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Feature: Parties

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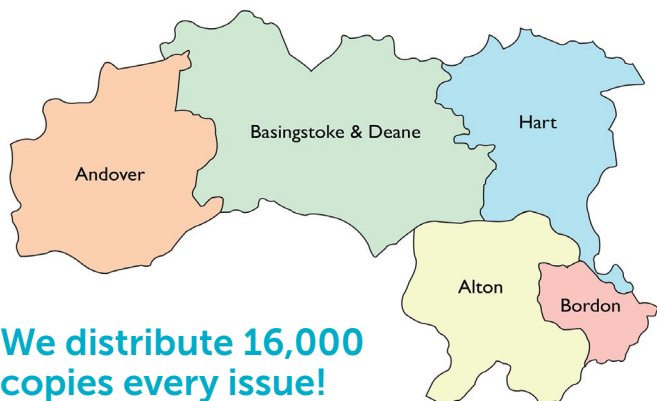
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## Editor's Welcome

Hello, and Happy Spring!

It's lovely to be able to enjoy lighter days, flowers and warmth again now that spring is here. It has been fun putting the What's On guide for this issue together, because there are lots of exciting outdoor activities coming up which we have listed (many are also 'egg-sighting'!)



We have a longer section on early years in this issue. This is a fleeting and busy time in a child's life - wonderful and full of questions for parents - and we take a look at choosing a toddler group and speech and language for this age group on pages 8 and 9.

Children's wellbeing continues to be a strong theme, and this time there is a great article about raising a confident child, as well as a reassuring piece on facing school avoidance.

Last but not least, Happy Mother's Day to all the special mums out there!

*Lesley*

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## 'National crisis' as children's reading enjoyment plummets

Children's reading enjoyment has fallen to its lowest level in almost two decades, with just one in three young people saying that they enjoy reading in their free time, according to a new survey.

Only 34.6% of eight- to 18-year-olds surveyed by the **National Literacy Trust** said that they enjoy reading in their spare time. This is the lowest level recorded by the charity since it began surveying children about their reading habits 19 years ago, representing an 8.8 percentage point drop since last year.

It is also part of a broader downward trend since 2016, when almost two in three children said that they enjoyed reading.

The charity called on the government to form a reading taskforce and action plan to address because it has got the scale of national crisis and needs to be all our responsibilities to address.

More information at [www.literacytrust.org](http://www.literacytrust.org)



## Easter Fun at Wellington Country Park

This is a fantastic park in a beautiful setting with lots going on for families. They have two great springtime activities happening in April - definitely worth a visit!

### Easter Eggstravaganza - 12 to 21 April

Hop into spring with Wellington Country Park's Easter Eggstravaganza - their biggest and most eggcellent Easter celebration yet! From dazzling circus performances under the Big Top to singing and dancing during shows, there's fun for the whole family. Get crafty with Junk Jodie's Easter creations, join in with storytimes and take a ride on the Easter-themed train. Don't miss animal encounters at the farm and plenty of egg-themed activities to keep little ones entertained. It's cracking fun for kids up to 8 years - join the adventure!

### Spring Into Spring At The Farm - 7 to 11 April

Celebrate all things springtime with fluffy chicks and other farmyard friends. Enjoy interactive animal encounters, engaging talks, and hands-on sessions that are perfect for the whole family. Learn about life on the farm during this exciting season while getting up close with Welly Park's newest arrivals. Whether it's feeding time or simply enjoying the sights and sounds of spring, you won't want to miss out.

Find out more at [www.wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk](http://www.wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk)



## Young Carers at Park View Primary School, Basingstoke

By Clare Sharp, Family Support Worker

The Young Carer group was set up 5 months ago and the group is currently at 18, with children from all year groups. There is a weekly lunchtime group where everyone has lunch together and then spends time playing games, doing craft activities, baking, chatting and activities that will help promote and support their emotional wellbeing. It also gives the individuals time for themselves and to be with others in similar situations.

There are visits outside of school, such as recently going to the pantomime at Christmas.

This weekly support group is not compulsory, and some children attend every week where others pop in and out when they want to catch up about something that's happening in the family.

The group has formed very good relationships where all the children play and interact together, with older year 6's playing games with the younger children, ensuring everyone feels welcome and not left out. They happily chat to each other about their home lives.

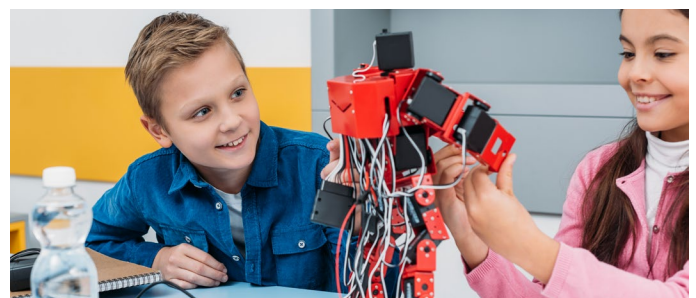
This is what the children wanted to share about the group...

*'It's awesome'*

*'Supportive with others. We need to support each other'*

*'It's very lovely, and it feels like a family'*

*'We have a family at home and a family at school'*



## British Science Week

**British Science Week** is entering its third decade in 2025, taking place on 7-16 March.

This year's theme 'Change and adapt' seeks to highlight how changing and adapting plays a big part in science and affects all aspects of life. Cities, towns and other areas where people live change and adapt as the world's population grows, plants and animals change and adapt to their surroundings to survive. Technology has changed exponentially and adapted to our new, busier lives.

During British Science Week, events and activities take place across the UK on a huge range of topics at a wide range of venues, including community groups, cultural centres and museums. A FREE activity pack can be downloaded for fun activities at home.

