

Firm Foundations



Sure Start News from Medway Council

Issue 10 Summer 2008

Serving You

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Foreword

Welcome to the latest edition of Firm Foundations – the newsletter for people who work with young children in Medway.

There are numerous factors that influence a child's experience in the early years. The health of a mother during pregnancy; the quality of care in the post-natal period; the family home environment; access to play opportunities; the skills of practitioners in childcare and early education settings – all can have a profound influence on children's outcomes.

In recent years we have come to better understand what we, as people who work with children, can do to most effectively support families in giving their child the best possible start in life. Learning from research programmes and practical projects enables us to focus on what we can do to help children develop and thrive.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is one example of how we are putting that understanding into practice. A new, evidence-based single framework, for all people who work with children from birth to five years of age. This summer's EYFS Profile data is showing the impact that you are having on improving children's outcomes in Medway. For the fourth year in succession, the proportion of children aged five years attaining the desired level of all-round development has risen. Of particular interest is the fact that the rate of progress is greatest amongst children living in more disadvantaged circumstances. The gap in outcomes between children who do well and those who do less well is closing.

This is exactly what we want to see, as it is evidence that concentrating on giving all children a high quality start in life is working.

Of course, there is still much more to do. Until every Medway setting is as outstanding as the best provision, and every Medway practitioner has all the skills and knowledge they need to ensure that every Medway child is supported to develop to their full potential, then we will need to keep on improving.

But, the evidence shows that we are moving in very much the right direction.

Best wishes

Mark Holmes

Strategic manager - early years services

Family Information Service

Medway Family Information Service is an award winning free service that aims to support parents and carers by providing childcare information and impartial advice on childcare related issues.

Services provided by Medway Family Information Service include:

- Up to date information on both registered and unregistered local childcare including day nurseries, childminders, out of school clubs, holiday playschemes, parent and toddler groups and other leisure activities available locally
- Help and advice on the different forms of childcare and nursery education
- Information on available help with childcare costs
- Up to date list of local job vacancies in childcare
- Information on childcare careers, qualifications required and training opportunities

Contact FIS by phone: 01634 335566 **email:** familyinfo@medway.gov.uk

local website: www.medway.gov.uk/childcare **national website:** www.childcarelink.gov.uk/medway

Office opening hours Monday to Thursday: 8.30am to 5.30pm **Friday:** 8.30am to 5.00pm

Quality Improvement Programme 'Reflections' Awards Ceremony



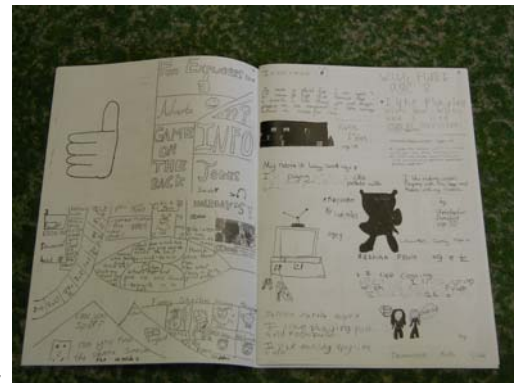
The Wendy House Preschool, Horsted Infant School and Deanwood Primary Education Technology School attended a ceremony on Tuesday 22 July to receive their awards from Rose Collinson (Director of Children and Adults - caring and learning) and to celebrate their success on completing the Medway Early years Quality Improvement Programme 'Reflections'.

The Medway Early years Quality Improvement Programme 'Reflections', replaced the Medway Early Years Quality Assurance (Kitemark) scheme when the national agenda for reflecting upon and developing high quality early years practice and provision changed.

They have collected evidence of their good practice across EYFS. This included reflection of early years services from working with parents and the community to curriculum provision inside and outside, inclusive practice, healthy eating and management of the setting. Our congratulations go to all of the staff teams from these settings.

Shout about it!

After School Clubs across Medway have been supporting the National Year of Reading by creating a Playwork newspaper. Medway children have been busy writing articles and drawing pictures to promote their clubs and share news with each other.



The Playwork team collated all the children's work and 'produced' a newspaper full of exciting news stories and jokes. Each club was presented with a newspaper including the articles from their budding journalists to read and share.

All the children's hard work produced the fantastic first edition call 'Shout About It'.

Katy Fridd who edited the paper said 'The children of Medway were a real inspiration and embraced the Nation Year of Reading'.

Children's Centre Open Day

On Monday 23 June, parents and carers across Medway were invited to the exciting launch of 10 new Sure Start Children's Centres for families with young children and babies.

