



Parent Handbook

2023 - 2024

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Key Information

Vision and Values

Ark Start is a network of not-for-profit nurseries managed by Ark, an education charity. Ark Start is about much more than childcare: we want to ensure that every child has a joyful time at nursery and leaves us ready to thrive at primary school.

Our core values are:

Value	Mascot	Description
Aim High		Aiming high means we make ambitious plans and enjoy achieving what we set out to do. We talk about our thoughts, our feelings and our interests and we know that we can learn from our mistakes and experiences.
Be Brave		When we are brave we explore new things and have a go. We do the right thing when no one's watching.
Be Kind		When we are kind we think about how we feel and pay attention to how other people feel. We make choices that help others and have fun playing together.
Keep Learning		It's fun to learn new things and be creative. No one in our nursery, whether a child or a grown up, ever stops learning.

Ark Start is a respectful and caring environment. We request that all parents are respectful and polite to our staff at all times.

Settling in

We want to support all children to settle into our nursery in a kind and nurturing way. We recognise that all children are individuals and therefore the settling in process may need to

look and feel different for each child depending on their prior experiences and emotional development. Our intention is always for a child to attend nursery for their full booked hours as close to their starting date as possible, whilst supporting them to build relationships with staff and peers.

At Ark Start, a child's settling in process starts prior to their start date, with a home visit and a settling in stay and play session. Following this, your child will attend nursery on their first day. Their play partner will meet the child on entry to nursery and help them familiarise themselves with the nursery environment and routines.

We ask that all parents/carers are contactable via phone with the ability to collect their child at any time throughout their booked hours for a child's first five days of nursery to support their child's unique settling in process.

Communications – Family

Family is our management information system. We use it to send you information about your child and the nursery, as well as to send your invoice each month. You will need to log into Family when you start with us and make sure all the information is correct.

Food

We ensure that children have access to healthy snacks and water throughout the day. We can provide breakfast, lunch and tea every day or families can provide a healthy packed lunch. Families must give two weeks' notice for any changes.

Staff are trained in Food Hygiene and Allergy awareness using the Ark Training Platform with Level 1 and 2 training provided by IHasco.

Cost of meals and snacks

We charge for meals and snacks separately so that we can offer the fully funded entitlements free to those parents who would prefer that option.

Lunch and snacks are charged at £2.55 per day.

Breakfast, lunch and tea is charged at £3.60 per day.

Packed lunch

For families who choose packed lunch, we ask that you provide a healthy lunch every day. This means:

- No chocolate, crisps or junk food
- No fizzy or sweet drinks (including juice): water only
- Avoiding processed cheese and meat

We are a nut-free nursery so please do not include any foods with nuts.

Allergies

You must let your play partner or nursery manager know if your child has any allergies so we can complete a risk assessment and ensure that the nursery is safe. Allergies are recorded on Family. Staff are trained in how to support a child who may be having an allergic reaction.

WE ARE A NUT-FREE NURSERY. We do not prepare nor allow food containing nuts in the nursery.

If a child has an allergic reaction to food, a bee or wasp sting, plant etc. a first aid trained member of staff will respond. We will inform parents and record the information. We will call 999 if required.

Clothes

Children at Ark Start play inside and outside all day long, whatever the weather. We ask that your child wears comfortable clothes such as leggings and a t-shirt and comfortable shoes (without laces!). If it's raining, waterproof shoes or wellies are needed. Sometimes these will get dirty because of the mud outside or while we are painting or baking.

All children must also have a spare set of clothes in their bag.

Suncare

It is important that children are protected from the sun. When it's hot, we make sure children are mainly in the shade and will apply factor 50 suncream before they go outside. We ask all families to put on factor 50 suncream in the morning and provide a sunhat and factor 50 suncream for the day. Water is available all day outside and inside.

When the weather is hot, children should be dressed in long sleeves, light clothing to help protect from the sun.

Toilet learning

Learning to use the toilet is an important milestone for your child and we work closely with you to agree the best way of supporting a child to learn to use the toilet. Any children that are still in nappies or still having accidents will need to be provided with nappies and wet wipes as well as a change of clothes.

What do you need to bring to nursery?

Every child should have:

- A spare set of clothes with extra underpants
- A warm, waterproof jacket
- Nappies and wet wipes (if you're still toilet learning)
- A sunhat and suncream (in the summer)
- A water bottle

What if something happens at nursery?

Sometimes children can get sick or hurt themselves at nursery. If your child starts to feel ill, we will ring you and ask you to collect them.

If your child has an accident, it will be logged on Family and you will be asked to acknowledge the accident form at the end of the day or as soon as reasonably possible.

