



Out of School Club & Kindergarten

Kindergarten for 3&4 year olds.

The Ark at Steiner Academy Exeter, EX4 5AD

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www.exwickark.co.uk

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Managed by Paula Stone (B.Ed, Early Years Professional Status)
and Harri Sharp (B.Eng, Diploma In Preschool Practice)

Exwick Ark Ltd. (No. 7321758) trading as The Exwick Ark

Aim: To provide high quality, Waldorf Steiner inspired child care and education that meets the needs of local families.



We will do this by:

Providing a safe, fun and challenging learning environment that meets the needs of every child and family, regardless of background, gender or ability.

- Maintaining very high standards of care and education, demonstrating a commitment to standards significantly above those required by OFSTED.
- Building strong working relationships with parents and acknowledging their role as the primary educators of their child.
- Working co-operatively with local Primary Schools and other providers of services for families.
- Demonstrating Christian values in the way we operate and interact with children, parents, staff and the community.

We offer your child:

- An OFSTED approved early years setting.
- A Waldorf Steiner inspired curriculum leading to approved learning outcomes.
- Individual care and attention made possible by a high ratio of adults to children.
- Fun and friendship with children and other adults.
- A healthy mid-morning snack and drink. A healthy lunch cooked on the premises.
- Opportunities for you and your family to be directly involved in the activities of the group and in your child's progress.
- A setting with underlying Christian values.



Age Ranges:

The Ark at Steiner Academy Exeter takes children from 3 years until the September before their fifth birthday. A place at The Ark does not guarantee a place for your child in the academy and you should apply for a place in the normal way. Please ask us if you would like further advice on this. The Ark is able to take up to 20 children at any one time and works on a ratio of at least one adult to every 8 children. Older children who are familiar with the rhythm of the kindergarten are encouraged to help the younger children and to ease their integration into the group. We also have daily helpers from the older kindergartens visit our classroom each day helping with transition into the school and providing positive role models. If your child progresses into the main school you may like to use our before and after school club which caters for children up to 12 years of age.

Session Times;

Sessions run from 9.15am to 2.15pm Monday to Friday during school term times. If you require childcare during the school holidays or for longer days we are able to offer this at our Exwick Road Nursery.

The number of sessions a child attends can vary according to parental preference but we find children settle better when they attend at least 2 sessions a week.

Underlying Christian Values:

Our Kindergarten has underlying Christian values demonstrated practically in the care we give your family. We sing a simple and fun blessing before our meal and include simple Christian songs in our ring time. Christian festivals and other celebrations help us to understand the rhythm of the year. We include Christian stories as part of our curriculum, alongside the celebrations, beliefs and stories belonging to other cultures represented in our society. If you have any concerns about this aspect of our provision please feel free to discuss it with either of our managers, Harriet (Harri) Sharp or Paula Stone.

Equal Opportunities:

Our Kindergarten is open to every family in the community. We will never discriminate against anyone because of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, ability, disability, age, status, sexuality, medical requirements, social or family commitments. Our full Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policies are available to read in our Policies and Procedures folder which can be found in the lobby.





Curriculum Statement

Our Kindergarten is inspired by the work of the Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner who wished to create a form of education which would help pupils achieve clarity of thought, sensitivity of feeling and strength of will. After listening to his lectures, the workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart asked him to form a school for their children and in 1919 the first Waldorf School was founded. There are now many Steiner Waldorf schools across the World. Our Kindergarten is in the process of becoming a member of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and follows much of the ethos of this way of working with children. Whilst we are able to follow most of the Early Years Foundation Stage we have received from Ofsted for certain modifications and exemptions to the EYFS which are not compatible with a Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten. These are mainly in the areas of reading, writing and technology but a full list is available in the parent lobby and we are happy to discuss this with you in more depth.

Play is a young child's work

At The Ark the children are given opportunity for child led free play (both inside and outside), play arising out of the child's own observation of life, where they have the opportunity to integrate socially and to use their imaginations and fantasy to recreate and work out situations which they have seen or experienced. There is little or no adult interference in the play, as the adult is involved in their 'work' and able to observe and help where necessary.

In our kindergarten we develop the following skills:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

The development of social skills and awareness of others are also precursors to formal learning and prepares children for the level of behaviour that is required in the classroom situation and society in general. In our kindergarten children are encouraged to share, to work together, to care for each other and to respect the needs of others. The behaviour of children is molded by what surrounds them. Kindness is practised by teachers and encouraged in the children and they learn to trust the adults and other children. Many items are made as gifts for family members. Traditional fairy tales and nature stories address feelings and gradually awaken a fine moral sense for knowing right from wrong.

