“Outstanding” Hope House Montessori Nursery School in Topsham

Staff at Hope House Montessori Nursery School in Topsham, Exeter are delighted to be the 3rd Montessori School in Devon judged “outstanding” by Ofsted in all areas. The inspector commented that: “Children are cared for by very well-qualified and highly skilled staff, who demonstrate an outstanding ability to identify and meet children’s individual development needs.” She concluded: “Children thrive in an environment which is extremely attractive, homely and stimulating. They enjoy free access to an extensive variety of activities and resources, which are used very flexibly, to meet their individual needs.”

This has been the perfect culmination to a year of celebrations at Hope House as staff, children and their families have been celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the School and also 100 years of Montessori Education.

To find out more, ring Margot and Emma Fletcher on 01392 875766.

Double Celebrations for St Mark’s Pre-School

Ofsted has recently inspected St Mark’s Pre-School in Exeter, and their report marked many areas as outstanding and others as good. Inspector Joyce Bowler praised the setting for its safety; its approach to helping children achieve by allowing them freedom to their play under staff supervision; the quality of teaching and learning and the leadership and management. The inspection, carried out at the end of the Summer term, marked the end of 5 years under the leadership of Linda Carter. The Pre-School has started the Autumn term with a celebration day to mark its 10th anniversary. The event was attended by many connected with the Pre-School over the past years and included various stalls, games, competitions, a balloon race and a visit from a fire engine.
Essential Ofsted Information Sessions

These will be taking place in February 08 and include information on the major changes coming in September 2008. The information at this training is very relevant and important to every provider. Don’t get left behind! Please attend if you can.

Please note every essential Ofsted Information session has a different agenda. It is not a one off training session and you should try to attend even if you have been to these sessions before.

Course content includes:
- Information from the new early years support teams, Trio Childcare and Barnardo’s.
- Up to date information from the Early Years Advisors on the EYFS.
- Latest information on the Voluntary and Compulsory Childcare Register
- News from the recruitment team and information on future changes to CRB checks
- News from the childcare referral team

Bookings are necessary. Places are limited to two people per setting and can be arranged by calling Devon Early Years Inspection Support Team on 01392 381598.

Exeter
- Saturday 16 Feb 10.30 am -1 pm Exeter
- Monday 4 Feb 7pm – 9.30 pm Exeter

North Devon
- Saturday 2 Feb 10.30 am – 1 pm Barnstaple
- Thursday 7 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Ilfracombe

Mid Devon
- Friday 29 Feb 10.30am – 1 pm Tiverton

Teignbridge
- Wednesday 27 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Newton Abbot

East Devon
- Tuesday 26 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Honiton

West Devon
- Thursday 14 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Lydford

South Hams
- Monday 25 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Ivybridge
- Wednesday 5 March 7 pm – 9.30 pm Totnes

Torridge
- Monday 11 Feb 7 pm – 9.30 pm Holsworthy

If you haven’t obtained an “Essential Toolkit for day care providers” you can collect one at the Ofsted Update sessions. One per setting.

Staffing Matters Update

New Helpline Service

Early Years and childcare employers and employees are now able to access a free, impartial and expert Human Resources Helpline, which was launched last month. The Helpline, which is being provided by Devon County Council’s HR team, can offer managers information and advice on a wide range of staffing issues, including employment law compliance, contracts, disputes, benefits and rights in the workplace. The Helpline can be contacted between the hours of 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday, on 01392 385555 or by email: hrsshelp@devon.gov.uk

Suspension and Pay

Employment contracts can be a complicated matter, and sometimes it can be hard to think of everything that needs to be included. Recently, a query raised the issue of suspension, and whether or not suspended employees should be paid during the time they are absent from the setting. We’re now urging employers to consider this matter, and ensure policies and employment contracts are updated to reflect the setting’s decisions. This will help employees to understand the financial implications of suspension, and help managers and committees to appreciate the potential extra costs, such as the recruitment of temporary staff cover. It’s important to bear in mind that in some circumstances, an employee has to be suspended through no fault of their own, eg. if they are applying for a waiver through Ofsted, because they live with someone who is disqualified from working with children.

