

Firm Foundations



Sure Start News from Medway Council

Issue 9

Spring 2008

Serving You

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Foreword

Welcome to latest edition of Firm Foundations. The days are getting longer, summer is just around the corner, and I'm sure it won't be long before we actually get some sunshine!

In this edition you'll find news of local developments such as the publication of our first "Childcare Sufficiency Assessment" – an audit of the availability of children's services and the needs of local families – and the launch of the Family Information Service. Both of these have come about as a result of the Childcare Act which seeks to ensure that early childhood services are available to all families.

We all know that the quality of services is key. I'm delighted that we have a growing number of early years and childcare providers that are being judged as "Outstanding" by Ofsted. I recently had the pleasure of awarding certificates to 8 outstanding registered childminders at the 2008 AGM of MARC (the Medway Association of Registered Childminders). They join a roll of honour that includes Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup, Kiddiwinks Pre School Playgroup, Leapfrog Day Nursery, Prima Montessori Day Nursery, Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre, Thames View Infant School Treasure Club, and All Saints Primary, Balfour Infant and Woodlands Primary schools.

Across Medway in pre-schools, day nurseries, children's centres, schools, out of school clubs, and in the homes of registered childminders, children are being given the very best start in life. The skill and professionalism of hundreds of early years practitioners is making the real difference that will boost the life chances of Medway's children.

Enjoy the sun!

Mark Holmes—Early Years Strategy Manager



Farewell Transformation Fund hello Graduate Leader Fund

The Transformation Fund has been really successful in Medway and has enabled large numbers of practitioners to access training and qualifications. We have been delighted that so many practitioners have grasped the opportunity to take their next professional development steps with the support of the Transformation Fund over the last two years. From April 2008 the Transformation Fund ceased to exist. Instead, in line with the Government's aim to have an Early Years Professional (EYP) in every daycare setting from 2015 and every Children's Centre from 2010, we are pleased to announce the arrival of the Graduate Leader Fund. This fund moves away from level three to five training and moves the focus to supporting practitioners gain L5/6 qualifications and gaining EYPS.

We hope to shortly be announcing how we plan to support practitioners with the Graduate Leader Fund and provide further information as to the benefits for each PVI setting. We also hope to be able to give details of how we may be able to support practitioners gain L3 qualifications in the absence of the Transformation Fund, details were not available at the time of going to press. Please look out for further information shortly. In the meantime you can gain further information on the Graduate Leader Fund on the Every Child Matters website. For further information on Early Years Professionals please log on to the Children's Workforce Development Council website.

Medway Family Information Service

From April 2008, Medway Children's Information Service will be formally known as Medway Family Information Service.

For several years, local authorities have had a duty to provide information to the public on childcare and related services through their Children Information Services.

In line with national guidance, we are now extending our remit to meet the full information needs of families – whatever their circumstances, and whatever the age of their children.

Medway Family Information Service has a mission to provide comprehensive, accurate up to date information about childcare and about other services and support for parents of children and young people up to the age of 20.

Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006 sets out the key categories of information to be provided to parents or prospective parents through Family Information Services:

- ◆ Information about childcare
- ◆ Information about other services, facilities or publications that may be of benefit to parents, prospective parents, children or young people.

Our new name - **Medway Family Information Service** will be used in all correspondence and publicity materials from April 2008.

Our name is changing – but our number stays the same!

For more information, contact us on 01634 335566 or familyinfo@medway.gov.uk

Read all about it!

The new theme for thinking imaginatively about reading, as part of the National Year of Reading 2008! See www.yearofreading.org.uk

For our next magazine (and possibly the year of reading website!), we are looking to print all the wonderful ways you are encouraging reading in your schools and settings (the more imaginative the better!), such as taking photos of your children reading anywhere and everywhere, developing your book corner or just photos of the exciting and inspiring activities or opportunities you have created to encourage everyone to share books!

For more information or to become involved, please contact victoria.salisbury@medway.gov or katy.fridd@medway.gov.uk



Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

A new duty to “secure sufficient childcare” came into effect in April 2008 with the aim of ensuring that local families have access to quality, flexible, affordable childcare - thereby reducing the number of children living in workless households which is a vital step towards eradicating child poverty. This duty supports the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda, for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 places the responsibility on local authorities to undertake a “childcare sufficiency assessment” as the first step forward in enabling them to secure sufficient childcare provision, by identifying gaps and establishing plans to meet the needs of parents.

Medway’s early years service has now completed its first sufficiency assessment, which has mapped and matched the availability of local childcare to the current and emerging demand for childcare across Medway. The emerging results from this assessment, and the gaps in the market they reveal, will serve as a baseline for future research and planning that will be crucial in enhancing the childcare market in Medway.

