

## Ark Childcare Ltd Day Care of Children

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Inspection completed on: 25 August 2017

**Service provided by:**  
Ark Childcare Ltd

**Service provider number:**  
SP2004937981

**Care service number:**  
CS2004068093

## About the service

Ark Childcare is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 90 children aged from birth to 14 years of whom no more than 75 children are aged 2 - 14 years and 15 children are under 2 years. The service was previously registered and was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

The service operates Monday to Friday from a spacious one level building situated in a rural area and with surrounding play areas that could be accessed directly from the building.

We check services are meeting the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (also known as GIRFEC), Scotland's national approach to improving outcomes and wellbeing for children by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work with the services that can help them. There are eight wellbeing indicators at the heart of GIRFEC; safe, healthy, achieving, active, respected, responsible, and included (also known as SHANARRI).

The aims and objectives of the service include:

- integrated care in a single location that is flexible enough to provide the care parents require to manage their busy lives
- a safe, clean and fully equipped centre that is suitable for children aged from 12 weeks to 14 years
- enthusiastic, friendly and caring staff whose continual development ensures a quality learning environment and we also ensure they are safe to practice
- the highest standard of early years learning through well developed planning, observing and recording of children's experiences
- a service that ensures that all of the children in our care are looked after to current child protection standards.

## What people told us

There was a total of 72 children present during the inspection although numbers fluctuated throughout the visit due to the nature of the service. We observed the children playing together and on their own in small groups, they all clearly enjoyed the freedom to be active outside. Specific comments from children included:

'I like coming, the food is really nice'  
'last week we had home made bread'  
'we go out mostly every day unless the weather is really bad'  
'the staff don't ask our views about the food or the activities'  
'I like being outside and doing gymnastics'  
'we only run outside'  
'I can put my own coat on and do it up'  
'look how high I can go'.

Fifteen parents returned completed Care Standards Questionnaires (CSQs). We spoke with seven parents face-to-face. They all told us that they liked the homely and open approach of the service, they found the staff friendly and caring and generally information sharing was good. Specific comments included:

'I am welcomed whatever time I arrive and sometimes I help to feed my child before leaving'  
'meals are very good and changed regularly, my child eats better at the service than they do at home'  
'Ark provide individual care for each child'

'all the staff are kind and warm, a caring environment'  
'definitely a home from home, staff could not be more caring'.

## Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self assessment in advance of the inspection. We looked at their own improvement plan and quality assurance processes. These demonstrated their priorities for development and how they were monitoring the quality of the provision within the service.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	3 - Adequate
Quality of environment	3 - Adequate
Quality of staffing	3 - Adequate
Quality of management and leadership	2 - Weak

## Quality of care and support

### Findings from the inspection

Children were being well cared for and the kind interactions of the staff helped to support their well-being. Parents told us that staff worked well with them, sharing information and listening to them, so partnership working was encouraged. Effective systems had been put in place to ensure that children's information and their personal plans were kept up to date for all children not yet at school. It had yet to be progressed for school age children. **(see Recommendation 1)**. We noted that a quick reference checklist in the folder for each of the rooms helped to promote consistency of care, promoting the national approach - Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).

Children moved freely around the rooms and made choices about their play. Group activities, such as together time, enabled them to socialise and learn together. However, play resources and materials were limited and restricted choice and exploration. At times children were bored and this did not support children learning about self control, sharing and understanding each other's emotions. Children needed to be better supported as individuals to progress their learning and to make informed choices matched to their own learning. This was particularly evident in the pre-school room (3-5 years) where activities tended to be adult led. There was also scope for improvement within other age groups. This was discussed in detail with the newly appointed manager and guidance for improvement was given. **(see Recommendation 2)**

Snacks and meals consisted of a range of healthy foods which took account of the nutritional guidance - 'Setting the table' which supported children's growth and development. They complied with children's dietary needs and food preference, as identified by parents. During snack and mealtimes we saw examples of some staff sitting with children, helping them to learn good social skills and behaviours associated with eating and drinking. However, this could be improved upon particularly for the babies/toddlers, with staff positioning themselves at eye level, so that they talked with them throughout the experience and responded on an individual level.

