

Inspection of The Ark Children Centre

Evelyn Street, Deptford, London SE8 5RB

Inspection date: 9 February 2024

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	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children at this nursery are highly independent and keen to participate in all aspects of the daily routine. They enjoy the activities and experiences that staff plan for them and apply themselves fully to their learning. When it is time to tidy up, line up to go outside or get ready for lunch, children contribute by putting away toys, putting on coats or washing their hands. Children learn to manage their self-care independently. They learn to use the toilet, wash their hands and wipe their noses by themselves. Children are relaxed, and they have close relationships with staff and their friends, which contribute to their safety and emotional well-being.

Staff make the most of opportunities to bring children of all ages together. Older children behave beautifully with their younger peers. Behaviour is positive and respectful, and children take great care to be gentle with babies. The youngest children watch their older peers intently and mimic their actions when they play together. When it is time for lunch, pre-school children set the table. They do this with very little instruction as they know exactly where everything goes. For example, they make sure that all their friends' water bottles are in the right place and everyone has appropriate cutlery. Children take pride in the completion of the task, and they smile broadly when staff praise their work. Children's experience at nursery helps them to acquire the skills they need for a successful move to the next stage in their learning, including starting school.

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

- The manager has a clear vision for the nursery and has ambitious aspirations for children and staff. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the manager and the staff have placed a high emphasis on supporting children's early language development and communication skills. The manager regularly observes children as they play and staff teaching to inform any changes to the curriculum or the environment. This supports a curriculum that is responsive to children's needs.
- Children can access a range of well planned and interesting activities, both indoors and outside in the garden. The manager has carefully considered how to deliver a range of learning opportunities by using all available space outside. Children have space to climb and run to extend their physical mobility. They can also explore natural materials, sand, water and messy play. In addition, children have opportunities to visit local parks on nature walks and picnics. Making the most of the space in the nursery and opportunities in the area ensures that staff deliver the curriculum successfully across all areas of learning.
- The manager and her team have developed good working relationships with local partners in the area. This helps enhance the curriculum through additional opportunities for all children or targeted interventions for those who need more support. For example, all children visit the local library and enjoy storytelling

sessions from a visiting librarian. Some children participate in a project that boosts their speaking confidence and develops their communication skills. Staff carefully consider every child's individual needs, and this helps ensure that every child makes good progress from their starting point.

- The manager has developed a cohesive and highly effective programme to improve children's oral health. Children sit together for a daily toothbrushing session alongside a member of staff who models effective toothbrushing. Parents attend an oral-hygiene workshop at the nursery to support their understanding of how to ensure that their children brush their teeth at home. As a result, parents and children have an excellent understanding of how to brush their teeth and why good oral hygiene is important to children's overall physical health.
- Staff support children who speak English as an additional language or children with special educational needs and/or disabilities well at this nursery. The manager, also the nursery special educational needs coordinator, works with parents and partner agencies to ensure that appropriate support is sought when required. This ensures that all children have every opportunity to make the best progress they can.
- The manager has built a strong team and all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff say that the manager values their well-being and that they have good opportunities for further training and development from a range of available courses and programmes. However, staff are unsure what professional development opportunities to pursue. Individual supervision arrangements are not fully focused on helping staff reflect on their practice through mentoring and coaching. That said, the manager asks staff to share what they have learned at regular team meetings. This demonstrates a positive approach to continuous learning and improvement.
- Parents say they like the 'family feel' of this small nursery. They say their children benefit from the close relationships children have with their key person and other members of the staff team. Staff use a range of communication methods to inform parents about what their children are learning and how they can continue this support at home. This helps children feel safe, settled and ready to learn at nursery.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen supervision arrangements to help staff reflect on their practice, in order to fully enhance their skills and abilities to the highest level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY492926
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10305163
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	27
Number of children on roll	17
Name of registered person	The Ark Children Centre Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP535148
Telephone number	02086926789
Date of previous inspection	13 February 2018

Information about this early years setting

The Ark Children Centre registered in 2015 and is located in the London Borough of Lewisham. The nursery employs five members of childcare staff, including the manager and an apprentice. Of whom, four hold qualifications from level 2 to level 6. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round, except for one week at Christmas and three staff training days. Sessions are from 7.30am and 6.15pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Trina Lynskey

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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