You can read the full report or summary by contacting the Medway Families Information Service 01634 335566 :

For more information or to comment on the report please email childcareinfo@medway.gov.uk or write to Medway Families Information Service, Gun Wharf, Dork Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR.

The learning and support team have moved!

You may be aware that we have recently moved from Woodlands Primary School Children’s Centre, to our office base which is now at Gun Wharf in Chatham. We are currently waiting on the remodelling of our new training rooms and hope to be able to welcome you to them in September.

We remain committed to offering training and support to every practitioner, school and setting. As a result we have moved much of the training that is happening and we are delivering it at numerous venues around Medway, we politely ask for your patience at this time and ask that you please check where the training is being delivered on your confirmation letter.

If you have any queries please contact our training administration team, you can reach Kim Turner on 01634 338529 (school training) and Jacqui Williams 01634 338611 (PVI training) or check the training diary on Moodle <http://www.e-learningatlast.org.uk>



What to do if you are worried a child is being abused

All settings should now have a copy of this document accessible to **all** staff.

Ofsted have recently recommended to a setting that a copy of this document is on show for all staff/parents to see and access if need be.

It was also suggested that this document is cited in your Child Protection Policy i.e. 'At this setting we have regard to the government document 'What to do....' it is accessible to all staff and parents/carers and we are all aware of the flow charts highlighting the process for monitoring or referring a child. We also work in line with the local Medway Safeguarding Board and follow the local guidelines for seeking further information through a consultation or referring a child through the Customer First process. All staff are aware of this telephone number, although it is likely that our DCPC would take the lead in any such circumstance.

HINT: Why not see whether you can make space on your entrance hall/entrance space information board for the document and flow charts (pages 16 - 20) to be displayed. It is good to be open with parents and let them know from the very beginning that we are here to support them in keeping their children safe and happy.

There is also a poster available, which could also be displayed on your board. It would be more relevant to put the Customer First information up in your staff room/area.

If you have any queries regarding these documents please contact your Early Years Advisor or Inclusion Advisor.

Both document and poster are available from:
DfES Publications
PO Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham NG15 0DJ

Telephone: 0845 60 555 60

Website: www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

Please quote reference: 04320-2006DOM-EN

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused



Every Child Matters
Change For Children



I do! - Making a commitment

How far have you got with the EYFS? What does it mean to put the principles in to practice?

One suggestion that has been used by a couple of settings already is to explore how their practice reflects the principles of the EYFS.

Following on from their team cascade they planned time to look at each theme and its related principle and commitments. They took one commitment at a time and brainstormed what they are doing already under the following headings:

- Policies and procedures
- Organisation and routines
- Environment
- Interactions



If there were areas that they were not sure about then they jotted them down on a sheet for future action. They found this process valuable because:

- It helped to familiarise them with the themes and related principles and commitments;
- It reassured them that much of their practice already fulfilled these commitments;
- It identified aspects of practice that needed to be developed in order to fulfil those commitments – a fantastic starting point for an action plan!

Finally they used the information gathered to create a vision statement for each commitment that they displayed alongside the poster together with photographs to illustrate their practice, as information for parents.

In memory of Ella Washington

It was with very deep sadness that we were met with the news of Ella's sudden death. She was a very large part of our team, although small in stature! She enjoyed sharing a joke and her facial expressions were something that even the newest of team members immediately came to recognise as that fun side of Ella.

Ella's family are a close family unit and have been clearly touched by the amount that has been raised in memory of Ella for Youth Music. Ella's enthusiasm for developing music in the Early years shows quite clearly in the legacy that she has left in Medway early years settings.

Ella was always reflective and striving for the best possible provision for children. She left us with a desire to fulfil her aspirations, working along side schools and settings to enable our children to have the best start in life.

Across the page are some thoughts from Ella

The great outdoors!

The staff at Boundary Road Preschool were devastated when they discovered the trees surrounding their outdoor area were to be cut down. It left the playgroup in direct sunlight, however, thanks to the scouts, who own the building, they are now able to access the surrounding woodland.



Pat Collet, the supervisor, says "At University we learned about Danish pre-schools and how the children were taught in the woods, so we talked to the scout master and we now have a woodland path with log steps to climb and a fire pit with a seating area. Eventually we hope to have a fairy grotto, where the tree trunks are carved to represent pixies and animals etc.



The children love the adventure of walking through the woods, it's fantastic for their gross motor skills and there is always so much to see. They learn about nature and recognise dangers such as nettles and how to avoid them and of course the scenery is always changing.

We were initially very wary of the risks, but a saying in Denmark- *You have to have a bit of ice in your stomach*- helped to put our fears in proportion. Danish four year olds use matches to light fires (with adult supervision) and although we are not yet confident enough to allow that to happen, we are finding that the children are really motivated to learn outdoors.