If your child hurts their head, we will also ring you to let you know and keep them under review for signs of concussion.

Very rarely, children may have a more serious accident. We aim for all our staff to be paediatric first aid trained. In the event of a serious accident or where medical attention is required, they may ring an ambulance for additional help.

Sickness and illness

We promote the good health of all children attending each Ark Start nursery. If a child is unwell, we may ask you to keep them at home. The NHS website [here](#) details illness and symptoms that mean that a child should stay at home – we follow this guidance when children become unwell.

If a child becomes ill during the nursery day, a member of staff will contact their parent(s) and ask them to pick up their child as soon as possible. During this time we care for the child in a quiet, calm area.

Should a child have an infectious disease, such as sickness and diarrhoea, they must not return to nursery until they have been clear for at least 48 hours.

- We ask all children on antibiotics to remain at home for the first 48 hours of the course (unless this is part of an ongoing care plan to treat individual medical conditions e.g. asthma and the child is not unwell). This is because it is important to ensure children receive the right amount of rest and to ensure that there are no adverse reactions to medicine when they have first become ill and require a course of antibiotics.
- We will notify Ofsted and Public Health of any notifiable infectious disease and follow their advice.

Absence

We encourage children to come to nursery every day. Children with strong routines find it easier to settle in and make friends, and regular attendance helps prepare children for school. If you are not going to come to nursery because your child is sick or you're away, we ask that you let us know so we are better able to plan.

Medication

We do not routinely administer over the counter medicine to children. If you have given your child any medicine before the start of the nursery day, please inform the nursery staff so that we can monitor your child as required.

If it is necessary for a child to receive medicine during their day at nursery, parents must fill out a permission form on Family and discuss their child's needs with a member of staff. There is no requirement for staff to administer medicines. When the nursery agrees to administer medicines, the following details will be recorded on Family:

- The name of the medication
- If the medication is short or long term
- When the medication expires
- If the medication can be administered
- When and how to administer the medication and how much

The medicine **must also be labelled by a pharmacy detailing the name of the child, the dose and the length of use.**

Collections

Only named contacts can collect children at the end of the day. We also operate a password system to ensure children are only handed over to known adults.

Late collections

If you are going to be late, we ask that you ring the nursery to let them know. **Families will be charged £1 for every 5 minutes that they run late.**

Timings of sessions

Wrap around 8am – 9am	Morning 9am – 12pm	Afternoon 12pm – 3pm	Wrap around 3pm – 5pm
School day			
Full Day			

Families accessing government funded entitlements are entitled to the following number of sessions.

Entitled hours	Term time only	All year round
15 hours	5 sessions per week	4 sessions per week
30 hours	10 sessions per week	8 sessions per week

Changing your booking pattern or leaving the nursery

Parents are required to give one month's notice if their child is no longer going to attend an Ark Start nursery or to change their booking pattern or two weeks' notice to change catering arrangements.

This needs to be done by emailing finance@arkstart.org.uk. **Nursery staff cannot agree to booking changes directly.**

Ad hoc childcare

Ad hoc childcare may be available on request if we have space in an individual session. Please email finance@arkstart.org.uk.

Invoices

Ark Start is a charity and does not operate for any profit. Any surpluses are invested back into the nursery and our children so we can keep fees as low as possible. We ask that all invoices are paid on time.

- Invoices are issued 7 days before the first day of each month, including all fees payable for bookings for the coming month.
- Payments are due within 7 days of the invoice being issued.
- If payments are not made on time, we will reduce bookings with immediate effect so that debt does not increase further.
- We can only confirm funded places once a funding code has been confirmed by the LA. If you want to start prior to this, you will be liable to pay the fees upfront and these will then be reimbursed once/ if LA funding is agreed.
- Any changes to sessions need to be made one month in notice
- Any changes to lunch/ tea requirements need to be made at least two weeks before the required adjustment date
- Invoices are issued monthly in advance and refunds cannot be given for absence.

The [finance agreement](#) you signed when you started lays out the terms and conditions of the nursery.

If you are struggling to pay your invoice or have any difficulties, please contact the team directly so we can try and help: finance@arkstart.org.uk.

Concerns

If you have any concerns about the nursery or a member of staff, please speak to the nursery manager in the first instance, or alternatively contact the headteacher at molly.devlin@arkstart.org.uk.

The full complaints policy is on our website here: [Ark Start Complaints Policy](#)

Our Provision

Curriculum

What is a curriculum?

