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Issue 76 September/October 2026

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NEXT ISSUE: NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
Booking deadline: 3 October
Feature: Festive season



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Editor's Welcome

September can be a bit of a jolt, but it's also reassuring to get back to the routine of the academic year, and there are so many adventures and things to learn in the school year ahead!



We focus on education in this issue, including visiting St Neot's Prep School on page 7 and looking at AI, which has become so ubiquitous these days, on page 8. Please get in touch if you have a school or early years setting story to share on these pages!

It's a great time of year to think about new extracurricular activities too, and I hope you enjoy our clubs and classes section, with some excellent local clubs to choose from, along with an article on sport for children.

I hope you have a great start to the 2026-2027 year!

Lesley

Competition winner:

Congratulations to Jay Armstrong, who won four tickets to see Let's Go to the Seaside! at Proteus Theatre in our July/August 2026 issue.



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Finding local support with the Here for Hart Directory



If you're feeling isolated or anxious, looking for better wellbeing or want to feel more connected to your community, many Hart GP surgeries have Social Prescribers who can help.

Social prescribing links people with local, non-medical activities, opportunities and support.

By using community-based services, they can improve their health and wellbeing by addressing the wider issues affecting daily life. The Here for Hart Directory can help social prescribers in this important role.

Jenny is the friendly face of social prescribing at Odiham Health Centre. She uses the Here for Hart Directory to find opportunities for her patients in a local setting. She can also find local organisations to help people with debt and housing support, parenting, independent home living and much more.

Why not explore what's available near you?

It includes over 500 local listings, covering everything from Mental Health and Wellbeing and Disabilities & Health Conditions, to Older People, Children, Young People & Families, and Social & Leisure Activities. Choose a category or use a keyword to find what you need.

www.hereforharterdirectory.org.uk



Statutory school phone ban enforced across England from September

The government has placed the national school mobile phone ban on a statutory footing under the newly enacted Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act.

The new legislation officially came into force on 29 June 2026, meaning all state-funded schools across England must operate fully phone-free environments by default when the new academic year starts in September.

While ministers argue legal backing eliminates classroom distractions, headteachers warn the mandate presents major implementation hurdles. The Association of School and College Leaders noted that over 90% of schools already restrict devices, proving the real challenge lies in daily enforcement rather than regulation.

Local school leaders now face significant pressure to police 'off and away' policies without dedicated funding for secure storage pouches or lockers. Furthermore, successfully managing parental resistance regarding emergency communication remains a hurdle as schools transition over to this stricter, legally binding regime.

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Citizenship, oracy and media literacy

Primary schools in England are preparing for a major overhaul following the government's formal backing of the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review. Under the incoming framework, scheduled for mandatory rollout in September 2028, citizenship education will become legally compulsory for primary pupils from Key Stage 1.

The mandate also places a heavy emphasis on oracy - the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language - introducing a dedicated framework alongside traditional reading and writing. For the first time, the new primary curriculum will also require schools to teach media literacy, equipping children with critical thinking skills to spot online fake news and misinformation.

While teaching unions welcome the focus on vital skills, leaders warn that primary timetables are severely overloaded. School staff will begin training ahead of the final text release in 2027, in order to integrate these demanding requirements into packed schedules.



Celebrating histories at Heritage Open Days

The country's largest festival of history and culture returns 11-20 September 2026.

Heritage Open Days returns this September with thousands of free events and experiences taking place across England. Each year, millions of people take part in a nationwide celebration of their heritage, community and history. The festival is brought to you by the National Trust and supported by Postcode Lottery players, with an exciting programme of events delivered locally by thousands of organisations and volunteers.

It's all about doorstep discovery - whether you're stepping into a cold war bunker or a crematorium, a museum or a mandir, a lido or a lighthouse, a canal boat or a colliery, a signal box or a submarine. The festival offers thousands of free, community-led events all over England, with endless opportunity for discovering something new.

www.heritageopendays.org.uk



Give your child a confidence boost this autumn with Perform

Are you looking for a fun weekly activity where your child can build confidence, find their voice and make new friends? Perform's drama, dance and singing classes for ages 4-7 and 7-12 provide a positive outlet for children to express themselves, grow in confidence and have fun.

Filled with drama-based games, improvisation, catchy songs and fun dance routines, each term ends with a magical performance, giving each child the opportunity to shine.

Every child is welcome to come and try Perform for free, to discover what their classes are all about before joining. It's also a great opportunity to chat to the team about your child's individual needs, whether that's building confidence, speaking up in a group, developing social skills or making new friends.

No previous experience is needed - every child is welcome.

This autumn's productions:

Ages 4-7: Super Hero School - an action-packed mission to save the planet.

Ages 7-12: Jack and the Wonderbeans - a Hollywood-inspired spy thriller.

Classes are available in Andover, Basingstoke, Bramley, Fleet and Hartney Wintney.

Visit perform.org.uk/try to book a FREE trial class.



Sat 24 Oct- Sun 1 Nov £2 - plus general admission



gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk



Introducing Wellesley Prep School in Hook

Looking for a school where your child can thrive inside and out? Join Wellesley Prep School's Open Morning on Friday 16 October (9.15am–11am).

Set in 100 acres of countryside in Hook, Hampshire, Wellesley is an independent co-educational day school for children aged 2–13. Meet staff and pupils, explore the classrooms and outdoor learning spaces, and discover a school where 40% of learning takes place outdoors.

From music and languages to drama, PE and ICT, children enjoy a broad and engaging curriculum from the very start. Wellesley pupils leave at 13 with firm friendships, fond memories, and a strong foundation for their next steps, supported by strong links with leading senior schools.

