

Inspection of The Ark Association Ltd (2)

Oakham C of E Primary School, Burley Road, OAKHAM, Rutland LE15 6GY

Inspection date: 22 January 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

The inclusive staff offer a warm welcome to children and parents. Staff provide plenty of cuddles and reassurance for children when needed. Children show that they feel happy and secure and have a strong sense of belonging at the 'family' nursery. They know what the staff expect of them. For example, they put away resources where they belong to keep the floor clear from trip hazards. Children learn self-care skills as they change their clothes for water play in the shallow swimming pool on the school site. Children dress in warm, waterproof clothing for outdoor outings, with interventions from staff only when needed. These activities help them to grow in independence, ready for the eventual move to school.

Staff ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress from their starting points. Children develop new skills as staff plan a wide range of fun activities indoors and outside. They enjoy taking the lead during independent play and when involved in group activities. For example, children delight in being 'number hunters' in the garden. They search for the hidden numbers one to five and match these to the ones they are holding. Staff planned this activity because they identified a need to strengthen children's knowledge in early mathematics.

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

- Staff collect initial information from parents to ensure that they understand children's care needs and interests. They use this information to provide books and activities that quickly engage children. However, staff do not find out what children already know and can do. This means that staff's initial planning to support children's development and next steps is not always precise enough.
- Parents say that they value staff's advice, such as how to help children sleep well. Staff update parents about children's progress in various ways, such as through an online platform, termly assessments and stay-and-play sessions. This information helps parents to continue their children's learning at home.
- Staff work closely with other agencies to support children with additional needs. They skilfully identify gaps in children's learning and provide the support they need to help close these. Staff develop links with the teachers who work at the host school to support older children's move onto their next stage of learning.
- Staff provide children with a wealth of opportunities to explore and learn about the wider world. For instance, they take children to visit local places of interest, such as the woodlands. Staff sing songs with children during the journey. Children recall that they collected natural objects, such as sticks, to compare sizes. Other visits to the community include museums and castles and local services, such as the fire brigade.
- Children snuggle up to the staff as they listen attentively to familiar stories. Staff

encourage children to join in the actions as they sing familiar rhymes and to sing using loud or quiet voices. They plan activities to support children's small-muscle skills and encourage them to make marks, such as painting and sand play. This helps to support the development of children's early literacy skills.

- Staff help children to speak clearly, repeating words accurately for them to hear. They provide a running commentary as children play and ask them questions, such as 'what if', to encourage them to think critically. Children learn to express their thoughts and ideas.
- Staff plan activities to support children's good health and physical development. Children benefit from fresh air and exercise daily. They climb, run, jump and balance on equipment in the outdoor play area. Children develop their large-muscle skills while using sit-and-ride toys and throwing balls. Staff promote good hygiene routines, such as handwashing before eating. This ensures children's physical well-being.
- Staff offer praise and encouragement, for example, when children share and take turns during games. They are positive role models. Children sing a 'thank you' song before eating their lunch. They learn to be kind and respectful towards others. Children learn about their feelings and those of others.
- The knowledgeable staff team regularly looks at ways to make improvements to practice. The nursery promotes staff well-being and professional development. Supervision and appraisal meetings are used to identify staff's needs for training and support. Staff say that they are proud to work at the 'caring, nurturing and fun' 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:

- enhance exchanges of information with parents about what children already know and can do, to inform early planning for specific next steps.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY439865
Local authority	Rutland Council
Inspection number	10367523
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	40
Number of children on roll	69
Name of registered person	The Ark Association
Registered person unique reference number	RP531262
Telephone number	01572770121
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2019

Information about this early years setting

The Ark Association Ltd (2) registered in 2011 and operates from the grounds of Oakham C of E Primary School, in Oakham, Rutland. The nursery employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Cathryn Clarricoates

Inspection activities

- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Staff spoke to the inspector about how they support children, including those with SEND.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an outdoor activity.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.

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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