

Firm Foundations



Sure Start News from Medway Council

Issue 7 Summer 2006

Serving You

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Foreword

Welcome to the latest edition of “Firm Foundations” – Medway Council’s regular newsletter of news and information for people who work with young children.

If you were fortunate enough to have a holiday this summer, or at least a break from work, I hope you are returning with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Many of Medway’s youngest children will be joining new groups and classes in schools, pre-schools and nurseries this September. Ahead of them lies an exciting time of making new friends and encountering new experiences. As practitioners, the start of another school year is an opportunity to put into practice new ideas and to build on the successes and learning of the past year.



**Mark Holmes—early years
strategy manager**

Our 2007 Foundation Stage Profile results show that a steady improvement has been made across all areas of learning and development – which is testament to the skill and talent of all the adults who have supported each child through their first five years. The statistics also show that where targeted effort has been made – such as supporting children in disadvantaged circumstances with their communication, language and literacy – significant improvements can be made, well in excess of the general upward trend. This is real evidence that focused intervention and support for practitioners and settings, and the provision of a broad, rich curriculum, will have positive consequences for children. But we do have much more to do.

This coming year will see preparation for the new Early Years Foundation Stage, implementation of the Letters and Sounds programme, and a burgeoning of the network of local Sure Start Children’s Centres across Medway. Together, we are making a difference to the lives and life-chances of children – and will continue to do so.

Have a great year!
Mark Holmes

Children’s Information Service

Medway Children’s 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 Children’s 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 CIS by phone: 01634 335566 **email:** childcareinfo@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

EYFS Briefings—Autumn 2007

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has published the new framework for high quality development, learning and care of all children in their early years. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a comprehensive framework which sets the standards for development, learning and care of all children from birth to five.

All registered early years providers and schools will be required to use the EYFS from **September 2008**, to ensure a high quality experience that supports the child's development in whichever childcare setting parents choose. It is being published early so that there is time to prepare for its introduction in 14 months time.

The EYFS is the result of extensive dialogue with early learning professionals, as well as consultations with parents, and will mean that children have the opportunity to learn through play in an inclusive, safe and secure environment.

Children's early learning should be challenging and enjoyable and the EYFS should reassure parents that their young child will receive the right support to progress at a pace which takes into account their individual needs.

The framework builds on, and replaces, the non-statutory Birth to Three Matters guidance, the Foundation Stage curriculum for 3 and 4 year olds and the national standards for day-care. It builds a coherent and flexible approach that removes the artificial divide between learning and care and creates seamless support for children's development from birth to five.

It is underpinned by the key principles of treating every child as unique, creating loving and secure relationships and environments in which children can learn and develop at their own pace, and with enjoyment.

Preparing for EYFS in Medway

The Learning and Support Team has developed training that will support and underpin the delivery of the EYFS from September 2008. Please refer to your workforce professional development profiles for further information.

Dates for EYFS Briefings

These days are repeated so EYFS leaders need only attend one session:

Tuesday 25th September

Wednesday 26th September

Thursday 27th September

Friday 28th September

Venue: Local area venue (please see your workforce professional development profile)

Getting you own copy of EYFS

The Early Years Foundation Stage can be obtained from DfES Publications:

Tel: 0845 60 222 60

Please quote ref: 00012-2007PCK-EN

You can download or order copies online at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications



Happy 21st Birthday Wendy House pre-school

Wendy House Pre-school celebrated their 21st birthday with a week long celebration of picnics and special events in the setting. Past and present children and staff helped Rosalind Sexton and her team to celebrate 21 years of provision.

Through the 21 years the pre-school has moved from a pack away setting to their present site within the grounds of Barnsole Infant School. The festivities culminated in a 21st Birthday party on the Friday, with pass the parcel and a splendid birthday tea in the outdoor area, the weather was good to them so the setting were able to celebrate in style!



Prizes for competitions including "how many things can you fit into a smarties tube" were awarded by special guest David Royle, Medway councillor for Rainham South. Staff and children agreed it had been a fantastic week of celebrations with an action packed party to end. Congratulations to Wendy House Pre-school and all the best for the next 21 years!



Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in Medway

From April 2008, local authorities will have a duty to secure sufficient childcare for parents in their local area. Duties within the Childcare Act 2006 require Local Authorities to shape and support the development of childcare provision in their area (so far as reasonably practicable). The aim is to enable parents to find childcare that meets their needs and help them make choices about their lives.



The assessment is a measurement of the nature and extent for the need and supply of childcare within each local area. This will involve an analysis of our local childcare market and it will establish where there are gaps in the provision. The sufficiency assessment with consultation will hence help us to plan actions needed to support the market to meet these gaps and meet parents' needs.

It will require us carrying out detailed research on the supply of, and demand for childcare in Medway. The Children's Information Service (CIS) is co-ordinating the assessment on behalf of the Early years and childcare service.

This will form part of the overall needs assessment, consultation and preparation for the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

Please complete the Childcare Assessment form sent to you by the CIS and send back in the prepaid envelope provided. On receipt of your form (before the deadline), your setting will be automatically entered into a free prize draw. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to have help shape childcare in Medway.

For more information please contact Esther Olawande on 01634 335566 or visit the website: <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/search/index.cfm?term=childcare+sufficiency&post=1&page=1>

Beep Beep Day

Brake, the national road safety charity, is urging nursery schools, childminders and pre-school groups to get involved in its national summer campaign Beep Beep! Day, aimed at teaching lifesaving road safety lessons to children aged six years and under.

The annual campaign, now in its fourth year, is organised by Brake in partnership with Green Flag Motoring Assistance, to help reduce the horrific numbers of pre-schoolers killed and injured on our roads each year.

Every 16 minutes a child is hurt on UK roads.

In 2006, more than 17,000 children from over 400 nurseries took part. The tots used their 'ride on' toys in the playground to learn basic road safety lessons like the importance of the word stop. Some nurseries raised sponsorship money for Brake's work to prevent death and injury on the roads and care for families affected by road crashes, raising more than £25,000 in 2006. Nurseries can also involve parents, by inviting them to attend as volunteer supervisors.

Organisations that hold a Beep Beep! Day receive a FREE action pack containing guidelines and new resources including stickers, colour-in sheets, placards, posters and activity sheets. Early years educators can hold their Beep Beep! Day anytime until the end of October 2007.

To order an information pack, contact Sarah Howe at Brake on 01484 530070/ 01484 559909 or email beepbeep@brake.org.uk with your name, the name of your nursery or playgroup, and day-time telephone number.



Woodworking with Children

Early Years Advisers in the Strood, Hoo, Cuxton and Halling area team developed a "Woodworking with Children" project with some of their area settings. Beehive Playgroup and Bo Peeps Pre-school were two of these settings and they have fed back on what they thought of the project.



Beehive "Using woodwork tools with 3 and 4 year old children had never occurred to us until the Early Years Advisors held the 'Working with wood' course. Being provided with a fully stocked tool box and a supply of wood enabled us to plan for, and use, woodwork as an activity. The children were all keen to try this new experience, they were able to explore and investigate all tools. Holes were drilled, hammered and screwed. Wood was sanded, sawn and glued. Overall it was a very positive experience."

Bo-Peeps "Bringing woodwork into your setting will probably raise plenty of issues between staff and between parents, mainly being safety. But once tried, your confidence grows and it's a fantastic experience for children. Trust between the practitioner & child is greatly enforced, and the confidence & self esteem in children becomes apparent as holes are drilled and nails are hammered. All in all a worthwhile activity."



EYPS



Early years professional status recognises effective leadership of practice across a range of early years provision. To be an Early Years Professional, you will need to be a graduate, with vision, resilience, determination, and commitment. You will often be the person that other workers rely on - the most skilled and the most knowledgeable. You will be able to change, shape and improve practice in your setting and, by doing so, you will make a real difference to babies, young children and their families.

With a government's aim to have Early Years Professionals (EYP) in all children's centres offering early years provision by 2010 and in every full day care setting by 2015. The EYPS programme is funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council. (CWDC), who believe that over time, only those with Early Years Professional Status should lead delivery of the new Early Years Foundation Stage.

