

The Ark

THE ARK, Dean Hey Farm, HEBDEN BRIDGE, HX7 5RU

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

29/01/2014

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children are extremely motivated and engage readily in new learning. Practitioners are highly skilled at using every situation to maximise learning opportunities and as a result, children make rapid progress in their learning. The range of external curriculum activities is worthy of dissemination to others.
- Children's welfare is substantially safeguarded and their well-being is superbly promoted.
- All practitioners are exceptionally skilled and sensitive in supporting children to form secure emotional attachments. This provides a superb foundation to enable them to develop their independence and motivates them to explore.
- The desire, commitment and attitude of the leadership team to deliver and maintain exceptional standards is phenomenal. As a result, rigorous self-evaluation is highly embedded and leads to exceptional outcomes for children.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children in all five base rooms and outdoors.
- The inspector completed a joint observations with the childcare manager of the setting.
- The inspector held meetings with the owners, the childcare manager, team leaders and four parents.
- A range of documents in each base room were inspected including observations, planning, tracking of children's progress and daily diaries.
- The inspector checked evidence of practitioner suitability, action plans, training certificates, policies, procedures and the setting's self-evaluation.

Inspector

Shazaad Arshad

Full report

Information about the setting

The Ark Experience LLP was re-registered in August 2013. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery is situated within its own grounds in the Hebden Bridge area of Halifax and serves the local and surrounding areas. It operates from a five detached building. The premises comprise of eight playrooms, offices, staff room, utility room, quiet room, sensory room, store room, kitchen and toilet facilities. There are enclosed play areas available for outdoor play and a Forest Green area attached to the site. There are separate units for children aged under two years, two to three years and three to five years. All children have access to the substantial grounds and large, shared outdoor play areas.

The setting employs 46 staff and of these 31 members of staff are dedicated childcare practitioners. Of these, 28 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including two practitioners with Early Years Degree qualifications and two further practitioners completing the degree. The nursery opens from 7am to 6.30pm five days a week for 51 weeks of the year, excluding public holidays and two training days. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 135 children on roll, all of whom are within the early years age range. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The nursery has achieved the Investors in People award and has completed 'Steps into quality', in partnership with the local authority.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- extend opportunities for children to recognise signs, symbols and numbers in the outdoor environment, for example, by including signage, numerals and words to make the outdoor areas even more stimulating and inviting.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

All practitioners have an excellent understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the seven areas of learning. The approach to planning ensures that rich, varied and imaginative experiences are constantly adapted so that they fully reflect each child's individual play and learning needs. Children make exceptional progress in their learning and development in this vibrant and extremely stimulating nursery. Consequently, they are extremely well-prepared for school. Practitioners consistently use highly effective systems

for observing, assessing and planning for children's next steps in learning. The highest priority is given to ensuring parents and carers are able to share information about their children's current interests and achievements, and this is achieved through highly successful strategies, such as the 'parent week' events and feedback consultations. This means practitioners have a comprehensive knowledge of each child's learning, both in the setting and their home environment, and know how they complement each other. Parents are given daily communication and opportunities, to review their child's learning records at consultation evenings. The nursery suggests ways that parents can help prepare their children for school by reinforcing and practising the skills they teach in nursery, such as independent dressing and confident scissor or pencil control.

Arrangements for supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exemplary. Practitioners monitor children very closely so that any intervention is made in a timely fashion and children receive any additional support that they need. Practitioners go to great lengths to work with parents and other professionals, often providing home visits and accompanying parents and children at meetings to discuss future support strategies. Therefore, children make rapid progress based on their starting points. Practitioners provide excellent opportunities to complement children's learning in the nursery through an outstanding variety of extra curricular programs of learning. These range from baby ballet, forest schools, archery, Spanish, French and physical education classes. For example, each week the older children are given the opportunity to learn French and Spanish; an activity they clearly delight and excel in. This means children are learning about the languages of other countries through active involvement. Similarly, for example, they confidently participate in physical education classes in a large separate hall and practice changing into their sports clothing, proudly talk about why they are doing this, and the effects of physical education has on their bodies. This prepares them for the changes they will encounter when starting school and becoming part of a larger group with less adult interaction. The youngest children also participate as they take part in baby ballet, music and singing activities led by very enthusiastic practitioners. The youngest children become captivated, as they explore movement and sounds through musical play and learning about rhythm. Practitioners skilfully ensure they continue these activities in the nursery to enable children to practise and consolidate their learning. For example, babies enjoy developing their physical strength and coordination in their own base rooms, as they crawl or clamber on the low-level equipment. Children develop positive attitudes to learning and enthusiastically engage in meaningful, purposeful play and exploration of the natural habitat and the onsite forest school. They skilfully ask questions about the weather, numbers and show excellent understanding of the bear story as they participate in the bear hunt games. Children are clearly very motivated to learn through exploration of the outdoors and practitioners are enthused by the clear display of excitement by the children as they embark on collecting and comparing snails in the outdoors. The activity allows the children to use their knowledge of numbers and measurement as they use magnifiers to measure and count.