Why not join Wellesley's **FREE** 'Muddy Wellies' weekly playgroup on Fridays, 9.30–11am, for children aged 2–4.

To book your place at the Open Morning, playgroup, or arrange a private visit, call 01256 882 707 or visit www.wellesleyprepschool.co.uk

Discover a transformative education at St Nicholas' School

Set within 30 acres of beautiful Hampshire countryside, St Nicholas' School is a thriving independent day school. Welcoming girls aged 3 to 16 and boys aged 3 to 7, the school combines academic excellence with outstanding pastoral care in a nurturing and supportive environment.

This autumn, St Nicholas' is excited to unveil two significant developments that will further enrich the pupil experience. A brand-new ICT Suite will provide access to modern technology and specialist resources, supporting both independent and collaborative learning while helping pupils develop the digital skills needed for future success.

Alongside this, the school will open a newly refurbished Learning Resource Centre (LRC), designed as a vibrant learning hub. Featuring dedicated Early Years areas, collaborative workspaces, teaching and presentation zones, and a welcoming 'Campfire' social circle, the LRC will encourage pupils to explore new ideas and develop a lifelong love of reading.

Families are warmly invited to attend the St Nicholas' School Open Event on **Saturday 3 October 2026**, from 10.00am to 12.30pm, to tour the school, meet staff and pupils and discover first-hand what makes a St Nicholas' education so special.

To register, visit: www.stnicholas.school/admissions



School Open Days September–October 2026

Crookham Infant School

Gally Hill Road, Church Crookham, Fleet, GU52 6PU
01252 615 547

crookhaminfants.co.uk

Tuesday 22 September, 6:30pm: Open Evening
Wednesday 23 September, 9:15am: Open Morning
Monday 28 September, 9:15am: Open Morning
Friday 9 October, 9:15am: Open Morning

Sherfield School

Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hook, RG27 0HU
01256 884 800 sherfieldschool.co.uk

Friday 18 September, 9am: Outdoor open morning
Tuesday 6 October, 6pm: Sixth form open evening
Friday 16 October, 9am: Senior school open morning

St Neot's Preparatory School

St Neot's Road, Eversley, Hook, RG27 0PN
0118 973 2118

stneotsprep.co.uk

Friday 2 October, 9am: Whole School Open Morning

St Nicholas' School

Church Crookham, GU52 0RF
01252 850121

stnicholas.school

Saturday 3 October, 10am: Whole School Open Morning
Wednesday 14 October, 9am: Whole School Working Open Morning

Wellesley Preparatory School

Stratfield Turgis, Hook, RG27 0AR
01256 882707

wellesleyprepschool.co.uk

Friday 16 October, 9:15am: Open Morning



New Digital Support Plans for SEND pupils

A sweeping reform of the UK special educational needs and disabilities system will legally require every primary school child with identified special educational needs to have a digital Individual Support Plan (ISP). These plans will replace the old SEN Support tier and require schools to record day-to-day needs, targeted support, and expected outcomes, all while involving parents in the process.

Accessible to teachers and parents, these living documents are designed to travel seamlessly with children between school years and education phases like a digital passport, preventing critical support from dropping during transitions.

The national initiative is backed by a new £1.6 billion Inclusive Mainstream Fund designed to boost early intervention. While headteachers welcome the push to cut down the lengthy bureaucracy of traditional plans, many warn that school funding must match these rising operational demands.

More information at www.bit.ly/SENchanges

At a glance: St Neot's School

FACT FILE

Number of pupils	330
Nursery	Yes
Selective entry	No
Entry points	Nursery, Reception, Year 3 and Year 7. Places available at other entry points depending on availability.
Exit at age	13
ISI grade	Passed all areas. Significant strength for behaviour.



Key reasons to consider St Neot's

St Neot's offers...

...a joyful, child-centred education for ages 2–13 that seamlessly merges high academic standards with an adventurous, outdoor-focused curriculum. Set across 70 acres of woodland, the school provides a progressive academic pathway, utilising the Pre-Senior Baccalaureate (PSB) framework in upper years, to build essential learning and life skills. Alongside core academics, pupils benefit from small class sizes, specialist-led modern languages, weekly swimming and Forest School sessions, and an expansive co-curricular program spanning sports, music and the arts.

St Neot's is perfect for...

...parents seeking a nurturing, non-selective country prep school that seamlessly blends academic ambition with an active outdoor lifestyle. Ultimately, it is tailored for families wanting a warm, family-oriented environment that builds personal confidence and consistently prepares pupils for top senior destinations.

St Neot's prioritises...

...mental and physical well-being above all, believing that happy, secure children naturally thrive academically and personally. The school places immense emphasis on character development and family values, instilling kindness, loyalty and respect alongside academic ambition.

St Neot's excels at...

...delivering academic excellence, consistently securing impressive senior school scholarships across academics, sports, drama, dance, and design technology. Its outstanding Pre-Prep and Nursery provision provides a seamless, nurturing foundation that builds confidence, social skills, and curiosity from age two. Furthermore, the school excels in competitive sports and outdoor learning, all underpinned by exemplary standards of behaviour and personal development that achieve top marks in ISI inspections.

St Neot's is loved for its...

...warm, family-oriented ethos and idyllic 70-acre woodland setting that lets children enjoy a wholesome, active childhood. Parents adore the balance of high academic standards with an adventurous outdoor curriculum, where pupils thrive without intense pressure. Above all, it is cherished for creating happy, confident, and well-rounded children who genuinely look forward to coming to school every day.

St Neot's celebrates...

...every child's unique achievement, whether in academic excellence, sporting success, creative performance, or outdoor adventure. The school places a strong emphasis on recognising positive behaviour, kindness, and personal growth. Above all, it celebrates the joy of childhood and a spirit of discovery, fostering a culture where effort, resilience and individual contribution are always honoured.