To find a local event, visit [www.britishscienceweek.org](http://www.britishscienceweek.org)





## Family fun awaits at The Shed in Whitehill & Bordon

Are you looking for family-friendly activities this spring? **The Shed** in Whitehill & Bordon has you covered!

March kicks off with **Toddler Tuesday**, a weekly event from 10am until lunchtime, where parents can relax with a cuppa while the kids play.

April brings even more excitement. Toddler Tuesday continues, and on **9 April**, **Daisy's Craft Room** returns for an afternoon of Easter-themed crafts. On **10 April**, enjoy two shows of the classic **Punch and Judy** puppets, guaranteed to bring laughter and chaos.

Magic lovers are in for a treat on **11 April**, with **Clumsy Entertainment's Easter Magic Show**, featuring rabbit and Easter egg tricks. Remember to book your **FREE** tickets in advance, as spaces are limited!

Join **Junk Jodie** on **16 April** for an interactive storytelling session followed by a craft activity. Finally, help colour in a giant tablecloth on **17 April**. Fun for all ages!

Find out more at [www.theshedwb.com](http://www.theshedwb.com)



## Could you become a foster carer in 2025?

Hampshire residents keen to make a difference are being urged to consider fostering a vulnerable child in need of a loving home. **Hampshire County Council** with their new campaign, **Foster Changes** are encouraging residents to consider fostering to provide care to vulnerable children that could have a special transformation on their lives.

Foster carer Anthony has praised the support he receives from the Council, including through **Hampshire Hives** – a network of local support groups for foster carers across Hampshire, led by a dedicated support worker. He says: "You've got social workers; you've got some wonderful 'hives' that provide an additional layer of support. Just as important is all the training that you're given, which really helps you to build your skillset and to make a big difference for the children."

Visit [www.hants.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.hants.gov.uk/fostering) to find out more or join the **Virtual Fostering Information Session** with a Foster carer on **Tuesday 18 March** at 7pm for an insight into fostering, the different types of fostering, the assessment journey, support, training and much more.

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# Supporting a child with emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA)

By Lucy Alexandra Spencer and Francesca Wells

Emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA) can be a distressing experience both for children and parents. Here's how to effectively engage with your child and support them through the different stages of this challenge.

## Initial hesitation and reluctance (over 90% attendance)

In the early stages, reluctance to go to school is often accompanied by minor complaints about feeling unwell. When this happens, your child needs a safe space for conversation. Sit down with your child and ask open questions about their feelings towards school. Use active listening techniques like nodding, maintaining eye contact and summarising what they say. Key at this stage is validating their feelings by acknowledging that it's okay to feel anxious and enquiring if there is any action you can take to help.

## Increased non-attendance (less than 90% attendance)

As anxiety escalates, your child may either exhibit more pronounced signs of distress or just shut down completely. Ask about scenarios that cause the most difficulty and discuss strategies to help them. Offer to share your child's concerns with their school and discuss what support the school can provide. It's very important for your child to identify adults who they feel comfortable with and for you to feed this back to the school.

## Refusal to attend

As a rule, we try to avoid the term 'refusal' as it suggests wilfulness, which can unfairly stigmatise a child. Understand that a child is not simply refusing school; they are likely experiencing significant emotional distress. Validate these feelings with statements such as: 'I can see how much this is affecting you.' Most importantly, book a meeting with the school to discuss



strategies like ELSA support, reduced timetables, therapeutic support or alternative provision.

## Building a support network

Throughout the process, encourage your child to share their feelings and stay connected to trusted adults like teachers, family members and peers both from school and out of school settings. Helping them to maintain a collaborative support network is hugely valuable – just don't forget to do the same yourself.

Lucy Spencer is founder of Education Boutique ([www.educationboutique.co.uk](http://www.educationboutique.co.uk)), which provides in-person tutoring for children, schools and local authorities, designed to meet individual needs and ensuring that each child can access the right resources at their own pace. If you need support before a meeting with your child's school, please contact them for free advice.



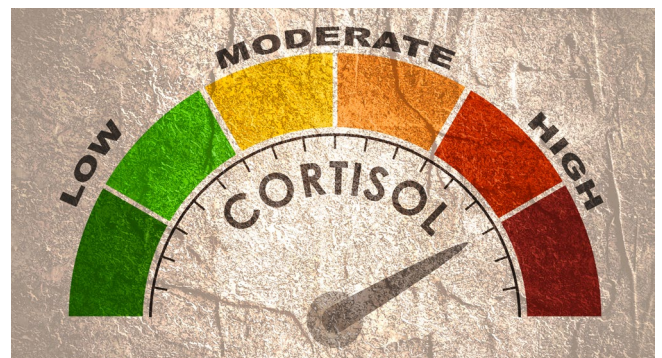
## Dealing with masking

For many children, especially those who have anxiety or neurodivergent traits, 'masking,' where they consciously suppress their true feelings, thoughts and challenges to fit in - can be a common response during the school day.

While this coping mechanism may help them navigate the social situations and academic demands of the school environment, it is a challenge that can often come at a significant emotional cost. After a long day of masking, children may feel exhausted and overwhelmed.

Decompression time is essential for allowing children to unwind and process their day. After school, you can make sure your child has decompression time by making a healthy snack available and by avoiding immediately bombarding them with questions. This allows them to unwind and enjoy a moment of peace in a safe, nurturing space. Encourage them to relax and process their day at their own pace.

After they've had some time to recharge, engage them in gentle conversation, fostering an environment where they feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings when they're ready.



## The effects of cortisol

When children face situations they perceive as stressful they may experience symptoms like increased heart rate and irritability, headaches or stomach aches. Over time, elevated cortisol levels can lead to chronic stress, further exacerbating feelings of anxiety and avoidance behaviours.

