



The Ark Pre-School Manager's Report 2022/23

Once again, another year has flown past. We have been privileged to nurture such a lovely group of children and will greatly miss those leaving for school and to other settings.

We are now very established within the hall at Crowthorne Baptist Church. Our routine has stayed the same as the previous year, as it works well and the children like the familiarity of what is happening next. Despite our numbers being lower this year, there has been a lot of energy and noise to make the room seem full! The staff have continued to be kept busy and we have been extremely grateful of our volunteer helpers.

Fun in the Forest has continued for two mornings each week, now running only on Mondays and Thursdays, having alternated the days at Wellington in previous terms. We hope that parents will choose a mixture of indoor/outdoor sessions to allow their children to develop skills and confidence in different things. As well as our usual Forest activities, we introduced real tools to the older children. Under close supervision they have learnt to use handsaws, peelers, files, knives, hammers and drills. The children have also had lots of fun engaging in various activities with a long piece of rope. They have worked together to problem solve and be imaginative.

Once the Autumn term was well underway and our new children were settled, our seasonal activities commenced. Our Harvest assembly took on a different format this year as we wanted to encourage more families to be involved. We were delighted to be able to take part in the church's Harvest service and do our own little performance to the congregation. It was lovely to see several Ark families attend this service and to integrate with the church. After a couple of years of not being able to visit other indoor venues, we were delighted to be invited back to St Brendan's Care Home in the Autumn. The children enjoyed singing to the residents as well as sharing stories, doing a simple craft activity and playing parachute games. We have since returned every term and will continue visiting on a termly basis. Christmas is always a busy time at The Ark, but also lots of fun. Our annual nativity went ahead in the church and was enjoyed by all. We are very grateful to the parents for the fantastic costumes they provided. The Christmas party went remarkably well and we were thankful to have such a great Father Christmas!

At the start of the spring term and towards the end of the summer term, we held our key worker consultations. The new EYFS has meant that tracking children's progress is much simpler and easier to complete and enables us to spend more time playing with the children rather than gathering information.

We also had lots of fun activities in the Spring term. The children enjoyed dressing up as a book character for World Book Day and shared their related stories during story time; our visit to the Fire Station gave opportunities for children to learn from first hand experiences, such as sitting in the fire engine, trying on uniform and having a turn with a hose. The firefighters did a great job of entertaining and educating the children.

The summer term has flown by with so much to fit in. We celebrated the King's Coronation. All the children made a crown from recyclable materials and were encouraged to wear it to the party in the park. We also reintroduced 'Stay and Play Week' after a necessary break of a few years, for obvious reasons. The children enjoyed having their parents/carers come into the setting and play with them. Later in the term we had our annual trip to South Hill Park, followed by our sports day at the Morgan

Rec. These are always enjoyable events and provide an opportunity for families to come together. We were also invited to the grand opening of the new running track at the Morgan Rec, where the children enjoyed feeding and stroking various farm animals, watching the ribbon being cut, running around the track with lots of other children in the community and eating some delicious fruits.

Our caterpillars were a big hit again this year. The children enjoyed watching them grow and change into butterflies. We read various stories about caterpillars and butterflies, singing related songs and we were able to talk about various life cycles.

Casper the cat and Rusty the dog have continued to be very loved and the children are all very keen to take them home. At circle time, the children enjoy telling everyone what they have been up to with the pet they looked after. I am sure the parents are as excited as the children when they come out holding a pet carrier!!!!

We are very grateful to Kevin, the church minister for being an active part of the Ark and also for the church members who have regularly helped us walk the children back to The Ark from Wellington College. It is wonderful to see the church building relationships with The Ark, holding several events which all Ark families are invited to. There are many ladies in the church who have kindly knitted some dolls clothes for our dolls, which are hugely appreciated. I also wish to extend my thanks to Avril (founder of The Ark) for coordinating the walking rota at Wellington and for coming in regularly to help the children make their pencil cases.

As always, we have many thanks to extend for support given over the last academic year. We would like to thank all the parents for their involvement and continued support, especially to those who have given up their time to help us walk children to and from various places. A special thank you also goes to Liz and Sze, volunteers who come in once a week to play with the children and help staff, as well as Sue who, despite being recently retired, has come in to sew pencil cases. A big shout out to Bill, the caretaker, who ensures that the building is opened and kept clean and tidy for us to use. Finally, a big thank you to Anna's brother Tim, for saving us lots of money by expertly making some wooden equipment for physical play, Maths and Forest learning.

We continue to receive so much positive feedback for which we are very grateful. Word of mouth has always been our top selling point! We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with parents and carers and to involve them as much as possible in their child's learning and development.

Heather Sinclair
Manager
11/07/2023