Parent testimonial:

'Mr Slot has completely transformed St Neot's, and the quality of the teachers he's brought in is just brilliant. The atmosphere is warm and friendly. We've been so happy with everything on offer. The advice we have received from Mr Slot and Miss Regent for choosing senior schools has been expert and personalised. You can really tell that everyone cares deeply about the children.'

2026 Parent Survey, Prep Parent

Transport links:

The school offers 3 bus routes, 2 morning runs covering Fleet, Church Crookham; Hartley Wintney, Hook and Odiham & LWC plus an afternoon route direct from St Neot's to Odiham/LWC.

Future School/University Destinations

St Neot's is part of the Lord Wandsworth College family of schools, making it a seamless and popular all-through pathway for a majority of its leavers. However, the school remains completely independent in its advice, successfully preparing pupils for entry to a wide variety of top schools including Wellington College, Bradfield College, Leighton Park and Pangbourne.

Open Events:

Friday 2 October

Friday 6 November

Book at www.stneotsprep.co.uk

Address: Eversley, Hook, RG27 0PN

AI at home: helping children use it wisely

By Zuzu Jordan

AI is already part of our children's world and even if we'd like to, we can't pretend it doesn't exist. But nor should we simply hand over responsibility for their learning to a machine. The most helpful place for parents lies between those extremes: in other words, adults using AI alongside children, with curiosity, clear boundaries and plenty of conversation.

Parents' worries are understandable. Artificial intelligence can produce inaccurate answers, reflect bias and make it tempting to skip the effort involved in learning. AI collects, processes and stores our data too, so it's important that children understand that personal information, photographs and private family details should never be entered into an AI tool without an adult's permission. Used thoughtfully though, AI can become a creative learning partner rather than a shortcut.

One positive use for AI begins with talking

Pie Corbett's Talk for Writing approach recognises the importance of children orally rehearsing language and ideas before writing. Speaking can help a child organise a story, experiment with vocabulary and hear whether a sentence makes sense.

So an adult could invite a child to describe an imaginary setting using the voice feature in an age-appropriate AI app. The child might describe a silver castle balanced on a cloud, with spiral windows and a garden of singing flowers. The AI could then create a picture or a written description based on those spoken ideas.

The important learning happens next. Does the result match what the child imagined? What has the AI misunderstood or left out? Which words could make the instructions to the AI clearer? The child remains the author, while the technology provides a way to question, edit and improve.

This can be especially useful for children who find the blank page intimidating or whose spoken ideas are stronger than their current writing.

AI should not write the finished piece of work though. Instead, it can help capture an initial idea, suggest vocabulary or turn a child's words into an image they can evaluate. The child can then write, draw, revise or expand independently.



AI can support parents too. Many adults want to help with homework but feel unsure about today's subject terminology. A parent could ask: 'My child is learning about fronted adverbials. Explain the term to me simply, give me three examples and suggest questions I can ask my child without doing the work for them.'

Using AI in this way gives parents a starting point for a better conversation: 'Show me how your teacher explained it,' 'Which part makes sense?' or 'What could we check together?'

The adult's role is to keep asking who made the choices, whose ideas are being used and what the child has learned independently.

Children also need to learn that **AI is not an authority**. It is a tool that predicts and generates response and it can sound confident while being wrong.

Encourage kids to use a simple routine: ask, check and create. Ask a clear question. Check the answer against a trusted source or knowledgeable adult. Then create something of their own from what they have learned.

The aim is not to raise children who rely on AI for every answer. It is to raise thoughtful users who can question technology, protect their privacy, recognise AI's limitations and use it to extend their own imagination. Parents do not need to know everything before beginning to use AI tools - exploring together may be the most valuable lesson of all.

Zuzu Jordan is a Mastery for Maths Specialist who has taught primary for eighteen years and is Director of Arnett International. For FREE resources and tips, find her on Instagram @edumate_uk

Family rules for using AI



Use AI with your child and ask them to explain what they think before consulting it.

Never enter names, addresses, school details, photographs or private family information.

Remind children that AI can make mistakes so should not replace trusted adults, books or school guidance and to check important answers against another reliable source.

AI may offer prompts, examples or feedback but the ideas, decisions and finished work should remain the child's and reflect their own understanding.

Try a challenge



Ask your child to invent a character or setting and describe it aloud using an AI app's voice feature.

Request a picture based only on their spoken description. Compare the picture carefully with the idea in your child's mind. What is accurate? What is missing? Which words caused confusion?

Let your child improve the prompt, then draw or write their own version. The goal is clearer communication and creative thinking, not producing a perfect AI image for them.

Building maths confidence in upper primary school

By Ksenia Volgemut

Many children begin upper primary school feeling comfortable with maths, only to lose confidence as the work becomes more abstract. In Years 5 and 6, pupils encounter longer word problems, fractions, decimals, percentages, negative numbers, multi-step calculations and early algebraic thinking. For some children, this shift can feel sudden.

A dip in maths confidence does not always mean a child is 'bad at maths.' Often, it means they have small gaps in understanding, feel unsure about methods or panic when questions look unfamiliar. The good news is that confidence can be rebuilt with calm, regular support.

One of the most helpful things parents can do is make maths feel normal, not frightening. Children often hear adults say things like: 'I was never good at maths either.' Although this may be meant kindly, it can accidentally suggest that maths ability is fixed. A better message is: 'You might not understand it yet but **we can work it out step by step.**'

Upper primary maths depends heavily on foundations. Times tables, number bonds, place value and basic fractions all support later topics. If these are shaky, harder questions can feel overwhelming. Short, regular practice is usually more effective than long sessions. Five to ten minutes of focused recall, a few times a week, can help children feel more secure.