School avoidance can be further explained by **Hebbian Learning Theory**: repeated stress responses from school anxiety reinforce negative associations with school and where the child's brain becomes wired to associate school with stress and danger. Eventually, the fight or flight response causes the child to avoid and shut down from school.

Parents can take several actions to help reduce cortisol levels in their children. Establishing a calming routine after school, including activities like drawing or mindfulness exercises, can promote relaxation. Encourage open communication, allowing children to express their feelings about school. Physical activities such as sports or outdoor play can also help alleviate stress. Lastly, ensuring adequate sleep and maintaining a balanced diet contribute to overall emotional wellbeing, further reducing cortisol levels.





## St Neot's Prep School in Hook tells us about the highlights of its school year

St Neot's Prep School, nestled within 70 acres of Eversley woodland, has been nurturing young minds for nearly 150 years. The school has been reinvigorated since Jonathan Slot joined as Headmaster in 2021 into a thriving, progressive environment where every child is valued as an individual.

The **St Neot's Way** fosters a strong sense of community, academic excellence and character development. The rigorous academic program is complemented by a rich co-curricular offering, encouraging intellectual curiosity and a love of learning. With a focus on outdoor adventure and personalised learning, they empower children to explore their passions, discover their talents, and embrace challenges.

The **Autumn Term** saw the senior pupils participate in 'Leadership Days', two days dedicated to bonding and fostering camaraderie. The children constructed a human tripod and solved a complex puzzle, encouraging collaboration and problem-solving. The favourite was 'Stepping Stones', a dynamic challenge requiring teamwork and co-ordination and the evening silent disco. These activities were specifically designed to utilise the **St Neot's PSB skills** - **Communication, Review & Improve, Thinking & Learning, Independence, Collaboration and Leadership.**

The Nursery and Pre-Prep pupils finish the term with their Nativity performances, and the cuteness factor is off the charts! Performances have varied throughout the years from a very traditional performance to retelling the story to Aliens who have crash landed on Earth. Each child has their own special part, whether it be a group dance, solo, or speaking part.

The highlight of the **Spring Term** is the Year 5 to 8 School Production. This year they will be performing Disney's *The Lion*



*King*. In the past, performances have included *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *Dr Seuss's Seussical The Musical*.

One parent commented, "When my timid son started in Pre-Prep, I never would have imagined that I'd be watching him so confidently starring in the school production. His confidence has grown immeasurably and now he has such fun on stage"

The **Summer Term** highlights for pupils are undoubtedly the residential: from bushcraft to sailing to coastering and camping in Wales. Overnight trips start from Year 2, where pupils take to heights climbing and abseiling. St Neot's residential leave pupils feeling a real sense of accomplishment.

Sport plays a huge part all year round. The U11 boys have qualified for both the **ISFA & ISBA** football national finals later this year after winning the regional finals. The girls have their netball competitions this term, and they hope to see the same success as last year qualifying for nationals. Both boys' and girls' hockey teams had an outstanding 2024 hockey year winning the **Berkshire plate, the Berkshire tournament and South Central tournament**. The school is also proud to be a 2024 runner up in **The Cricketer Magazine Awards**.

To find out more about St Neot's vibrant school community firsthand and learn more about how St Neot's can nurture your child's potential, book onto an **Open Morning** on **Friday 7 March, Friday 16 May**, or speak to the admissions team about booking a bespoke tour.



St Neot's Prep School  
[admissions@stneotsprep.co.uk](mailto:admissions@stneotsprep.co.uk)  
 0118 973 2118  
[www.stneotsprep.co.uk](http://www.stneotsprep.co.uk)



# Which toddler class is right for your child?

By Andrew Campbell

Choosing classes for under 5s can be an exciting way to support their early development. While parent-toddler playgroups offer informal interaction and play for socialisation, structured toddler classes focus on the development of specific areas like music or movement. Led by instructors, these sessions open up a world of possibilities for your child. But with so many options available, it's important to consider the best fit.

**Your child's interests and personality.** Do they enjoy music and rhythm, physical activities like climbing and running or creative pursuits like crafting? Selecting activities they are naturally drawn to will increase their enthusiasm and ensure they enjoy the experience.

**Class size and atmosphere.** Smaller groups often provide more individual attention, which is ideal for young children. The setting should be encouraging and supportive, with a focus on having fun and learning through play, rather than a competitive atmosphere. Toddlers and pre-schoolers thrive in positive environments where they can explore without pressure.

**Qualified, caring instructors.** Teachers should be skilled in their field - whether it's arts, music or sports - and experienced in working with young children. Patience, understanding and creativity are key qualities. Observing a class or asking other parents for recommendations can help you evaluate the instructor's suitability.

**Trial classes.** Many providers offer these trials, sometimes free, giving you and your child the chance to see what the activity is like before enrolling for a term. It's an excellent way to ensure the



class meets your child's needs and interests.

**Franchise-run or independent?** There are pros and cons to each. Franchise classes often provide a standardised approach, consistent quality and reliable resources. On the other hand, independently run classes may offer more flexibility and a personalised touch. However, the quality of independent sessions can vary so do your research and take advantage of trials.

**Safety.** This should always be a priority. Ensure facilities are child-friendly and well-maintained. Gymnastics classes should have padded floors, art sessions should use non-toxic materials and sports activities must include proper warm-ups and attentive supervision to minimise risks.

**Your child's temperament.** Quieter children may prefer smaller, relaxed music or art sessions, while high-energy youngsters could thrive in more dynamic sports settings. The right class can ignite a lifelong passion or simply help your child grow while enjoying a fun and engaging experience. Take your time, trust your instincts and enjoy watching them thrive.

