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WELCOME

We hope that your child will be very happy at Cobnuts Steiner Kindergarten. We aim to provide a safe, warm, friendly and home-like environment in which children are able to develop at their own pace.

Our approach is based on the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, which has evolved from the work of Austrian philosopher and educator, Rudolf Steiner. The first Waldorf school was founded in 1919 and there are now hundreds of schools and kindergartens around the world. The nearest schools to us are in Canterbury, Forest Row (near East Grinstead) and Greenwich.

Our kindergarten caters for children aged 2½ - 6 years. Sessions run in the mornings for 3 ¾ hours, and the number of sessions attended varies with the age and need of each child. Sessions begin at 9.15 am and end at 1pm.

Our kindergarten runs for four mornings from Monday to Thursday and on Wednesday and Friday we run a Parent and Child Group, from 10.00 to 12.00.

Our kindergarten teacher and manager is Diane Frewer, and the kindergarten assistant and deputy manager is Lauren Beaumont. Our kindergarten helper is Eileen Whitworth.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE KINDERGARTEN?

The kindergarten provides a secure and homelike environment, with a calming indoor space and a child-friendly garden, which are both beautiful and nourishing for the child's developing senses. The equipment provided is chosen to enable and support the child to fully engage in play creatively and imaginatively. Objects from nature and equipment of natural materials are provided, including shells, fir cones, fleece, wood, cotton veils, soft dolls and simple materials for building. With such equipment the play possibilities are endless.

Each morning has its rhythm, with time for children to play creatively outside and inside. Play is the serious work of childhood, and through it children learn, by investigating, exploring and discovering. This supports physical, emotional and social development: fundamental tools for life.

We play in the garden in all weathers. Here the children can run, skip, balance, climb, dig and build, and learn new physical limits and skills. While inside the children build or create their own play areas using the natural materials and equipment provided.

These periods of creative play are balanced with times that are teacher-led, such as singing and story time. Here the children enjoy songs, finger-games, rhymes and stories. These are repeated for a length of time so that the children can learn them by heart, thus aiding memory development. Circle-time is movement based and a social time, which allows the children to experience their bodies and learn about the world around them through song and rhyme. Through the use of rich language and song the foundations are laid for language, numeracy and literacy skills later on.

The kindergarten is a hive of activity, and the emphasis is very much on 'doing'. Through 'work' the young child learns not only social and domestic skills, but develops good motor and practical skills. We bake our own bread, draw, paint, model, make seasonal handicrafts, sew, cook, polish the wooden toys, wash up, tidy up, sweep the floors and attend to the garden.

The seasonal cycle of the year forms the basis of the curriculum and provides for endless possibilities for the children to make and to do. Autumn might be a time for grinding wheat and Spring time for planting. Stories, puppet plays, songs, verses and craft activities relate to the season and a 'seasonal area' in the room reflects the changing natural world throughout the year. The children come to activities out of their own free will, and learn by imitating the teacher.

Young children learn best through example and imitation. Formal instruction is avoided, and instead the children are able to participate in activities and learn by doing and so with a sense of wonder and reverence they learn to respect each other and the world around them. The faculties of willing and feeling are protected by avoidance of a rush to attain early intellectual targets, allowing the children to experience their rightful need to play and unfold at their own pace.

Rhythm and repetition are crucial. Regular patterns of activity create routine and foster a sense of

security and self confidence, helping the child to know what to expect. The children grow to learn that Monday is baking day or that on Thursday we make soup, for example. Although the activities may change from day to day, the rhythm of the day stays the same, so the children always know what comes next in their morning. For example, the period of creative play ends with a song, which the children learn to signify that it's time to tidy up for story-time. The recurring rhythm of the day, the week and the year through repeated activities, festivals and songs brings structure and security into the kindergarten, and enables the children to develop confidence.

Working with rhythm also 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 relate to the natural and human world.

We provide a healthy daily snack, cooked freshly each morning in the kindergarten, along with a drink and fruit. This is a pleasant social time, when we all sit around our big table together. The children are given the opportunity to talk and listen to each other.

DAILY RHYTHM

Staff arrive and prepare for the morning. We check the environment and that all activities are ready for the children.

At 9.15am the garden gate is opened and children start to arrive. Parents help or encourage their child to dress ready for garden play.

