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Cobnuts Steiner Kindergarten
9 Gatland Lane
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Our Reference EY313859

Dear Maidstone Steiner Kindergarten Initiative Committee

Monitoring for provision judged as inadequate

An Ofsted inspector, Mandy Mooney, monitored your provision on 04/06/2014 following your inspection where the provision was judged to be inadequate.

Outcome of monitoring

As a result of our inspection on 03/02/2014, we sent you a welfare requirements notice. The actions you were set are included at the end of this letter.

The Welfare Requirement Notice asked you 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. The notice to improve asked you to 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; to 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; 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; ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures include the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting; 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 and improve the monitoring of children's progress to ensure every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual

needs.

You were also issued with a notice to improve for the compulsory and voluntary part of the Childcare Register which asked you to ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (compulsory and 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; ensure all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks and inform Ofsted of changes to the nominated person of a childcare provision.

At the first monitoring visit on 27 March 2014, the inspector found through observation of practice, discussion with staff and children and scrutiny of records that you have taken little action to tackle the actions raised to drive improvement. The areas identified for improvement remain and furthermore, additional areas where the requirements are not being are also evident. It is not clear if there is a nominated person in place for the setting and the manager informed the inspector that she was not aware of the actions raised because the nominated person failed to share this information with her.

The inspector observed the practitioners and children in the garden and inside the premises and it is evident that the system in place to ensure the side gate is secure is not effective. Parents were observed to come into the setting, this means an unknown person could enter the premises unchallenged and is a potential risk to children. The manager explained this was something that had been reviewed, however practice relating to the use of the gate had not changed since the last inspection. Although the inspector did not observe any other safety risks, apart from the side gate not being secure, it is not evident that the risk assessment is reviewed to ensure it is current and effective in safeguarding children.

Children enjoy their time at the setting, however, on several occasions practitioners did not see incidents of unacceptable behaviour where children hit each other or are unkind to each other. This is because practitioners are not always well deployed so they can have a clear view of what the children are doing and although practitioners speak very calmly and kindly to children, when there is unwanted behaviour, this is not always managed in the most effective way, for example, reassuring a child who is upset after being hit by another child or explaining to the children what is acceptable behaviour and the impact on others. Furthermore, it is not evident that all adults working with the children, including students have a sound understanding of behaviour management techniques.

The inspector observed the children to be confident in the environment, they have ample opportunity to develop their independence and self help skills, as they make independent choices and contribute to the daily tasks in the setting, which they clearly enjoy. However, on occasions, the behaviour of some children impact on the enjoyment for others and furthermore, because practitioners' time can be taken up managing specific children, this results in practitioners not being able to offer enough time for other children.

The manager explained that action to meet the notices to improve and welfare requirement notice was halted following advice given by another agency and this results in you not taking sufficient action to ensure the requirements are met and furthermore, other areas for improvement were identified, this includes, ensuring there is a named deputy to cover in the absence of the manager, implementing an effective system to assess the suitability of adults working with or having regular contact with children, induction for adults, including students, to ensure they have sufficient knowledge to enable them to fulfil their roles and required qualification ratios are not being met as at present only the manager holds a relevant qualification in early years. A notice to improve relating to the learning and development requirements was not considered at this visit as the timescale for completion has not been reached. As a result of the visit the actions raised from the previous visit will be raised again because of the apparent miscommunication between you and other agencies, alongside additional actions to cover all other areas.

At the second monitoring visit on Wednesday 4 June 2014, the inspector found through observation of practice, discussion with staff and children and scrutiny of records that you have taken some action to tackle the actions raised to drive improvement. However, several areas of concern remain. You informed Ofsted of a change of nominated person and of committee members following the last visit. The manager said the setting had a visit from the Steiner advisor who advised on the general routine and organisation of the environment and from the local authority early years advisor. 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 are not evident.

The main improvements are in the safety of the premises, where the side entrance gate is now secure and risk assessments are in place to cover all aspects of the premises. You have also updated your policy for the use of cameras and mobile phones in the setting and this contributes to safeguarding children.

The inspector discussed staffing with the manager, who was unclear of who current staff are and what checks are completed for staff. In a subsequent telephone call to you, it was apparent that the lines of communication between the manager and the committee have become blurred as the staff names given at the visit did not correspond with those you informed the inspector of. The discussion with you and practitioners confirms that it is unclear whether the required qualification ratios are being met. Furthermore, it is unclear what checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of staff or who covers in the absence of the manager and you have failed to employ a suitable deputy to cover the manager's absence.