It also helps to talk through mistakes calmly. When a child gets an answer wrong, try asking: '**Where did it start to go wrong?**' rather than 'Why did you get that wrong?' This turns mistakes into information. Perhaps your child misread the question, forgot a times table, rushed a step or chose the wrong operation. Once the pattern is clear, the solution becomes easier.

Word problems are another common confidence barrier. Many children can complete a calculation when it is written clearly but struggle when the same maths is hidden in a paragraph. Encourage your child to **underline key information**, circle the question being asked and decide which operation is needed before they start calculating. This slows down the process and helps them feel more in control.

Parents can also build maths into everyday moments. Cooking involves measuring, sharing and scaling quantities. Shopping involves money, estimation and percentages. Travel involves time, distance and problem-solving. These small examples show children that maths goes beyond the classroom.

However, support at home should not become pressure. If a child is already anxious, too many extra worksheets can make maths feel like a punishment. Start with what they can do, then **stretch gently**. A child who feels successful is more likely to try the next challenge.

It is also worth praising the process rather than the speed. Fast answers are not always accurate and slower pupils may have strong reasoning skills. Say things like: 'I like how you checked that' or 'That was a good method,' rather than only praising the final answer.

As secondary school approaches, maths expectations increase. Pupils need to explain methods, solve multi-step problems and apply knowledge in new situations. Building confidence before Year 7 can make that transition feel much smoother.

Maths **confidence grows when children feel safe to try**, make mistakes and practise regularly. Parents do not need to know every method perfectly. What matters most is creating a calm routine, encouraging effort and helping children believe that



maths can improve with practice.

Ksenia Volgemut is from Battersea House, a UK-based online tutoring platform supporting students from primary through GCSE and A-level. Families can claim their first session FREE at www.batterseahouse.co.uk

How to make maths practice less stressful

Keep practice short and predictable. Ten calm minutes are often better than an hour of frustration. It also helps to choose one small focus, such as times tables, fractions or word problems and stop before your child becomes overwhelmed.

Use a timer if it helps but avoid making every task a race. Some children think more clearly when speed is removed. To end a session with confidence, not panic, finish with a question they can do successfully.

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Books that help children with their worries



Compiled by Carrie McCarthy

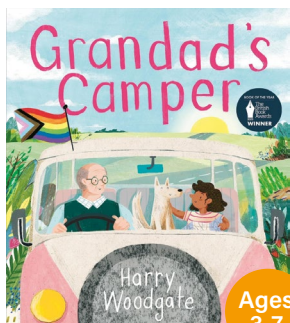
Children experience all kinds of challenges, from big life changes to dealing with everyday worries. At these times, the right book can offer comfort, reassurance and a way to make sense of what they're feeling. Try these to help children through life's ups and downs.



Ages 3-6

The Invisible String
by Patrice Karst,
illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

This heartwarming picture book helps when children are struggling with separation anxiety, anxiety, loss or grief. In the book, the mother tells her children that they are connected by an invisible string of love to everyone they care about, no matter how far away.



Ages 3-7

Grandad's Camper
by Harry Woodgate

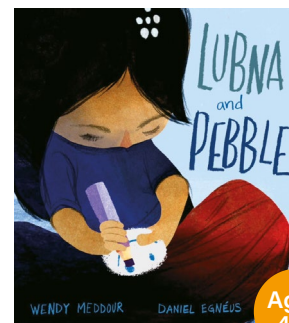
A gentle picture book about grief which also celebrates LGBTQIA+ families. The story follows a young girl and her grandad, sharing stories about his partner Gramps and their life together. Within the story, the granddaughter learns about loss and the importance of cherishing memories of people we love.



Ages 3-6

Two Places To Call Home
by Phil Earle, illustrated by Jess Rose

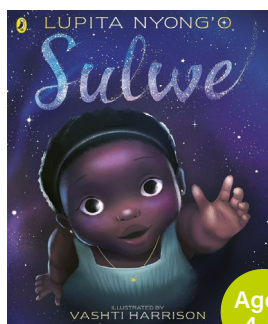
This comforting picture book reassures children experiencing divorce. Florrie has two brothers, two pets and two parents - and now she has two homes: one with her mum and one with her dad. She shares special moments with each parent and when she feels sad or worried, those memories remind her that the other parent is never far away.



Ages 4-8

Lubna And The Pebble
by Wendy Meddour,
illustrated by Daniel Egnéus

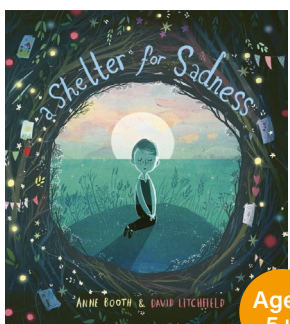
Here is a story that gently helps children understand the challenges that refugees might face. Lubna, a young girl, arrives at a refugee camp and forms an attachment to a small pebble, whom she calls her best friend. Through this friendship, she processes her feelings of fear, loss and missing home. When she meets Amir, she gives him the pebble,



Ages 4-8

Sulwe
by Lupita Nyong'o, illustrated by Vashti Harrison

A great book to open up conversations about self-acceptance and learning to see your own worth. With the darkest skin in her family, young Sulwe struggles with feeling different and less beautiful than others. After a magical journey through the sky, she understands that beauty exists in many shades and that her own skin is something she should be proud of.



Ages 5+

A Shelter For Sadness
by Anne Booth, illustrated by David Litchfield

This is a beautiful book about making space for sadness. In the book, a boy makes a shelter for his sadness. He can visit his sadness at any time, whether to sit quietly, to cry or to talk. The message is that sadness is not something to be pushed away but instead cared for and understood.



