



Newsletter of the Maidstone Steiner Kindergarten Initiative  
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As we start a new school year at Cobnuts Kindergarten, it is definitely time to update all our friends and supporters with news of what has been happening since our last Newsletter in February. We have seen an exciting year of steady growth in the number of children attending Cobnuts, and we are now open five mornings a week, with 10 children enrolled. We still have spaces for more children, and anyone with a child aged 3–6 who is interested in the kindergarten is more than welcome to contact us.

Our teacher, Carol Hooper, and assistant, Sue Mortimer have created a magical, warm and welcoming space which the children really enjoy and flourish in. This year Carol is unable to continue as kindergarten teacher, and we are very happy that Sue is able to take over the role of teacher. We are in the process of recruiting a new assistant to help her.

We have been accepted by KCC for their scheme for assisted funding for nursery places, which means that all 3 and 4 year old children are eligible for a subsidy of their kindergarten fees. This will make Cobnuts more accessible to families and will help with our continuing growth.

#### **Our first Ofsted inspection**

We had our first Ofsted inspection at the end of March. Luckily we had a couple of days warning, so there was a weekend of frantic activity making sure that every-

thing was shipshape and that all our protocols and policies were up to date! The inspector spent a whole morning in the kindergarten, observing the session, and was able to speak to parents, the teacher and assistant, and the committee chairman.

The inspector was impressed with the kindergarten and graded it 'good' in all the areas that she looked at. She noted that the children arrived happily at the kindergarten and were eager to join in with activities. They felt secure and settled, and enjoyed playing together and sharing activities. Her report highlighted the benefit to the children's health of their playing outside in the garden every day; and having healthy organic snacks which are shared by the staff and children at snacktime.

We were very pleased to have such a positive response to Cobnuts, and hope that this augurs well for next year, when we will be assessed for the educational as well as the childcare aspect of our work.

#### **Our first summer term**

Whitsun was celebrated in the kindergarten with a festival, including songs, a special feast of white food for our snack, and the room decorated with twelve white doves and twelve white shells with candles in for the table. The garden too was decorated, with gold spirals hanging in the trees.

We celebrated St Johns with the parents from kindergarten, and families from the

parent and toddler groups joined us at the kindergarten for a picnic in the garden. The children played together.

With the beautiful crafts and painting carrying a summer theme, and along with the ever-changing creative play of the children, we all found ourselves drawn to spending more time out in the wonderful garden at Cobnuts. We enjoyed picnics with the parents joining us, and stories in the dappled shade of the tree.

The hard work digging the circular vegetable patches was rewarded with crops of sweet radishes, which we enjoyed with our snack on Thursday mornings. The children had also helped in the planting of carrots, parsnips, pumpkins, tomatoes, squash, peppers and onions. The fruit of all our hard work back then is now obvious – with large pumpkins festooned on the garden fence, and the tomatoes and carrots ripening for us to harvest and enjoy in our homemade soup.

The new waterproof tarpaulin covering the sandpit has also provided an unexpected source of fun, plus a way of conserving water, as the children have been able to collect bucketfuls of rainwater to water the vegetables, and enjoy a good splash around too. Recycling in action!

Looking forward to this new Autumn term, we welcome four new children, and their families, to the kindergarten – Amir, Fletcher, Jordan, and Rafferty. We hope they will be very happy here.

With the kindergarten decorated with sheaves of wheat and barley, corn dollies, rosehips and seed pots, we are celebrating harvest. In this busy time we will also be preparing to celebrate Michaelmas, with our kindergarten activities, and our festival on Saturday 30th September.

Looking a little further ahead, it is very exciting to look at all our pumpkins in the garden and to wonder just how big they will grow before we harvest them in October!

### The Friday parent and child group

Initially, the Friday group started because the Tuesday group was so popular, it was over-subscribed. It has been running for a year now and has been a great success. Ten families with fourteen children – aged from six months to three years – regularly attend the sessions; two children of which have recently progressed to three mornings a week at the kindergarten.

The atmosphere at the Friday sessions is always warm and welcoming and there has been a genuine rapport between the parents and children.

The children play, usually harmoniously, whilst the parents participate in various seasonal craft activities.

Normally fruit is prepared by a parent and child for snack-time.

However, birthdays are looked forward to greatly because then a cake is baked for the special birthday child and we all celebrate together.

During the course of the morning each family has secretly drawn a picture. All of the individual pictures are then put into a unique birthday book. This is presented to the child during circle time along with an individual, handcrafted gift.

It has been a delightful pleasure to attend the parent and child group over the last year. The calming environment of Cobnuts and its cosy homeliness has been a real joy for all the families.

P.S. The 2 parent and child groups are changing their times to Tuesday and Thursday afternoons 1.15–2.45pm as the kindergarten is now running every morning.

