



MILTON KEYNES PLAY ASSOCIATION  
KENTS HILL & MONKSTON PARISH COUNCIL  
SUMMER PLAY SESSIONS 2011



## **Milton Keynes Play Association – Summer 2011**

This year, MKPA ran 23 open access play sessions in the Kents Hill & Monkston Parish, with activities taking place at Monkston on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons, Monkston Park on Tuesday afternoons, and Kents Hill on Wednesday afternoons.

All 3 venues were again very well attended, with great turnouts at almost every session. Only bad weather kept the numbers low on one occasion, but we were never totally washed out; there were always families coming along to play whatever the weather.

We ran a variety of activities to appeal to all children in our 4-14 year old age range, and have detailed popular activities in this report, along with feedback from families that attended, and details on how turnouts were at each site.



*Football was a popular sport activity this summer*



*The site used in Monkston Park*

## Venues

### **Monkston:**

We had very consistent numbers throughout the summer at Monkston, with only one session being particularly rain-affected. Otherwise, there were the expected great turnouts, with numbers hitting 80+ on more than one occasion. It is certainly an impressive fact that sessions of between 50-60 children are considered 'quiet' at this venue; for other areas of the city, this would be the biggest turnout of the summer. As in previous years, parental support was again very good, with around 30-40 parents and carers coming along to most of the sessions.

Activities at Monkston were very well received, and we saw an increase in the number of older children coming along to take part, which has possibly been the area we'd most like to have seen improve, so we are hoping this will continue to be the case. The inflatables (bouncy castle and slide) were very popular, and the craft activities were well-accessed by the younger children, often with help from parents.

We can't stress the popularity of this site enough, it really is one of the best attended across the whole of the city year on year. We've seen an increased number of child minders coming along, which has no doubt helped to keep turnouts strong. As we've found in previous years, great publicity has really helped this site to attract large numbers.

### **Monkston Park:**

This venue really seems to have found its feet now, with great attendance for most of the summer. We had a group of 'regulars' that helped to spread the word, and regularly saw turnouts of 40 children on Tuesday afternoons. Because we seem to attract a crowd largely made up of children at the lower end of our 4-14 year old target, it means that we seem to have a lot of parents and carers turning up each week, with usually 15-20 being present.

All activities seemed to go down well, with both the craft table *(pictured right)* and the bouncy castle being well used.



### **Kents Hill:**

We saw pretty consistent turnouts at Kents Hill, with only two sessions running when the weather was particularly bad. Even when it was wet and windy, we had no less than 20 children taking part. On the better days, we saw between 35-45 children each time.

Due to the size of the field, sports and games were very popular at Kents Hill; football and cricket were requested the most by children of all ages. Crafts were again popular with the younger crowd, and face painting was particularly popular.

We saw a lot of new families coming along this year with younger children, which we hope indicates a future 'audience' for sessions in the area.

## Activities

This year, the activities provided every week were very well received. The themed crafts were particularly popular, with many joining in with whatever was on offer. Themes this year included Pirates, Under the Sea, Space, Jungle Animals, and Cartoons. Many of the children also used paints, materials and other items to make their own art and crafts, as we place the emphasis on the fun of taking part rather than sticking to our weekly suggestions.



The water run (pictured left), was a very popular activity at all sites this summer.

Children used bamboo canes to construct a 'wall', before then using pipes, string, tape, joints, and plastic tubes to create a water run. These bits and pieces from our scrap store and resource unit prove very popular with the children, and kept many of them entertained for hours.

Different constructions were also tried, with pyramids and towers also being constructed, before the pipes were attached to see which carried the water best.

Sports were very popular again this summer, particularly with the older boys. Because we had such great numbers attending, it meant that big games of football, cricket and rounders could be organised by staff, with children coming and going from the game if they wanted to try something else, or take their turn on the bouncy castle. Being able to have large scale games was something that children really enjoyed, and not something that we can do at all sites when numbers don't allow it. Parents also commented on how much their children enjoyed being able to come along and make friends while playing different sports with the other children. Football (pictured right) was regularly requested, and was popular with both boys and girls.



Face painting was again incredibly popular this year, with queues of children each week eager to get their faces or arms painted. Often, they'd choose to have their face painted to fit in with the theme we were running for the crafts, so during the 'Jungle Week', we had many tigers and lions running around the field!

Some of the older children opted for having their favourite football team's emblem painted on their arm, and many of the younger children favoured butterflies, cats, dogs and fairies.

### Response from attendees

We had more great comments this year, from both children and parents. The children enjoyed the new activities we laid on, especially the water slide on a hot day, and the den building. All venues attracted children from right across our 4-14 year old target age range, so our feedback came from children of different ages. Our staff have a comments book with them at sessions, and encourage feedback from attendees. A few comments have been listed below:

“I come every week, normally with my brother or with friends. I love the sports, and it’s always worth coming along as there is a good game of football on the go”

**A, 12, Monkston**

“It’s great that this has carried on again this year. During the summer, Friday afternoons are taken care of, as we know it’s always worth coming along to the sessions here.”

**Parent of 5, 7 and 9 year olds, Monkston**

“My kids love coming along to these sessions, and the fact it’s free is amazing. I’m not the only parent who relies on these activities. They are a god-send!”

**Parent of 5 and 7 year olds, Kents Hill**

“I like the craft activities, because there is always something cool to make, and we get to take things home when we’re finished.”

**P, 8, Monkston Park**

We’re pleased that we continue to receive positive feedback from not only the children and young people, but also the parents, carers and guardians of the children. There is a large number of parents that mention liking the regularity of sessions, and the fact that they know what is on and where, as we have become a well established event each week. We feel that the great turnouts each week at all venues is in no small part due to the fantastic job Kents Hill and Monkston Parish Council continue to do with promoting the sessions – it really does pay off.

The bulk of feedback from children was centred around their favourite activities, and it was nice to see that they are still finding our offerings very enjoyable. We feel we run a tried and tested formula with the crafts, sports and bouncy castles, and try to make sure that there are other different activities each week alongside this to keep sessions fresh, interesting, and fun.

## In Summary

This summer saw us continue to experience great turnouts at all venues in the Parish, with Monkston continuing to be one of the best accessed sites in the city. General feedback from children and adults was that they were very happy with the service. We are pleased that some of our new activities were well received, and that we continue to attract a crowd of children that is very mixed in terms of age and gender.

We had much feedback from the parents that they were well aware of when activities were taking place, because of the adverts they'd seen in more than one place. We've found that as we have now run for several years in the area, and always use the same days of the week, and run at the same time, people know when and where to find us.

Numbers in general this summer across the city were good, but very few areas experience consistently high numbers in the same way that Monkston does.

In the history of this project, it hasn't been uncommon for certain sites to be consistently busy, but it's worth recognising that the regular high number of attendees really is some way ahead of other Towns/Parishes, and Kents Hill and Monkston Parish Council can rightly take pride in that fact. We are in no doubt that these great attendance levels are largely down to great publicity, and having great venues to use.

We were pleased to see a letter from a satisfied parent appear in the local paper at the end of the summer (attached right), which praises the efforts made by our sessional staff, and the gratitude that many parents have towards the participating Parish Councils. We are confident that the upcoming October half term sessions will experience the same success of the summer sessions in the area.

If you have any questions or queries from this report, please just let us know.

