

The Ark Pre-school



Prospectus

The Ark Pre-School

Welcome to The Ark Pre-School. This document outlines our aims and objectives as well as some of the practical details of what we offer.

The Ark Pre-School, Crowthorne, opened in September 1998 and is based in the Hub at the front of Crowthorne Baptist Church. We are a small setting with a maximum of 24 children on any day, which often assists the rapid settling of our children when they join.

The vision at The Ark is to be a welcoming, caring, happy group where all children can learn and develop within a Christian environment.

AIMS

At The Ark we aim to:

- Enhance the development and education of children aged between two and five in a parent-involving group.
- Build confidence in the children by learning through play.
- Develop social skills, encourage spiritual awareness, meet emotional needs, develop intellectual abilities and increase physical co-ordination.
- Provide a warm, loving, caring and happy group within a Christian environment.
- Build relationships not only with the children but also with their families so that we can share with them our understanding and experience of God in our lives.

WE OFFER YOUR CHILD:

Continuity of tailored pre-school learning from the age of two years to five years, with the opportunity to develop their potential at their own pace within a planned curriculum.

Qualified and experienced staff members, who are able to give individual care and attention, made possible by a high ratio of adults to children.

Opportunities to socialise in a friendly environment. The Pre-School is open for you and your family to be directly involved in the activities of the group and in your own child's progress.

LOCATION

The Ark is located in the Hub at the front of Crowthorne Baptist Church, which is situated in the High Street.

POLICIES

Policy statements are included in this Prospectus. Copies of all policy documents are available to read on our website, or in the Pre-School.

All our policies are designed to offer the best possible experience for the children and families in the group. Our policies are reviewed on a regular basis and comments and suggestions from parents are always welcome.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The Ark Pre-School treats all children with equal concern and will ensure that no child is disadvantaged as a result of their race, religion, language, gender or ability.

SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

We aim to provide for each child's individual learning requirements, including those who need additional support or have particular needs or disabilities. We work closely with local Health Visitors and Social Services and, after consultation between staff, parents and professional bodies, would hope, where possible, to be able to provide for children with Special Educational Needs. A full statement of our Special Needs Policy and Practice is available on request.

SESSIONS

The Ark meets every weekday morning from 9.15am to 12.15pm during term-time. The maximum number of children per session is 24, and we offer places to children between the ages of 2 years and 5 years of age. There is a staffing ratio of 1:8 maximum for children aged 3 and over and 1:4 maximum for under 3's.

We strongly recommend that your child initially attends at least two sessions per week, to help them settle into the setting and routine, and can later be increased. However, in exceptional circumstances we will consider offering a place for one session a week, with the aim to increase this within a half-term, or within a term at the most.

Our term times and holidays are usually the same as Crowthorne schools. Our website and newsletter provides the term dates on a regular basis.

Children cannot be left at the Pre-School before 9.15 am and parents are required to see their child safely into the care of a member of staff.

Children must be collected promptly at 12.15, as they can become distressed when parents/carers are late. Parents/carers tell a member of staff if their child is to be collected by another person. In the event of a long-term arrangement, parents are requested to write to the Manager. In the case of a Court Order preventing access to the child by a particular person, the Manager must be informed in writing as soon as possible.

We also offer lunch clubs, which run after the session on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. These run from 12.15-1.15pm. The days that lunch clubs are offered can vary, depending on demand, so please do ask our administrator for the current lunch clubs availability. Parents supply the packed lunch for their child and the children will enjoy the social event of eating lunch together. When lunch has finished there will be more activities for the children to enjoy.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Children can start at The Ark from the age of 2 years. You can register your child by completing a Place Application form, available from our website or on request from our Administrator.

A child may be registered on the waiting list at any time, with priority allocated to the oldest child first. Where a brother or sister is already a member of the Pre-School, a child is given priority on the list in order to try and avoid the practical difficulties for parents of attendance at two groups. We do, where practically possible, try to make provision within The Ark for children moving into the Crowthorne area.

We confirm places no earlier than a half-term in advance, depending on available spaces at that time in The Ark.