### Autumn recipe for apple muffins

Ingredients (makes 12):

- 275g (10 oz) plain flour
- 1 level tbsp baking powder
- 75g (3 oz) caster sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs (medium)
- 225ml (8fl oz) milk
- 110g (4 oz) butter, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 225g (8 oz) cooking apples, peeled and chopped
- 1 tsp cinnamon



1. Preheat oven to 200c, 400f, gas mark 6 and place 12 muffin cases in a muffin tin.

2. Sieve flour, baking powder and salt together in a large bowl.
3. In a separate bowl, mix together sugar, eggs, milk, butter and vanilla extract.
4. Fold flour etc. into egg mixture, add apple and cinnamon.
5. Mix gently to form a lumpy batter.
6. Divide mixture between muffin cases and bake at top of oven for 25–30 minutes until well risen and golden.

### The Summer Open Day

The sun kindly shone down on the Summer Open Day at the kindergarten, and the garden made a lovely setting for the afternoon. There was a friendly mix of new faces and old, thanks to the beginnings of the publicity group's leaflet campaign. Children of all ages were catered for by the beautiful play space, craft opportunity, and relaxed environment. There was also plenty of opportunity for adults to chat, and enjoy the space. Delicious cakes had been contributed, and were enjoyed by all, and there was gentle music from Bons, Jackie and Zoe on violin and recorder. A puppet show had originally been planned, but it was decided that this might not be best suited to the children's lively summertime mood. This made way for a very entertaining impromptu performance by Clive on his saxophone, which managed to draw some parents to their feet to dance with the children on the grass in the sunshine.

Hans spoke a few words to thank everyone for coming, and creating such a lovely atmosphere together. It felt as if the spirit of the summer had really arrived.

### Sponsors

We would like to thank the many businesses and organisations that have agreed to help with our publicity by displaying or distributing our leaflets.

**Health Matters** Star Arcade, Maidstone  
**Holland and Barret** Chequers Centre, Maidstone

### Kent Cloth Nappy Network

**Luddesdown Organic Farm**  
Tel: 01474 815044 (box scheme)

**Goddard Farm** Bonnington, Ashford,  
Tel: 01233 720506 (organic box scheme)

**Churn Farm** Churn Lane, Horsmonden,  
Tel: 01892 722577

**Mole End Farms** Hartleylands Farm,  
Cranbrook, Tel: 01580 720319  
Farmers Markets in Yalding, Tunbridge Wells, Penshurst and West Malling

**The Old Dairy**, Sutton Road, Langley,  
Tel: 861113 (Farm shop and organic box scheme)

**Una's Barn** High Street, Headcorn  
(Centre for 'sustainable Headcorn')

**Harvest4U** 25 High Street, Aylesford,  
ME20 7AX, Tel 717019  
(organic box scheme)

**Micha Kennard** Homoeopath,  
Tel: 01622 730526

**Christine Tsavellas** Homoeopath in  
Rochester, Tel: 01634 842583

**Headcorn Natural Health Centre**  
Tel: 890803

**The Paean Centre** Mangravel Ave,  
Tel: 340059

**B-pro-active Healthcare** 22 Church St,  
Maidstone

**King Street Therapy Rooms**  
West Malling, Tel: 01732 220134

**Ralph Evans Herbalists**  
Tel: 01732 871818

**Aylesford Osteopath Practice**  
Tel: 710536

**Medway Osteopathy Clinic** 36 City Way,  
Rochester Tel: 01634 814700

**Mollycoddles** 44 High St,  
Rochester, Tel: 01634 848895

**European School of Osteopathy**  
Tonbridge Road

**Museum of Kent Life**

**Capstone Park**

**Riverside Country Park**

**Tyland Barn**

**Iden Croft Herb Garden**

**Maidstone Library** and  
surrounding branch libraries



**AGM 2006 – Cobnuts Kindergarten**  
8th of Nov, 8.00pm

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Everybody is welcomed to this years meeting which will be held at the Kindergarten (address at the top)

## C A L E N D A R 2.2006 / Activities for Children

### 30th of Sep, 2.30pm Michaelmas festival at Cobnuts Kindergarten

Come and celebrate this harvest-time festival with apple-pressing, craft activities, outdoor play, music and refreshments.

### 22nd of Oct, 3.00pm Puppet show at Cobnuts Kindergarten

A puppet show for young children of the fairy tale 'The Frog Prince'. This will be followed by a simple puppet-making work shop for parents and children. Cost £5 per family.

### 12th of Nov, 4.00pm Martinmas Puppet Show and Lantern Walk

Bring your own candle lantern (if you have one) and join in this festival at the kindergarten.

### 3rd of Dec, 3.45pm Advent Spiral at Blackthorn Medical Centre, St Andrews Road

A lovely festival marking the beginning of Advent. A spiral of candlelight is slowly built up in our advent garden. Music, a story, refreshments. A peaceful magical start to the preparation for Christmas.