



GROOVY GROMMETS: These littlies loved their dance class on Wednesday – back, Elizabeth, Ella, Summah, Leigha and Cheyanne; front, Riley, Oscar, Ryan, Jodi, Kaylee and Angel. **RIGHT – TIPPY-TOES:** Dance teacher Rolande Hooklyn takes Jodi through some moves.



Baby steps: youngsters get into the groove of moving

By MICHÈLE JEDLICKA

THERE was nothing but life and activity at the Sapphire City Dance Studio on Wednesday morning when the Mini Groovers entered the building.

Mini Groovers is a free program with Inverell Family and Youth Support Services.

Under the patient guidance of dance teacher Rolande Hooklyn, preschool-aged children learned aspects of co-ordination, self-confidence, musicality, movement and following direction.

Amy Rushby has brought her four-year-old daughter

Elizabeth to the program since the beginning of term one.

They both look forward to Wednesday mornings.

"She loves dancing, and she's learning all the formative things, like footwork and even skipping."

Amy said it was amazing how the group of so many young, distractible children had gradually learned to follow direction.

"Every week it gets a bit better," she said.

"They used to all just run amok, and so the fact that they're all staying (in) there – the majority – is a massive improvement.

"So by the end of the year, it should be really good," she said with a grin.

Mum Tracey Byrne's music-loving son Riley, age three, is also in his second term with the Mini Groovers.

She said his footwork and arm co-ordination had improved.

"I couldn't ask for a better place, a better teacher, she's lovely. And she's so clear, and the kids understand, she has got the patience," she said.

Stacey Budda-Deen brought little two-year-old Ryan. She said her son takes the moves home and performs.

"Like the side-stepping, he'd

never done before, but he does do that.

"He'll go 'Look mum!' and he's going across the lounge room, and so he's remembering things," she said laughing.

"And the mothers here, they're so lovely."

Stacey said: "It's the right balance between getting them to do what she wants, but it's also very fun."

Rolande said she relished the class because of the challenge working with so many young and busy minds.

"I love the way the mums watch on, and the little things make them so proud," she said.

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