Ages 8+

Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet
by Zanib Mian

A warm and humorous story about a young boy adjusting to a new home and school. The book gently explores bullying and racism as Omar faces prejudice and unkind behaviour because of his Muslim faith, whilst learning to navigate friendships, family life and misunderstandings. Together with support from his family and friends, Omar responds with humour, kindness and resilience.



Ages 9-11

The Wrong Shoes
by Tom Percival

Tackling the themes of poverty, pride and morality, Will and his dad struggle financially, and his worn-out shoes make him a target for bullies. When Will falls out with his only friend, he has to make the tough choice between doing what's right and giving in to the pressure for quick money.

Carrie McCarthy is from Pageticker (www.pageticker.com), the UK's top-rated digital reading diary for children. This free app helps record, organise and celebrate every book a child reads, allowing them to create beautiful reading lists, set achievable goals and build daily reading streaks that keep motivation high.

Using anchoring to calm anxiety

By Christopher Paul Jones

Anxiety has become incredibly prevalent. Children can suffer anxiety about going back to school; parents can suffer anxiety about their child's development and societal expectations can be an issue for everyone. But very few people really understand how anxiety works, what causes it or indeed how to change it.

Understand what anxiety actually is

One of the biggest misconceptions about anxiety is that it is about character; if sufferers were just braver, stronger or more confident, they wouldn't feel it. But anxiety is much more often a learned reflex. A conditioned response. Trying to think your way out of it often doesn't help because emotions don't follow logic.

Anxiety can be handled

One of the quickest and most useful tools I've come across is something called anchoring, a technique that creates a conditioned association between a specific internal emotional state and an external stimulus (such as a touch). Anchoring gives us something incredibly valuable - the sense that we can start reclaiming control.

How to anchor

Think of a time when you felt very relaxed. Go fully to that time. See what you saw. Hear what you heard. Feel what you felt.

At the peak of that feeling, squeeze your thumb and forefinger together. Hold that for as long as you can stay in that feeling. The second the feeling begins to fade, let go.

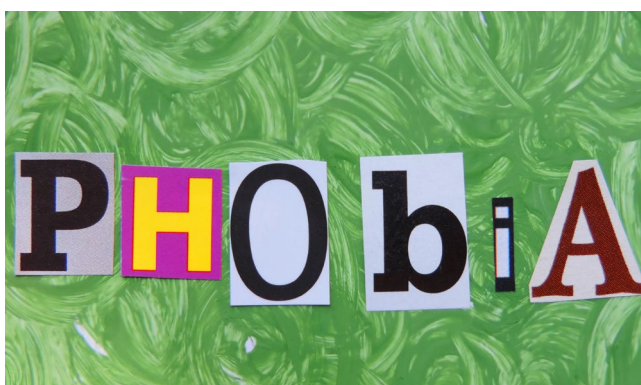


Now do it again, thinking of a time when you felt very loving or connected. Repeat other positive emotions: a time you couldn't stop laughing; a time when you felt very confident or very safe.

Now test it. Clear your mind for a moment. Then squeeze your fingers together in exactly the same way, with the same pressure. This should start sending you back to those positive emotions. Whenever you start to feel anxious, squeeze your fingers together in exactly the same way and fire off positive emotions.

If the anchor is strong enough, it should take out or at least neutralise much of the negative emotional charge.

Christopher Paul Jones is a leading Harley Street phobia expert who combines mainstream psychology and cutting-edge techniques which aim to change the mind's danger response. He is author of *Face your Fears - 7 Steps to Conquering Phobias and Anxiety*. More at www.christopherpauljones.com



Anxiety vs phobia

Anxiety and phobia are often used interchangeably but the key differences are important.

Phobias tend to be tied to a very specific trigger. The time you were chased by a dog. The turbulent flight that frightened you. The moment you were forced to get up and speak in class and everyone laughed. The brain links one thing to one fear response.

Anxiety, however, is often more of a prolonged sense of unease. It can come from growing up with anxious parents, moving around a lot, being bullied at school or going through a prolonged period of stress at work or at school. Rather than one very clear moment, it's often a longer period of not feeling safe, supported or in control.

And what then happens is that instead of flying = fear or dogs = fear, the mind starts to generalise. Anything out of your comfort zone, anything slightly uncertain, anything that feels even vaguely unpredictable can begin to trigger that same emotional response.



One client's story

A client explained that she had anxiety around flying. I asked her a simple question: 'What specifically are you afraid of?' She said: 'Turbulence.'

I got her to think about turbulence and really step into what she was scared of. As she did that, I linked that state to a touch on one arm. Then I asked her to think of a time when she had felt very loved and connected. A moment where she felt safe, warm and emotionally close. As she stepped into that feeling, I linked that state to a touch on the other arm.

Then I fired them together. What happens when you do this is that the two emotions rush in together and the stronger state starts to take over. It doesn't always mean an instant miracle but when you've conditioned a powerful enough positive emotion, it is possible to completely change how you feel.

A few months later she messaged me to say she was sitting on a plane, unfazed by her previous feelings.

How sport and education can work together

By Dennis J Smith (M.Ed)

Back to school and to the excitement of a new school year. New teachers, new classrooms, new friendships and new opportunities can all help create a sense of anticipation. While some children may feel a little nervous, many are also eager to return to familiar routines and activities.

For parents, the start of a new term is often a good time to think about how children can enjoy a healthy balance between education, sport and family life.

Over many years of working with young people, I have seen how **participation in sport can often support progress in school**. Children who take part in football, swimming, tennis, rugby, athletics, dance or other activities frequently develop qualities that can also help them in the classroom.