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## Sherfield Early Years welcomes children from 3 months

Looking for an exceptional nursery? At **Sherfield Early Years**, staff provide a warm, nurturing environment for children from 3 months to 4 years, where little learners thrive through outdoor adventures, creative play, and hands-on experiences like cooking with their head chef.

Sherfield is now participating in the Hampshire Early Years Scheme, offering 15 or 30 free hours per week — making outstanding early education more accessible than ever!

Join Sherfield's **Open Evening** on **Thursday 13 March** to explore this beautiful setting, meet the dedicated team and discover what makes Sherfield unique.

Sign up now: [www.sherfieldschool.co.uk/Open-events](http://www.sherfieldschool.co.uk/Open-events)

Give your child the best start — they can't wait to welcome you!



# Your child's speech and language development

By Kate Lewis and Katie Kennedy

Watching your child's speech develop over time is very exciting but if they don't meet or hit expected milestones, you may consider it to be a cause for concern. Speech and language skills develop rapidly in the first years of life and every child progresses at their own pace. These milestones are general guidelines rather than rigid expectations:

**12-18 months:** By this age, children typically say their first words and may have a vocabulary of five to twenty words. They begin to name familiar objects, imitate sounds and understand simple commands like 'Give me the ball!'

**18-24 months:** Vocabulary grows rapidly during this period. Toddlers may have around fifty words by 18 months and combine two words into simple phrases like 'want cookie' or 'go park.' They understand more than they can say, following directions like 'put it in the box.'

**2-3 years:** By age 2, children often use two to three hundred words and start forming three- or four-word sentences. They begin asking questions like 'What's that?' and can be understood by familiar listeners about half to three quarters of the time.

**3-4 years:** At this age children typically use longer sentences and have a vocabulary of a thousand words or more by age 4. They can tell simple stories, ask 'why?' questions and be understood by strangers most of the time.

## Boosting speech and language development

There are things you can do to support your child's speech and language development:

**Books, books and more books!** Reading books with your child



helps them to build vocabulary and learn sentence structure skills, while sparking imagination and creating opportunities to connect. Keep them engaged by using objects and toys as props – learning is way more fun when you bring meaning to words through real-world experiences.

**Copy your child.** By repeating the sounds, words and phrases your child says, you build a stronger connection with them, while also letting them know you're interested in what they have to say, regardless of the form of communication they prefer to use. It might feel strange at first but remember to watch their reactions when they realise you're joining in with their preferred communication method!

## It's important to remember...

Every child is unique and developing communication should be fun and interactive. Having an awareness of developmental milestones and supporting them with the tips above will stand you in good stead to increase your child's communication skills.

**Kate and Katie are speech and language therapists at Magic Words Therapy which provides a broad range of expert speech and language therapy services for children and adults. Find out more at [www.magicwordstherapy.co.uk](http://www.magicwordstherapy.co.uk)**



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# Raising a confident child

By Poppy O'Neill

Confidence comes in many forms - from public speaking to asking for help - and what it takes is different for everybody. As parents, there's a lot we can do to help foster confidence in our children. With small daily habits, they can develop the type of true confidence that they'll use throughout their lives. Here are my go-to tips for raising confident kids.

## Be patient

True confidence takes time and patience to build. When your child is finding something challenging, slow it right down.

Knowing they can take a step back, say 'no' or back out entirely allows your child to progress through baby steps. For example, if there's anxiety around a school trip, explore their options. Is there something that could make the day easier? What would it be like not to go? When a child can sense they have a bit of wiggle room, it takes the pressure off and helps them make braver choices.

## Talk about a time you overcame low confidence

Kids don't always like talking about feelings, let's face it - conversations about mental health can feel heavy and awkward.

Talking about your own experiences takes the pressure off and lets your child see how someone like them conquered a similar problem.

Sharing stories about your own inner world will help your child feel understood and less alone. Even if your experiences are quite different from theirs, emotions like fear and bravery are something we all share.

## Look for ways to make it a tiny bit easier

As much as we'd like to be able to solve all our child's problems, encouraging them to try to problem solve builds resilience and confidence. We don't need to sit back and watch them struggle though.

Think instead in terms of supporting them to work things out independently and how you can make things less daunting for them. This could be sitting together while they study for a dreaded exam, checking in to let them know you're thinking of



them or talking through a big decision with them.

## Be on their side

When children feel sure that you are always on their team, that you will treat their wins with pride and their losses with gentleness, it becomes easier for them to take leaps of faith towards their challenges.

One of the worst things about trying and failing is feeling alone, with the difficult emotions failure brings. Equally, it can be isolating to excel; winning can bring its own challenges. Being a stalwart supporter of your child shows them they are definitely not alone, whatever happens.

## Gently nudge

When the time is right - and you can trust yourself to know when this is - nudge your child towards what is difficult or challenging for them. By the time we become adults, we know from experience that fear can hold us back from some of the best parts of life; but your child hasn't yet learned this.

Without shaming or rushing, help your child to understand that trying things is often the only way to know for sure. Never force them to do something as this usually backfires. Instead, after building the foundations for confidence together, be the one who shows them they're ready to fly.

Poppy O'Neill has written several books on mental well-being for children and adults, including the bestsellers *Don't Worry, Be Happy* and *You're a Star*. Her most recent book, *Be Confident* is published by Vie Books.

## When your child is full of self-doubt



It can be so difficult to hear our children criticise themselves and doubt their abilities. Often, it feels sensible to tell them they're wrong and counter what they say with praise.

However, it's usually more helpful to listen and try to identify the emotion underneath their words. Are they scared of failure, rejection or has their pride been wounded? Speak to their emotions and let them know that whatever happens, they will cope and you will be proud and supportive.

