

Inspection of The Ark Child Okeford

St. Nicholas C of E Primary School, Station Road, Child Okeford, BLANDFORD
FORUM, Dorset DT11 8EL

Inspection date: 26 February 2025

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 are happy and settled in this warm and welcoming nursery. They form strong bonds with the staff, who provide warm interactions and reassurance, helping children to feel safe and secure. Staff provide exciting learning opportunities for children, who are keen to join in and concentrate for long periods. Children receive appropriate praise and encouragement to support them to persevere and to promote their well-being. Staff have high expectations for children's learning and behaviour. Children share, take turns and learn about the feelings of others. When minor disagreements occur, children often manage these for themselves. For example, they negotiate a solution together, such as taking turns.

Staff communicate regularly with parents to obtain information about children's emerging interests. Staff incorporate these interests into the curriculum to engage children in learning that builds on what they already know and can do. The development of children's communication skills is a strong focus. Staff engage children in meaningful conversations, introduce new vocabulary and encourage children to express their thoughts and ideas. Children enjoy listening to stories, singing songs and engaging in role play, which further enhances their language skills. Children learn how to manage risks for themselves as they balance on planks outside. Staff help children to identify potential hazards, such as where the larger puddles may be and if the grass might be 'slippery' due to lots of rain. Children enjoy plenty of fresh air and exercise to help keep them fit and healthy.

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

- The setting provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all the children. Experiences offered support children to reach the next steps in their development. Staff deliver the curriculum well. Children demonstrate good levels of engagement. For example, older children enjoy making play dough, linking the colour choices to a favourite superhero and choosing the music from a movie of their choice.
- Staff support children's language development and literacy well. Staff clearly explain the context and meaning of words as they introduce them. For example, children learn how to identify the 'spine' and 'cover' of a book and demonstrate their understanding of this during later conversations.
- Staff are attentive to babies wants and needs. For example, they identify children's interest in pressing buttons and provide appropriate resources to support and extend this further. Babies are active and engaged in their learning.
- Staff working with older children incorporate mathematical language as children play to provide the building blocks for later learning in school. For example, in the pre-school, children vote for a story using construction blocks. Staff help

children to identify which tower of blocks is the tallest and therefore has more. However, staff working with younger children do not provide enough opportunities for children to learn about number or shape.

- Children behave well. Staff provide children with appropriate strategies to support conflict resolution. For example, children take turns and use the sand timers to indicate when their turn has finished. Staff model good behaviour and have positive relationships with each other.
- The nursery is reflective and proactive in identifying areas for improvement. For example, the provider implemented training for all staff to make mealtimes more purposeful and joyful. Staff sit with the children throughout and provide engaging conversations. Children are not rushed. They develop independence in serving themselves and pouring their own drinks from an early age. Following feedback from parents, children also receive a starter or a pudding each day.
- The nursery plays an active role in the community. For example, children enjoy visits to the local shops and to the residents at a local care home. This helps to develop their social skills as they learn to greet and interact with others. The nursery also held a music festival, which some families attended, following staff identifying that children were showing a keen interest in music.
- Staff report that they feel supported by the provider. Training opportunities are identified through regular meetings to discuss staff's professional development. Staff use knowledge gained during training to support children's learning and development and meet children's individual needs. Staff offer peer support through professional conversations about how they can improve and develop their teaching.
- The nursery works in partnership with parents and their children. For example, parents report that their children ask them to upload photos from home to the online app to share with their key person in the nursery. This promotes children's pride in their achievements, which are celebrated at home and at nursery.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the 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:

- support staff working with younger children to implement the curriculum for mathematics in a way that helps all children to develop their confidence and skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	141096
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10380846
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	0 to 11
Total number of places	42
Number of children on roll	63
Name of registered person	The Ark Child Okeford
Registered person unique reference number	RP902280
Telephone number	01258 861007
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2019

Information about this early years setting

The Ark Child Okeford registered in 1992 and re-registered when they moved to the grounds of St Nicholas Primary School in Child Okeford in 2007. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm, from Monday to Friday, for 50 weeks of the year. The nursery receives funding to provide early education for children aged two, three and four years. The nursery employs 17 members of staff. The manager holds an early years qualification at level 4, and most of the other staff are qualified at level 3. The staff team is supported by an administrator and a cook.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Chris Langdon-Casey

Inspection activities

- The nursery manager joined the inspector on a learning walk of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- The inspector and manager completed a joint observation of a planned group activity.
- The inspector spoke to staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector spoke with the manager and deputy about the leadership and management of the nursery.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- They observed the quality of education being provided for all children, both indoors and outdoors.

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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