

Cobnuts Steiner Kindergarten

9 Gatland Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8PJ

Inspection date

03/02/2014

Previous inspection date

01/12/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

4

Previous inspection:

3

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| How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend | 4 |
| The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision | 4 |

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- The provider has not followed and implemented the setting's policies and procedures for safeguarding children, or for behaviour management. As a result, children are not safeguarded sufficiently, and their behaviour is not managed adequately.
- Staff do not always place children's individual needs before the daily routine which results in children's emotional needs not being met.
- The key person system does not support new children effectively when they start attending to lay foundations for secure relationships.
- Monitoring children's progress is not robust, which limits children's challenges and learning opportunities.
- Staff do not consistently engage and reflect on different ways children learn, so that children receive appropriate support and challenge in their learning and development.

It has the following strengths

- Staff encourage children to do things for themselves to help promote their independence.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the garden and the main room indoors.
- The inspector sampled records and documentation.
- The inspector heard the views of several parents spoken to during the inspection.
- The inspector held meetings with the manager and chairperson of the committee.
- The inspector observed staff interaction with children.

Inspector

Julie Ready

Full report

Information about the setting

Cobnuts Steiner Kindergarten is a committee-run kindergarten which registered in 2005. The kindergarten operates from one main room on the ground floor in a converted house in the Maidstone area of Kent. It is open for four days a week during school term time from 9.15 am to 12.45 pm. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The kindergarten is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 14 children on roll. It receives funding for free early education for children aged two-, three- and four-years-old. The nursery receives support from the local authority. There are three members of staff; of these two hold appropriate early years qualifications. The kindergarten supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are learning English as an additional language.

The kindergarten operates in line with the Steiner Waldorf educational philosophy. It has been granted some specific exemption/ modification to elements of the learning and development requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take the following enforcement action:

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice ensuring the provider to:

make sure that staff know how to manage children's behaviour appropriately and implement effective strategies to help children to learn behavioural expectations and how to keep themselves and others safe.

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- ensure that the outdoor space is secure and a safe place for children, develop a system to monitor the main entrance gate to maintain children's safety
- review risk assessment policies and ensure all staff have a good understanding of risks to children's safety, with specific attention given to the risk of hot drinks in the setting and safe play
- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of relevant matters: including ensuring the relevant procedures/checks have been followed if there is a change of Nominated Person
- ensure that records are easily accessible and that you can demonstrate that all staff have had appropriate suitability checks completed
- develop systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision effectively to ensure children's needs are placed before the daily routine, and key weaknesses are identified and addressed to help maintain continuous improvement
- support staff to gain the necessary skills to interact, engage and reflect on different ways children learn, so that all children receive appropriate support and challenge in their learning and development
- ensure there is a key person assigned to each child when they start attending the setting to help children become familiar with the setting and to offer a settled relationship for the child and their family
- improve the monitoring of children's progress to ensure every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs

- ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures include the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

The educational programme at the kindergarten is based on the Steiner Waldorf approach to learning. Exemptions have been granted and this means that the provider is not required to cover all aspects of the educational programmes as laid out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This includes aspects of 'Communication and Language', 'Physical development', 'Mathematics', 'Understanding the world', 'Expressive arts and design' and all aspects of the programme for 'Literacy'. Staff follow the approach of allowing the child to take the lead in activities, however at this setting some activities are also adult-initiated. Both of these approaches provide children with opportunities to explore, and be creative using different materials, and means that most children make some suitable progress in their learning and development. However, staff do not always consistently engage in children's learning through skilful listening and questioning. This means that children are not being effectively challenged and extended in their learning.

Children have opportunities to learn about the natural world both within the indoor and outdoor environment. The garden area provides space for children to explore various activities such as splashing in puddles, digging in the mud and planting bulbs. During the inspection two children are observed helping each other clamber over logs and through the undergrowth, clearly enjoying their adventure. This environment supports children to make meaningful choices and develop friendships with their peers. Indoors there is a variety of natural resources such as conkers, pinecones, pebbles and pegs organised to support free-play. There are various pieces of material for dressing up and a small kitchen area which helps children's self-expression and imagination.

Parents of new children attend play visits where they share information with the key person to enable staff to get to know the child. The key person makes observations of the children at play and shares these with staff at weekly meetings. The manager is key person to all of the children in the setting and records observations daily. This information is used to inform termly assessments, which are shared with parents and used to plan adult led activities. However, despite these systems there are significant weaknesses in the provision for children's learning and development. There is no differentiation in planned activities for younger or older children to ensure that effective learning takes place. Observed teaching is poor; staff assisting the manager show little understanding of how to support children's language development fully or how to engage children in meaningful activity or extend their learning. Much of the learning that takes place is incidental because staff lack understanding of the possible next steps for children's learning and as a result planning is ineffective. The management of children's behaviour and the lack of consideration for children's individual needs has a detrimental impact on the quality of children's learning experiences.