## Top tip for growing sustainable confidence



There's no quick fix for confidence, though it can be boosted when needed. The secret is connecting with your child and building a strong relationship.

Find small, regular ways to connect with your child. It could be watching a show together, sharing a joke, a few words of affection - little and often beats big and flashy every time. Connection with our loved ones helps us learn that we are not alone and that is the key to confidence.



# A parent's guide to clubs and classes

Clubs and classes are a great way to continue your child's development, as well as allow them to have fun, get exercise, socialise with others, and take part in activities they might not have the chance to at home.

Here are just a few of the clubs and classes on offer, and some of the benefits they can bring. Take a look at the list to find out which ones are best suited for your little one.

## Rugby

Rugby is a great way for children to have fun and get exercise while learning to work and function as part of a team. Your children can learn a wide variety of skills from the sport, including respect, winning and losing, and working together. All of these come together to make a great, enjoyable experience.

## Drama

Drama is always hugely popular with children and really helps younger people release their creative thoughts and let their imagination run wild. Always fun and engaging, it's also a great way to help children develop their own sense of self, confidence and self-esteem - even shy children love taking part. It can also be a great way to develop an interest in other forms of art.

## Trampolining

Trampolining is always popular among children, but it's also a great fun way to get exercise. Under supervision, and learning different moves on the trampoline, it can be the perfect way to get into gymnastics and other athletics too - as well as being healthy and fun in its own right.

## Music

Music classes will help your child to develop their artistic talents by exploring how to create music and learning an instrument. As well as the joys of music, it's also a great way to learn other



related abilities - like patience, discipline and social and physical skills.

## Baby and Toddler Physical Sensory Classes

Great for very young children, this class allows you to explore a multi-sensory environment with your child, with organised activities in place for you to enjoy as well as the freedom to explore. In the play area, your child can benefit from physical activity, learn to make friends with others, and have plenty of fun while doing so.

## Martial arts

Martial arts are a great way to help develop confidence in children, as well as learning values like discipline and patience. Teaching responsible self-defence helps to benefit children enormously, and it's a great and fun way to get exercise too.

Whichever class you choose, all of the above have great benefits for all children. As well as being open and beneficial, they're all designed to be as fun as possible and to get children active and working with each other.

For more information about clubs and classes, visit [www.familiesonline.co.uk](http://www.familiesonline.co.uk)

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# Acclaimed family-friendly UK museums

Compiled by Andrew Campbell

The UK is brimming with 'must-see' museums with plenty for families to explore. Engage with history in Nottinghamshire, spark young imaginations in London and see art come to life in Margate! Here are our top picks. All the museums featured have either won or been shortlisted in the Family-Friendly Museum Awards 2024 by Kids in Museums ([www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk](http://www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk))

WINNER  
Best  
Museum  
Youth  
Group



The Tees Valley Museums

## The Tees Valley Museums, Teeside

An exciting world of discovery for children awaits at these five museums, with hands-on exhibits, interactive displays and workshops that make learning fun. Each museum features unique activities, from exploring local history to engaging in creative art sessions. Kids can enjoy playful educational experiences in a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Endless opportunities for fun and imagination! [www.teesvalleymuseums.org](http://www.teesvalleymuseums.org)

## National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh

Shortlisted Best Large Museum

Children can immerse themselves in a variety of creative activities ranging from hands-on art workshops to storytelling sessions inspired by the gallery's iconic artworks. Interactive stations allow young visitors to experiment with colours and shapes and families can join fun-filled events that explore different art techniques or engage in treasure hunts designed to uncover artistic treasures. [www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org)

Science and Industry Museum



## Science and Industry Museum, Manchester

Shortlisted for Best Large Museum

Delve into a world of discovery through exciting, hands-on activities that bring science and technology to life! From building circuits to experimenting with forces in interactive zones, there's something to spark curiosity in every little scientist. Families can join creative workshops, take part in live demonstrations or enjoy fun-filled science shows. [www.scienceandindustry-museum.org.uk](http://www.scienceandindustry-museum.org.uk)

WINNER  
Best  
Accessible  
Museum

## The Cooper Gallery, Barnsley, South Yorkshire

An opportunity for an enriching and fun experience for children. With interactive art displays, creative workshops and family-friendly activities, the Gallery is perfect for sparking young imaginations. Kids can explore art through hands-on sessions and exciting exhibits designed just for them. The gallery's welcoming vibe and dedicated children's programmes make it a great option for a day out. [www.cooper-gallery.com](http://www.cooper-gallery.com)

## Young V&A, London

A vibrant hub of creativity designed to inspire young minds. Celebrating art, design and performance, it houses interactive exhibits, hands-on workshops and captivating displays tailored for children and families. Highlights include iconic toys, playful installations and opportunities to explore imaginative spaces. The museum fosters creativity and curiosity in young audiences and is a must-visit destination for families seeking an unforgettable experience. [www.vam.ac.uk/young](http://www.vam.ac.uk/young)

OVERALL  
WINNER &  
Best Large  
Museum

## The Turner Contemporary, Margate, Kent

Offers a fantastic experience for children, with interactive exhibits and family-friendly activities that bring art to life. Kids can explore creative workshops, hands-on art projects and playful installations, sparking their imagination and curiosity. The gallery's welcoming atmosphere and engaging programmes ensure a fun and educational visit for families. Overlooking Margate's beautiful coastline, it's the perfect place for children to discover a love for art and creativity. [www.turnercontemporary.org](http://www.turnercontemporary.org)