A half-term's notice in writing is required if a child leaves The Ark other than for entering Primary School. If this notice is not given, we reserve the right to charge for the following half-term, unless we can re-fill the place. Please advise us in advance if you intend to place your child at The Ark for a short period, i.e. whilst you are on a waiting list for another pre-school.

EARLY EDUCATION FUNDING

All children are universally entitled to 15 hours funded Early Years Education from the term after they turn 3. Some 2 years olds are also eligible for this funding. From September 2017, some parents of 3 and 4-year olds may be eligible for 30 hours' funded childcare. Eligibility for the additional 15 free hours is determined by HMRC through an online application at: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. If successful you are given a code, which must be passed to the pre-school to verify the eligibility.

Whilst The Ark Pre-school is not currently open for 30 hours, you are able to share the hours between more than one provider.

Prior to the term following a child's 3rd birthday, a charge per session is made; this is £17 per session for 2 year olds, and £5.00 for a lunch club. Children accessing 15 hours funding can pay for extra hours at £15 per session.

From September 2022 session prices will be:

2 year old session - £18

3 and 4 year old session - £16

Lunch clubs - £5.50

From September 2023 session prices will be:

2 year old session - £19

3 and 4 year old session - £17

Lunch clubs - £6

STARTING AT THE ARK

A child who is unhappy will not be able to play or learn properly, so it is important for parents and staff to work together to help the child feel confident and secure in the group; this takes longer for some children than for others. Parents should not feel worried if their child takes a while to settle. If your child has special needs the staff will discuss with you a strategy to integrate your child as easily as possible.

KEY WORKERS

Our key worker system gives each member of staff responsibility for just a few children. Each child in the group has one special adult to whom they can relate, which can make settling into the group very much easier. In addition, the key worker will tailor the group's curriculum to the unique needs of each child. The key worker maintains links with the child's home setting, working with parents through shared record-keeping to ensure that all children are supported in reaching their full potential.

We use Tapestry to maintain a secure online record of your child's 'Learning Journey', including observations and photos. You can like staff comments and comment on our observations, or even post your own observations. This tool allows us to track your child's progress, and plan for their ongoing development. Should you have any queries about this, please speak to the Manager.

You will be invited to meet with your child's key worker twice a year, although you are welcome, of course, to discuss progress at any other time.

REFRESHMENTS

We offer a drink of milk or water each morning. If your child does not drink cow's milk please let the Manager know.

All children should bring their own healthy snack each day, in a named container. This should be a piece of fruit (cut up), with perhaps a couple of crackers or breadsticks – no crisps or biscuits please.

CURRICULUM

The Ark aims to provide a positive learning environment for all its children as we follow the guidelines set by the government in the 'Early Years Foundation Stage' document. Each staff member is involved in planning the sessions and we seek to encourage development at the pace of the individual child. Our Keyworker system means that each child will be known especially well by one member of staff, who will be able to oversee their progress. We operate mixed two to four year old sessions.

Our staff plan each individual session with care, for which they have long term goals in mind. These are referred to as our Areas of Learning; there are 3 prime areas:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development

and 4 specific areas of learning through which the prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

PRIME AREAS OF LEARNING

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We aim to make what is often the first transition from the home environment a positive experience. We value each child as an individual, encourage individual work and play and acknowledge personal milestones and achievements. We also encourage group participation to help bring confidence in social settings. This is done through sharing, taking turns, listening to one another and encouraging group discussion at snack time.

We place a high priority on being supportive and caring as a backdrop for increased independence and confidence.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ark is able to offer a variety of indoor and outdoor activities for the children to improve the skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation and movement. Our activities include:

- climbing frame, see-saw, balls, hoops, tunnels, beanbags and parachute
- balance beams, bats and balls to assist co-ordination and aim of targets
- music, movement and dance
- encouragement to run, jump, hop and skip.

All of these activities are done in a controlled manner to help to develop balance and motor skills as well as getting children familiar with following simple instructions. During their time at The Ark, children will gain confidence in what they can do and feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Children are encouraged to communicate thoughts, ideas and feelings through conversations between both children and adults (one to one, and in small groups). They are expected to listen to instructions and explanations and to respond to them appropriately. They are also encouraged to listen to and appreciate one another, for example during letters and sounds time, and when sharing what they have been up to with the Ark pets (soft toys).