The manager informed the inspector that she is the key person to all children and it is her responsibility to monitor children's progress and development. This was not looked at in detail at this visit and will be explored at the next monitoring visit to ensure this is effective in practice.

The inspector observed the children in the garden at the beginning of the session and indoors later. The children were observed to enjoy the outside, exploring the space available and engaging well with their peers and staff. Staff supervised this part of the session well, offering a good balance child initiated play and adult engagement. However, when indoors later on in the session, children became very disruptive. The behaviour observed at the previous visit was evident again. Children were observed to be running round the room, frequently unchallenged by practitioners. Children were seen to be unkind to each other, hitting, biting and snatching from one another. Some incidents were not observed by practitioners, due to the lay out of the room and also because practitioners are fully stretched, they cannot meet the needs of all children. This impacts on the quality of care given and also compromises the safety and well being of the children. While practitioners try to supervise the children appropriately, this is not always possible as the set up of the routine and environment, coupled with the varying needs of the children does not allow this. The strategies used to manage children's behaviour are not effective; messages given to them by practitioners are not reinforced, consequently they do not learn right from wrong.

As a result of the visit the actions raised from the previous visit will be raised again, alongside additional actions to cover all other areas. A list of action required is at the bottom of this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, the inspector is of the opinion that the setting has not taken prompt and effective action to address the points for improvement.

Next steps

The next step will be further monitoring.

If you have any further queries please contact us on the number at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Nick Hudson
National Director, Early Education

Actions

Action	Due date	Closed date
ensure that the outdoor space is secure and a safe place for children, implement a system to monitor the main entrance gate to maintain children's safety	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
review risk assessment policies and ensure all staff have a good understanding of risks to children's safety	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
ensure that records are easily accessible and that you can demonstrate that all staff have had appropriate suitability checks completed	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures include the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
implement effective systems to ensure practitioners and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with	16/05/2014	03/06/2014

children are suitable and ensure the information used to assess suitability is readily available for inspection

ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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implement an effective induction system that enables all adults working with children to fulfill their role effectively. This should cover all policies and procedures, including safeguarding children and behaviour management	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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review staffing arrangements to ensure the needs of all children are met and to ensure their safety. Ensure that children are adequately supervised and staff deployed to ensure children's needs are met.	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (voluntary part of the Childcare Register)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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improve the monitoring of children's progress to ensure every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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ensure at least half of all staff, hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification (the manager must hold at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification also)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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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)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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ensure there is a named deputy, who is capable and qualified to take charge in the absence of the manager	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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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)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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ensure all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks. (compulsory part of the Childcare	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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Register)

ensure all necessary measures are taken to minimise any identified risks. (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
inform Ofsted of changes to the nominated person of a childcare provision (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
inform Ofsted of changes to the nominated person of a childcare provision (compulsory part of the Childcare Register).	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
ensure that all adults working with the children, including students 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 (Welfare Requirement Notice)	16/05/2014	03/06/2014
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	04/07/2014	
ensure there is a named deputy, who is capable and qualified to take charge in the absence of the manager (Welfare requirement notice)	04/07/2014	
ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (compulsory part of the Childcare Register)	04/07/2014	
ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (voluntary part of the Childcare Register)	04/07/2014	
review staffing arrangements to ensure the needs of all children are met and to ensure their safety. Ensure that children are adequately supervised and staff deployed to ensure children's needs are met.	04/07/2014	
improve the monitoring of children's progress to ensure every child's learning	04/07/2014	

and care is tailored to meet their individual needs

ensure at least half of all other staff, (the manager must hold at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification also) hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification (Welfare requirement notice) 04/07/2014

ensure that all adults working with the children, including students 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, with specific regard to the end of the session (Welfare requirement notice) 04/07/2014

review staffing arrangements to ensure the needs of all children are met and to ensure their safety. Ensure that children are adequately supervised and staff deployed to ensure children's needs are met (Welfare requirement notice) 04/07/2014

review and improve the systems to ensure practitioners and any other person who is likely to have regular contact with children are suitable. Ensure it is known by management who is employed and working with the children and ensure records are reorganised and accurate to reflect this (Welfare requirement notice) 04/07/2014

ensure children's behaviour is managed in a suitable manner (compulsory and voluntary part of the Childcare Register) 04/07/2014