Sport encourages perseverance, concentration, self-discipline and resilience. Young people learn that improvement usually comes through regular effort rather than instant success. They discover how to cope with setbacks, learn from mistakes and keep trying when things become challenging. These are valuable lessons both on the sports field and in school.

However, **balance remains important**. Children benefit most when sport is enjoyable rather than becoming another source of pressure. Not every child wishes to become a champion and that is perfectly acceptable. The real value often lies in participation, friendship, enjoyment and personal development.



The same principle applies to education. While academic progress matters, children should not feel that their worth depends entirely on test scores or examination results. Confidence often grows when parents focus on effort, attitude and gradual improvement rather than constant comparison with others.

As the new school year gets going, parents can help by encouraging positive routines. Regular sleep, healthy meals, reading, outdoor activity and organised preparation for the school day all contribute to a calmer and more successful start.

Most importantly, children benefit from knowing that **home is a place of encouragement and support**. A simple conversation after school, showing interest in what they enjoyed, learned or experienced during the day, can sometimes be more valuable than focusing solely on performance.

A new school term offers a fresh opportunity for children to grow in confidence, develop new skills and enjoy new experiences. When education, sport and family support work together, young people are often able to achieve their potential while maintaining a healthy sense of balance and wellbeing.



Keeping life balanced during term time

Whilst education is important, children benefit most when school remains part of a balanced and enjoyable life. As a new term begins, families can sometimes focus heavily on homework, tests and academic progress. However, children often achieve more when learning is balanced with activities that support confidence, wellbeing and happiness.

Sport, creative arts and hobbies help children develop resilience, self-discipline and social skills. Family visits to local libraries, walks in parks and the countryside and relaxing with friends also contribute positively to a child's development.

Don't let schoolwork dominate every conversation at home. Children need opportunities to switch off, recharge and enjoy themselves. A balanced lifestyle often improves concentration, motivation and emotional wellbeing.

Every child is different. Some enjoy competitive sport, whilst others prefer reading, creative activities or spending time outdoors. The key is helping children maintain interests that support confidence, happiness and healthy development alongside their educational progress.



Helping young athletes build lasting confidence

Confidence is one of the greatest gifts that sport can offer a child but it rarely develops overnight. Instead, it grows gradually through positive experiences, encouragement and learning how to cope with challenges.

Parents play a vital role in this process. Children often judge their own performance through the reactions of the adults around them. A supportive comment after a match, race or competition can have a lasting impact. Statements such as: 'I enjoyed watching you play' or 'I loved your effort today' help children feel valued regardless of the result.

Mistakes are also an important part of development. Every athlete experiences setbacks, disappointments and periods when progress feels slow. Children who learn that mistakes are opportunities to improve are more likely to persevere and remain motivated.

Rather than focusing solely on winning, parents can encourage effort, commitment, learning and enjoyment. When children feel accepted whether they succeed or struggle, they develop confidence that extends beyond sport, school, friendships and everyday life too.



A new chapter for Stagecoach Andover

Stagecoach Performing Arts Andover has a new Principal at the helm this term: **Sarah Maskell**, a performing arts teacher with more than 20 years' experience in drama, singing and dance.

Sarah trained in Musical Theatre at D&B Theatre College in London, she has toured as a presenter with Rainbow, performed with dance groups and taught LAMDA - before spending around a decade running Stagecoach Maidenhead/Wokingham.

Based at Anton Junior School on Barlows Lane, Stagecoach Andover welcomes children and teenagers aged 4 to 18, with weekly classes in singing, dancing and acting.

Younger children aged 4-6 join Early Stages, 90 minutes of creative activity each week, while Main Stages students aged 6-18 take on three-hour sessions covering all three disciplines.

To book a **two-week trial**, visit www.stagecoach.co.uk/andover or email andover@stagecoach.co.uk

Clubs & Classes Directory

Please get in touch if you would like to be included in our directory: editor@familieshampshirenorth.co.uk

DRAMA

Perform

Andover, Basingstoke, Bramley, Fleet or Hartley Wintney

Weekly drama, dance and singing classes. These are confidence-building drama classes for 4-7s and 7-12s. A unique mix of fun drama games, dance and singing specially designed to boost confidence, communication, concentration and co-ordination.

To book a **FREE** class, visit www.perform.org.uk/try

Stagecoach Theatre Arts Andover

Performing arts classes for children and teenagers aged 4-18yrs. The aim is to nurture and develop young potential through singing, dancing and acting in Andover, stretching young imaginations and building creative courage for life.

Call 07577 258057, or visit www.stagecoach.co.uk/andover

MUSIC

Vivace Music School

Fleet, Farnham or Yateley Babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers enjoy a rich buffet of sensory and imaginative songs and play ideas, discovering their voices along the way. School-age children grow in confidence as expert teachers help nurture their innate musicality and creativity.

Email info@vivacemusic.co.uk or, visit www.vivacemusic.co.uk/book

SWIMMING

Puddle Ducks

Puddle Ducks teaches children from birth to 10 years, to swim independently, confidently and to love and respect the water. Weekend and weekday lessons available. Free trials (T&Cs apply) and sibling discount offered.

Call 0118 229 3232, email northhampshireandreading@puddleducks.com or visit www.puddleducks.com



Spark curiosity through music and movement!

At **Vivace Music School**, they turn curiosity into joyful learning with playful, movement-based classes - try a **FREE** class and see for yourself!

From babies to school-age children, every session is packed with singing, games, sensory play and real instruments - igniting imagination while building essential music skills. Vivace classes are active, engaging and rooted in the renowned Kodály approach, helping children discover their voices, develop confidence and fall in love with learning through music.

