

# Childcare with a difference

by Linda Whitney

**Y**OUR childcare experience could be used to build a business. A wide choice of franchises involve working with children, and being a parent can be useful when it comes to businesses such as these.

'If you are looking for a sector that is rewarding, interesting and satisfying, consider a children's franchise,' says Nigel Toplis, of ComputerXplorers, a franchise based around teaching computer skills to children aged from three to 13.

'Working with children can be hugely fulfilling, and you can run a successful business while making a real difference to your community,' says Mr Toplis, who is looking for more franchisees. You do not need experience of teaching, computers or children, as you will be trained to deliver the course in a professional but entertaining way.

The ComputerXplorers franchise costs £24,500, but currently, the pilot franchisees are discounted to £18,750.

When it comes to working with children, there are extra regulations involved, so expect Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks as part of the recruitment process.

'All our operators are required to have enhanced CRB clearance in England and Wales and Disclosure Scotland clearance north of the border,' says Gerry Usher from Go-Kart Party.

The franchise involves hiring out

and transporting a mobile go-kart track, and around 60 per cent of franchisees' business comes from children's parties.

'It is important that you enjoy working with children, because for many a Go-Kart Party is their first experience of driving a motorised vehicle, and you must make that a happy experience,' says Mr Usher.

Franchisees also take the track to corporate events, fetes and fairs, and most of the work is at weekends. The cost is £25,000.

Many child-centred franchises allow flexible work, which you can fit round family responsibilities. Kumon Educational franchisees, for instance, run after-school maths and English study centres in local venues.

'The only fixed hours are those when you are taking classes — otherwise you can fit the rest of the business into your own timetable,' says Cheryl Brown from Kumon.

You need no teaching experience, but you must have solid English



## GETTING THE PARTY STARTED

CLIVE and Ann Matkin of Bicester, Oxfordshire, run a Go-Kart Party franchise.

'Many people are daunted by the prospect of working with children, but as a father of six, I have plenty of experience in dealing with them,' says Clive, 48, pictured here with wife Ann and Logan, eight. Clara, four, Caleb, 11, and Fallon, 12.

Most of his business comes from birthday parties, where he sets up the go-kart track and then gives children safe

driving exercises followed by a competition for a safe driver trophy. 'The key to working with children is to be organised, offering structured activities and a challenge,' he says. 'They dislike hesitation or dithering, or lots of options. You must confidently tell them what they are going to do and then do it.'

'If activities are organised, they feel comfortable and so do their parents, and you can combine safety with fun.'

and maths skills, business acumen and enthusiasm to motivate children. The start-up fee is £400.

With concerns that more children are becoming obese, there are plenty of franchises aimed at boosting their fitness.

Boogie Bounce, whose franchisees run trampoline-based exercise classes, is branching out into schools, with some franchisees offering after-school clubs and lessons as part of the curriculum.

Training is included in the £6,500 investment, but extra costs include trampolines and the course leading to the RSA Exercise to Music qualification.

Tumble Tots franchisees run physical play programmes for under-fives, and you can fit it round a family, though you must be able to complete 24 sessions a week. The

cost is £17,000. A new children's franchise has just been launched by actress Pauline Quirke, famous for television's *Birds of A Feather*, which involves teaching children drama, comedy, musical theatre, television and film skills.

Called the Pauline Quirke Academy, it requires no performing or teaching experience, but you must be inspired, creative and willing to work weekends.

There is no franchise fee, but you need up to £2,500 for props and equipment. There is an open day for potential franchisees on November 3, in London.

■ ComputerXplorers 01530 513 308, Kumon Educational 0800 854 714, Boogie Bounce 01827 671 00, Tumble Tots 0121 585 7003, Pauline Quirke Academy 08456 732 022, Go-Kart Party 0870 116 2000.