

# Kids read maps, will go, can do

**ANNA PRICE**

Nine young adventurers, kitted up in wet weather gear and gumboots, trekked through The Groyne in heavy rain for their first experience of orienteering.

Aged nine weeks to four years, the Avonhead Play Centre troupe accompanied by their mums helped read the map, listened to the clues and searched high and low for the markers on their first Wild Wednesday adventure on January 27.

Centre supervisor Kirsty Bell was delighted with the strong turnout – and thrill factor.

“They were excited to find each marker, and were fantastic at reading the numbers on each of them,” she said.

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Bell, who took her four month old along, has been pushing for the program for some time, with parent-backing.

“We firmly believe that parents are the first and best teachers for their children,” she said.

The fully licensed sessions are led by trained educators.

The program has been developed specifically to challenge and

extend play centre for its 3 to 6 year olds.

“We expect to see children grow in their independence through the sessions and develop into competent, confident children, capable of taking on the wide world around them with the necessary skills,” she said.

The orienteering course took around two and a half hours, with two stops – “one for some kai, and another to watch a big, loud, fast waterfall and watch sticks thrown in by parents float down.”

One parent, Jess Mackay said neither she nor her husband were seriously adventurous.

“So this is great. It’s exposing the girls to things we would never do ourselves”.

Another mum, Sam Munn enjoyed how the children plunged into their new experience.

“I really liked seeing them working as a team to find the markers. I’m calling our first Wild Wednesday a total success”.

For Rhia Munn, 3, her favourite thing was “finding the little orange and white squares cut in half”.

Styx Mill Reserve, Cave Rock, Travis Wetland, Waimairi Beach, St James Park and Kennedy’s Bush are now ripe for exploration over the coming year.

Coming up are pond-dipping to see different species, birdwatching and treasure hunts on the beach.

**In full wet weather rig Wild Wednesday mom Sam Munn helps Avonhead Play Centre children fix their position on a map as they trek through The Groyne.**