SPECIFIC AREAS OF LEARNING

LITERACY

Children share in reading, singing, rhyming and story-telling, and are encouraged to enjoy and learn from books. Our quiet reading corner is well-stocked with a wide variety of material.

Children will begin to distinguish between pictures and words, beginning from day one with their own name and increasing over time at an appropriate level. By the time they leave for school they will be familiar with letter sounds and rhyme, and will be able to use pictures and symbols to convey meaning. They are also given opportunities for mark-making and tracing to assist pencil control.

MATHEMATICS

We aim to develop mathematical understanding through a variety of activities including matching, ordering, counting (0-10 and beyond for those who are ready), sorting, building and pairing. Children are encouraged to use the language of mathematics by identifying shape, position, size, number, colour and volume. This is done through song, rhymes, games, story and water play.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

We aim to give all children opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that help them to make sense of the world.

Children are encouraged to talk about their family environment and to share events and everyday happenings in their lives.

They are given opportunities to explore nature and the world outside during our Fun in the Forest sessions at Wellington College, and at our annual outings to Sandhurst Park and South Hill Park, as well as our trips to local areas of interest (Fire Station, St Brendan's Care home, the library etc).

Children are given first-hand experiences and encouraged to learn skills through using a wide range of tools, encountering real life situations and working with a variety of materials. We have various resources to help them become familiar with technology as a learning tool, including a computer with educational games, and voice recorders.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

We aim to provide an environment, with sufficient time and resources, to encourage children to explore and express their ideas. Children are encouraged to be creative with paint, glue, paper, pens, junk and play dough. We encourage the use of a wide range of materials and textures for modelling and craft work.

Children have the opportunity to take part in basic drama, use role-play and improvise with the aid of music. We also have resources such as ribbons and scarves to enable creative movement to music.

Imaginative play is vital to this area of development and our home corner is used in many different guises to provide a new imaginative background each week; from builder's yard to hospital we encourage the children to extend their imaginative play by entering a different environment.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

At The Ark we also consider the spiritual development of children to be important. We are a Christian group affiliated to the Baptist Church and are able to make use of the Church building to hold or take part in special services (eg. at Christmas and Harvest), and to which parents are invited.

We seek to share with the children our love for God and an appreciation of the world He has created in all its diversity. As part of this, children also learn about the major festivals and celebrations of other cultures as well as our own.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Ark is run by a Management Committee, made up of Church members, and parent representatives (see notice board for current Committee members). The Committee is responsible for reviewing both policy and practice, and for the employment and appraisal of members of staff. We have an Annual General Meeting held during the summer term to which all parents and church members are invited.

The Committee anticipates the goodwill of parents in order to fulfill all the tasks in a happy and relaxed atmosphere. It will be ready to accept and consider ideas, constructive criticism or offers of a special talent of which the Pre-School could make use.

Should you have any concerns or comments about the Pre-School, please speak to any staff or Committee member.

We also have an administrator who is available to answer any general enquiries. The contact number is 07827 892397 and will be able to be used for contact outside of morning sessions.

STAFF AND STAFF TRAINING

Our Manager is a fully trained teacher, and all our staff are qualified at least to NVQ Level 3, or equivalent, in Early Years Childcare. We also encourage and support ongoing training and professional development. We benefit from a stable team of staff, most of whom have been at The Ark for many years.

As a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, we ensure that we are constantly in touch with new thinking in the field of childcare and education.

The Ark Pre-School is registered with OFSTED and Berkshire Social Services and is subject to the appropriate inspections. Our OFSTED and Social Services Reports are always available on request.

RECORDS

The Ark will maintain records of the following, and these records will be available for verification if needed:

- Full name and address of both parents/guardians
- Contact telephone number of parents/childminders, including place of work if appropriate
- Child's date of birth
- Health information on the child, including immunisation and allergies
- Contact details of the family GP in case of an emergency.
(Parents will be required to give written consent for the Pre-School staff to carry out First Aid or seek medical attention in emergencies)

An Attendance Register will be taken at the beginning of each session.