EYPS is recognition of the high standards, skills, experience and commitment needed by people who lead early years practice. Early Years Professionals are highly effective practitioners who use up to date knowledge and understanding to lead and mentor staff and manage the play, care and learning environment.

Are you interested?

EYPS training at Christ Church Canterbury University starts in September 2007 and all the training is absolutely free with supply cover costs awarded on an individual basis. There are four pathways to achieving EYPS, depending on your qualifications and experience, lasting between 3 and 15 months. For information pack please contact:

Sharon Vinton EYPS Programme Administrator
Telephone 01634 894425
Email: sharon.vinton@canterbury.ac.uk

Come along to Canterbury Christ Church EYPS Twilight Information

On Monday 3rd September 4.30 – 6.30 p.m. at:

Canterbury Christ Church University,
Chatham Campus,
30 Pembroke Court,
Rowan Williams Court,
ME4 4UF



Big Toddle

On Thursday 26th July, children and families from the Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre turned out at Rookery Fields, Gillingham for a sponsored Toddle to raise money for the Barnardo's charity.



Despite the cloudy sky and blustery gales a group of nearly 70 children and their families "toddled" around the large field twice, once to gain a "I'm a big toddler!" sticker and a second time to be awarded with a medal.

Once everyone had "toddled" the group went back to the Children's Centre to get out of the wind and to help themselves to healthy snacks provided by centre staff. A fun time was had by all!



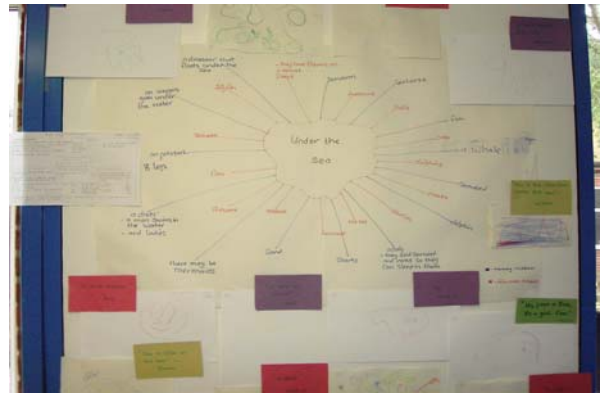
“Talking and Thinking Books”

A significant number of settings are using mind-mapping and ‘talking and thinking’ books to enable very young children to take control of their learning. Inspired by the work of educationalist, Claire Warden (www.mindstretchers.co.uk), Rainbows pre-school has embraced talking and thinking books to the extent that all of their planning comes directly from the children. For example, a visit by a member of the community with a physical disability evolved into a talking and thinking book recording the children’s thoughts and experiences. The books really reflect the level of sustained shared thinking that took place and practitioners have seen a marked improvement in the children’s speaking and listening skills.

Practitioners at Woodlands pre-school use mind-mapping to record the children’s thinking and this informs planning. The photo shows a mind-map about under the sea initiated by a child who had visited the beach. Planning started from what the children appeared to already know, so that their confidence was enhanced. Activities and experiences came directly from the children rather than the adult. Children chose to add their own mark making if they chose to.

Both ‘Talking and Thinking Books’ and mind-mapping reflect the key principles of effective early years practice.

Ask your Early Tears Advisor for further information. Have fun talking and thinking!



Business Training for Childcare Providers

Are **You** thinking of setting up your own childcare business?

Have **You** recently set up and are looking for business advice & networking opportunities with other childcare providers?

If so, you may be interested in the **free** Business Training for Childcare Providers we are planning on holding in September. It will be a four-session programme over four weeks.

If you are interested and would like more information, please contact Emma Prentice on 01634 332427 or Lauren Row on 01634 331375



Multi-cultural Festival 2007



On Wednesday 23rd May (one of the hottest days of the year!) the learning and support team organised an Inclusive Multi-cultural Festival for all early years and childcare practitioners across Medway and Kent. Over 300 teachers, early years practitioners, play workers and childminders came to the Rochester Castle Gardens to participate in the huge variety of workshops and look around the many exhibition stands. The

festival workshops ran from 1pm until 6:30pm concluding with a grand finale which included the Kut-O Dance Association entertaining us with their beautiful Chinese dancers and the fabulous Chinese Lion Dance.