This is the children's free outdoor play time and an opportunity to help adults with gardening projects and snack preparations.

We then start to get busy together with tidying away. This involves the adults and children and is a play based activity. We may sing outside. Then garden clothing is removed and it is time for using the toilet and hand washing (although children may use the toilet any time during the morning).

Then comes snack time. Every child helps to lay the table with their own bowl or plate and cup. After the candle is lit, we say our blessing. Snack time is a time to eat together with an opportunity to share our news.

After snack time is the children's indoor free play time and an opportunity to help with adult led activities such as washing up and enjoying the various activities offered. We may also return to the garden, depending on the time of year.

We then start to get busy again together with tidying up. This again involves the adults and children and is a play-based activity.

This is followed by story or puppet play time.

At 1pm the children are ready to go home, having put on their own shoes and coats. The parents/carers arrive to receive their children.

N.B. Time is usually available at the beginning or end of the morning for parents to talk to staff. If this is not possible, then a mutually convenient time will be arranged.

WEEKLY RHYTHM

Each day of the week has its own activities and mood, depending on the time of year and the group. The activities have 'doing' as their focus and are creative play opportunities. We may

- Draw with beeswax crayons
- Do watercolour painting, using high quality paints on wet paper, which allows the colours to dance and intermingle as the children experience colour and form
- Grind wheat for baking
- Card wool
- Sand wood
- Enjoy a seasonal craft activity in preparation for a festival.

We provide a different healthy snack each day. The children are free to choose to help an adult with snack preparations.

On **Monday** we bake bread together. The snack is rice cakes, spread and marmite served in the warmer part of the year, and rice pudding served in the cooler part of the year.

Tuesday's snack is bread spread with marmite.

On **Wednesday** we make rye sticks: the children mould and shape the rye dough for baking. Our snack is millet pudding and jam, sometimes with apple sauce made from apples harvested from the garden.

On **Thursday** we make soup together (during the cooler part of the year). Some vegetables may be harvested from the garden. We wash and chop the vegetables for the soup. The snack is soup and rye sticks during the cooler part of the year, and rye sticks with jam as a summer alternative.

We have fresh fruit and water with the snack every day.

N.B. Our daily and weekly routines and rhythms run throughout the kindergarten year, but may change if we are celebrating a festival or child's birthday.

Fresh water is available to drink throughout the morning. We often use alternatives to dairy products, and organic flour, vegetables and fruit where possible. We ask for information on children's dietary needs at the time of enrolment and ask that you keep us informed of any changes.

FESTIVALS & SPECIAL DAYS

There is much for the children to celebrate in the kindergarten, including birthdays, seasonal, cultural and Christian festivals. These are very special times in the kindergarten, where the children work to prepare for the festivals, and families are often invited to join in. It is recognised that parents like to play an active and creative part in the child's life in the kindergarten, and the celebration of the festivals helps to strengthen feelings of belonging and community for the child. Festivals that we celebrate include:

Birthdays

Michaelmas, September 29th

Martinmas, November 11th

Advent, December

St Nicholas, December 6th

End of term Christmas festival

Epiphany, January 6th

Candlemas, February 2nd

End of term spring festival

Easter

May Day

Ascension

Whitsun

Midsummer St John's June 24th

End of term summer festival

KEY PERSON

In a Steiner Kindergarten, the overall Key Person role is held by the kindergarten teacher, who has the overview of all the children in their group. It is the kindergarten teacher who will write up assessments, reports and feed back to parents.

Diane, our kindergarten teacher, will:

- Have more consistent contact with the children than any other adult and act as a point of contact between parents and carers.

She and her assistant Lauren will:

- Work closely with parents/carers to settle children in appropriately and to build a caring relationship with each child.
- Help the children become familiar with the setting.
- Meet children's individual needs.
- Observe the children during interactions and then discuss the next step for each child's development, involving parents and carers where appropriate.

We are aware that in order to properly meet the individual needs of each child, and to properly observe and assess their learning and development, each key person should be attentive to around 8-10 children in the group. Therefore the kindergarten assistant may be given a key person role in respect of certain children in the group, and they will share information with the kindergarten teacher on a regular basis.