PARENTS' PARTICIPATION

The Ark hugely benefits from the parental support it receives. Any parents/carers (or grandparents) are welcome to come in and help for any of our morning sessions. We also have a stay and play week each term, which allows parents/ carers to come in for a session and see their child at play. This helps us to get to know our children and their families better, and parents/ carers benefit from seeing their child in the setting.

We are particularly interested in help from parents, grandparents or carers with a skill they could share with us, such as carpentry, cooking, sewing or craft work. If this appeals to you please see a member of staff. We regularly visit places within the locality, such as local primary schools and a nearby old people's home. This simply needs additional adults to assist in walking the children there and back.

Please do not be put off if you feel you are not the "practical" type; playing and talking to the children is tremendously important and much appreciated.

We have three celebrations a year: Harvest, Christmas, and our Leavers' Assembly. These allow the children to present what they have been learning about and there is often a short all-age talk from our church Minister during these assemblies. All friends and family are invited to these, which are usually held in the Baptist Church.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please pass them to your Parent Representative or a member of staff.

BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Good behaviour: this will be positively encouraged. We give “smiley face” stamps each session to children who have demonstrated good behaviour (eg. sharing, tidying, listening) and to children whose behaviour has improved in a particular area.

Worrying behaviour: any behaviour that is out of character for the child concerned will be noted and discussed with the parent/carer at the end of the session. A written report will be made of continued worrying behaviour and discussed with the Manager and Chairperson. Parents will be fully involved in discussions.

Disruptive behaviour: a member of staff will talk 1:1 with the child and remain with them until the child is calm and can be reintroduced into the group. We will observe the child at play and we will try to ascertain the reason behind the behaviour.

We will always acknowledge a child's feelings, however unreasonable or impossible they may seem to us. We will always reassure and never ridicule a child. Discussion will take place with the parent at the end of the session.

Exclusion will never be used as a means of discipline unless all other methods have failed. The Management Committee reserves the right, as a last resort, to ask for a child to be removed from the group.

This behaviour policy applies to all children at The Ark and if parents/carer are staying with their child we would ask them to respect the authority of the Pre-School staff in this area.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Ark follows the procedures laid down by the Local Authority Child Protection Committee. It also adheres to Crowthorne Baptist Church's own Safeguarding Policy, as well as safeguarding guidelines and procedures from Bracknell Forest Borough Council. Further details of these policies are available from the Pre-School on request.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

The Ark follows procedures laid down by the Local Authority, details of which are available from the Pre-School on request. The Manager will report any dangers or cause for concern to a member of the Management Committee as soon as possible.

Risk assessments are carried out regularly.

All equipment and practices will be reviewed and revised at regular intervals.

Any accidents, however minor, will be entered in the Accident/Incident Book and reported, for counter signature, to the parent/carer who collects the child. An up-to-date First Aid box will be provided at all sessions. At all sessions we have at least one member of staff who is a fully trained First Aider. If a child has an accident at home a Home Accident form must be completed and brought into the Pre-school the next time they attend.

Regular fire drills are carried out with the children and fire-fighting apparatus is checked annually.

We would ask you not to bring your child to Pre-School with an infectious disease, and to check on the length of time he/she should be kept away. Please keep your child at home if he/she is unwell, as tummy upsets can spread very easily among young children. Please note that we are unable to administer medicine to your child unless in exceptional circumstances. Shortly before your child starts you will be asked to complete a Registration Form.

If necessary, we will also ask you to complete an Individual Health Record. Please ensure that this information is kept up-to-date. We cannot be held responsible if we have not been informed of any relevant condition.

Children are not allowed in the kitchen area. Parents/carers are asked to observe safety rules when entering or leaving the premises to bring or collect children.

The Ark Pre-School has a comprehensive insurance cover and details are available to parents on request.

BROADMOOR ESCAPE

In the event of the Broadmoor alert being raised all children will be kept in the Hub hall until collected by parents. This can be at the end of the session or sooner if you prefer.

If we are on Wellington College's site we will go to a secure location to wait and will contact parents. If we are already on our way back to The Ark we will continue to the church building.

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