Kent Circus Skills came along to entertain delegates in between workshops and had a workshop of their own so practitioners could learn to juggle, plate spin and unicycle themselves! Workshops ranged from Arabic dancing, playing a Didgeridoo, Puppetry and African drumming to a variety of food and art workshops. There were also multi-sensory workshops facilitated by Richard Hirstwood and Magpie Dance. Ros Blackburn also gave an inspiring talk on living with autism. Exhibitors included Puppets by Post, Fun 2 Learn, National Autistic Society, World Language Books, Letterbox Library and many more.



Workshops were well attended and lots of ideas were gained.

The day was a complete success with many people asking for the date for next year!



Recruiting Staff

Recruiting staff for your setting is as easy as 1,2,3.....



The Children's Information Service can help you find staff for your setting by advertising any vacancies free of charge. We also offer a job matching service and can link candidates who are looking for work with relevant vacancies, based on qualifications and experience.

For more information ring The Children's Information Service on 01634 335566

Places to go in Medway

There are many places to visit in Medway that are suitable for young children. Dickens World is one of the many. It is a brand new, innovative and exciting indoor visitor complex themed around the life, books and times of one of Britain's best loved authors, Charles Dickens. It will take visitors on a fascinating journey through Dickens' lifetime as they step back into Dickensian England and are immersed in the urban streets, sounds and smells of the 19th century.

With a host of captivating attractions, Dickens World features one of Europe's largest dark boat rides, the Haunted house of Ebenezer Scrooge, a state-of-the art animatronic show, Victorian School Room, 4D high definition show and Fagin's Den. Offering a unique showcase for one of the world's best loved storytellers, Dickens World will truly offer visitors the 'day out of a lifetime'.

Cost:

£12.50 for adults £7.50 for children (5 to 15 Years) Children Under 5 are Free

Open Daily from 10am to 7pm Last Admission 5pm

For more information contact:

Dickens World
Leviathan Way,
Chatham Maritime,
Kent.
ME4 4LL

Telephone: 01634 890 421



Montessori Training

Montessori Centre International Foundation Certificate Level 2

An exciting opportunity to gain a qualification in the Montessori Method. The course has been designed for three distinct groups of potential students



- Parents and childminders who are looking for a comprehensive introduction to the Montessori approach with the possibility of achieving a qualification at the end of their study.
- Existing assistants in Montessori classrooms with experience of children but who do not wish to undertake the more academic Montessori Early Childhood course.
- Qualified early years practitioners working in the Montessori classrooms who do not hold a Montessori qualification.

The course will run on Friday afternoons over 31 weeks starting in January 2008 and finishing in November 2008 and will be held at St Justus Montessori pre-school, Clifton Close, Strood, Kent. ME2 2HG.

For further details please contact Penny Modena on 07701 833994

Talk Friendly

Ten settings in Medway have recently completed a 'Talk Friendly' Pilot project. The project was led by Therese Smith and supported by Hayley Pitts – both Inclusion Advisors with the Early Years and Childcare, Learning and Support Team. The main objectives of this project centred around enhancing practitioners understanding of the development of children's language; helping them to become more aware of their own communicative behaviour and giving strategies to help promote and reflect on children's communication skills within the setting.



The project began in November 2006 with an introductory session supported by Olwen Cockell, a speech and language therapist working in the local area. This was followed up with 4 further sessions all focusing on a specific area of children's language development and allowing practitioners to share ideas with each other.

Settings were also encouraged to use specific core resources during the project to support them in their planning for language and communication. These resources were very well received by all staff and the supporting photographs show some of these resources being used with the children.

The pilot project was a great success and Therese and Hayley would like to congratulate and thank Kestrel Under 5s, Beresford Pre-school, The Bligh Children's Centre Day Care Nursery, King's Pre-school, Hempstead Village Hall Playgroup, Noah's Ark Pre-school, Beehive Playgroup, 2 J's Pre-school, Springvale Pre-school and The Wendy House Pre-school for successfully completing the sessions.