We will share with parents should a specific person other than the kindergarten teacher take on that role.

EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)

A revised version of the EYFS came into force in September 2021. The focus of the new EYFS Learning and Development requirements and Early Learning Goals have changed, and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship negotiated exemptions and modifications to some of these under the 'Established Principles' route for all Steiner schools and settings. We have received some 'Exemptions and Modifications' to the EYFS Learning and Development requirements and Assessment regulations under the 'Established Principles' route for Steiner Waldorf settings. These are mostly to do with the introduction and in some cases formal teaching of reading, writing, mathematics and use of IT/media and electronic gadgetry. There is no exemption from the safeguarding and welfare requirements. (See list of Exemptions and Modifications in the kindergarten).

You can find out more about how we meet the requirements of the EYFS in the EYFS/Steiner Interpretation and Read-over and other documents which you will find in the kindergarten. You can also find a Parent's guide to the EYFS on the government website (<http://www.foundationyears.org.uk>).

~~Cobnuts Steiner Kindergarten, like all other Steiner kindergartens in England, follows the government's statutory framework, the EYFS, which was originally established in 2008 and reformed in 2012 and then again in 2021. In some areas of the educational program and assessment arrangements the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship have been granted exemptions and modifications in order to preserve the integrity of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and practice of established principles.~~

MONITORING THE CHILDREN

Before your child is accepted into the kindergarten, the teacher will need to meet you and your child. The teacher completes a form which includes details about the child's health and development, and other relevant background information. This form is the basis of the confidential record of the child's progress. The teacher and assistant continue to observe each child throughout their time in the kindergarten, and a child profile is kept with ongoing observations.

Each child may also be visited at home by the teacher. This gives the teacher a much fuller picture of the child and its family and strengthens the link between kindergarten and home. The teacher will also meet with every parent to discuss how their child has settled in.

Parents and teacher can talk and share information informally at the end of each session, when necessary. Individual meetings can be arranged with the teacher to discuss any important issues in more depth.

Progress reports are ongoing. These are available for use in discussion with parents throughout the school year.

Communication with parents is an essential factor in the life of the kindergarten. We hold regular parents' evenings where questions will be answered, new parents welcomed, and the rhythm of the day and week, and activities within the kindergarten day will be explained more fully. There are sometimes talks on subjects to do with our educational principles and workshops.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN THE KINDERGARTEN

A calm, peaceful, predictable, familiar and unhurried environment provides a happy atmosphere where the child can develop individually and socially in a healthy way.

In the kindergarten, we work on routine, rhythm and repetition during the day, week, month and year with the children. **Please could you consider carefully before taking your child out of kindergarten during term time for holidays or days off, unless of course they are unwell.** Missed days will unsettle them, disrupt building relationships with their friends and they will not have benefited from the group garden and inside play, the songs, activities, stories we offer each morning. The other children are also affected as they usually want to know where their friends are. This affects the calm mood we are trying to create each morning.

Basic verbal guidelines for behaviour are presented in a gentle manner when appropriate, for example: 'Hands are for work and play' and 'Walking in the kindergarten, we run outside' and 'indoor voices'. Through these measures we encourage respect and care of self and others and the environment, and encourage the learning of self-control.

Challenging Behaviour

Most children experience social difficulties at some time in their development. There are many ways that staff help children, according to their age, to better integrate into the group. Please look at the policy folder to see full details on behaviour management in the kindergarten.

CLOTHING FOR KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Experiencing the outdoors, in all weathers, is an integral part of kindergarten life, and the children will spend around an hour each morning in the garden. With this in mind, it is essential for children to have various items of clothing available for their work and play outdoors. When dressed warmly the children can thoroughly enjoy this time, but unsuitable clothing can spoil this important activity.

We ask that you send your child with the following:

- For Spring – Wellington boots, socks, a light but warm jacket which fastens up, a hat
- For Summer - A sunhat, a lightweight long-sleeved top, skin protection (applied at home please)
- For Autumn – Wellington boots, warm socks, a warm jacket which fastens up, a hat
- For Winter - All of the above, plus waterproof padded gloves, a scarf and extra layers under tops and trousers

We also ask parents to provide a set of waterproofs for the children, named and left at the kindergarten if possible. These will get much use, and are a good investment as they will last for a long time and are necessary through all the seasons. The kindergarten can give details of where to obtain these.