A quote from Pat "Children need to be able to take risks and the safety standards are the same throughout Europe. It's just the way you choose to interpret them. So if *you* can get a bit of ice in your stomach, I would say get the children out into the woods and ENJOY!"

12 little thoughts from Ella

The final words are Ella's that was found on a scrap of Ikea paper on her desk....

Spend more time than money on your kids

Let them play

Tell them you love them

Let them discover music and singing

Let them use their imagination and creativity

Let them share your world

Hug them every day

Make sure to talk with them

Let them climb, skip and run

... but never force them

Praise them throughout life

... and share their world

Helpful hints

What are the rules for nappy changing?

- Generally it is ok to change nappies on the floor, especially for older children, as long as area is clean/sterile (i.e. on a large enough mat) and there is a screen for privacy.
- Nappy changing on the floor in a screened off area of the main room is fine. Double mats are good - you can get a large mat about 4 to 6 feet square then put a padded mat on top. This is suggested for 4 yr olds who can't be lifted onto a changing table.
- Look at ways of working with parents for getting children toilet trained, so it's just a child with a disability or the occasional 'accident' they have to deal with. There has been talk recently about the problems of delaying toilet training because children aren't developing proper body awareness.
- Ofsted said it was OK that the changing was taking place in a room where children play with a screen up, as long as it doesn't effect H&S.



Is there a telephone number or support available for PVI settings to phone if they require support / language translation / help for parents in regard to EAL?



- There is no translation service for anybody, including schools, unless they pay for it. Settings need to forge links with their local communities to get volunteer translators, some people use older children but that is risky, some associations such as the Chinese one do voluntary translating.

Are there any specific guidelines on making up babies' milk bottles (time allowed to cool, how long they are allowed to sit out without being stored in a fridge if they are only half drunk e.g, with toddlers drinking cow's milk who might put their bottles down and then go back to them)

- Current guidelines suggest that it is unsafe to make up a feed for your baby in advance. If you are going out for the day you should fill a flask with boiled water and only combine it with the formula milk powder just before your baby needs a feed. This will help to minimise the risk of your baby being exposed to any harmful bacteria.
- The actual standard (7) says the registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.
- When making up the feeds etc, it would be recommended that the manufacturers instructions on the packaging should be followed.



Places to go in Medway

There are many places to go in Medway that are suitable for children. 'Monkey Bizz' Activity Centre is one of the many.

Monkey Bizz provides adventurous indoor softplay for children up to twelve. Their main playframe, 'Monkey Maze', is a three storey "jungle" for four to twelve year olds. There is also a large 'Tots Town' play area for babies to under fives.

There's a large cafe area and the 'Bizz Café' serves a range of hot and cold food and drink.

Monkey Bizz is open 7 days a week - 9.30am to 6.00pm except Mondays during term time.



Monkey Bizz also has two party rooms that can accommodate up to thirty children each. Each room is brightly coloured and decorated with jungle characters. There's music and multi-coloured disco lights. They also provide a dedicated table in the Bizz Cafe for adult guests, so they can chat or have a cup of tea while the children play.

The party includes:

1 1/4 hour's play at Monkey Bizz

private party room for 45 mins

choose between cooked meal or traditional party food

ice cream

jugs of juice

party bags and balloons

Monkey Bizz invitations

Prices:

Adults – FREE

Under 1's – FREE

Children aged 1 – 3 £4.40

Children aged 4 – 12 £5.20



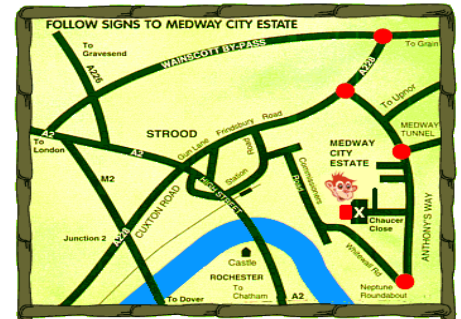
Monkey-Bizz

Unit 1, Arden Business Park

Chaucer Close,

Medway City Estate

Rochester, Kent ME2 4LF



8 things you can do with a builders tray!

1. Fill it with shaving foam, add colours and a variety of tools to explore the texture including –toothbrushes, combs, sticks
2. Create the bear hunt scenes to support the retelling of the story using natural materials
3. Create art in the style of Andrew Goldsworthy using natural materials see <http://www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/bibliography/>
4. Freeze water in different shaped containers and leave them in the tray for the children to explore. For added interest coloured the water you are freezing.
5. Be gardeners – provide soil, plant containers, trowels and spades and pot up artificial flowers, this play could be linked to a role-play around a garden.
6. Make gloop – ratio of mix is two cups of cornflower to one cup of water to make your preferred texture, add colours for extra interest.
7. Provide a range of balls – younger children can explore the balls positioned within the tray – rather like a ball pool.
8. Add cushions, blankets, tape stories and books identify it as a quieter space



Congratulations for Outstanding OFSTED!