Curriculum is what nurseries plan to teach children. It includes all learning and experiences the children will do through their time in that nursery. Our aim for our curriculum is that every child learns more, so they can do more independently, over time.

What is Ark Start's curriculum?

Ark Start's curriculum is what we want the children to learn in the time they are with us. It includes:

- every book we read with the children
- every resource we choose to add to the classroom
- every time we choose to interact with our children and what we say
- every experience we give to our children e.g. ducklings, sports day, farm trip

You can find more detail about our curriculum on our website here: [Ark Start Curriculum](#)

Assessment and parent meetings

What is assessment?

In education, the term assessment refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the progress our children need.

How do we assess at Ark Start?

At Ark Start, we work hard to make sure we deeply understand what our children can do and what they need to learn next, so that we can plan effectively for all of our children to learn more and do more independently, over time. We do this through every conversation,

interaction and helpful choice we make to support them, and each time we watch and wait to do something independently.

Keeping you updated

We hold parent meetings three times a year when you will have the opportunity to talk to your child's play partner about your child's progress. We will also create three written reports: a two year old report, a three year old report and a report for the transition to primary school.

We encourage you to talk about your child at drop off or collection every day, or to arrange a more formal meeting if you would prefer. There is no need to wait for the next formal parents' meeting to discuss anything about your child – our door is always open.

Promoting positive behaviour

At Ark Start we believe that children flourish best when they know how they and others are expected to behave. We promote British values by offering children choices, encouraging children to talk about and share their ideas and listen to and consider the ideas of others.

Staff encourage and praise thoughtful, caring and polite behaviour at all times and provide an environment where children learn to respect themselves, other people, nature and their surroundings.

Ark Start approach to promoting positive behaviour

We always acknowledge when a child is feeling angry or upset and that it is the behaviour that is not acceptable, not the child. Staff are encouraged to recognise that active physical aggression in the early years is part of the child's development and that it should be named, talked about and channelled in a positive way working with parents to create consistent, predictable approaches at home and in nursery. We will always inform parents if their child's behaviour is unkind to others or if their child has been upset. In all cases we deal with inappropriate behaviour in nursery at the time.

We do not condone corporal punishment.

Anti-bullying

Bullying takes many forms. It can be physical, verbal or emotional, but it is always a repeated behaviour that makes other people feel uncomfortable or threatened. Any form of bullying is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately.

We recognise that children need their own time and space and that it is not always appropriate to expect a child to share. We believe it is important to acknowledge each child's feelings and to help them understand how others might be feeling.

We teach children to recognise that bullying, fighting, hurting and discriminatory comments are unacceptable behaviour. We want children to recognise that certain actions are right and

that others are wrong. Children are helped to understand not to use aggression to get things and resolve problems in other ways. Staff will always intervene when they think a child is being bullied, however mild or harmless it may seem by involving families and creating a plan between play partners, families and children. Staff will sensitively discuss any instance of bullying with the parents of all involved to look for a consistent resolution to the behaviour.

If any parent has a concern about their child, a member of staff will be available to discuss those concerns. It is only through co-operation that we can ensure our children feel confident and secure in their environment, both at home and in the nursery. All concerns will be treated in the strictest confidence.

SEN

We use the SEND Code of Practice (2015) definition of Special Educational Needs and Disability:

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

We provide a positive and welcoming environment where children are supported according to their individual needs.

Please ask the Nursery Manager or email info@arkstart.org.uk for a copy our full Special Educational Needs Policy or to discuss your child's needs in more detail.

Safeguarding, health and safety and privacy

Ark Start is a community and all those directly connected (staff, trustees, parents, families and children) have an essential role to play in making it safe and secure. All staff who work with children have a legal duty to report any safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities, including the local authority and, at times, the police.

Our full safeguarding policy is available on our website here: [Ark Start Safeguarding Policy](#).

The Designated Safeguarding Leads are Molly Devlin and Sarah Charlton.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Zoie Scriven

If you have concerns about a child at the nursery please talk to Sarah or Molly.

Health and Safety

We work hard to ensure that Ark Start is a safe environment for everyone. You can see our full health and safety policy on our website here: [Ark Start Health and Safety Policy](#)

GDPR Statement

Protecting people's data is important to us. We use Blossom as our main information management system and all staff are trained in our GDPR responsibilities. Data is also held on our all in one safeguarding tool Impero EdAware, in our assessment and SENDCo folders and on our assessment system EExAT.

Our privacy notice is published online [here](#).

CCTV

Ark Start has in place a CCTV surveillance system across its sites. The CCTV system is managed and operated by the school, in line with the Ark Schools' CCTV policy.