

Inspection of The Ark Pre-School Wantage

The Butler Centre, 17 Church Street, Wantage OX12 8BL

Inspection date: 5 June 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 enjoy taking part in a broad range of activities that are skilfully planned by the consistent and professional staff team. The routines embedded for children set clear boundaries, and children know what is happening throughout the day. The impact of this is that children behave extremely well.

Children become engrossed in their play and learning. They benefit from the strong focus on promoting their communication and language, becoming animated as they listen to stories and sing songs. Staff extend children's learning effectively as they introduce props to embed children's early counting.

The outside space is beautifully set out, and children are encouraged to take risks and seek challenge in their play. Guided by supportive staff, they confidently ask adults for help and feel secure in the knowledge that their needs will be met.

Children are learning to understand what it means to be healthy. For example, they grow fresh fruits and vegetables in the garden and prepare them for snack. Staff talk about healthy choices and encourage children to be independent as they pour water and open their own lunch boxes. Children are well prepared for school.

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

- Children arrive happily at the setting to be greeted by happy, caring and attentive staff. The setting is beautifully maintained, and the children have an array of activities and play experiences on offer. Children have hands-on learning experiences as they observe tadpoles that they have nurtured from frogspawn. They note the changes and create artwork to reflect their observations. This helps them experience the wonder of the world around them.
- Children play alongside each other well. Staff encourage children to be independent, and they keep a clear routine for the children to follow. Children develop positive relationships with the staff, and as such, they demonstrate that they feel safe and secure in their environment.
- Children are excited and interested in their learning. They balance along a wobbly beam outside, requesting help when needed. They learn simple measurements in the large outdoor sandpit when pouring and tipping sand, guided by competent staff. This positively impacts on children's early mathematical skills.
- Children gain experiences beyond the classroom. For example, staff take them on weekly visits to the local market to buy fruit and vegetables to prepare for snack, ensuring that a healthy balanced diet is maintained. Leaders talk about the positive impact that trips to a local care home have on children's emotional and physical well-being. They also visit the local museum. Staff are actively

embedding children into their community, enhancing their understanding of their place within it.

- Children are well prepared for school. Staff highlight independence skills and confidence as a contributing factor. Staff have put into action robust planning that supports children at this stage. As a consequence, children are confident, curious learners and are prepared for the next stages in their development. However, staff do not plan some aspects of the curriculum for younger children as precisely, to ensure that they consistently benefit from the same high-quality support as those who are older.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a comprehensive understanding of children's needs for them to make progress. However, arrangements for sharing information between the SENCo and children's key persons are not always fully effective. This means staff working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always benefit from having the fullest picture of the curriculum plans.
- Parents are delighted with the setting. They happily report that they return time after time with siblings, some travelling great distances just to use the setting. Parents share reassuring messages about the staff, saying that they trust them and value their understanding of their child's individual needs. They feel part of a family, and they comment that staffing consistency is a positive factor. This supports positive partnerships that promote children's learning and development.

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:

- refine further the curriculum planning for younger children to more consistently reflect the precisely targeted support provided for older children
- enhance the arrangements to share information between the SENCo and children's key persons.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY499172
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10339210
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	38
Name of registered person	Wantage Pre-School Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP518086
Telephone number	01235 764010
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2018

Information about this early years setting

The Ark Pre-School Wantage registered under a new name in 2016 and is run by Wantage Pre-School Playgroup. It is located in the centre of Wantage, Oxfordshire. The pre-school is open on weekdays, during school term times, from 8.30am until 3.30pm. It receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The pre-school employs seven staff, and five of these hold relevant qualifications at level 2 or 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Stephanie Dorling

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.
- A learning walk took place with the setting manager and the inspector.
- A joint observation of practice was conducted by the setting manager and the inspector.
- The inspector spoke with children and observed them in their play.
- The inspector greeted parents and discussed with them any concerns they may have.
- Conversations were held between the staff members and the inspector.

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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