Children of all ages took part in outdoor play so that they had fresh air and their physical skills were being developed through movement and energetic play. For example, pre-school children climbed on the adventure

frame, younger children and babies enjoyed ride on toys and water play. The pre-school and school age children would benefit from more spontaneous, free flow (indoor - outdoor) play, promoting freedom of choice.

A child protection policy was in place and staff had an understanding of safeguarding procedures, as effective training had been undertaken. The knowledge the staff had of the children also enabled them to be alert to changes or any signs of stress. The newly appointed manager agreed that they would attend training so that they had the necessary knowledge to deal with child protection matters in a competent manner.

The format for the recording of medication and its administration had very recently been reviewed and amended, although not yet in use. However there were discrepancies in the information recorded on the previous format, although no emergency medication was needed by any of the children. **(see Recommendation 3)**

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 3

1. Management and staff to further develop the format of children's plans for the out of school service to support the health and wellbeing of the children. All elements of the plan should be dated and monitored to ensure that the content reflects children's needs with a review at least six monthly.

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing

2. To further help children to learn, develop skills, confidence and self-esteem the staff with the support of the management should:

- a) be flexible in offering choices and resources inside and outside, that capture children's interest with the individual in mind so children direct their play and remain motivated
- b) ensure children are better encouraged to express their ideas and feelings and own theories through conversations, decision making and taking responsibility.

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 4 - Engaging with children and Standard 5 - Quality of experience

3. To promote the wellbeing of the child through the correct exchange of information related to the management of medication, the manager should:

- a) ensure that an accurate record of the medication to be administered is held and contains written consent from parents
- b) ensure the dosage on the record of consent matches that of the original container
- c) ensure required medication is reviewed a minimum of 3 monthly
- d) affirm that all staff know and follow best practice guidance.

Further guidance can be found in the document 'Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services' (<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/>).

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and Wellbeing.

**Grade:** 3 - adequate

## Quality of environment

### Findings from the inspection

Children were being cared for in an environment that enabled them to feel welcome and comfortable. They were able to move around the play space, independently and safely. Infection control was being well managed. Children were learning about the importance of personal hygiene, how to keep healthy as they washed their hands after using the toilet and before having their snack and meals.

Staff ensured that children were treated appropriately should an accident occur as they had completed recent first aid training. Accidents and incidents were being appropriately recorded and information was shared with the parent/carer promoting the wellbeing of the child.

The premises provided ample space, however, it was not being used to its best advantage to promote children's wellbeing such as adequate quiet areas, space standards, a suitable safe sleep environment and equipment. The design of the pre-school rooms lacked a variety of good quality play resources and natural materials that were readily accessible to the children to enable them to make meaningful choices, through a flexible and adaptable environment. Rooms lacked character as there were no displays of the children's work. **(see Recommendation 1)**

The service had a great outdoor play area which surrounded the majority of the premises and included soft and hard services. We noted the recycled tyre rubber surface outside left children with black stains on their clothing and skin, there were some unproven concerns about the surface itself; an alternative would be conducive to children's welfare. Whilst we saw that the youngest and pre-school children enjoyed outdoor play, many areas lacked thought in terms of the provision. For example, a mud kitchen with pots and pans was situated in the space used in the main by the babies/toddlers. Replicating this resource and significantly increasing natural resources and materials in the outdoor play space, leading directly from the pre-school room would initiate exploratory play that could be readily used. After school children were keen to play outside after their snack, however, apart from the adventure climbing frame they only had equipment used by the babies/toddlers, constraining their play process. **(see Recommendation 2)**

Parents told us that they were happy that their child was out playing most days.