For more information and advice on this matter, please contact the HR Helpline on 01392 385555 or contact ACAS on 08457 47 47 47, (www.acas.org.uk).

Age Discrimination

A quick reminder to employers that the Age Discrimination Act was passed last year, and in practical terms, this means you must not discriminate against any potential job applicants (or existing staff) on the basis of their age. Make sure that you don’t ask for “x” years of experience in person specifications, as this is deemed to be discriminatory. Instead, you can focus on the skills, type of experience and qualifications needed to fulfil the duties of the role. In the same way, ensure that all staff receive equal opportunity to access relevant training and development options linked to their work.

If you need any advice on this matter, contact the HR Helpline, or ACAS, as above.

If you have any queries, please can contact the Recruitment & Retention Team. Tel: 01392 385398 or email childrensworkforce-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
Out of School Development Worker Update

Hi all
Hope you all had a good Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year ahead of us. I would like to say a big thank you to all the groups who have completed a Quality Check and Sustainability Health Check with me in 2007, I have been very pleased to see how well you are all doing. All groups will be receiving a summary of my results from the sustainability health checks near the end of April which I hope you will find interesting. If you still have not completed a Sustainability Health Check or a Quality Check please contact me so we can arrange an appointment.

If you are having any worries about the sustainability of your setting please contact me sooner rather than later so I can come out and put an action plan together with you, as lots of groups have found small changes can make a big difference to the setting’s accounts.

Committees/Trustees and Governors
Have you recently appointed any new members that manage your Out of School club? If so please contact me to come out and meet with them to discuss the services and support we can offer here at the Early Years and Childcare Services.

Alexa Sclater – Out Of School Development Worker

Useful Contacts for Committees/trustees and Governors
Charity Commission
Charity Commission Direct
PO Box 1227
Liverpool
L69 3UG
Telephone 0845 3000 218

Exeter Council for Voluntary Service
Wat Tyler House
King William Street
Exeter
EX4 6PD
Tel: 01392 202055
Email: cvs@exetercvs.org.uk

The Governance Hub
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Regent’s Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London
N1 9RL
Telephone: (020) 7520 2514
Email: governace.hub@ncvo-vol.org.uk
Helpline: 0800 652 4886

Playwork Training Courses

Meynell Games is a Training Provider who specialises in Playwork Courses, and offers the following courses.

Qualifications;
• CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Playwork
• CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Playwork
• Level 3 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Childcare Workers
• First Steps Playwork Induction Standard

Short Courses (CPD Programmes);
• An introduction to the eye opener
• Parachute Play
• Rain doesn’t need to be a pain
• Bringing fire into the play setting (3 hours)
• Physical play and games (3 hours)
• Creative play (3 hours)

Meynell Games is working in partnership with Devon Children & Young Peoples Service. If you are interested in any of the above courses please contact the Meynell Games Office on 01323 730500 or Louise Kennedy the Devon Training & Development Playworker on 0845 217 8955 for further details, or to register your interest.

Transformation Fund and Graduate Leader Fund

Devon Early Years and Childcare Service still has extra funding available from the Transformation Fund to support students undertaking qualifications and to support childcare settings that employ graduates. You can undertake fully funded qualifications AND claim supply funding; and you may also be eligible for a Bonus Payment when you complete your qualification. The funding available for full day care settings that employ graduates can support training for all staff in the setting, and can boost staff wages.

If you would like further details about the Transformation Fund or if you would like to apply for funding, please contact Zen Bailey on 01392 385420 or email zenaida.bailey@devon.gov.uk

The Transformation Fund is a two year fund until March 2008, it will then be replaced by the Graduate Leader Fund. The Graduate Leader Fund is initially a 3 year fund with the same aim as the Transformation Fund but with greater flexibility. We are currently awaiting final guidance about the fund which should be available by the end of this year.
The Planet Rainbow Project is an independent mutual support group for mixed-heritage/race families, including those who have fostered or adopted children from an ethnic or cultural background different to their own. Planet Rainbow is a voluntary organisation, managed by a committee made up in the majority of family members to maintain its family led philosophy. The project started in November 2002 and so has been running for five years now. It has expanded greatly since moving premises to the new West Exe Children’s Centre in St. Thomas, Exeter, where new opportunities to evolve and develop the project have presented themselves. The project encourages a relaxed and fun environment for both parents/carers and children, having access to a range of both indoor and outdoor facilities during a monthly drop in sessions where families can meet and enjoy each others’ company. Single parent families, grandparents and step families are all very welcome at the sessions.