Communication and language

Good communication and oral numeric skills develop out of playing and working together in an informal and practical atmosphere. Every day the children take part in activities such as counting games, rhythmic activities, poetry, rhymes and singing, including foreign languages. The oral tradition is integrated into most parts of the kindergarten day to encourage listening and speech development. They listen to stories told by our teacher, which include a rich vocabulary. Children experience the musicality of language and its social aspects through playing ring games. Children are encouraged to speak freely and learn to listen to others.

Physical Development

Formal learning relies on dexterity and physical co-ordination. In our kindergarten children have the opportunity to develop both large and small motor skills throughout the range of directed and child-initiated activities, such as free play, laying the table, finger games and baking. These activities develop hand to eye co-ordination, manual dexterity and orientation. For example, doing some simple sewing or weaving is a useful preparation for reading print from left to right. Drawing materials are provided, as well as painting and other creative arts and crafts. Children develop both small and large motor co-ordination in the indoor and outdoor environment where they learn to stretch their physical abilities in climbing, balance, and learning to manage their own risk taking and boundaries. Children also learn how to keep themselves healthy with good nutrition, exercise, rest and hygiene practices.

Literacy

The focus in our kindergarten is on developing a rich oral tradition of story telling and rhymes but children are also introduced to picture books where they are encouraged to "read the pictures" by telling the stories in the book whilst handling it carefully and with respect. They may pretend to read their own or others writing. They play games with sounds such as "I spy" and experiment with rhymes but are not formally taught blending and segmenting sounds until after the age of 7. Children make marks in their creative play which is the beginnings of writing in their own style. They use paint brushes for painting and crayons for drawing and mark making. They may imitate writing their own name or adults writing but are not formally taught how to write in a Steiner setting until the age of 7.

Maths



The kindergarten experience integrates maths on the grounds that grasping mathematical concepts such as weight, measure and shape is most meaningful when it relates to everyday activities and routines. For example, the preparation of food provides an opportunity to weigh, measure, count and use number, and setting the table is another area where maths is used in a practical way. Through movement games, children recognise and recreate patterns - in, out, alternate, above and below, in front of, behind etc. Natural objects such as acorns, pinecones, conkers and shells are sorted, ordered and counted, as part of spontaneous play or tidy. This approach to the introduction of mathematics embeds the concepts in a social and moral context.

Knowledge of the World

In our kindergarten, children are encouraged to appreciate the natural world in order to help them to value its gifts and to understand its processes and the patterns of the seasons. The beauty of nature, plants, insects and animals is brought to the children with awe and wonder. Domestic tasks provide opportunities to experience science and the four elements. When children make toys from sheep's wool, wood, felt, cotton and other natural materials they learn about its origin. Local crafts people are often invited to visit; short local walks provide an opportunity for the children to appreciate some of nature's wonders. Children are encouraged to look after the kindergarten equipment, sanding and oiling wooden furniture and toys, mending things that break, washing cloths and other simple tasks which children and adults can do together. Children learn to use "warm technological tools" such as whisks, apple presses and corn mills whilst the use of electronic technology such as computers is kept until they are older.

Creative Development

Children's creativity is extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. Children have access to a variety of natural materials, which are used for imaginative play or other activities. They are involved in artistic activities such as painting, drawing, music, dance and puppetry. Crafts are many, often seasonal or festive and part of the yearly rhythm such as lantern making or Easter baskets. Outside children also have the opportunity to undertake creative activities in many areas.

THE KINDERGARTEN DAY

The kindergarten day is structured so that there is a varied pace, with periods of contraction and expansion to provide a balance between times of activity and times of rest. Child-initiated activity is alternated with teacher-led activity but the latter is a comparatively short period at this age. The kindergarten day follows a consistent and predictable pattern and the children do the same things at the same times, carried through imitation of others. Within this rhythm the children feel held and safe and rarely express a wish to be excused from an activity or event.