The service was generally clean and free from hazards; main exits were secured and there was an expectation that visitors signed in and out of the service. We found that cleaning practices and maintenance needed to be improved upon to help ensure that a safe environment was promoted. For example, some furnishings were worn and tired looking; this also included some of the play equipment and carpets had not been vacuumed. **(see Recommendation 3)**

### Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

### Number of recommendations: 3

1. Children should be able to enjoy an environment that has a wealth of interesting opportunities and encourages them to be imaginative, inventive and creative. This could be achieved through:

- a) play rooms that are well thought out and organised to promote independence and choice and display children's achievements
- b) a variety of age appropriate resources/play equipment, that include natural materials
- c) sleep equipment promotes safe practice, infection control and the overall wellbeing of the child
- d) re-evaluation of overall space and areas used, taking account of the space standards.

Further guidance can be found in the documents:

- Building the ambition - national guidance on early learning and childcare
- Scottish Cot Death Trust - early years safe sleeping for childminders or a nursery setting
- Space to Grow - design guidance for early learning and children and out of school settings

The above available at - [hub.careinspectorate.com](http://hub.careinspectorate.com)

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 5 - Quality of experience

2. With a view to further promotion of a risk benefit approach, challenging play and exploration, a more stimulating outdoor play area should be made available to the children through the inclusion of natural resources and scrap play materials.

Further guidance can be found in the documents:

- My world outdoors - sharing good practice in early years in how services can provide play and learning wholly or partially outdoors
- Loose parts play toolkit

The above available at - [hub.careinspectorate.com](http://hub.careinspectorate.com)

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 5 - Quality of experience

3. The provider should ensure that the premises are suitably cleaned and furniture and fittings are effectively maintained to support children's health and wellbeing.

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16: Standard 3 - Health and wellbeing and Standard 2 - Safe environment

**Grade:** 3 - adequate

## Quality of staffing

## Findings from the inspection

Staff were friendly and welcoming towards the children, creating an environment where children were comfortable and assured. The consistent staff team helped with the continuity of care of the children as they had got to know them and their families well. Staff worked well together and recognised the importance of supportive and positive relationships with the child and their family so that children's health and wellbeing were promoted.

The majority of staff were experienced in childcare and held a relevant qualification. Core training such as child protection and first aid had resulted in effective practice being implemented to help children stay safe. However, staff had been given limited opportunity to improve their own knowledge and skills of early years methodology. This would help to make a difference to children's experiences and for their own continuous professional development (CPD).

A lack of structured time for planning and reflection, peer discussion, individual supervision and performance appraisal, had resulted in staff being inward looking and less able to experiment and evaluate, with a view to raising the quality of the provision. **(see Recommendation 1)**

The lack of clear identification and record of staff training needs, both individually and collectively did not help with the support and monitoring of staff development. Staff would also benefit from leadership roles and specific responsibilities, perhaps linked to best practice guidance such as safe sleeping, medication, outdoor play and building the ambition. This would help staff to be more self aware, invoke interest in finding out more to benefit their own CPD, and learning could be shared with the wider staff team to enhance the care and experiences of children. **(see Recommendation 2)**

Parents told us that they found staff friendly and approachable and that they always had time to talk about their child's day.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 2

1. Staff need to be better supported by the management so that they are empowered to be creative and innovative, promoting a culture which values staff and enables them to improve their skills and knowledge, leading to improved outcomes for children. This should be achieved through:

- a) effective and planned individual supervision and appraisal
- b) organised and protected planning sessions
- c) staff meetings planned in advance with staff contributing to the agenda

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 12 - Confidence in staff

2. Children should be supported to achieve their potential by an effective management that promotes leadership roles and is committed to providing on-going development and training of the staff team. This could be achieved through:

- a) the development of a central training plan for staff, individuals and group that is effectively monitored
- b) an evaluation of training as to how it has improved outcomes for children
- c) assigned roles/responsibilities for staff linked to their knowledge/interests

Useful resource:

The Scottish Social Services Council – Step into Leadership

National Care Standards, Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16: Standard 12 – Confidence in staff and Standard 14 – Well managed service