Teachers visit the kindergarten from local schools. Staff share information to help support children moving on to school.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The kindergarten is arranged to offer a calm and welcoming environment supported by a routine that reflects the Steiner Waldorf approach. However, staff occasionally forget to place the children's needs before the daily routine. For example, children are sitting for long periods at snack time resulting in children displaying frustration and poor behaviour. Most children seem to settle sufficiently because they form appropriate bonds with staff. However, due to weaknesses in staff deployment there is no one person assigned to each new child starting at the nursery to help them to settle. As a result, on occasion children that are new to setting are left unattended, distressed and uncomfortable. This means the key person system is not being implemented effectively when new children start to support children's well-being.

Staff are good role models, which means children see and hear staff using good manners. Consequently, children are polite when talking to each other and staff most of the time. However, when there are instances of inappropriate behaviour staff are not always aware of it happening, neither do they implement appropriate behaviour management strategies. As a result, more than occasionally some children are not engaged in activities, which leads to a disorderly environment that hinders their learning and puts them and others at risk. This demonstrates the provider is not ensuring the behaviour policy and expected procedures are followed and implemented to support children's welfare and well-being.

Staff have attended safeguarding training and written risk assessments are in place, although in daily practice daily hazards are not identified. For example hot cups of tea are left on the table with children at snack time and there is no system in place to monitor the entrance gate that leads on to a main road. Consequently, during the inspection this was left open posing serious risk of a child leaving the premises unsupervised and being caused significant harm.

Children enjoy a variety of healthy snacks such as rice and apple and drinking water is available throughout the session. Staff encourage children to develop skills to manage their own personal needs and promote independence. For example, children take it in turns to pour the water and when there is a spillage they mop it up without prompting. Children use the toilet and wash their hands independently and are encouraged to wipe their own nose. All children use the outside area everyday which enables them to receive fresh air and exercise.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision

The registered provider is not fulfilling their legal responsibility in meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the associated requirements of the Childcare Register. Mandatory policies are not in place and suitability checks are not completed for the nominated person or all staff. The provider has failed to notify Ofsted of a change to the nominated person that took place over six months ago. Procedures are not effective to ensure that staff who have not yet received a criminal records check are not left alone with the children being cared for. Furthermore the provider does not ensure that the behaviour management policy is implemented appropriately. Staff do not show the necessary skills to manage children's behaviour. The security of the premises is not assured and risk assessment fails to identify and minimise all hazards. This compromises children's safety. Ofsted intends to take enforcement action to ensure that the provider takes prompt action to improve the provision.

The manager has identified some areas of improvement with support from the local authority quality team. Parents and staff are encouraged to participate in the setting's evaluation and are involved in the changes made. For example, a weekend working party has been arranged to make improvements to the garden. This shows that the provider has some capacity to review and improve the provision. However, there are weaknesses in the evaluation of practice as the current system is not robust enough to identify and address the breaches of requirements noted at inspection. The majority of staff are appropriately qualified and regularly complete self-appraisals. Although, there is at present no system for the continual assessment and monitoring of staff performance to support improvements to the quality of care and education. Management describe adequate arrangements to work alongside other professionals, which means that the nursery is able to seek additional support for children when needed. However, there are currently no systems in place to share information with other carers, for example children that are looked after by childminders.

Staff work with parents by keeping them informed of their children's experiences at the kindergarten. Parents spoken to at the time of the inspection expressed that they were extremely happy with the setting. They identified the time the children spend outside and friendly staff as strengths of the setting. Partnership with parents is underpinned with daily communication, which helps promote continuity of care for the children.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met
(with
actions)**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met
(with
actions)**

To meet the requirements of the Childcare Register the provider must:

- ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure that records are easily accessible and that you can demonstrate that all staff have had appropriate suitability checks completed (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks. (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)
- inform Ofsted of changes to the nominated person of a childcare provision (compulsory part of the Childcare Register).
- ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (voluntary part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure that records are easily accessible and that you can demonstrate that all staff have had appropriate suitability checks completed (voluntary part of the Childcare Register)
- ensure all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks. (voluntary part of the Childcare Register)
- inform Ofsted of changes to the nominated person of a childcare provision (voluntary part of the Childcare Register).

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning. |
| Grade 2 | Good | Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection. |
| Met | | The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration. |
| Not met | | The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration. |

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

Setting details

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Unique reference number | EY313859 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 843856 |
| Type of provision | Full-time provision |
| Registration category | Childcare - Non-Domestic |
| Age range of children | 2 - 6 |
| Total number of places | 15 |
| Number of children on roll | 14 |
| Name of provider | Maidstone Steiner Kindergarten Initiative Committee |
| Date of previous inspection | 01/12/2009 |
| Telephone number | 07548 328 514 |

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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