Waterproof dungarees and separate jackets are ideal, as the dungarees will also be used in the summer, with a top, for water play.

As the children will be required to change into slippers once inside the kindergarten, a pair of plain slippers (with backs - not mules!), ideally rubber soled, will be necessary for each child.

In case of accidents and spillages, a set of spare clothes should be left at the kindergarten so that each child always has some warm, dry clothes to wear. We will provide a calico bag for each child's spare clothes to hang on their peg. All clothes should be clearly labelled.

SAFETY

The safety of the children is paramount. To ensure their safety, we have a series of policies and protocols. A copy of these is kept with the parents' library books in the cloakroom area and is available for anyone to see. The list of policies includes:

1. Administration of Medicines Policy
2. Admissions Policy
3. Child Protection Policy
4. Confidentiality Policy
5. Complaints Procedure
6. Early Childhood Observation and Assessment Policy
7. Equality and Diversity Policy
8. Equipment and Resources Policy
9. Evacuation Procedure
10. EYFS Policy
11. First Aid Policy
12. Food and Drink Policy
13. Health and safety Policy
14. Key Person
15. Lost Child Policy
16. Mobile Phone Policy
17. Nominated Person
18. Non Collection of Child
19. No Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol
20. Parental Involvement
21. Personal Care and Changing
22. Photography Policy
23. Play Table
24. Positive Behaviour Policy
25. Recruitment Policy
26. Settling in Policy
27. Sick Child
28. Special Educational Needs
29. Staff Absence Cover
30. Tree Climbing
31. Vacant Places

HEALTH ISSUES

A medical form is completed for each child at the time of registration. Information needed includes details of the child's GP, any significant illnesses or operations, any allergies, and any regular medication.

Parents are asked to sign to consent to medical treatment of their child in case of an emergency.

We keep accident *sheets* on which any accidents are recorded. Parents are asked to sign *these* if their child is hurt e.g., bumps themselves.

We have a first aid kit at the kindergarten and ensure that at least one member of staff with a current first aid training certificate (relevant to infants and young children) is on the premises at any time.

Our policy for the exclusion of ill or infectious children is discussed with parents. This includes procedures for contacting parents - or other authorised adults – if a child becomes ill at kindergarten.

IF YOUR CHILD IS ILL

Guidelines for Keeping Children at Home

Deciding whether to keep your child home from a kindergarten session may sometimes be a difficult decision to make. Here are some guidelines to help you decide whether to bring them or not.

Come to kindergarten - If your child has any of these they can come to kindergarten, if they are actually well in themselves:

Sniffles, a runny nose and/or a mild cough, **without fever**

Vague complaints of aches and pains

Threadworm – if being treated

Stay at home - if your child has any of the following symptoms, please keep them at home:

APPEARANCE, BEHAVIOUR - Unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused or irritable, fatigue or run down, chills, aching all over. This is sufficient to keep a child at home.

FEVER - Temperature of 99.8 degrees Fahrenheit/37.6 Celsius or higher. A fever overnight may well seem resolved first thing in the morning, but it is best for a child to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to kindergarten.

DIARRHOEA or VOMITING - The child must stay away from the kindergarten for at least 48 hours from the last bout of diarrhoea or vomiting.

CHICKEN POX - Children must stay at home for 5 days after the onset of blisters, or until all vesicles are scabbed over and dry.

If your child shows any of the above symptoms at kindergarten, you will be contacted and asked to take him/her home.

CONTACT DETAILS

It is essential that, in case of an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, the kindergarten is able to contact each child's parents.

Similarly, it is essential that parents are able to contact the kindergarten.

For each child we have a contact sheet, with details and phone numbers of responsible adults. It is essential that this is kept up to date.

We have a telephone in the kindergarten. We will either answer it immediately, or please leave a message and we will respond as soon as possible. If your child is not attending a session due to illness, please phone us to let us know that morning. Our number is 01622 205914.