Led by expert teachers, the curriculum supports your child from birth to senior school - nurturing creativity and musicality every step of the way.

Now is a great time to join one of the entry level classes for ages 0-7. Older kids? Kids with SEN? Email to find out more.

Try Vivace for **FREE** in **Fleet, Farnham** or **Yateley**!

Book at www.vivacemusic.co.uk/book or email info@vivacemusic.co.uk

Do you run kids' classes, camps or holiday clubs?

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lara@familieshampshirenorth.co.uk

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What's on

September/October 2026

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

SEPTEMBER

2 Sep

Sip & Paint Colourful Walk - The Shed Bordon

Join The Paint Club for a relaxed and creative evening of painting! One of The Shed's friendly artists will guide you step-by-step from a blank canvas to your very own work of art. theshedwb.com

2 Sep

Jack and The Beanstalk: Storytelling with Merry-go-Round - Mottisfont, Romsey

Amanda Kane-Smith from Merry-go-Round Storytelling returns to Mottisfont for more interactive storytelling adventures! From bear hunts to teatime tigers, there's a story for everyone. nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont

5 Sep

International Vulture Awareness Day - Hawk Conservancy Trust, Andover

The Hawk Conservancy Trust love vultures, so every day is vulture awareness day. hawk-conservancy.org

5 Sep

Community Summer Fair & Carboot - Basingstoke War Memorial Park

A fantastic afternoon filled with community spirit, local stalls, delicious food and drinks, fun crafts, live music, and a tombola - all in support of Keki's Rescue. allevents.in/basingstoke

6 Sep

Classic Car Show and Music, Music, Music - West Green House, Hartley Wintney

Classic car enthusiasts are welcome to bring their treasured classic cars to display in the park land in front of West Green House. It's a relaxing day to view the cars, indulge in sausage and bacon rolls or dine in the Gardens Tea Room. westgreenhouse.co.uk

12-13 Sep

Heritage Open Days 2026 - Hinton Ampner, Alresford

Venture into the historic house, explore the beautiful gardens, grab a coffee in the cosy café and stretch your legs on a stroll across the stunning estate! nationaltrust.org.uk/hinton-ampner



13 Sep

The Romans are Coming! - Iron Age Museum, Andover

Our peaceful Iron Age ancestors are about to get a serious wake-up call, and you need to come and see the action! Whether you want to side with the local Celtic tribes or train to become a Roman soldier, there is a piece of living history waiting for every little warrior. hampshireculture.org.uk

19-20 Sep

Apple Weekend with Sparsholt College - Hinton Ampner, Alresford

Take a bite of the juiciest weekend of the year and join in the productive orchard at Hinton Ampner. There will be apple growing experts from Sparsholt College to chat about and celebrate all things apple and delicious! nationaltrust.org.uk/hinton-ampner

19-20 Sep

Newbury Show - Newbury Showground

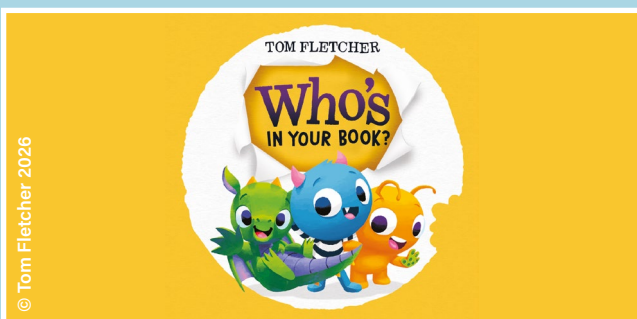
The show is widely regarded as one of the best county shows in the country hosted over two days. The show remains true to its roots - a celebration of all aspects of farming and rural life in the area, showcasing agricultural technology, animals, artisan products, local produce and more! newburyshowground.co.uk

OCTOBER

3-4 Oct

Apple Weekend - West Green House, Hartley Wintney

Over centuries apple trees have been planted in profusion in the gardens, so there are hundreds of apples to giveaway. A **FREE** bag of apples for every family - harvested from West Green House trees. westgreenhouse.co.uk



Two exciting autumn events coming to The Vyne

At **The Vyne** from Saturday 3 October to Sunday 8 November 10am-4pm, set off on a fun-filled interactive trail through the magical world of Tom Fletcher's *Who's In Your Book?* series.

Oh no! Monster and his friends have escaped from their books, and only you can help return them home! Search for your favourite characters, solve playful challenges, and discover how every page can become an unforgettable adventure.

You can also enjoy **Stranger Folk** - a magical new digital adventure at The Vyne for ages 7-12 played by mobile app. As the spirit and human worlds collide, sneaky goblins, cunning beggars and Stranger Folk are slipping through the crack to stir up trouble. Gather your team, harness the elements and seal the rift before the creatures take hold! Download the app before your visit via the Apple app store or Google Play.

These are **FREE** events and normal admission applies.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/hampshire/the-vyne



Autumn Adventures at Basingstoke Leisure Park

As autumn arrives and the leaves begin to turn, **Basingstoke Leisure Park** offers the perfect destination for family days out. Whatever the weather, visitors can enjoy a variety of indoor attractions, making it an ideal choice for weekends and the half-term break.

Enjoy water fun at the Aquadrome, ice skating at Planet Ice or friendly competition at Hollywood Bowl. History lovers can step back in time at Milestones Museum, while thrill-seekers can experience the excitement of iFLY Indoor Skydiving. Younger children will love imaginative play and exploration at Pop Up Play Village.

