, and all staff went through a secure recruitment process to ensure their suitability to work with children. The provider and staff have regular safeguarding training. All staff have a robust understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They clearly understand the importance of safeguarding vulnerable children. Staff can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what to do if there is a concern about a child or a colleague. Robust discussions at the weekly staff meeting ensure staff's safeguarding knowledge is up to date. They have a good understanding of any complex health needs of children in their care.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2652830
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10308714
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Sessional day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	2 to 5
<b>Total number of places</b>	6
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	11
<b>Name of registered person</b>	The Ark Centre CIC
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	2652831
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245467355
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this early years setting

The Ark Centre registered in 2021. The setting employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, three staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 6 and one at level 3. Qualified speech and language therapists and occupational therapists also work with the children. The setting opens from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 9am to 12 midday and from 1pm to 4pm.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Louisa Taylor

## Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discusses the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The nursery manager and the inspector completed a tour of the setting both indoors and outdoors to understand how the early years provision and curriculum are organised. Additionally, the manager showed the inspector the premises and discussed how they ensure it is safe and suitable.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact that this had on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of group activities with the manager and also discussed self-evaluation.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Children communicated with the inspector during the inspection. Parents and carers shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and also discussed self-evaluation. The inspector looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of the staff working in the setting and a selection of other records.

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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