PARENTAL SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement in Cobnuts Kindergarten can take many forms:

- By attending parents' evenings. This is a vital link to understand what your child does in kindergarten, enjoy some of the activities yourself, and meet other parents.
- We invite parents to share in several festivals during the year.
- Parents may also like to participate in the role of class contact. We have two parent class contacts at the moment in the kindergarten who liaise with the kindergarten teacher and parents and help the kindergarten teacher organise festivals and parents' evenings.
- By being part of the management committee, which helps to support and run the kindergarten.

PROBLEMS AND COMPLAINTS

All children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our kindergarten and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the kindergarten.

How to complain:

1. Any parent who is uneasy about an aspect of the kindergarten's provision, first of all talks over his/her worries and anxieties with the kindergarten teacher. A time will be arranged for a confidential discussion to take place.
2. If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent puts the concerns or complaint in writing to the kindergarten teacher and the management committee. This will be acknowledged promptly.

Most complaints should be able to be resolved informally at stage 1 or stage 2.

3. The parent can request a meeting with the kindergarten teacher and a designated member of the management committee. Both the parent and teacher can have a friend or partner present if required. An agreed written record of the discussion is made. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it. The signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.
4. If the complaint is still not resolved at this stage, or if there is a possible breach of our registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate). Parents are free to approach Ofsted directly during any stage of this complaint procedure.

A record of complaints against our kindergarten and/or the children and/or the adults working in our kindergarten is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.

The address and telephone number of our Ofsted regional centre are:

Ofsted Early Years
The National Business Unit,
Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231

Email: www.ofsted.gov.uk/parents

These details are displayed on our kindergarten notice board.

If a child appears to be at risk, our kindergarten follows the procedures of the Area Child Protection Committee in our local authority. In these cases, both the parent and the kindergarten are informed and the kindergarten teacher works with Ofsted or the area Child Protection

Committee to ensure the complaint is investigated fully and followed by appropriate action.

FEES

Standard fees are £20.00 per session. Three- and four-year-old children are entitled to KCC funding for 15 hours kindergarten time a week. This means that they can have 4 sessions per week completely free.

Our kindergarten is registered with KCC for 'Free for Two' funding for families of children aged 2 ½ -3 who fit the financial criteria.

You will be advised by us when you are entitled to claim for the funding, and how to do so. Unless otherwise agreed with the committee, we expect children to attend for a minimum of two sessions per week.

Invoices and Payment

Fees can be paid termly (3 terms), or in half-termly or monthly instalments. If you choose to pay per term, an invoice will be sent a week before the beginning of each term. Payment is required at the beginning of each term (or month, if paying monthly).

Notice

We require one term's notice if a child is leaving (for fee-paying children), otherwise the term's fee will become due and payable. In the unlikely event of parents being asked to remove a child, one term's notice will normally be given or the outstanding fees refunded.

Fees Acceptance Form

When a date is set for your child to start kindergarten you will be asked to sign the fees acceptance form.

MOVING ON

Steiner Schools take children into formal education from the age of 6 to 7 years. (This is at least one year after the state requirement that a child should be enrolled in full time education by the first term after their 5th birthday.)

Cobnuts is registered for children up to the age of 6 which means that parents wishing to send their child to a Steiner school can keep their child at Cobnuts until the child is ready to move on. If you have any questions about this process, please feel free to ask.

We have a DVD and video which explain more about Steiner Education, which you are welcome to borrow, and we would encourage any interested parents to visit a Steiner School.

FURTHER READING

There are many books which relate to the Steiner approach to child development, and early years care and education. We have a fairly comprehensive library of books at the kindergarten, which you are welcome to borrow. Some titles which we recommend are:

- *Well, I Wonder - Sally Schweitzer
- Free to Learn - Lynn Oldfield
- *You are your Child's First Teacher – R.Baldwin
- Natural Childhood: A Practical Guide to the First Seven Years - John B Thomson
- *Education Towards Freedom – Frans Carlgren
- *Festivals, Family and Food – Diane Carey and Judy Large
- *Work and Play in Early Childhood - Freya Jaffke
- *Painting with Children – Brunhild Muller
- *Set Children Free – Martin Large
- *The Way of The Child - A.C. Harwood
- *The Secret of Happy Children - Steve Biddulph
- All Year Round - Ann Druitt, Christine Fynes-Clinton and Marije Rowling
- *Happy Child, Happy Home – Lou Harvey-Zahre

***copy in the kindergarten library**