When hunger strikes, convenient dining options including McDonald's, Costa and KFC provide something for everyone. With a wide range of attractions all in one location, plus plenty of **FREE** parking, Basingstoke Leisure Park makes it easy to enjoy a memorable autumn day out with family and friends.

Visit www.BasingstokeLeisurePark.co.uk to plan your trip.

3 Oct-8 Nov**Who's in Your Book? – The Vyne, Basingstoke**

Oh no! Monster and his friends have escaped from their books, and only you can help return them home! In The Vyne's gardens, set off on a fun-filled interactive trail through the magical world of Tom Fletcher's *Who's In Your Book?* series. Search for your favourite characters, solve playful challenges, and discover how every page can become an unforgettable adventure. **FREE** but normal admission charges apply. nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne

3 Oct-8 Nov**Stranger Folk Digital Adventure – The Vyne, Basingstoke**

Perfect for ages 7-12, this magical adventure played by mobile app comes to The Vyne this autumn. As the spirit and human worlds collide, sneaky goblins, cunning beggars and Stranger Folk are slipping through the crack to stir up trouble. Gather your team, harness the elements and seal the rift before the creatures take hold! Download the app before your visit via the Apple app store or Google Play. **FREE** but normal admission charges apply. nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne

10 Oct**K-Pop Dance Heroes – The Anvil, Basingstoke**

Featuring songs from the Netflix film K-Pop Demon Hunters, Golden and Soda Pop, alongside K-Pop chart toppers like Dynamite by BTS and Gangnam Style by PSY. Expect live vocalists, high energy, synchronised choreography and exceptional harmonies. anvilarts.org.uk

10, 17 & 24 Oct**Owls by Moonlight – Hawk Conservancy Trust**

This autumn, venture out into the night with the beautiful owls and experience the mystical owls' graceful, silent flights in and out of the darkness in two enthralling flying displays. The evening will include two different flying displays in our Woodland and Savannah Arenas. hawk-conservancy.org

11 Oct**FOOBS Trail and Fun Runs, Basingstoke**

The FOOBS Trail and Fun Runs returns, inviting runners of all ages and abilities to enjoy a scenic and friendly trail running experience on the outskirts of Old Basing. This much-loved annual event takes participants through picturesque countryside while celebrating the strong community of the village. foobs.weebly.com

17 Oct**Speed Lego Competition – Rocket Propelled Games, Newbury**

Do you and a friend or loved one back yourselves to become monthly champions in the Rocket Propelled Games Speed Lego Competition? You'll have 1 hour to complete a roughly 200-piece Lego set, which you get to keep afterwards. visitnewbury.org.uk

17 Oct-1 Nov**Pumpkin Galore – Hinton Ampner**

Jump into autumn with a splash of colour and marvel at the beautiful pumpkin displays around the grounds. **FREE** with normal admission. nationaltrust.org.uk/hinton-ampner

22 Oct**Glow Ride – Newbury town centre**

The campaign calls for safer streets and better cycle routes and shows the power of cycling communities coming together. visitnewbury.org.uk

23 Oct**Roller Disco – The Harlington, Fleet**

The Harlington have combined with DISCO SKATE to bring the joy of Roller Disco to Fleet! theharlington.co.uk

23-31 Oct**Hallo'Welly'ween – Wellington Country Park, Riseley**

Step into a world of magical mischief and playful spooks as Hallo'Welly'ween returns for its 13th year! This half term, families are invited to enjoy a week bursting with enchanted Halloween fun, packed with activities. All ages. wellingtoncountrypark.co.uk

27 and 29 Oct**Halloween Trick, Treat, and Create Trail – Whitchurch Silk Mill**

Make your way along the trail and find activities for the whole family. Take part in the Halloween-themed activities around the site and collect your Bag of Treats at the end. whitchurchsilkmill.org.uk

28 Oct**The Dinosaur That Pooped – A Rock Show! – Anvil Arts, Basingstoke**

Adapted from the number one best-selling books by Tom Fletcher and Dougie Poynter, the whole family will have a poop good time enjoying a brand-new story for the stage. Featuring new songs by Tom and Dougie, a lot of laughs and a whole lot of poo! anvilarts.org.uk

29-30 Oct**Owl-O-Ween – Hawk Conservancy Trust, Andover**

Prepare yourself and your little ones for a wickedly spook-tacular family evening this Halloween. Enjoy ghostly storytelling and marvel at the owls as they put on two mystical flying displays against the backdrop of our moonlit grounds. hawk-conservancy.org

30 Oct**Brainiac Live – Anvil Arts, Basingstoke**

Brainiac Live, the UK's original and favourite family science show explodes on stage and will take you on a breathless ride through the wild world of the weird and wonderful. Watch from the safety of your seat as the Brainiacs delve fearlessly into the mysteries of science and do all those things on stage that you're too scared to do at home. anvilarts.org.uk

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

Folklore and Fable Autumn Trail at Gilbert White's House

Which tree was thought to protect against witchcraft?
Which could lead to another world?

Step into a world of myth, magic and mystery this half-term with the **Folklore and Fable Autumn Trail** from **Saturday 24 October to Sunday 1 November**

at **Gilbert White's House & Gardens**. Wander through the beautiful autumn grounds and uncover the fascinating stories and beliefs once woven into the natural world.

This is a fun and thought-provoking Halloween activity for nature-loving families. Trails cost £2 with a valid admission ticket and are available throughout half term.

www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk



Make family weekends magical this autumn

From swimming to skating, bowling a strike to grabbing a bite to eat, there's plenty for everyone to enjoy.

www.BasingstokeLeisurePark.co.uk

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Basingstoke
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Halloween adventures

at The Vyne

Sat 3 Oct – Sun 8 Nov 2026
10am-4pm

nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne

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