**Grade:** 3 – adequate

## Quality of management and leadership

### Findings from the inspection

The business manager had instigated a full health and safety audit. This resulted in better procedures related to safety and an improved system for the location of children's personal plans so that pertinent information was readily accessible to staff. Policies and procedures had been reviewed and updated and they were well written and clear. Whilst we recognised the efforts of the business manager and the challenges raised, the service lacked a clear vision for evaluation and improvement with a view to better outcomes for children. The very recently appointed early years manager, whilst having experience as childcare practitioner, lacked experience and skills as a manager. Our discussion with them highlighted that they were clear about the challenges ahead and demonstrated a willingness to learn, as well as it being their intention to complete the necessary management qualification. This was a requirement made since the last inspection that remained in progress. **(see Requirement 1)**

The childcare manager advised us of their intention to initiate an appraisal for all staff with a view to discussing performance, learning and development needs and expectations of registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). It was essential that the manager was awarded sufficient time not only to establish their own skills and knowledge, but to carry out continuous meaningful observations and evaluations of all aspects of the service, leading to sustained improvement. **(see Requirement 2)**

Parents told us that they found the business manager and administrator helpful and responsive in relation to any queries or issues. They valued the friendly relationships of the staff and the openness of the service as they were welcomed in to the premises at any time. They particularly liked the on-line learning journals and being able to see photographs of their child and some liked being able to add a comment. A parent was particularly pleased that the information recorded by staff reflected their child as an individual.

Self evaluation of the service should be a key aspect of improvement and all staff within the setting should be involved. If the views of staff were given status and acknowledged this would lead to a better reflection and honest and open debate of what needs to improve, how to improve and increase ownership. The increased skills and knowledge of the early years manager should not only include staff in the improvement agenda, but engage with parents/carers, children and stakeholders in reviewing outcomes for children and their families. **(see Requirement 3)**

The early years manager was also advised to familiarise themselves with the notification reporting system, so that they informed the Care Inspectorate of specific circumstances, required information, within the designated timescale.

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 3

1. The provider must make proper provision for the health, safety and wellbeing of the children attending the service by ensuring the manager is suitably qualified and demonstrates that they have the necessary skills and knowledge.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Scottish Statutory Instrument 2011/210 Regulation 4(1)(a) - Welfare of users and Regulation 7(c) - Fitness of managers

Timescale: to be commenced within 3 months of this report

2. The provider must ensure that the early years manager is supernumerary to staff ratios, enabling them to have sufficient time to become competent and confident in their role and implement practice and support that enhances outcomes for children and leads to improvement.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Scottish Statutory Instrument 2011/210 Regulation 4(1)(a) - Welfare of users and Regulation 7(c) - Fitness of managers

Timescale: within 24 hours of receipt of this report

3. Effective and robust systems of self evaluation and improvement must be established for the purposes of reflection and analysis to make better provision for the children's wellbeing and learning.

This is in order to comply with:

The Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Scottish Statutory Instrument 2011/210 Regulation 4(1)(a) - Welfare of users

Timescale: to be commenced on receipt of this report

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 0

**Grade:** 2 - weak

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

## What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous recommendations

#### Recommendation 1

Management and staff should continue to develop the format of children's personal plans for children using the nursery and out of school service to support the health and wellbeing of the children. All elements of the plans should be dated and monitored to ensure that the content has been reviewed and updated at least every six months.

**This recommendation was made on 22 September 2016.**

#### Action taken on previous recommendation

Personal plans for the children in the nursery had been improved with the introduction of a new format. The personal plans for children using the out of school service remained in progress.

### Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

### Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
22 Sep 2016	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	4 - Good Not assessed 4 - Good Not assessed
23 Jan 2013	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 5 - Very good 5 - Very good 4 - Good
16 Nov 2010	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good Not assessed Not assessed Not assessed
3 Dec 2009	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	5 - Very good 5 - Very good 4 - Good 4 - Good
3 Oct 2008	Unannounced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and leadership	3 - Adequate 4 - Good 3 - Adequate 3 - Adequate

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