

Inspection of The Exwick Ark

The Old School, Exwick Road, EXETER EX4 2AT

Inspection date: 31 October 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children enjoy attending this welcoming nursery. They are greeted warmly by friendly and approachable staff. Children happily wave goodbye to their parents and carers and hang up their belongings. Staff take their hand and lead them to their designated room, where children settle quickly into an activity of their choosing.

The provider and staff have made significant improvements since the last inspection. They tailor their curriculum specifically to meet children's individual needs, with a particular focus on communication and language. Babies relish in listening to familiar nursery rhymes. Younger babies rock their body in time with the tune and sustain staff's eye contact as they sing. Older babies show excitement in participating, using puppets to act out parts of the song. They all sustain attention for long periods and begin to learn new single words. Staff help toddlers to join words together. For example, staff encourage sign language and provide context to children's play, such as supporting children to ask for help through words and actions when they need it. Pre-school-aged children extend their sentences well, such as during story times. They listen attentively and confidently describe the characters in the book.

All children have a positive attitude to learning and build warm relationships with staff and peers. They enjoy being part of the 'nursery family'.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Toddlers enjoy small-group times with staff. They confidently use musical instruments and join in with number songs. Children jump up and down in excitement pretending to be 'monkeys jumping on the bed'. They know how to count backwards from five to zero. Staff use their fingers to represent numerals to help further develop children's mathematical skills.
- Partnerships with parents are effective. Parents speak highly of the care and education their children receive. They comment on the progression of children's communication and social skills. Parents compliment the staff on liaising effectively with other professionals to help close gaps in children's development.
- Staff provide high-quality interactions with children throughout the day. They provide a narrative to children's play and adapt their conversations according to the needs of each child. Occasionally, some staff speak too quickly and, at times, do not enable children to answer their questions to aid their thinking skills and promote their confidence further. Some children look despondent when staff answer for them.
- Children benefit from the ample outside space as well as the nearby forest school. They spend long periods in the fresh air and with nature. Staff rake up

leaves, and at the children's request, scoop the leaves up and let them go above the children's heads. The children squeal with delight as the leaves fall on their heads and into their open arms. Older children learn how to cut wood using real tools to support their hand-eye coordination. Others talk about how exercise is important for the body and demonstrate some of the movements they complete during 'get up & go' sessions. Children know they must drink lots of water to stay hydrated and talk about the meditation sessions that make them feel calm.

- Staff introduce children to group games to help develop their listening and attention skills. For instance, staff encourage toddlers to play 'What's in the bag?' Toddlers take out an animal and children say the animal's name and the sound it makes. For pre-school-aged children, staff hide autumn items under a blanket and encourage children to guess which item is missing. Children work together as a team, developing their social skills to identify the missing item. They take turns in hiding items for their friends to guess.
- The provider ensures staff well-being and observes them during interactions with children to monitor the quality of teaching. Staff feel well supported in their work and morale is high. They comment on how the provider makes positive suggestions for their practice to benefit children. For example, staff adapt their activities more precisely to meet the ages and stages of children to ensure they succeed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- provide children with sufficient time to think about the answers to staff questions to aid their thinking skills and promote their confidence.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY466130
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10336869
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	96
Name of registered person	The Exwick Ark Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP903483
Telephone number	01392 425551
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2024

Information about this early years setting

The Exwick Ark registered in 2013. It is open Monday to Friday, from 7.45am to 5.45pm, all year round. The nursery offers government funded places for childcare and receives specific funding for disadvantaged children. There are currently 19 members of staff. Of these, three hold qualified teacher status, two hold early years professional status, 11 hold a level 3 childcare qualification and one holds a level 2 qualification. Two members of staff are training toward a childcare qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Joanne Steward

Inspection activities

- The provider and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The provider spoke to the inspector about children's learning and development, with a particular focus on communication and language.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the nursery.
- The inspector spoke with the provider about the leadership and management of the nursery.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector and provider carried out a joint observation of a communication and language activity.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

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