Huge congratulations to Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup for receiving an outstanding OFSTED inspection in all areas with no recommendations!

The OFSTED Inspector arrived at the setting, which has been running since 1967, completely unannounced (on a day when both Manager and Deputy were not available). The 'pack-a-way' playgroup is committee run and operates from one large room with access to a kitchen, toilets and an enclosed outdoor area.

Manager Carolyn Bassindale said "It just goes to show how much the staff work together as a team and how each individual is so important to the setting, to receive such wonderful comments is very well deserved and appreciated"

The setting looks very closely at individual children, they have good relationships with parents and send out questionnaires to each child's family to find out more information about the child's home life and interests so planning can be done accordingly. The setting creates a mind map for each child with a photo of the child in the centre and their interests and information coming from it.

Some of the areas which the inspector highlighted as particularly good practice were:

- Their partnership with parents / carers
- Adult / child interactions
- Talking & thinking books
- Planning

"Children are valued, respected and encouraged to achieve their full potential whilst learning through play following curriculum guidelines".

The setting staff were very pleased that planning was highlighted as they felt that this was a strength in their setting, as they allow the children to do the planning and feel it is very much a working document. They plan to further improve their relationships with parents / carers and to continue attending training courses to enhance staff professional development. They wish to continue working together as a team and build on the strengths of all staff so their outstanding status remains intact!

Many congratulations to the whole team at Hempstead Village Hall! Well done!



Little Explorers Leapathon

Little Explorers Day Nursery which is based in Rochester, decided they were going to celebrate the 2008 leap year by having a sponsored 'Leapathon'. All money raised was donated to Demelza House Children's Hospice.



The children (aged from 6 months to 5 years) and staff dressed in green and had their faces painted like frogs if they wished and the children made frog hats to wear. There were a variety of sponsored activities and events that the children took part in, which were adapted to suit the age and stage of the children taking part. These activities included:



- Space hopper races
- How many jumps on a trampoline in a minute
- Throwing bean bags through a frog's mouth
- How many leaps across lily pads
- How long they could keep the frog on the parachute

Whilst enjoying participating in the activities the children also learnt about health and fitness and the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. When the event had finished the children sat down to enjoy a tea of green food which consisted of: pea soup, cucumber & celery sticks, sandwiches and lime jelly. The nursery's cook also made a very special 'leapathon' cake for the children to enjoy as a special treat.



Despite the weather being very cold and windy, a fun day was had by all and a massive £500 was raised for Demelza House.



Dates for the diary

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
National Grounds Week– This week of focused activity encourages schools and early years settings to get outside and use their grounds.	9–13 June 2008	www.ltl.org.uk	Speak to your early years advisor about the grounds week activities that will be going on in your area.
National Bike Week— Bike Week is an annual opportunity to promote cycling as a source of fitness and fun.	14–22 June 2008	www.bikeweek.limelightinteractive.com	What can you do in your setting to promote fitness, using bikes and other methods?
Fathers Day	15 June 2008	www.orenoque.com/fathers-day-crafts/	What can you do in your setting to help your children with fathers day cards / gifts?
Bring your bear Week— Children bring their teddy bear or favourite soft toy into school or nursery for a day and donate £1 to help sick and vulnerable babies. Adults can take part too	23–27 June 2008	www.action.org.uk/get_involved/bring_your_bear.php	If your setting registers you will receive a free fundraising pack filled with lots of exciting ideas. This will include useful educational materials, activity sheets and 200 Paddington Bear stickers.
Child Safety Week—this years theme is “make a change, make a difference”	23–29 June 2008	www.capt.org.uk/csweek	The message for Child Safety Week is “even small changes in our everyday lives can make big differences to children’s safety”.
Children’s Art Day—This event provides opportunities for thousands of children, young people and families to get involved in art projects and activities.	1 July 2008	www.engage.org/projects/artworks.aspx	How can you encourage your children an parents to become involved in art projects and activities.

Feedback / contact details

This magazine is written for you and we really value your views, we would like you to send us news about your setting or any other information you think may be useful to other providers. Some ideas are:

- Outings with your children (e.g. local visits, trips to the park etc.)
- Events at your setting (e.g. coffee mornings, competitions etc.)
- Any media recommendations (e.g. TV programmes, books etc.)
- Ideas about the kinds of articles you would like to read

Please note if you wish to send in any photos of the children in your setting, you need to ensure permission has been granted by the parents/ carers before the photo is sent to us. Please contact us if you would like us to send you a photograph release form.

As this is your magazine we want **you** to tell **us** what you would like to see, contact us to request information on interesting topics that you feel would benefit your own setting which will in turn benefit others.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline for articles</u>
Autumn Issue	Friday 18 July 2008

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