WINNER  
Best  
Medium  
Museum

## Museum of Making, Derby, Derbyshire

Shortlisted for Best Medium Museum

Discover an incredible space where children can engage with interactive exhibits showcasing creativity and innovation. Kids will revel in hands-on activities, like building and creating in dedicated workshops, while interactive displays unravel the wonders of design and technology. Educational programmes inspire and encourage exploration. [www.derbymuseums.org](http://www.derbymuseums.org)

Museum of Making



## National Civil War Centre, Newark, Nottinghamshire

Take a fascinating glimpse into England's tumultuous past! Dedicated to preserving Civil War history, it boasts immersive exhibits, rare artifacts and interactive displays that bring the 17th-century conflict to life. Visitors can explore pivotal moments of the English Civil War, including Newark's significance as a royalist stronghold. With knowledgeable guides and a vibrant atmosphere, it's a top choice for history lovers and the curious! [www.nationalcivilwarcentre.com](http://www.nationalcivilwarcentre.com)

WINNER  
Best Small  
Museum





## Spring into a new season of exciting science fun!

'Eggs-plore', play, discover and hunt this Easter at **Winchester Science Centre!**

Between **Friday 4 March and Monday 21 April**, the eggcellent Eggs-travaganza **Easter Hunt** returns with tasty treats waiting for everyone who takes part. Plus, Easter sees the return of the hugely popular dancing fire demo in live science show, **The Sound Show** and there'll be all the usual Science Centre fun including two floors of interactive exhibits, exciting Planetarium shows and huge 'don't try this at home' demos.

Plus, don't miss all the usual Science Centre fun! Explore two floors of hands-on interactive exhibits where you can learn British Sign Language, crawl through a giant ear or have a go at building a tower whilst wearing space gloves. Be wowed by huge 'don't-try-this-at-home' demos involving fireballs and gravity defying science in Science Live. And discover the wonder of the South Downs National Park both indoors and outside. No matter what age you are, you can explore, play, create and discover why science isn't just for scientists!

[www.winchestersciencecentre.org/whats-on/easter](http://www.winchestersciencecentre.org/whats-on/easter)



## Easter Adventures with the National Trust

This Easter, all ages can enjoy fun activities at your local National Trust venue.

At **Mottisfont**, from **5-21 April**, enjoy funfair games for all the family. Test your aim with coconut shy and archery practice. Other activities include 'Hook a Duck', sack racing with an egg and spoon and a 'Clowning Around' challenge to encourage general silliness.

From **29 March to 21 April**, get stuck into fun, Regency-themed adventures at **The Wyne**. Line up your shot in bunny hoopla and see if you can outwit your opponent using a giant outdoor chess set. Race to place down all your giant dominoes tiles and show off your sensational hoop shot in a fabulous game of croquet.

Take part in a series of challenges left by Bonnie the Easter Bunny at **Hinton Ampner** from **5 to 21 April**. Spread your arms wide to measure your wingspan against feathered friends, identify animal footprints and have a go at carrot throwing, pallet percussion and bunny hoopla. Activities are dotted around the gardens which will be a bursting with spring colour and fragrance.

Find out more at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hampshire](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hampshire)

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## FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AT THE SHED!

The Shed in Whitehill & Bordon has delicious food, unique shopping & exciting activities for all ages!

Eat, Shop & Play at The Shed! From tasty treats and live entertainment to crafty workshops and unique events, there's always something happening! Little ones will love **Toddler Tuesdays**, while adventurers can step into the Dino Dome to meet life-sized dinosaurs. Whether you're here for food, fun, or fantastic experiences, The Shed is the perfect place for families to explore and enjoy!

**CHECK OUT WHAT'S ON AT THE SHED AND PLAN YOUR NEXT VISIT TODAY.**



[theshedwb.com](http://theshedwb.com)



follow us @shedwb



The Shed, Sergeants Yard, Bordon, Hampshire. GU35 0DU





Egg hunt at Gilbert White's House and Gardens

## Easter Holidays Activities to Enjoy

With more time available over the holidays, there are some great activities for children or families. Take a look at these fantastic offerings of things going on in our area.

**Animal Tracks Detective Trail at Willis Museum and Sainsbury Gallery, Basingstoke: 5-21 April**  
Search around for the animal tracks which have appeared throughout the museum and see if you can identify the wildlife that have left their mark behind. 10am-5pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**Birds in Folklore Egg Hunt at Gilbert White's House and Gardens, near Selborne: 4-27 April**  
This year's egg hunt includes stories and folklore about some of our best loved British birds! Hunt for ten eggs hidden in Gilbert White's Garden and match the birds pictured on the eggs with the stories about them. Match all 10 and claim a chocolate egg! 10:30am-4pm  
[gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk](http://gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk)

**Easter at Winchester Science Centre: 4-21 April**  
Head off on an oviparity Easter egg hunt, discover if fire can dance in live science show, The Sound Show, zoom into the stars for a family space adventure during Solar System Quest in The Planetarium and discover if there's life beyond Earth in subtitled Planetarium film show, *We Are aliens*.  
[winchestersciencecentre.org](http://winchestersciencecentre.org)

**Easter Egg Hunt at Hinton Ampner, near Alresford: 5-21 April**  
Go wild for the Easter Trail at Hinton Ampner as you don your bunny ears and take on the challenges the Easter bunny has left behind. 10am-4pm  
[nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire-hinton-ampner](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire-hinton-ampner)

**Easter Egg Hunt at Mottisfont, near Romsey: 5-21 April**  
Roll up, roll up this spring and treat the whole family to a world of adventure at Mottisfont on an Easter trail. 10am-5pm  
[nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire-mottisfont](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire-mottisfont)

**Easter Egg Hunt at The Vyne, near Basingstoke: 29 March-21 April**  
Families can enjoy Bunny Hoopla, giant chess, croquet, dominoes and more Regency-themed fun in The