Planning of activities is based on practitioners' thorough knowledge and understanding of every children's interests, and introduced as children approach school age; they enjoy small group teaching in a separate area such as the library, with focused outcomes on recognising items in the magic sack. For example, during these sessions children use their critical thinking skills to find objects to test their theories on texture, colour and shapes.

They explore shape and colour, matching and naming two dimensional shapes, and become adept at basic calculation with the aid of superb accessible resources. Sensory experiences using a variety of materials they can squeeze, shape and manipulate, encourage children to experiment and investigate, tapping into their natural curiosity. These experiences are continually enhanced with visits to the stimulating sensory play room which provides further experiences to enhance children's sensory exploration and thinking. During a group story, practitioners talk expressively and vary their pitch or tone of voice to sustain children's interest, motivation and good listening skills. At the end of the story they use well-structured questioning to encourage children to think and use language to recall what happened. The vast outdoor spaces are exceptionally well-equipped but there is scope to increase signage and text to promote the children's excellent literacy skills further.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children's emotional well-being is extremely well-supported through a highly effective and well-established key person system. They share very positive relationships with the highly skilled practitioners, who are caring and sensitive to each child's individual needs. Practitioners spend time talking to parents in detail about their children and provide a settling-in process to make sure every child feels especially secure. Practitioners are always nearby to offer support and encouragement, which results in children being confident to try new things and fully participate in the exciting activities the setting has to offer. All parents know who their child's key person is because the setting has a gradual settling-in procedure where practitioners, children and parents build relationships and if required home visits are also conducted. During the highly effective settling-in period practitioners work with parents to understand children's individual routines and their starting points. This means they can support children to settle, while at the same time, engaging them in activities and learning opportunities that stimulate them and support them to learn and develop. In addition, children's individual care routines are managed by their key person so that children feel exceptionally safe and secure in the setting. The transition documents are very well-used between the rooms and the effective use of these ensure that practitioners are very well-informed as children move between rooms.

Children learn about expected levels of behaviour from the positive role modelling of practitioners and from each other. Children's behaviour is exemplary because practitioners provide clear boundaries and implement the behaviour management policy consistently throughout the setting. Practitioners manage inappropriate behaviour in a calm, sensitive way that is appropriate to children's age and stage of development. As a result, the setting is full of happy, settled and exceptionally well-behaved children. There is an excellent focus on outdoor physical activities and this enables all children to develop very good control of their bodies and to benefit fully from lots of fresh air. For instance, they relish the daily opportunities to play outside; enjoying nature trail games and exploring the vast nature spaces. Neither practitioners nor children are fazed when the rain begins to fall and take full advantage the new dimension this brings to their play. The attention given to promoting children's health is excellent. Meticulous systems are in place to ensure their individual health or dietary needs are met at mealtimes and practitioners are vigilant in

promoting very good hygiene as a matter of course in their daily routines. Children's understanding of healthy eating is exceptionally well promoted. The older children confidently serve their own food at lunch time, knowing how much to take to satisfy their appetite. The use of menu cards on display on every table and activities around growing, planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables further promote an excellent understanding of where food comes from. In addition, the nursery have been obtained the 'cute fruit' award. Children have excellent opportunities to learn about self-care from an early age. For example, a very young child independently used a wipe to clean her hands after outdoor play and put this in the bin afterwards. All children know to shield their mouth if they cough, to help stop the spread of germs.