Other services provided by the project at the family sessions include multicultural craft activities, training, afro hair care, outings, workshops, access to internet and a small library resource. The overall aims of the sessions are to provide positive social interactions and role models for our children whilst promoting positive identities and diversity. The project is also currently running a youth group for the older children at the project, & for mixed-heritage/race & Black & minority ethnic youth in the wider community of Exeter. Because of the dynamics sometimes involved with mixed heritage/race families, single race siblings are also included.

Other project work includes; raising awareness and promoting the mixed-heritage/race culture in agencies and organisations that families come into contact with, for example the education system; raising awareness in the wider community; supporting families through adoption and fostering procedures; and supporting families through any difficulties that may arise as a result of being a mixed-heritage/race family. Work within the education system has taken the form of partnerships with the (DCC) English as an Additional Language Team & the Psychology Department at Exeter University. Both departments have engaged with the project on a consultancy basis, using the project’s knowledge around the topic of mixed-heritage/race to inform their own practice & teaching methods. The project is also involved in the development of an education resource, which is currently being piloted in a Crediton school, and is liaising with the School Library Services to review new resources.

The project has also recently been involved with a number of pieces of research on both a local & national level, where it was cited as a model of good practice in this particular area of work. The largest research piece was for the London South Bank University & Commission for Racial Equality, which culminated in a conference held in London at the end of September under the title of ‘Mixedness & Mixing’. The 60 participants who were lucky enough to be invited to this special event helped to inform government officials around mixed-heritage/race issues & concerns, with a view to shaping future policy decisions around the fastest growing minority group both nationally & locally. Planet Rainbow felt privileged to have the opportunity to take part in this event.

After five years of operating successfully, the project is now facing the challenge of securing core funding for the next financial year & beyond. The consultancy service is one that the project is keen to develop further as a means of creating income for the project, however, this will not be able to happen if funding is not found to allow the project to continue past March 2008.

If you would like more information, or would like to come along to the sessions please contact Kayte or Parminder at the project office on 01392 217452, or by e-mail at planetrainbow2004@yahoo.co.uk.

Business in the Community

Business in the Community is a unique movement in the UK of over 800 member companies. Its purpose is to inspire, challenge and support business in continually improving its impact in the community, environment, marketplace and workplace.

If your setting is in need of any work doing to it and would like to register as a challenge for company teams to work on, please contact Business in the Community South West - Abigail Netcott, Regional Cares Coordinator, Business in the Community South West, 2nd Floor Alliance House, 161 Armada Way, Plymouth PL1 1HZ. Tel: 01752 510410, Mob: 07917 127290.
Hello to all Childcare Practitioners in Devon!

Hello from TRIO CHILDCARE, the new providers of your Early Years and Childminding Support Services. As you may all be aware, resulting from the tendering process with Devon County Council, we have taken over these services from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and Devon Childminding Association. Childcare Practitioners must be well used to change by now so this is just one more!

Trio are a company who set up in 1996, initially overseeing the Childcare requirements of a major UK Insurance company. With the advent of the Early Years and Childcare Partnerships, we started working with Local Authorities across the South West, managing Support Workers and Childminding Network Coordinators. The company has grown from an initial 5 staff to over 50, as we are now an accredited NVQ Assessment Centre as well as continuing to manage a variety of support and training projects for Local Authorities. Our work in Devon will be managing the support for Early Years Groups and Childminders so many of you will see the same staff who have been supporting you for some considerable time.

We relish the challenge of working with your existing support workers and in providing you with an even better service of advice, support and guidance. All our Devon staff will have the title “Childcare Development Worker” and be working with Childminders, Private, Voluntary and Independent Group settings. Each Childcare Development Worker will have an individual telephone contact number plus the contact for our head office is 01793 849621 where we have a range of staff who can answer your queries.