Vyne's gardens before collecting their trail prize at the end. 10am-3pm  
[nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/the-vyne](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/the-vyne)

**Easter Egg Hunt and Fact Trail at Andover Museum: 5-21 April**  
Find the eggs scattered around the museum, discover some Easter facts and crack the code to receive a special Easter prize! 10am-4pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**Easter Eggstravaganza at Wellington Country Park, Riseley: 12-21 April**  
From dazzling circus performances under the big top to singing and dancing during the shows, there's fun for the whole family. 9:30am-4:30pm  
[wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk](http://wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk)

**Finkley Easter Eggstravaganza at Finkley Down Farm Park, near Andover: 5-20 April**  
Be sure to check out the timetable so you don't miss Bunny Hop, Birds of Prey Shows and our Famous Goat Race, Goat Gladiators!  
[finkleydownfarm.co.uk](http://finkleydownfarm.co.uk)

**New Stick Man Trail at Alice Holt Forest, Farnham**  
Enjoy the wonderful world of Stick Man as you complete lots of fun stick-based activities, discover tree-mendous facts and learn about forest wildlife. Once you've helped Stick Man find his way back home, complete the rubbing in your adventure passport and take a picture with Stick Man in the family tree. Make a day of it while you're there and enjoy the Play Trail and Playwood area. Find the Gruffalo character sculptures and enjoy a tasty treat from the café.  
[forestryengland.uk/alice-holt-forest/the-stick-man-trail-alice-holt](http://forestryengland.uk/alice-holt-forest/the-stick-man-trail-alice-holt)

**Wind in the Willows - Play in a Week at Holybourne Theatre, Alton: 7-11 April**  
This fun-filled week of creativity and exploration will allow the children a rare chance to perform in front of a live audience and to experiment with characterisation in the most exciting way.  
[holybournetheatre.co.uk](http://holybournetheatre.co.uk)

# What's on

## March/April 2025

All listings are correct at the time of publication. Please check with the venue before you visit in case anything has changed.

### MARCH

7:30pm  
[anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)

**Until 2 Mar**  
**Dinosaur and Nature Trails at Curtis Museum, Basingstoke**  
Two FREE trails at the Curtis Museum, for younger and older children. 10am-4:30pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**14 and 15 Mar**  
**Peter Pan RARE 2025 at The Lights, Andover**  
Join RARE Productions with their cast of local children for an adaptation of J. M. Barrie's story about a boy who never grew up.  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**1 Mar**  
**Playtime! Cheesy Tunes at Proteus Theatre, Basingstoke**  
Play-along theatre adventures for 2-6-year-olds and their grown-ups! 10am / 11:30am / 2pm  
[proteustheatre.com](http://proteustheatre.com)

**18 Mar**  
**Moon Song at Phoenix Arts Centre, Bordon**  
Using Bamboozle's calm approach, incorporating invitation and interaction, this sensory show caters for groups of six autistic children along with accompanying adults. 10am / 11am / 1pm  
[phoenixarts.co.uk](http://phoenixarts.co.uk)

**4 Mar**  
**Story Time with Steven Lee at The Lights, Andover**  
Popular children's author Steven Lee brings some of his best-loved books to life with a magical mixture of music, puppetry and heartwarming, giggle-making, interactive fun. 12:30pm  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**18 Mar**  
**Shakespeare Schools Festival at The Lights, Andover**  
Experience a series of abridged Shakespeare productions brought to life by local schools in the world's largest youth drama festival. 7pm  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**4 Mar**  
**Bedtime Stories with Steven Lee at The Lights, Andover**  
This is a relaxed performance in an arena space where you can choose your seats and your little ones can get close up to the stage on cushioned floormats. 5pm  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**18 Mar**  
**Fostering Information Session at Hampshire County Council (Virtual)**  
Is fostering something you are interested in but not sure where to start? Come along to this virtual presentation and hear from a member of the team and foster carer for an insight into fostering, the different types of fostering, the assessment journey, support, training and more. Book online. 7pm  
[www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering/storiesandevents/events/virtual-fostering-information-session-120225](http://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering/storiesandevents/events/virtual-fostering-information-session-120225)

**4 and 5 Mar**  
**Mini Adventures at Mottisfont: Nature Hedgehogs at Mottisfont, near Romsey**  
A fun, hands-on activity where children can create their very own hedgehog out of salt dough and natural materials. 10:30am  
[nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/mottisfont](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/mottisfont)

**30 Mar**  
**Mother's Day at Finkley Down Farm, near Andover**  
Visit Finkley Down Farm over the Mother's Day weekend for a great day out with all the family!  
[finkleydownfarm.co.uk](http://finkleydownfarm.co.uk)

**13 Mar**  
**Tap Factory at The Anvil, Basingstoke**  
Prepare to be captivated as eight extraordinary male performers deliver a sensational blend of dance, acrobatics, music and comedy, creating a show that appeals to audiences of all ages.





