



The Ark Pre-School Manager's Report 2025/26

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

The sessions in the church continue to take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. We have kept our routine the same and the children quickly learn the transition songs and what is expected of them. We have found it much easier with the new children starting half termly and a few parents have taken us up on our offer of a “stay and play” morning, before their child starts. Our termly programmed “stay and play” sessions have remained popular and we were pleased to give parents/carers the opportunity to see what goes on during our Forest sessions as well as in the hall. Once again our numbers have remained high throughout the year, keeping us busy and challenged.

Fun in the Forest has continued for two mornings each week, on a Monday and a Thursday. These days are limited to 20 children per session, rather than the maximum of 24 on other days. We continue to split into two groups, according to age/ability. The children engage in activities appropriate to their stage of development and they take the lead in their learning. These sessions provide great opportunities for the children to talk more openly and freely and to take risks/learn new skills. The older children have enjoyed learning how to use various tools safely, including hammers, drills, files, saws, peelers and knives. They have learnt to problem solve and work as a team. All children have observed the change in seasons and looked closely at nature. They love looking for bugs by rolling logs. There have also been great opportunities to develop physical skills, such as climbing over fences, balancing along logs and jumping off tree stumps.

Highlights in Autumn term were Harvest and Christmas. Our Harvest assembly took place in Crowthorne Baptist church on the Sunday of the church's Harvest festival. 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 so many Ark families attend this service and to integrate with the church. 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 was a little more challenging this year, with the cohort of children we had, but they were all pleased to take home a goodie bag of things they had made, play party games and eat party food. We were thankful to have such a great Father Christmas as well as a great storyteller/singer to entertain the children. (Thank you Tim and Avril). It was also lovely to have Sue and Sumita (retired staff members) helping out on the day too.

In March, we celebrated World Book Day. As last year, we gave the children the option of choosing any day in that week to celebrate this occasion. The children enjoyed dressing up as a book character and sharing their related stories during story time. We were also pleased to visit the library during that week and to be entertained with stories and share books together. Also, in Spring Term, we were pleased to be able to visit the Fire Station. The retired firefighters did a great job of entertaining and educating the children. There were plenty of opportunities for them to learn from First hand experience, including sitting in the fire engine, trying on uniform, and having a turn with the hose. In April, two volunteers (one being a retired Primary school headteacher) came to The Ark to do a Christian storytelling session with the older children. They told the story of Creation, using handmade props. The children listened attentively and asked/answered appropriate questions. We were kindly given a set of the props and the children have enjoyed retelling the story.

During the summer term, along with another staff member, I took groups of the older children to the Morgan Rec for part of the session. This happened on a Tuesday and Friday when the weather was good.

We recognised that some children learn/behave better in the outside environment and appreciate the space to run off some energy. This also meant that the younger children had more space and time to appreciate the resources on offer. In June we had our summer trip to Sandhurst Park, followed by our sports day and picnic at the Morgan Rec. These are always enjoyable events and provide an opportunity for families to come together. Still to come is our annual Leavers assembly, lead by the children leaving for school. Also, in the summer term, we welcomed Year 10 students from local schools to carry out a week of work experience. It was great to have an extra pair of hands and the energy that the younger generation bring!

This academic year, we have visited St.Brendan's once a term to entertain the residents there. The children enjoyed singing to the residents as well as sharing stories, doing a simple craft activity and playing parachute games. It has been lovely observing how the different generations interact and seeing the pleasure that young children bring to the residents.

Once again, our caterpillars were a big hit; 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. 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!!!! A new initiative for us this year has been the introduction of story sacks. Poppy very kindly made up five different sacks for us, to include a popular storybook and props that link to the story. The children have all been excited to take these home and they have been received well.

At the start of the spring term and towards the end of the summer term, we held our key worker consultations. Parents were invited into the setting to talk to their child's key worker about their progress and to discuss Next Steps. Parents have been able to provide feedback through our yearly parent questionnaire and the parent Whatsapp group.

We are very grateful to 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 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 are also extremely grateful to Anne and Joe, who have been working with some of our SEN children.

We would personally 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, who volunteers every Wednesday to play with the children and help staff and to Annette, who has regularly volunteered her time on a Monday morning to help the younger children during our forest sessions. Also, to Sue and Sumita, who have 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.

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
26/06/2026