We look forward to meeting many of you over the coming months and assure that the service will provide you with an excellent range of services. It is good to be working in Devon!

Trio Network Childminder Support meetings

If you are an Accredited childminder or a Locality network level 2 childminder we would like to invite you to a support meeting. These meetings are open to any childminder who fits the criteria and lives in the area of Devon County Council. You are welcome to attend a meeting in any area and you may attend more than one if you wish. You must ring or email the relevant Trio Childcare Development Worker to book your place.

Tiverton – 7 to 9pm, Tuesday 12th February
Judi Jones 01884 254939  Judith.Jones@triochildcare.co.uk

Honiton – 7.30 to 9.30pm, Monday 21st January
Angela van den Bosch 01392 468688  Angela.Vandenbosch@triochildcare.co.uk

Bideford – 7 to 9pm, Wednesday 19th March
Paula Honeychurch-Hann 01837 880123  Paula.Honeychurch-Hann@triochildcare.co.uk

Exeter – 7.30 to 9.30pm, Wednesday 30th January
Angela van den Bosch 01392 468688  Angela.Vandenbosch@triochildcare.co.uk

Musical Funding Grant to St Matthew’s Playgroup

St Matthew’s Community Playgroup in Newtown has been awarded over £9,000 by the Youth Music Foundation for its exciting music programme. For the next year every child at the playgroup will enjoy weekly music sessions, and their parents and carers will get a chance to enjoy the sessions too!

St Matthew’s is making music and movement a core part of its everyday activities with 3 and 4 year olds. Not to stop there, the playgroup staff are passing on the training they are receiving to toddler groups and other pre-schools. On Saturday 8th March 2008 St Matthew’s Playgroup are offering subsidised places on a music and movement course for pre-school leaders. Then each group that sends a play leader will be invited to an innovative concert, where Exeter Symphony Orchestra, Musik Garten and St Matthew’s Playgroup will present the first ever “A Walk Through the Orchestra”. At the concert children will be able to sing and dance and walk between the musicians to songs they know, specially prepared for the event.

So if you are walking through Newtown any weekday morning, listen out for the sounds of young children’s voices and the banging of drums!

Registered pre-schools (working with 3-5 year olds) who are interested in being part of “A Walk Through the Orchestra” should contact Nicky Jeffrey on 01392 681571.
News from your Registration and Inspection Team

New team introductions
We are delighted to welcome Lorna Pitts and Kirsten Elswood, new members of staff to the Registration and Inspection Advice Team, and also Louise Arscott, (who is covering Sandra Doddington’s Maternity Leave) to the Childcare Referral Team.

Kirsten Elswood
Hello, my name is Kirsten Elswood and I am the new Registration and Inspection Advisor for Exeter, East and Mid Devon. Some of you may recognise me as I have worked for the Pre-School Learning Alliance and Trio as a Childcare Development Worker for two and a half years, supporting groups in Mid and part of North Devon.

Before becoming a Development Worker I enjoyed five years as a deputy head in a private nursery school in Mid Devon. This experience enabled me to gain my Early Years Professional Status this June. I have also worked in primary schools teaching French and German to older children, as well as setting up, and volunteering in, a breakfast club in my son’s school.

I am really looking forward to working with you and meeting you in the forthcoming Ofsted Update Training sessions.

The Registration and Inspection Team covering the Exeter area are:
Mary Cousins; Registration and Inspection Support Officer.
Tel 07815 189 281 or 01392 385533
email: mary.cousins@devon.gov.uk

Exeter, Mid and East Devon
Kirsten Elswood; Registration and Inspection Advisor. Home based.
Tel 07837 207 749
email: kirsten.elswood@devon.gov.uk

Administrator
Sarah Edwards; Registration and Inspection Support Administrator
Tel 01392 381598
email: sarah.edwards@devon.gov.uk or registrationsupport@devon.gov.uk

Childcare Referral Advisor
Mandy Cluett; Childcare Referral Advisor. Home based.