Regular patterns of activities create routine and foster a sense of security and self-confidence and help the child to know what to expect. Working with rhythm helps children to live with change, to find their place in the world, and to begin to understand the past, present and future. It provides a very real foundation for the understanding of time - what has gone before and what will follow - and helps children to relate to the natural and the human world. Children's memories are strengthened by recurring experiences and daily, weekly and yearly events in kindergarten (such as festivals and celebrations) are remembered and often eagerly anticipated a second time around. Therefore emphasis is given to regular patterns of activities repeated within the day, week and year to provide rhythm and routine. Repetition helps to support good habits and reinforce behaviour – we always wash hands before eating, or put on appropriate clothing to go outdoors. Every day has its own rhythms, which support the day's activities - our 'tidy up' song, for example, signals the end of one activity and the beginning of another. Seasonal activities celebrate the cycles of the year. Repeated stories, songs, verses and craft activities relate to the season and a 'seasonal area' in the room reflects the changing natural world throughout the year, as do the themes of the songs, stories and poems.

Arriving time and play/activity time

As the children begin to arrive, they hang up their coats and change into indoor shoes and say good-bye to the parent/carer before the teachers welcome each child. You are welcome to come into the classroom for the first few minutes to settle your child to an activity. The day begins with a period of free play, perhaps getting the dolls up and dressed, building with small logs or driving a bus made from upturned chairs. During this free-play time, the teacher and assistants are usually engaged in a task, such as preparing the food for snack time. Children are encouraged to help with the chopping for at least a short time before going off to play.

Our teacher then moves gently into the main activity for the day. Each day of the week is identified by a particular 'doing' activity such as baking, gardening, painting, a seasonal handicraft, modeling, cleaning or woodwork. They



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might make things for their lunch such as barley buns or rye bread or for particular festivals, such as window decorations, lanterns and mobiles. The children are welcome, but not required to 'help' with the activity and they are expected to engage in the activity only for as long as their interest lasts. In all these activities the children learn by example, finding their way in to the experiences at their own pace. Some of the children may prefer to be around the adults, as children traditionally have been, watching or helping, while adults work. In this way the children learn to explore and be creative whilst acquiring a love of work. This manifests itself in an increasing mood of self-reliance and calm industriousness when the children are engaged.

The teacher and assistants start the next phase by beginning to clear the things away and the children join in helping each tool or object to find its place on shelf or in basket – sorting, matching, folding and stacking. Tidying up is an important task and it is done in such a way that it does not occur to the children that this is something that spoils their fun or is a tedious chore. It is done out of imitation of the adults and more experienced children, and soon becomes part of the rhythm of the kindergarten day. During this time we sing our tidy up song.



Ring time

Once things have been put back in their places after the 'doing' activity and play, the children gather for a small "squirrel snack" and then move into ring-time. The activities in ring time help focus the children's attention, develop their linguistic skills and help strengthen their motor skills. Ring-time is when the children come together in a circle and sing traditional songs, play games and rhythmical verses are spoken and acted out. Listening and clear articulation is practiced through this kind of rhythmical recitation which is repeated for a week or more. Children leave The Ark with a rich and varied repertoire of songs, stories and poems, including verses in French, German or other languages, which they have learned during ring time.

Lunch time

Next, the children go to the toilet and wash their hands in preparation for lunch time. Everyone gathers to say a blessing on the meal. Meal times offer an opportunity to develop good habits, social, communication and mathematical skills, and to co-operate in setting the table, sharing out of food, partaking in conversation and listening to the comments of others about various bits of 'news'. Some of the children help clear up while others get ready to go outside.

Our menu is available in the setting for parents to view. We have a rotation of grains throughout the week so that children have a balance within their diet. Our food is locally produced and organic where ever possible.

Outdoor time

After lunch we spend a period of time outside. Children are encouraged to bring appropriate waterproofs and wellies and to put these on as independently as possible. We have a safe outdoor play space with sandpit, trees, bushes for dens/hiding areas directly outside our classroom. Sometimes we go for walks into the wider school grounds. The outdoor space also includes a growing area where the children can work alongside the adults in caring for the garden. Recycling and composting is part of our ethos. All children help to tidy the garden before coming in to hang up coats and scarves and put on indoor shoes. The development of the physical co-ordination through movement, balance etc. is fundamental at this age. Climbing trees, balancing on poles, skipping with large and small ropes, or doing hard physical digging all provide an excellent opportunity for children to develop these capacities, and to find their own boundaries.