Children learn to behave very responsibly from a young age and to cooperate within a group. For example, even young toddlers learn about responsibility and being helpful as they are encouraged to help find items for activities, which they do with great confidence. Older children show a high regard for keeping themselves and their environment safe. They consistently adhere to rules for indoor physical play sessions and when exploring the nature play areas independently. Practitioners are extremely keen to allow children the opportunity to take calculated risks. They understand the importance of children learning through active play and talk about the safety implications of activities. As a result, children are developing excellent levels of safety understanding, confidence and self-esteem. In addition, children complete their own safety risk assessments and their parents are provided with information on 'safety matters' to embed safety understanding at home. These opportunities support children to develop skills for the future and learn how to keep themselves safe from harm.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The leadership team ensures safeguarding is given very high priority and the leadership team ensures all practitioners working in the setting are fully aware of their responsibilities. The nursery has robust procedures for recruitment, vetting and induction to assess the suitability of practitioners working with children. All practitioners attend regular safeguarding training and the majority of practitioners hold a first aid certificate. Thorough and continuously updated safeguarding policies and procedures are known by practitioners and underpin the excellent practice. Designated practitioners are responsible for leading safeguarding so that roles and responsibilities are clear. All documentation related to safeguarding and welfare requirements are completed to an exemplary standard to support the safe and effective running of the setting.

Leadership at the setting is inspirational because the owner's have a clear and very well-defined vision of what it is they want to achieve for the nursery, which puts children at the heart of everything. This is shared fully by the childcare manager and the practitioner team. For example, the range of extra curricular activities offer superb exciting opportunities for children to emerge themselves in quality learning experiences. The concept of using practitioner ideas in the form of 'your voice' suggestions help all the team

feel valued and fully supported. The management set high expectations for practitioners performance and children's achievements through robust monitoring of the educational programs. The programme for the professional development of practitioners is fully embedded and each member has a training plan which means opportunities for them to enhance their knowledge and understanding of childcare practice are excellent. There is a very well-established and effective system of self-evaluation that drives continuous improvement based on the views of all stakeholders. Parents' views in particular, are very important to the continuing development of services. For example, the nursery asks parents to complete thorough questionnaires on what children have learned and how well-involved parents have been. This enables the nursery to evaluate and reflect more deeply on the effectiveness of the curriculum that they provide. Practitioners also, are trained to reflect deeply on their own practice when evaluating how well plans have worked so that improvements can be made to the environment and to further enhance children's capacity for learning. Consequently, the nursery sustains high levels of achievement over time. This is borne out by data from the very effective system that the management has developed to monitor and track the progress made by each cohort of children. This is used very successfully to identify any particular trends in learning and to identify where any changes to the curriculum are needed in order to meet the needs of every child. Feedback data from the partner schools demonstrates that the impact of the children moving from the nursery into school is exceptional.

Partnerships with parents are superb. They are provided with a wealth of well-presented and useful information on noticeboards, through newsletters, a website, booklets about the Early Years Foundation Stage and detailed written and verbal updates of what the children have been doing each day. Parents are actively encouraged to attend events, such as parent week, open evenings and charity, to ensure they play a full part in the life of the nursery. The nursery management see parents as full and active partners in the nursery. For example, they have released a practitioner to help settle a child's move to another European country. Parents provide extremely positive feedback on their satisfaction of the service, praising the whole ethos of the nursery and commending practitioners for their very professional but friendly approach. Very positive relationships have been forged with other providers, such as local schools, to aid transitions with communication books in place for the reciprocal sharing of information. Highly effective partnerships with parents and other providers ensure that children's needs are quickly identified and exceptionally well-met. Children who require the involvement of external professionals are supported by practitioners at the highest level because of their outstanding understanding of the importance of partnership working. For example, children with specific medical and health requirements are cared for by practitioners who have a superb knowledge of their needs and receive specific training to ensure they consistently receive the very highest standard of care. Partnership working with other professionals and settings to support children's individual needs is exemplary, including at transition times.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

Met

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY466724
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	931614
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	205
Number of children on roll	135
Name of provider	The Ark Experience LLP
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01422882010

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

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