Tel 07971 513 567
email: mandy.cluett@devon.gov.uk
Covering South Hams, Teignbridge, Exeter, East and Mid Devon.

Ofsted Website keeping you in touch

The Ofsted website is an invaluable source for you to keep up to date with the latest Ofsted news, updates and publications.

Did you know you can subscribe to the Ofsted newsletter to be sent automatically free by email?
If you have problems accessing the internet please call the Registration Support Team and we can print off and send you hard copies of the articles you would like to read.

Recent Articles from the website to interest you:

Ofsted Annual Report 2007-08
The first annual report for the new Ofsted finds a broadly positive picture across education, child care and adult skills, but warns that not enough is being done to narrow the gap and improve the care and education of disadvantaged children and young people.

Getting on well
Getting on well is the second national report on how early years and childcare providers are supporting Every Child Matters outcomes for children. It focuses on how the best providers are promoting children’s enjoyment and achievement, and helping them to make a positive contribution.

Getting on well: enjoying, achieving and contributing focuses on two of the five Every Child Matters outcomes which the Children Act 2004 identified as vital for every child. The report shows how childcarers are helping children in their care to ‘enjoy and achieve’ and ‘make a positive contribution’.

Outstanding providers 2006-07
The list of providers judged to be outstanding following an inspection in 2006/07 is now live on the Ofsted website.

Have a look and see how Ofsted reached the judgement of outstanding for these providers. It demonstrates how providers evidence to Ofsted that they are meeting the standards for all the five outcomes for children.

For more information and the full reports log on to www.ofsted.gov.uk
Kidz Biz Turn it Around

Back in April this year, our club was faced with a disastrous committee meeting: our After school club was running out of money. Like many other clubs we were started up with NOF funding, but suddenly when this expired, we were struggling. The fees had been too low, as they were heavily subsidised by the NOF money, this meant that we had to dramatically increase fee, which not all parents were in support of. We were unsure that if we raised the fees to the ‘true’ cost of the childcare, would we have any children left. We were trying to make a decision on what to do: We had enough funds to run till the end of the academic year and afford to pay redundancy costs, therefore closing with no loss, or we could take the risk, to continue into the next academic year, unsure whether we would be into the red or not.

We didn’t feel that shutting down a valuable after school club should be on the conscience of the committee, so held an open meeting for all the parents/carers to discuss what they wanted the club’s future to be. The meeting was supported by parents/carers and all families were consulted in this process. We gave the parents/carers choices: If they wanted the club to be kept open or not, and if they did, how could they make this work with us.

Thankfully the consultation’s results were positive, people did want to keep our club open, but it still didn’t solve the problem of the finances. We’re based in St. Thomas, a reasonably economically deprived area and for our parents/carers, raising the fees to the ‘true’ cost straight away would have been detrimental to the club, as so many would have to have left.

The final decision from the open meeting was that we would slowly raise the fees up to the ‘true’ cost of the childcare, with immediate effect and for all parents/carers to support us to fundraise all we could!

It was a nailbiting time and it was a little risky. We made it known that we were struggling and pulled in all the resources and people who could help. We wrote to all the funders listed in the funding news, called on our District co-ordinator and Out of School Development Worker for support, not to mention all the parents/carers and committee members and local community.

It was a very hard few months, writing relentless letters and organising events, but with help from parents we were featured in the Express and Echo with a plea to help. A local pub ‘The Showman’ called us, saying that the pub would be happy to support us. Fair enough, a pub is not the ideal supporter of a Kids club, but they are a community pub, willing to help us in any way they could, so we leapt on the offer.

Since April the various things we have done include: a Sponsored Swim, Coffee mornings, Raffles, Fundraising evening at the Showman, Making and Selling Hanging Baskets, Stalls that the children set up in their front gardens, one ex-volunteer sold bags she made from old plastic bags, St. Thomas Methodist Church members donated money to us on their Gift Day, a man cut off his long pony tail, the list goes on! We now have raised enough money to see us through to the end of the academic year, but it’s ongoing, we know we mustn’t be complacent.