Story time

The day concludes with story time. Story time is always a very special event. The mood is hushed and the expectation is that children will respect that this is a quiet time. The children are told many wonderful stories sometimes supported by a puppet show. A well-told story creates an appreciation for the human voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. It also helps to extend vocabulary and aids the development of a good memory. Children love to hear the same story many times and delight in the repetition which brings the opportunity for children to familiarise themselves with the material and to deepen their relationship to it. By the time the story ends, parents/carers are waiting outside to collect the children.

THE KINDERGARTEN ENVIRONMENT

The indoor space

Very careful consideration is given to the detail of the quality of all aspects of our kindergarten environment to ensure that it is beautiful and gentle on the eye, ear and all the senses. The physical space is designed to be home-like and as free from exterior distraction as possible. Each child has his/her own coat peg with their name above it and somewhere to leave a change of shoes and their outdoor clothes and wet weather gear. There is a nature table, which follows a seasonal theme, and the decorations are also seasonal and are displayed with moderation, using soft material and pastel colours. There is a quiet corner, a home corner, an area for floor play and building large constructions, an area for the activity and snack tables and chairs. The kitchen area is partitioned but within the room.

Materials and toys

The furniture is made of wood and is intended for open ended or multi use by the children. Toys are made of natural materials and are deliberately crafted to be relatively undefined to allow maximum scope for imaginative use as props in children's play. They include wooden blocks and logs, natural plain cloth, shells, and hand-made dolls. Equipment includes grain mills, juice presses, woodwork tools, weaving looms and other simple manual tools, watercolours, broad brushes, beeswax crayons, sheep's fleece, sewing materials and picture books. There are also a variety of materials in soft colours for dressing up or using to cover the wooden screens, which can make houses, boats or castles. In the home corner there are small cradles, table and chairs, kitchen equipment and more. There are instruments for musical activities, and a quiet/book corner with a few carefully chosen picture books, which are changed regularly.

The outdoor space

Our Kindergarten has a protected and safe outdoor area for play and work where the children are able to climb or play in the sand or mud pit. The outdoor equipment is simple, with a choice of skipping ropes, digging or raking equipment, and logs and branches for building dens. There is an area for growing plants. Sometimes children are taken on a walk into the wider school grounds. Children are introduced to gardening/composting in the kindergarten garden where there is an opportunity to become familiar with the process of growing from planting to harvesting.

Adult Resources

We are proud of the exceptionally highly qualified staff within our Kindergarten. Our ratio is at least one adult to eight. The high staff to children ratio ensures individual attention to the needs and development of each child.

Our Play Team:



Harri and Paula are the managing Directors of the Exwick Ark Ltd. Paula taught for nine years in a primary school and since 2005 has been teaching in The Exwick Ark nursery. Paula has a Bachelor of Education teaching degree and Early Years Professional Status. Paula has three children of her own so understands some of the joys and concerns of being a parent.

Harri has a degree in Engineering! She has 25+ years experience working with children, both full time and also part-time for her church. Harri has completed a Diploma in Pre-school Practice (DPP) and has three children of her own.

Our Kindergarten teacher is Samantha Taylor. Samantha has experience of working both within our setting and previously in the Steiner Academy Exeter. Sam has 2 children of her own. Sam is currently completing her Steiner teacher training.



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Our setting manager, Kelly is undertaking her Steiner teacher training and has a level 3 childcare and education qualification. Kelly has experience of working within our setting, The Academy and as a nursery leader in another local nursery.

Our Kindergarten Assistant is Harriet Wetherden who also has a level 3 qualification in childcare and education and experience of working with children across all of our settings.

All our staff members attend relevant training over the year and have child protection, anti-discrimination, food hygiene, paediatric first aid and health and safety training as part of their induction programme. All the staff members are encouraged to continuously develop their knowledge of childcare by studying for appropriate qualifications and attending training sessions.

Family-worker system:

We operate a Family-worker system where each child is linked into a small group with a member of staff. The Family-worker will build a special relationship with you and your child. They will help your child settle into pre-school, will observe your child playing and learning, record these observations, create your child's Celebration Scrap book and use these to create an individual learning plan for your child. They will discuss this learning plan with you during our once a term parents' meetings and are always happy to discuss your child's development and care informally at the end of a session. Ofsted use the term Key Worker where we use family Worker.