**30 Mar**  
**Mothering Sunday Afternoon Tea at West Green House, near Hartley Witney**

Always the most wonderful way to say thank you to Mother is to bring her to a garden in early spring when the daffodils and tiny bulbs carpet the ground. 2:30pm  
[westgreenhouse.co.uk](http://westgreenhouse.co.uk)

**APRIL**

**6 Apr**  
**Children's Easter Event at The Brickworks Museum, Lower Swanwick**

Lots of animals on-site, including some baby goats that the children can feed and pet all included in the admission price; on top of this you will be able to take part in an Easter egg hunt around the museum. 11am-3pm  
[thebrickworksmuseum.org](http://thebrickworksmuseum.org)

**7 Apr**  
**Jack and the Beanstalk at The Lights, Andover**

There'll be splendid scenery, staggering costumes, spectacular effects and heaps of audience participation! 2pm  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**8 Apr**  
**The Amazing Bubble Man at The Haymarket, Basingstoke**

From square bubbles, bubbles inside bubbles, fog-filled bubbles, giant bubbles, bubble volcanoes, tornados and trampolines, to people inside bubbles, The Amazing Bubble Man conjures shrieks of laughter and gasps of amazement from all ages. 2pm  
[anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)

**9 Apr**  
**Wednesday Craft Club - Spring Pot Plants at Andover Museum**

Making some pots with seeds to plant in them when you get home. 10:30am-3:30pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**10 Apr**  
**Back to the Iron Age! at Andover Museum**

From coin making to weaving and everything in between, you'll be

stepping back in time to Andover over 2000 years ago! 10am-4pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**11 Apr**  
**Animal Mask Making Workshop at Willis Museum, Basingstoke**

Make a mask and see who you can scare - Grrrrhhhhhh! 11am / 2pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**12 Apr**  
**The Dinosaur That Pooped at The Haymarket, Basingstoke**

Adapted from the number one best-selling books by McFly's Tom Fletcher and Dougie Poynter, the whole family will have a poopy good time enjoying a brand-new story for the stage. 12:30pm / 3:30pm  
[anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)

**14 Apr**  
**Puffling Percy at Phoenix Arts Centre, Bordon**

An uplifting children's show for 4-11 year olds about friendship, overcoming self-doubt and trusting your own instincts. 11:30am / 2:30pm  
[phoenixarts.co.uk](http://phoenixarts.co.uk)

**14 Apr**  
**Teach Rex at The Lights, Andover**

Teach Rex uses life-like dinosaurs to perform their 1-hour show, teaching children about the anatomy and life of one the most mesmerising creatures. 2pm  
[thelights.org.uk](http://thelights.org.uk)

**15 Apr**  
**Easter Panto: The Wizard of Oz at The Anvil, Basingstoke**

There's no place like The Anvil for family entertainment, so click those heels together and book your tickets now! 2pm / 6pm  
[anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)

**16 Apr**  
**Wednesday Craft Club - Celtic Painting at Andover Museum**

You'll be creating some Iron Age-inspired paintings. 10:30am-3:30pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**18-21 Apr**  
**Easter Weekend Garden Entry, Bunny Hunt and Petting Zoo at West Green House, near Hartley Witney**

On Easter weekend, an Easter Bunny Hunt leads the children through the 10 acre garden, with a traditional Easter treat at the end of the 'adventure.' 11am - 4:30pm  
[westgreenhouse.co.uk](http://westgreenhouse.co.uk)

**19 Apr**  
**Meet the Celts! at the Museum of the Iron Age, Andover**

With reenactors, family activities and talks and tours, there'll be something for the whole family. 10am-4pm  
[hampshireculture.org.uk](http://hampshireculture.org.uk)

**19 Apr**  
**Pop Princesses at the Corn Exchange Newbury**

A Magical show where beautiful Princesses become Pop Stars. 1pm / 6pm  
[cornexchangenew.com](http://cornexchangenew.com)

**22 Apr**  
**Michael Morpurgo's Farm Boy at the Corn Exchange Newbury**

Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel to War Horse takes to stage! 1:30pm / 4pm  
[cornexchangenew.com](http://cornexchangenew.com)

**27 Apr**  
**The Steve Hewlett Show at The Haymarket, Basingstoke**

This extravaganza will feature a combination of comedy ventriloquism, live music and celebrity guests, including Graham Cole OBE (The Bill), Triple Cream, and Arthur Lager as co-host to celebrate Steve turning 50. 3pm  
[anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)

**Don't forget to say you saw these events listed in Families Hampshire North Magazine**



**Easter Pantomime at The Anvil**

Follow the Yellow Brick Road to a fantastic all-new Easter pantomime version of **The Wizard of Oz**, brought to **The Anvil** by Enchanted Entertainment on Tuesday 15 April.

Join Kansas farm-girl Dorothy and her pet dog Toto as they are picked up by a tornado and carried off to the magical Land of Oz, where they meet the Munchkins, a Scarecrow who needs a brain, a Tin Man who wants a heart, and a Cowardly Lion who desperately needs courage.

Packed with well-known pop songs, lots of audience participation, and plenty of laughter for all the family!

For details visit [anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk) or call the Anvil Arts box office on 01256 844244.

**WELLINGTON COUNTRY PARK presents**

**7th - 11th April**

**Spring Into Spring At The Farm**

Celebrate spring with cute lambs, fluffy chicks, and farm animals through interactive encounters, engaging talks, and hands-on sessions.

**12th - 21st April**

**Easter Eggstravaganza**

Hop into spring with Wellington Country Park's Easter Eggstravaganza. It's our biggest and most eggcellent Easter celebration yet!

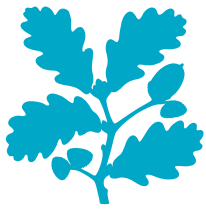
**MEGA EGG HUNT 20TH APRIL ONLY**

[wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk](http://wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk)

It's cracking fun for kids up to 8 years old. We always have the best day out!

Book online in advance to save!





National  
Trust

# Easter Adventures in Hampshire

Join us on an Easter adventure in Hampshire. Celebrate spring together in nature as you follow an Easter trail packed with crafts, games and activities.

The Easter trail at each place is different, but they're all topped off with a chocolate egg.

Vegan 'Free From' available and all eggs are made with Rainforest Alliance certified cocoa.

£3.50  
per trail

Hinton Ampner  
Mottisfont  
The Vyne



Dates vary. Use the QR code to check online for details