



The Ark Pre-School Chair's Report 2023/24

We are grateful for another stable year at The Ark where life has continued to be settled and successful weekly and daily routines have been embedded. The convenience of our central High Street location, paired with the modern facilities offered at Crowthorne Baptist Church, are paired with our Outdoor Learning sessions at Wellington College to create a rounded offering to our children.

The legislation changes came into force, offering funded places to eligible 2-year-olds. This is positive to support families with burdening childcare costs but does create challenge for us as a small setting as we are able to ensure all children feel settled and comfortable at The Ark. We also have to consider how to meet the individual needs of children across a large developmental age range. Our staff have done an excellent job in ensuring all of this happens, led with extreme skill and care by Heather, but we do constantly review all practices and routines.

The partnership with Crowthorne Baptist Church has been strengthened this year: Kevin, the pastor, visits the children regularly and enjoys chatting to parents as well. We would struggle to operate our Forest sessions without the kindness of volunteers meeting us at Wellington to assist in walking the children back to the setting. Finally, The Ark received such a warm welcome at the Harvest service where the children confidently shared their knowledge about all the produce we are fortunate to enjoy and the importance of the seasonal weather (which maybe we are not always grateful for).

Once again, we must thank all of our parents for their support throughout the last academic year. I am particularly grateful for our two parent representatives who take all of your feedback and enable us to hear your voices and to communicate with you all about what is going on in the setting. This link between committee and parents is invaluable and I am very grateful for the time they give.

We are so grateful for the time given up by all members of our management committee. We have had two fantastic parent representatives to engage with parents and carers and share that feedback so we can meet parental needs and seek to improve the setting. Laura and Roula have done this with enthusiasm and share our passion for this fantastic setting and have helped us hugely over the last year. After three years, Laura is stepping down as her children will have both left The Ark and we thank her for all her time and support over those years. Roula has been so generous with both her time, organising our carnival involvement, and providing crafting activities for the children. We are delighted that she is willing to stay on the committee. The time given by other members is appreciated but Justine gives a huge amount of time to ensure our budget is in order, our staff are paid and we meet any changing legislation and we must thank her.

Finally, and most importantly, we continue to be blessed by our committed and passionate staff team. We have been through a few changes this year: Poppy, our new administrator, took some time off for maternity leave but her predecessor kindly stepped back into the role to cover her time off. We are so grateful to Naomi for seamlessly keeping everything running smoothly and it has been lovely to have her back with us. We expect Poppy to return in September. We have been encouraged to see numbers grow through the year and this meant our staff team expanded. We called on Clare, a teacher who has supported us for many years now and our volunteer, Sze, who is a Nursery Teacher from Hong Kong has joined as a staff member. Sze will remain as a permanent

staff member from September, increasing her sessions to four mornings. Anne and Anna continue to be a huge asset to The Ark with many additional hours done by them that none of us will know about. A huge thanks to Heather for her leadership of the setting, for which we are known and recommended to others.

Finally, I need to take a moment to thank Sumita who is sadly (for us) retiring to spend time with family and garden after her very long service of 25 years. Sumita, you have shared your love, care, faith and teaching skills with so very many children and families over the years and will leave a huge hole in The Ark which we will plug but it will never be the same mould as you. We also hope that the staff have learnt enough Hindi to continue counting for snack time.

I wish everyone a wonderful summer and look forward to meeting new families when the Autumn term comes around again.

Sarah Webb
Committee Chair
04/07/2024