



The Ark Pre-School Manager's Report 2016/17

This year the Ark has had much to celebrate. In September, we were delighted to receive 'outstanding' in our Ofsted inspection, feeling reassured that we are all doing the best for our children. At this point, we had welcomed two year olds into the setting for a term and we had had the opportunity to establish a routine that worked for all of the children. We have made very few adjustments to the routine since our inspection as we feel that children are now familiar with the timetable and gain a security and sense of independence in knowing what is happening next.

During the morning, all children have access to free play, both inside and outside. There is a different craft or cooking activity set out each day, often linked with the topic for the half term in which all children are encouraged to participate. Once the Wiggle Song comes on, all children know that they should leave what they are doing and come to the book corner to 'wiggle'. Following this popular song/dance the children split into two groups for story time. During the year we have been receiving training from Bracknell Forest to help us develop ideas for story time and we are really encouraged by the way in which our new approach has engaged and actively involved all the children, including those who find listening a challenge.

Snack time continues to work well as a whole group activity, either inside at tables or outside, on logs and chairs. Before eating snack, all children are encouraged to go to the toilet and wash their hands and then find their place mat. Whilst waiting for everyone to be seated, we sing a variety of nursery rhymes and songs. We then count the number of children, followed by the number of girls, number of boys and number of staff. The children learn to count in English, French and German. Then we talk about days of the week, using language of time. After singing our 'Thank You' song, children are offered a selection of fruit (fresh and dried) which they are strongly encouraged to eat before being offered crackers. We have seen a marked rise in children eating a variety of fruit since holding back the crackers!

The Happy Helper system continues to work well and gives children responsibility. The Happy Helper enjoys tapping heads for children to line up at the door after story time, choosing who is number one in our counting time and helping to choose who will place the correct picture on the coloured cupboards. They also take responsibility for handing out the plates and cups at snack time.

After snack the children continue with free play with the older ones doing a staff led activity. This involves practising to write their name and learning about the letter/sound/rhyme of the week. These older children have been put into two groups, butterflies or bees and they are called on alternate days.

During the summer term this year, we have provided an English or Mathematics activity for the most able children and we have really seen them flourish when encouraged to think of their own ideas and have a go at making up their own problems.

All children are encouraged to participate in Tidy Up Time, although this part of the session has proved to be the most challenging this year. We introduced the 'Heigh Ho' song to remind children that they need to be busy tidying up the toys. We have given lots of praise and stickers/stamps to children who are good role models at this time.

Once all the toys are away, the children sit in small groups with their key worker for Show and Tell time. The children are encouraged to take turns to listen to each other and to ask relevant questions. Finally, we have music time as a whole group in which we explore dynamics, tempo and timbre, as well as singing action songs. Sometimes we dance with ribbons, scarves and finger puppets to different genres of music. We finish the session by joining hands for our goodbye song before the children are collected.

'Fun in the Forest' sessions have been very much enjoyed this year. All children leaving to go to school in September have been given two opportunities to participate in a five week programme held at Chaucer Woods. The children have benefited from seeing the woods in different seasons, as well as talking about things they see on their walk to and from the woods.

We also participated in World Book Day when the children enjoyed dressing up as a book character and sharing a book that their character appeared in. They were all given a World Book Token to take home.

Our assemblies took place at Harvest and Christmas and at the end of the summer term for leavers going to school. Throughout the year we have appreciated members of the church coming in to read a story or to sew with the children.

During our topic of Babies, the children were delighted to see a baby being bathed and fed. We were pleased to welcome several people to the Ark during our 'People who help us' topic, including the local police. Our trip to Camberley Fire Stations was a big success and we were also very privileged to visit Crowthorne Fire Station and enjoyed an incredibly well organised, hands on experience, by two of our paramedic parents. Some children came away wanting to be paramedics when they grow up!

We planned Sports Day slightly earlier this year, so as not to cram everything in to the last couple of weeks. This year we decided to do a sponsored mini marathon around the field after the event and we are very grateful for your donations to the Ark. Finally, our trip to Sandhurst Park was an enjoyable event, helped by the great weather.

We would personally like to thank all the parents for their involvement and continued support. We continue to receive so much positive feedback for which we are very grateful. We also like to hear of things in which you think we could improve. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with parents/carers and to involve them as much as possible in their child's learning and development.

Heather Sinclair, Manager