From feeling very low and very alone at that committee meeting, now we feel as a club that we have more support than we ever did! Opening the problem out to all the parents who weren’t involved in the committee and Devon Early Years suddenly meant the burden was shared and the old adage of ‘a problem shared is a problem solved’ really rang true.

Co-op Community Dividend Scheme

Small grants are available to local voluntary community and self-help groups operating in the trading area of the Cooperative Group. Allocation of the awards is based on a set of values and principles including self-help and cooperation.

Projects must have a charitable purpose and be concerned with the environment, protection of heritage sites or promoting racial harmony.

Grants range from £100 to £5,000. The average grant is between £100 and £500

Voluntary, community and self-help groups may apply at any time. Application forms may be downloaded from the website http://www.co-op.co.uk/membership or contact: Community Dividend, New Century House, Manchester M60 4ES. Tel: 0161 827 5879

The Heavitree Brewery Charitable Trust

The Heavitree Brewery Charitable Trust provides funding for organisations based in Devon. The Trust does not fund agencies outside of the county, nor will it fund expeditions or scholarships.

The Trust was established to distribute funds provided by the Heavitree Brewery and provides grants of up to £2,000, although awards are usually below £500.

Applications must be made in writing to: Mr. G. J. Crocker, Heavitree Brewery PLC, Trood Lane, Matford, Exeter EX2 8YP. Tel: 01392 849273.

Decisions on applications are made every two months.

For advice on how to apply in writing to a Charitable Trust, go to: http://www.middevon.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3618
Funding News

Lloyds TSB Foundation
The Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales has announced that it has given £4,963,871 in grants to 258 charities between July to September 2007. Through the grants awarded, The Foundation continues to support charities that help disadvantaged people to play a fuller role in their community. Charities receiving funding include support services for ex-offenders, disabled people and disadvantaged families. The Foundation makes grants through a number of schemes. These include the Community Open Programme which is open to all charities whose work falls within the Foundation’s overall mission statement; the Community Priority Programme which provides grants that meet specific regional needs and the Matched Giving Scheme which is for Lloyds TSB Group employees who are involved in charity fundraising. Organisations that received a grant during this period included St Mabyn Pre-School which received a grant of £5,000 towards the cost of training and mentoring support and the Big Buzz After School Club which received a grant of £25,000 towards the salary costs of the Family Liaison Worker and Senior Play Worker. Organisations interested in applying to the Foundation should in the first instance contact the Foundation so that they can obtain advice on how to make the best application.

http://www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk/
PressandMediaCentre/Pages/Over%C2%A349mgive
nto258charities.aspx

Paul Hamlyn Foundation Education and Learning Programme (UK)
The Paul Hamlyn Foundation is currently accepting applications under its Education and Learning programme. In particular, the Foundation is looking to fund projects that promote innovation and change in the areas of supplementary schooling and tackling school exclusion and truancy. Eligible organisations that can apply for funding include charities, local authorities individual pre-schools, schools, out-of-school clubs, supplementary schools, colleges and youth clubs if they demonstrate benefits to the wider community and include partnership working that will result in increasing access to education and learning to all communities and age groups. The costs that can be covered by the Foundation’s grants include running costs such as staff salaries and overheads such as stationery, rent, rates and utilities. There is no minimum or maximum size of grant that organisation’s can apply for but the average size grant awarded in 2006 -07 was £19,300. Applications can be made at any time.

http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=85

Kellogg’s Active Living Fund
Grants of up to £1,000 are available through the Kelloggs Active Living Fund for projects that remove the ‘barriers’ which stop people being active.

The fund is open to charities and other voluntary and community organisations as well as schools for activities that directly lead to people taking part in sustained physical activity.

In particular, the Fund is looking to support projects that implement innovative ways of getting non-active individuals active; existing projects or activities that adapt or expand so that they are available to new groups of people or new geographical areas; and existing projects or activities that need new or replacement equipment, or existing projects that require replacement funding. A panel of Kellogg’s employees meets every two months to assess applications. Applicants should receive a decision on their application within approximately ten weeks of submitting your application. Applications can be made at any time.

For more information, visit www.kelloggs.co.uk/company/corporateresponsibility/activelivingfund.