



## **The Ark Pre-School Manager's Report 2021/22**

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 have now had a year back at the church and have had to plan a different way of working. I am very thankful to my great team of staff who have been so patient and adaptable. We really appreciate having toilets and a kitchen within the hall as well as access to meeting rooms if we need to use them. It did not take us long to find a routine that worked for us and also to get used to the full set up and pack away procedures. We quickly discovered a way in which to set up the hall to include the different areas of learning and we quickly identified the different strengths amongst the staff, which have been put to good use! Although we miss our playground, we are delighted that Wellington are allowing us to use their grounds so that the children can reap the benefits of being outside as well as in the setting. We believe that this has been very successful, so we will continue to use Wellington College 2 mornings a week, alternating the days termly.

The children who remained with us from the previous academic year, settled really well into the new building. Since being back in the church setting, we have still had some Covid restrictions/ recommendations to adhere to. This has meant that we have not had trial days for new starters or had parents into the setting. On reflection, we have found that new starters do not actually need a trial session but are better starting at the beginning of a term/half term. We welcome parents to stay a while until the child has settled. We are aware that parents miss coming into the setting and seeing the toys on offer as well as noting who with/how their child plays. We want to reintroduce an open-door policy, where parents are welcome to come in with their child for the first 15 minutes of a session if they wish to. Staff will advise if they feel that a child will be more unsettled with this approach.

We have been delighted to start to return to normality by inviting parents and carers to join for our Harvest service and Nativity Play in the church. I know from the comments we received that the parents really appreciated this. We will also end the term with parents invited to the Leaver's Assembly as we celebrate those children who will leave us for school. We reintroduced our take home toys this academic year. As the children are so desperate to have a turn, we decided to have 2 pets in rotation so that the children would have more opportunities to take a pet home. Casper the cat and Rusty the dog have been 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.

Our Christmas party was very successful. The children enjoyed making a variety of crafts, dancing, playing party games and eating Christmas treats. Father Christmas made another excellent impression on everyone and will be invited back again!

In the spring term, we celebrated World Book Day. The children enjoyed dressing up as a book character and sharing their favourite stories in Key Worker groups.

The children have been out and about in the community this year, visiting the newly refurbished fire station in Crowthorne. Stacey and Jo did a great job at showing the children all the equipment and explaining how things work. The children were very well behaved and learnt so much. They particularly enjoyed having a turn with the hose. We also had our annual trip to Sandhurst Park, followed by our sports day at the Morgan Rec. it was so lovely to be able to include parents and carers once again.

We have really missed our visits to St. Brendan's again this year, knowing that the children were such a blessing to the older people there. We hope to return in the autumn when we will sing songs and share stories and crafts with the residents.

Other highlights were the caterpillars, which 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 and sang related songs. We were able to talk about various life cycles. The butterflies had the perfect environment to be freed into as we let them go in the wild flower area next to the theatre at Wellington. It was good to celebrate the Queens Platinum jubilee by making bunting and crowns with the children.

Our recent Ofsted inspection took place on 25<sup>th</sup> May. Our inspector was lovely and made us feel very relaxed, despite grilling us with some gruelling questions! No doubt, you can see from the report, that we were overjoyed with the results.

We are very grateful to 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. We are very encouraged that the church want to build relationships with The Ark and hold several events which all Ark families are invited to. I know that the children enjoyed the recent production of Noahs Ark, presented by a few church members. 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.

We would personally like to thank all the parents for their involvement and continued support. A special thank you also goes to Liz, a volunteer who comes in every Wednesday to play with the children and help staff. A big shout out to Bill, the caretaker, who ensures that the building is opened and kept clean and tidy for us to use.

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  
11/07/2022