Most of Medway's Sure Start Children's Centres are part of local infant or primary schools, making them easy to access for families with children aged up to five years. Sure Start Children's Centres co-ordinate and provide local services for local communities.

The new children's centres bring together health and maternity services, information about getting back to work or training for parents, childcare, play and early education for all children aged up to five. The centres offer fantastic opportunities to meet other local parents, carers and children at one of the many meetings, groups or classes.



Expectant mothers at the Children's Centre Launch



The Mayor opening the Children's Centre at Kingfisher Primary School

These latest additions bring the numbers of centres in Medway to 14, serving more than two-thirds of the Medway area. More centres will be opened by 2010, by which time every family in Medway will be within reach of a local centre.

Portfolio Holder for Children's Services Cllr Les Wicks said: "The launch of the new Sure Start Children's Centres is very important for families in Medway. I am sure that parents will use the services offered by the centres to help give their children the best possible start in life."

Families in Medway can find out where their nearest Sure Start Children's Centre is by calling the Medway Family Information Service on **01634 335566**.



Speech & Language Therapists at Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre

Adult Education came along to Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre help families make fruit kebabs



Families playing in foam at Gun Lane Children's Centre

National Play Day

National playday is an annual event that takes place across the county promoting children's right to play. This Year's theme is called 'Give us a go!'

Smilers Holiday playscheme hosted Medway's event supported by the Playwork team on 6th August with an exciting day of fun and games to challenge and enthuse the children. Play opportunities included den building, toasting marshmallows, tug of war and team games. The children rose to each challenge exploring and discovering their own solutions, taking risks and making choices to support their right to play.



The playwork team support National Playday every year and hope to make next year's event bigger and better. Playday themes allow children to take part in adventurous play and aim to shake of the 'cotton wool' culture that can limit children's play.



Fair Play—Consulting Medway's Children

As part of the work around the Children's Plan and first England's play strategy, the government is giving children and young people the chance to have their say about the type of outside play space they like and share their views on how to make those spaces places to have fun and feel safe in.

A number of Medway holiday playschemes including Bradfields and Rainbow have taken part in the consultation process supporting their children to complete the Fair Play questionnaire and design their own dream play space. The children and young people age ranged from 4 –16.

The children's designs incorporated spaces to challenge and excite, including large wooden climbing structure, hideouts, places adults can't go, stages and places to sit and chill with friends, trees and shrubs, flower borders and places to dig. The designs ranged from very detailed to wild and wacky but all included areas for all ages, which is so often lacking in many of the existing play spaces of today. Both ends of the age spectrum showed consideration for each other.

The questionnaires have been sent back to the DCSF and the clubs eagerly await to see if they have won a digital camera and the children for a new more challenging space in which to play.



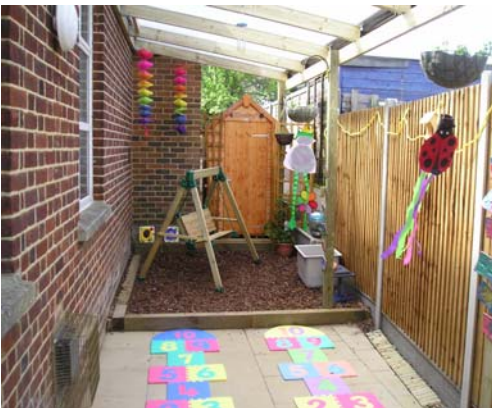
St Luke's Sensory Garden

St Luke's Pre-school, Rochester have built a garden at the back of their church setting which was a derelict space previously, at a cost of around £19,000 with funding from the National Lottery. It is a covered area and the pre-school staff have worked hard to develop it over the past few months. There is a play area, sand pit and water fountain and a covered area so they are not restricted to good weather use!



The children have produced some lovely artwork to be displayed in the garden and there are obviously lots of opportunities to learn about the environment and wildlife. The garden boasts a ladybird house, tadpoles, slow worms and plenty of plants.

The setting officially opened the garden on 3rd May which was a well attended and much enjoyed event organised by committee member and mum, Deborah Hope



The garden is an excellent addition to the school and has already provided lots of learning and fun for the children who attend.

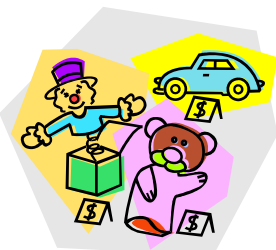
Well done to St Luke's for all their hard work and for producing a fantastic outdoor space.



Toys for Sale!

After 10 years a local Parent and Toddler group will sadly be closing at the end of this year.

The group intend to have a big celebration to mark the ten years of the group at the end of the year, but the group leader would like to inform other settings that they have lots of good quality toys available for sale.



They have a wide collection of toys, including a brand new two seater trike (Community playthings) Twinstar which has never been used and is selling for a fraction of the price.

Please call 01634 376270 for more information about the toys for sale

Well being and Involvement

It's that time in the year when practitioners everywhere are getting to know new children. Some children take longer to settle than others and at times we tend to feel under pressure to concentrate on the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage and forget that children won't learn effectively if their emotional well being isn't met.

We can all think of those children who are unsettled by going for lunch or outside. Here is some research that reinforces why we should allow children time and flexibility to settle in to a new environment. Time spent getting every child's well being established sets vital foundations for learning.

How do we know when a child's well-being is established?

Characteristics of well-being

- feeling at ease
- acting spontaneously
- showing vitality and self confidence
- openness to the surroundings (the child uses the environment and is flexible and imaginative)
- expressing 'inner rest' and relaxation (the child is not anxious)

Because

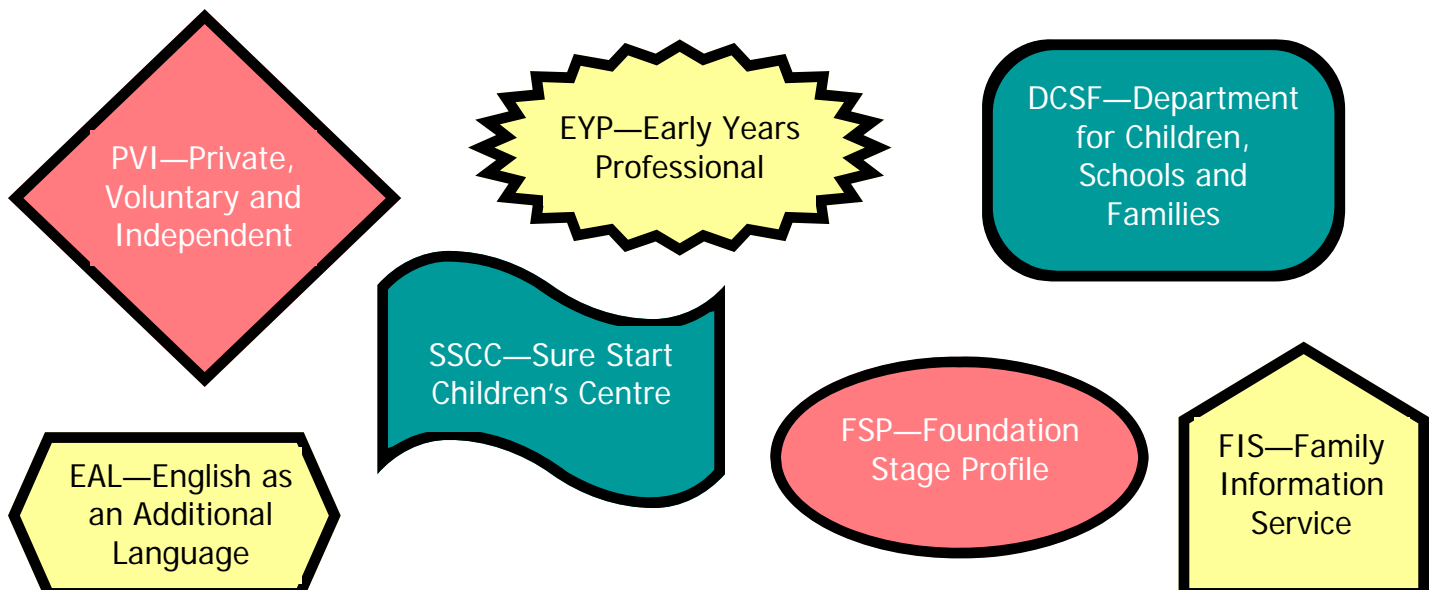
- the situation meets the child's basic needs
- the child has a positive idea of their self
- the child can make their needs understood

Well-being is a particular state that can be recognised by satisfaction, enjoyment and pleasure.

Resulting in

- emotional health

Jargon Buster

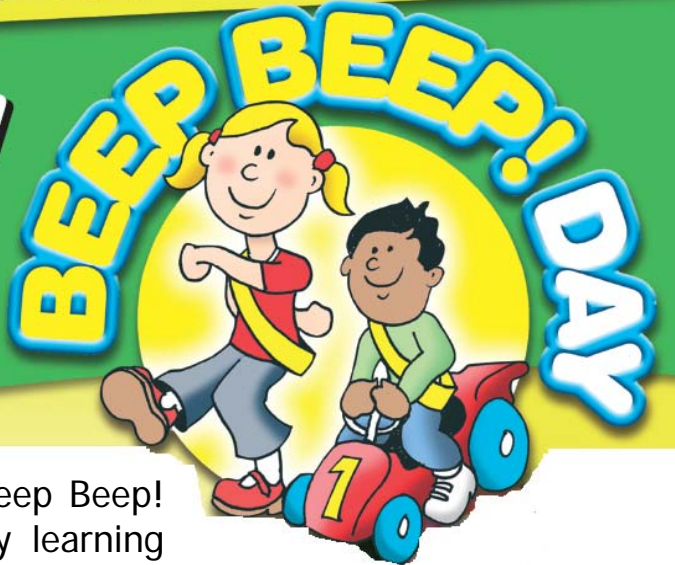


Beep Beep Day

CALL 01484 559909 TO REGISTER AND GET YOUR **FREE** RESOURCES

Teach road safety and save LIVES!

Beep Beep! Day is an educational and fundraising event that you can run on any day.



Brake have created a special event called Beep Beep! Day to help you kick-start your road safety learning and support Brake.

Whether you are a nursery, infant school, child minder, playgroup or children's club organiser, you can take part! You can choose to run your Beep Beep! Day on ANY day of the year. Brake send you stickers, posters, certificates and other fun give aways if you take part in Beep Beep! Day!

Organised by



Kindly sponsored by



The day provides an opportunity for you to teach simple lessons, such as holding hands and the word 'STOP', while children do fun activities, such as using ride-on toys on a marked route in a secure playground or hall, or making a giant poster of hand prints with the message 'We hold hands!' You can use Beep Beep! Day to help raise valuable funds for Brake and our work supporting families bereaved by road crashes.

To find out more or to register for Beep Beep Day

Call 01484 559909

email beepbeep@brake.org.uk

or go to www.brake.org.uk and click on Educators

Places to go in Medway

Arethusa Venture Centre is one of the many places to visit in Medway.

Specialising in adventurous outdoor learning for all ages, Arethusa Venture Centre is Open all year round with activities to suit all weather, activities are delivered by fully trained staff to instruct and lead you and your group through exciting challenges, with all the necessary equipment provided for your safety.

Arethusa's range of activities include Indoor and Outdoor Climbing, Swimming, High ropes and Low ropes, Archery, Adventure playground, Sailing, Motor Boating, Raft Building, Kayaking, Canoeing, Orienteering, Adventure walks and many more.



Every activity is closely supervised by staff who are fully qualified in their specialist areas and recognised by the relevant governing bodies to ensure a very safe environment enabling people of all ages to achieve. Everyone in the team is trained in essential first aid and emergency action plans.

Most of the outdoor activities are mirrored by indoor ones. There is a superb range of indoor climbing walls to offer an exciting range of activities all year round whatever the weather.



Arethusa have a few core beliefs that drive everything they do. Learning through experience, developing new skills, achieving self belief, problem solving through team work, valuing people, appreciating differences and all whilst having great fun.



To find out more contact:
 Arethusa Venture Centre
 Lower Upnor
 Rochester
 Kent ME2 4XB
 Telephone 01634 719933
 Fax 01634 295905
 Email info@arethusa.org.uk
 Or visit the website
www.arethusa.org.uk

Job Vacancies

Family Information Service

Advice / Information / Brokerage

Recruiting new staff for your setting is as easy as ABC...

The Family information service can advertise your vacancy free of charge for however long you need to advertise for. We also work together with Jobcentreplus so we can forward your vacancy to them, making advertising for new staff for your setting "child's play"!

Let us help you find the right staff for your setting.

For more information please ring:
 Medway Family information service on **01634 335566** or
 e mail: familyinfo@medway.gov.uk

Messy Play—Explore, Be Creative, Investigate

Materials to explore

Playdough
Water
Sand
Pastry
Glue
Clay
Shredded paper
Compost
Bark
Pebbles
Corn flour
Gravel
Soap flakes
Ice cubes
Leaves
Shells
Paint

Combine materials to create new textures for exploration

Soap flakes and paint
Sand and washing up liquid
Playdough and glitter
Woodshavings and glue
Mud and water



Preparation

- Let the children take responsibility in helping to prepare for messy activity
- Cover floors and walls with protective sheeting and create easily cleaned surfaces
- Keep a bowl of water to hand for washing tools and hands
- Provide a range of surfaces for mark making to follow on from the exploration, such as textured wall paper
- Encourage independence at the end of the session and involve the children in clearing away

Tools

Make sure they are readily available to add to investigation:

Sieves
Whisks
Spoons of various sizes
Forks
Rollers
Sponges
Brushes

Safety

Always check materials for possible hazards, such as the size of the pieces with younger children for choking, allergies with food and soap products.

Messy play is about **exploration** and in most cases will **not** result in an end product!

Inclusion

Children with special needs can access these materials in their own way as part of the group. Make sure the height of the activity is accessible to all.

EAL

This sort of play does not require words; children with English as an additional language can readily join in.



Ask open ended questions such as:

- 'I wonder what would happen if?'
- 'Why did that happen?'
- 'What might happen if I added more water?'

Outstanding OFSTED

Kiddiwinks Pre-school achieves 'Outstanding' in all areas as a result of a recent Ofsted Inspection.

The Pre-school opened in 1979, is a Registered Charity, Committee led, and is Pre-school Learning Alliance Accredited Group.



The Pre-school opens Monday to Friday during Term time from 9.30 am to 12 noon, and operates a Lunch Club from 12 noon till 1 pm. There are currently 46 children attending the setting, the age range being 2 to 5 years. The Setting has sole use of a secluded outdoor area, and incorporates outdoor activities daily into its curriculum planning. It is part of the ethos for the outdoor area to be used as often and effectively as possible.

The OFSTED report pays tribute to Staff providing a welcoming, warm caring environment that helps to build the children's development, confidence and independence. The report also highlights that Staff training is a priority, and they are clearly inspired by the courses they undertake. They have a passion for their work and continually strive to make improvements. All Staff have a positive 'can do' attitude and work hard to respond to children's requests promptly. Also, all have an excellent understanding of how children learn, and a range of activities is provided that follow their interests and enable them to explore and experiment. Innovative methods are used to plan appropriate activities for the children, therefore the children are motivated to learn and happily engage in activities. Thus the children make good progress, and behaviour is excellent.

The report praises the quality of Parent/Partnership, parents' time being willingly given as they feel part of the Pre-school community. Congratulations to everyone at Kiddiwinks!

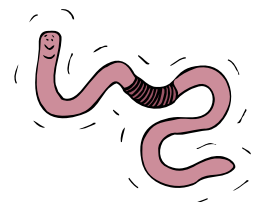
Things to do before you're 10!

Created as part of Persil's 'dirt is good' campaign, this list highlights the positive benefits and learning potential that unrestricted play can bring.

- Roll on your side down a grassy bank
- Make perfume from flower petals
- Grow cress on a windowsill
- Build a sandcastle
- Make a painting using your hands and feet
- Have your face painted
- Make snow angels
- Make and fly a kite



- Make a mud pie
- Climb a tree
- Make a den in the garden
- Find some worms
- Pick some strawberries
- Feed a farm animal
- Bake a cake



Dates for the diary

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
European Day of Languages—held annually to celebrate language and cultural diversity.	26th September 2008	www.cilt.org.uk/edl/	Visit the website for information on events, activities, quizzes and competitions
Black History Month—an annual awareness campaign to highlight African and Caribbean history and heritage and to be promote a greater understanding of the UK's diverse cultural heritage.	1—31st October 2008	www.black-history-month.co.uk/	Throughout October, communities across the UK celebrate by hosting a wide range of events and activities to entertain, inform and educate.
Learn to Sign Week—A campaign run by the British Deaf Association to encourage the public to join in, enjoy themselves and learn British Sign Language.	1—6 October 2008	http://bda.org.uk/Learn_to_Sign-i-19.html	Visit the website to find out more or to sign up to a range of British Sign Language courses.
Anti-Bullying Week—Encourages schools to tackle bullying and make schools safer learning environments.	16—21 November 2008	www.antibullyingweek.co.uk/	The theme of 2008 will be around school and community and will provide scope to explore safer routes to and from school, cyberbullying and more.

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.) **Issue** **Deadline for articles**
- Events at your setting (e.g. coffee mornings, competitions etc.) **Winter** **Friday 12 December 08**
- 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.

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