Winter Grounds Week 2007

A big well done to all those in the Gillingham, Rainham, Twydall and Hempstead Area for all the inspiring outdoor learning during summer grounds week and beyond. It is wonderful to see that so many practitioners are planning experiences for the children and that settings are getting together to celebrate the outside. As the well known saying goes "there is no such thing as inappropriate weather, just inappropriate clothing!" so as summer ends let autumn and winter begin! Here are a few photos from the Hempstead Pavilion Pre-school from Winter Grounds Week 2007.



The children planned the experiences and the practitioners facilitated the learning. An interactive display recorded the event, which culminated in parents and carers being invited to share in the celebration of the children's achievements. A huge thank you to Hempstead Pavilion for sharing their success.



Forest Schools Project

Reception children from Deanwood Infants have spent every Tuesday morning from October to mid-July not in their classroom, but up in Capstone woods.

The excitement started with the children piling into a minibus, dressed for adventure in their wellies, coats, scarves, gloves... prepared for all weathers!

The aim of the project was to provide the children with regular access to an alternative environment for learning, aimed specifically at developing PSE and CLL skills. We all got so much more!



Forest schools is an educational concept that is now taking root across Britain. This is enabling learning through play using different media. It encourages confidence building and risk taking; offers opportunities for challenge and perseverance; provides opportunities for co-operative play and language development as well as an invaluable insight into the natural world. Research shows that sustained access to this form of learning can have a very positive impact on behaviour. (Ref: *National Economics Foundation and Forestry Commission research 2005*)



Regardless of the weather the children set out prepared for all kinds of experiences led by Kris Staples, a Capstone Ranger, in allocated areas of the woodland.

Initially the children were wary, tending to stay close to the adults and move around as a group. By January confidence was growing and they were happy to venture further, by themselves or with friends, exploring and following their own ideas. They built dens and made mud faces. They made pictures using natural materials. They collected wood and built a fire. They sawed wood, cooked sausages, and marshmallows. They explored the natural world with care and fascination and best of all - went mud sliding!!! On several occasions the children would return caked in mud, and wrapped in black bin liners. The parents took it all in their stride – not a complaint to be heard.

The perseverance, confidence, determination and independence instilled in the children was phenomenal. By July they owned the woods!

" I love mud,"

"I love getting sticky and wet"

" This is like a real adventure."

"This is the best. I wish we could come back tomorrow and keep looking."

"I got up here all by myself!"



Dates for the diary

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
World Heart Day—The theme of this year's World Heart Day is "Team Up for Healthy Hearts!"	30 September 2007	www.world-heart-federation.org.uk	What activities could you do in your setting to get involved in World Heart Day?
The aims of Black History month are to: Promote knowledge of Black History and experience and to heighten the confidence and awareness of Black people in their cultural heritage.	October 2007	www.black-history-month.co.uk	There are many books, cd's and other resources available on the Black History Month website that can be used in your provision.
Learn to Sign Week—The British Deaf Association is challenging everyone in the UK to learn British sign language used by some 70,000 people in the UK	1—6 October 2007	www.learntosign.org.uk	Help your children and staff to learn sign language and create an inclusive environment for all.
World Animal Day—encourages people to acknowledge and be thankful for the way in which animals enrich our lives	4 October 2007	www.worldanimalday.org.uk	There will be a round up of events on the website, send your photographs and article off to be a party of the round up.
Dyslexia Awareness Week	5—12 November 2007	www.bdadyslexia.org.uk	Encourage a dyslexic friendly society that will enable all dyslexic people to reach the potential.
Young Hearts Day	29 November 2007	www.tymestrust.org	This special day was instituted to remember children with ME.
Tree Dressing Day—part of National Tree Week which celebrates trees and woods.	21 November—2 December 2007	www.treecouncil.org.uk	Decorate a tree in your outdoor area or at a local park on this day and show how much you value it

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>
Winter Issue	Friday 14 December

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