Record keeping:

Because of the good ratio of children to adults, we are able to implement an excellent record keeping system in which observations of the children in the group are used as a basis for drawing up an individual child study for each child. Parents/ carers are encouraged to share observations of their own child with their child's Family-worker to enhance the child study. During your child's time at The Exwick Ark we will keep a record of your child's development. This will include notes, photos and artwork from their time with us. These are available for parents to see whenever they wish. Records are passed on to the parents/carers and their new teacher when a child leaves. Parents/carers are invited to be involved in planning activities appropriate to their child.





Parental Involvement: Research shows that children learn better when their parents are involved in their education. We are always happy for parents to visit or help in the group.

Special needs:

The number of adults present in the pre-school enables us to provide individual attention for each child. Each child is able to progress at his/her own rate in all areas of development, and this is true for the children with and without special educational needs. Our company Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is Paula Stone who has many years' experience of working with children with special needs and in liaising with other professionals. If you would like to discuss further the group's ability to meet your own child's special needs, please talk to Sam in the first instance. If additional support or advice is needed Paula is available to help.

Management and decision making

Decision making:

The Exwick Ark Ltd (Exwick Ark) is run and owned by two senior managers, Harri Sharp and Paula Stone, which ensures that there is continuity in the running of the nursery. The Exwick Ark is a business where profits will be put back into the Exwick Ark to aid its development. If parents/carers have any comments to make they can either talk to a member of staff or put a suggestion in the "suggestions and comments" box. All comments will be considered. Should you have a complaint to make the procedure is explained in the Complaints Policy, which can be found in the Policies and Procedures Folder in the lobby.

Policies:

A full set of policy and procedure statements are available in the lobby. Particularly relevant policies for parents/carers are offered to parents/carers for them to read when a child starts with us. All our policies are designed to offer the best possible experience for the children and families in the group. Our policies are reviewed on an annual basis and comments and suggestions from parents are always welcome.



Fees:

From the term after their third birthday all children are entitled to the equivalent of 15 hours of free childcare each week for 38 weeks a year, or 11 hours a week over the whole year, until they start school. These are funded by Devon County Council. Please ask for more details. Fees for additional sessions are payable each month, payable at the end of the month, or in instalments as agreed with the management. Fees can be found on the chart on the following page. We provide a healthy cooked meal as part of our session which is charged at £2.00 per child. You are welcome to provide a healthy packed lunch if you would rather.

What you need to provide:

Please send your child with a packed lunch if they are staying with us for lunch and you are not paying for a cooked meal, however, most children eat the meal they have helped to prepare as



part of the session. We provide all other snacks and drinks and these are included in the fees. Children will also need at least one change of clothes in case they get wet or dirty and more if they are toilet training. Children need to bring a pair of indoor slippers and a pair of wellies. They will also need a complete set of water poofs and a weather appropriate hat as we try to get outside whatever the weather. We ask that you provide nappies or pull ups if your child is using these at home.

Visits:

We understand how important it is for you to feel confident in your choice of childcare so are happy for you and your child to visit or spend a session with us before making a decision. We are also happy to answer any of your questions either in person, by email or over the phone.

Waiting list:

We operate a waiting list but, in order to ensure equality of opportunity we operate a priority list (Please see the Admissions policy for details). If you wish to put your child's name on our waiting list please complete the short form that you should find attached.

Home Visit:

As it gets nearer to the time your child is due to start at the Ark Kindergarten we will offer you the opportunity to spend a session with us and the opportunity of a home visit. Kelly and your child's family worker will visit you and your child in your home. This gives us a chance to finish completing the full registration form with you, to give you a copy of the Parent Handbook and to answer any questions you may have about your child's start at the Ark Kindergarten. This face-to-face contact with staff also will mean your child sees a known, friendly face on their first time with us.



Office use: date received:
acknowledgement letter/phone/email:

:

Please complete and return to
Mrs Harri Sharp
The Exwick Ark
c/o Exwick Old School
Exwick Road
Exeter EX4 2AT

added to CP:
Home visit: FWkr:

Or send the same information in an email to admin@exwickark.co.uk

Request for a place at the Ark at Steiner Academy.

Name of child:

Date of Birth of Child:

Gender: Male / Female

Name of parent /guardian:

Address of parent /guardian:

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Email address:.....

Day time contact phone number for parent /guardian:

Date you wish your child to start at the Ark at Steiner Academy:

(please underline preferred choice) Date:Year..... or

Beginning of Sept-Dec term / Jan-April Term / April- July term / Other (please specify year)

Days you would prefer your child to attend The Exwick Ark (please mark preferred choices):

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday