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For families with children from 0 to 11

• Summer 2017

• Issue 57

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Issue 57 Summer 2017

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editor's note

As the days get warmer and longer, thoughts automatically turn to holidays in locations where the days are probably even warmer, and definitely sunnier. But before you book your trip, make sure to read up on our travel columnist's experience of cruising with kids (p4), and muse over the pros and cons of whisking your children out of school with a thoughtful article (p22). If the thought of trekking abroad isn't a tempting one this year, then you can find plenty to entertain and amuse the kids locally by looking at our guide to summer camps (p7) And for those who are reluctant even to move beyond the comfort of their own gardens, why not find out how to make the best of yours with tips from Nest (p12).

However far you plan on travelling, let M&D be your faithful guide to the best of summer – and step out into the sun armed with a copy of our magazine, and some sunscreen! **Zoe x**



Callie Boots, pink metallic leather, £25, Chipmunks

visit www.mums-dads.co.uk



Just add batteries *by Paul Wojnicki*

In the last issue of Mums & Dads our travel columnist Paul Wojnicki wrote about how he'd been toying with the idea of taking the children on a cruise for a while, and how they had tested the water, so to speak, with a cruise ferry to northern Spain. That sailing went so smoothly that this April they decided to embark on their first Mediterranean cruise as a family, sailing with MSC from Genoa in northern Italy to Sicily via Marseille, Menorca, Sardinia and Malta.



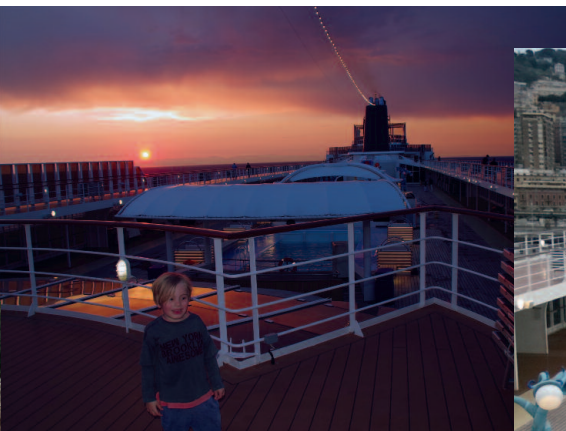
I initially chose MSC for one reason: price. It's hard to believe that in the Easter holidays a six day/five night cruise for a family of four could cost just £630, or around £100 per day for four people, but that's exactly what we paid for our sea view cabin. To put this in context the return ferry from Portsmouth to Santander alone had cost us more money in the Easter holidays of 2015. *Here's how the cruise went...*

What I hadn't realised when I booked is that MSC have something of a reputation as being extremely child friendly, and this first became evident when we boarded in Genoa. We'd spent the day exploring the cruise line's hub city and were tired and eager to board when we arrived at the port. We eyed the long queue of passengers wearily and I anticipated a long wait before we could get to our cabin. Not so. We'd only been in the reception area a minute or

two before we were approached by a representative who informed us that families with young children were entitled to priority boarding and whisked us through a separate entrance straight onto the ship. So far so good.

Our room, when we found it, was surprisingly spacious for the price, with a large double bed, two fold down single beds, wardrobes, bathroom and bar area. Harrison and Ella were in heaven, aside from some minor histrionics revolving around the mini-bar and an expensive looking bottle of mango juice. I needn't have worried however, the mini-bar prices were around the same as you'd expect to pay in a typical European café, and exactly the same as the drinks in all the ship's other bars.

Once the children had explored every nook and cranny of the cabin, we decided to put our swimming costumes on and explore the pool areas on the 11th deck. The air temperature was a temperate 17 degrees but the water in the pools was 24 centigrade and that was warm enough for our two, who took great delight in splashing each other while bemused Italians (who presumably prefer to bathe at a balmier time of year) watched on from the poolside bar.



Having the pools to ourselves was great but once we were out of the water we did feel the chill in our wet clothes and we insisted the kids waited until the day after to try out the Spray Park. Harrison was particularly disappointed about this, as it looked like so much fun with its water cannons, giant tipping water bucket and wet slides area. Still, there were five more days ahead of us and the weather report for later that week was excellent.

Leaving the pool area behind we moved on, starting with the lido buffet restaurant, which with young children makes far more sense than the formal dining options. Harrison and Ella's table manners are hit and miss at the best of times, so it was nice to just let them pick what they liked from the buffet and eat it in a relaxed atmosphere. Standard of the food was fine for us. No doubt the silver service restaurant was superior, but we could save that experience for when the children were older.

It almost felt like a shame to get off the following morning, but disembark we did, in rainy Marseille and in sunny Cagliari two days after that, then in sunnier Malta (our favourite port) and finally in red hot Sicily at the end of the voyage. The Armonia was unable to dock in Mahon (Menorca), due to high winds, and this meant a full day at sea when the weather was inclement. Luckily there were no



signs of seasickness in the children (though free pills were being dispersed by the staff) and this gave us the chance to properly explore the rest of the ship. At 15 years old The MSC Armonia is an older vessel, though a \$200 million dollar refurbishment gives the ship a more modern feel. It's not the biggest ship on the seas either, with a mid-range capacity of around 2000 passengers, but to Harrison and Ella it was the biggest ship they'd ever seen and it felt pretty large to us as well. Still, we did manage to locate all of the children's clubs. We found an under 3s club that Ella loved - despite the lack of batteries in around 70% of the toys. The club is sponsored by Chicco, the Italian baby care brand and could probably do with having Duracell co-sponsor it. We found a club for 3-6 year olds that Harrison fiercely resisted entering, so I couldn't possibly comment there, and we found a Lego club for children over 7 where our children were both wel-

comed by the animation team inside, despite them being aged 2 and 5. There was also a teenagers club that we explored out of general interest and which felt like an amusement arcade/chillout room for adolescents wanting to get away from their boring old parents.

So there was something for all age-groups, including adults. If we'd wanted to catch a show or visit the cinema by ourselves there were child-minding services provided in these clubs that we could have used. All in all think 5 nights was about right for us on-board the Armonia. Harrison and Ella would gladly have stayed until they were teenagers, but Alena and I were happy that MSC's flexible embarkation and disembarkation ports meant we could end our cruise in Sicily and spend a few days there rather than spending another two days sailing back to Genoa. Harrison claimed it was his favourite holiday ever, and wants to return next year. I'm sure we'll sail with MSC again simply because it's so affordable and informal, but I'll probably bring a few packs of AA batteries with me next time.



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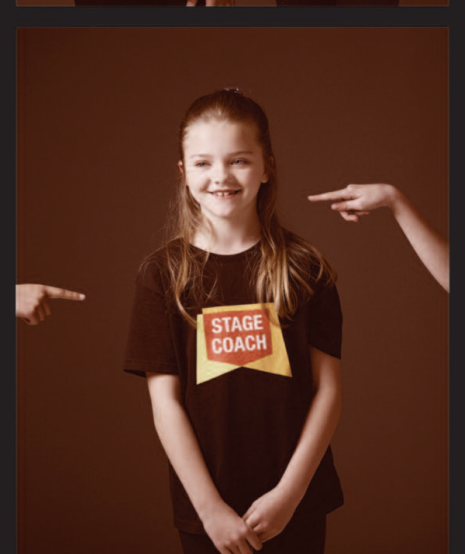
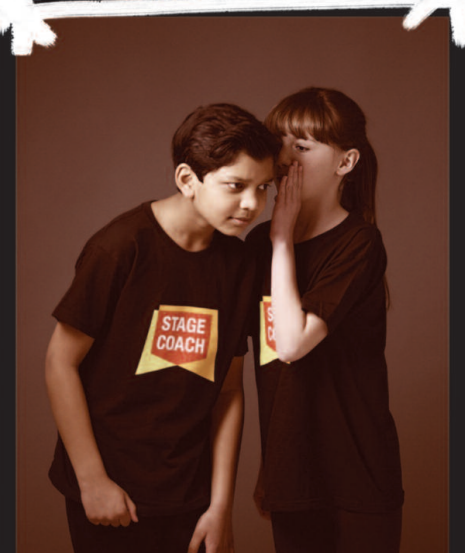
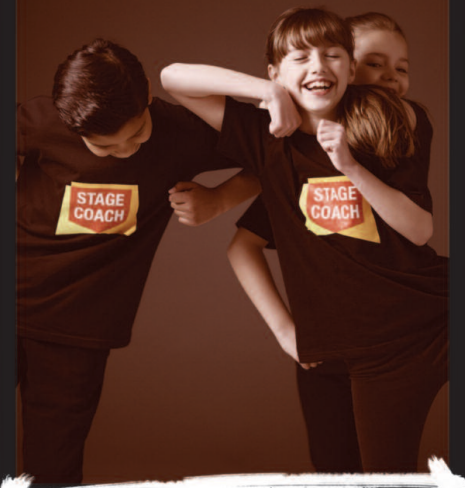
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Summer clubs and camps

Sports

17 - 21 July - Cheadle Hulme School
24 - 28 July - Stockport Grammar School

Activate Camps - The Andrew Flintoff Cricket Academy

For boys and girls aged between 5-16 years old. The Andrew Flintoff Cricket Academy is a fun filled week of cricket coaching, games and activities. Each Academy features a Star Visit from either Andrew Flintoff himself or another professional player who will pass on coaching tips that helped them reach the top.

The Freddie Juniors (5-7 year olds) have their own programme which establishes the fundamentals of cricket and sport in general. In addition the Freddie Juniors programme will incorporate more multi-faceted activities in the afternoon sessions, these may include arts and crafts, as well as more multi activity games and play sessions. Price: £190 per week

Tel: 01785711572 www.activatesport.co.uk

24-28 July 9am-1pm

Enjoy-a-Ball Summer Camps



For children aged 4 - 9 years.

The sessions are action packed with fun in - and out-door games, treasure hunts, arts & crafts and much more!

The camps are held at Brookburn Primary School in Chorlton. Early booking discount is available. Book via the Enjoy-a-Ball website on the South Manchester page. Contact Sam or Kate for more information: Tel: 07973 886 783 southmanchester@enjoy-a-ball.com www.enjoy-a-ball.com

24 July - 1 Sept 10-2pm & 2-4pm weekdays

Bollington Health & Leisure Summer Activity Sessions

For children aged 5-11 years.

One hour of games and one hour fun swim.

Price: £6 per session / 5 sessions for £25

T: 01625 574 774 www.bollingtonleisure.co.uk

Bollington Health & Leisure, Heath Road,

Bollington, SK10 5EX

24 July - 1 September (4 day courses)

Junior Sport Stars

Soccer Stars - football; Sport Stars - hockey, basketball, cricket, tennis, handball, lacrosse, dodgeball; Stage Stars - performing arts (on the basis of famous musicals and Disney classics) Gym Stars - gymnastics

Venues: Lane End Primary School, Cheadle Hulme

St. Winifred's Primary School, Heaton Mersey

Barlow RC High School, Didsbury

Tel: 07730 419 982 | 0161 222 5676

www.juniorsportstars.co.uk

31 July-4 Aug 7 Aug -11 Aug 9.30-3.30pm

Children's Sport Camp at Withington

For boys and girls aged 6 to 14.

The focus will be on developing skills in a variety of sports whilst having fun, for example, Hockey,



Tennis, Rounders, Volleyball, Netball and Table Tennis. There will also be short sessions of quiet time to break up the day. The Sports Camps will be led by qualified tennis and fitness coach, Matthew Nichols and Alderley Edge Ladies 1st team Hockey player, Sophie Hetherington. Cost is £100 for a full week, or £22.50 per day

Withington Girls' School, 100 Wellington Road,

Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6BL.

Tel: 0161 224 1077

reception@wgs.org, office@wgs.org

31 July-4 August 7-11 & 14-18 August

Multi-active camps

For children aged 4 - 11.

Loads of swimming, fitness warm-ups and over 30 other games to get involved in throughout the week. Children benefit from being in groups with children of similar age and ability, and each small group has their own dedicated coach.

For younger members (aged 4 - 6) Multi-Active is a chance to try lots of new activities, including arts and crafts, parachute games, swimming games and sports. (NB - 4 year olds can attend the morning sessions only). Children aged 7 - 11 enjoy longer 45 minute sessions that help them to learn and progress in a variety of different sports, alongside team-building games.

T: 0114 2632160 www.kingscamps.org/booking/manchester-bridgewater Bridgewater School, Drywood Hall, Worsley Road, Manchester.

21 - 23 August

Activate Camps - Netball Fever

For girls aged 7 to 16 years of age.

Netball Fever is a unique nationwide netball coaching course suitable for any level of player. Every Netball Fever has at least one Star Visit.

The star coaches offer a fantastic experience in both coaching and playing.

Stockport Grammar School Buxton Road,

Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 7AF.

Tel: 01785711572 www.activatesport.co.uk

24 - 25 August

Activate Camps - Grays Hockey masterclass

For girls and boys aged 7 to 16 years of age.

Masterclass is a unique nationwide hockey coaching course suitable for any level of player.

Stockport Grammar School Buxton Road,

Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 7AF

Tel: 01785711572 www.activatesport.co.uk

Art, theatre, music, science ... & more

24 - 28 July 31 July - 4 August 7 - 11 August

FireTechCamp - Junior Coder

For children aged 9 - 11

Gain insight and experience into many aspects and functions of computer coding - robotics, mobile apps, animation, games! Children will start from the basics and reach the point where

they can design and build their own ideas. This course exposes campers to a variety of tools and techniques that will enhance their understanding of programming and design, allowing them to continue their journey into code at home.

Price: £400. The University of Manchester www.firetechcamp.com/course/junior-coder

24 - 28 July 31 July - 4 August 7 - 11 August

FireTechCamp - Minecraft Maker

For children aged 9-12

This is a course that will get children building, designing, coding, and making, all using block building game Minecraft. Through this course students can gain experience in core computing concepts such as Computer Aided Design, conditions, loops, and iteration.

Off the screen, students will have the opportunity to explore physical design and electronics by making their own Mini Minecraft controller. Price £400

The University of Manchester

www.firetechcamp.com/course/junior-coder

31 July, 1 & 2 August 9.30am-3.30pm

Creative Writing at Withington

Open to boys & girls aged 8 - 14.

Led by the WGS Head of English, Ms Christine Davies & Deputy Head, Ms Jen Baylis.

This three-day creative writing course will focus on how characters and 'voices' are created in stories and poems and will culminate in a reading children's work to family and friends on Wed. 2nd August. An anthology of poems and stories will be produced for all participants to take away at the end of the course.

Price: £80. Withington Girls' School 100 Wellington Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6BL. Tel: 0161 224 1077 reception@wgs.org, office@wgs.org

31 July - 4 August 7 - 11 August 9:00-16:30

Fuchsia School of Dance Summer School

For all ages and any ability.

Ballet, Jazz, Street, Repertoire, and dance related craft. Lots of fun, good exercise, and very sociable. Held at the dance studio in Knutsford. Please contact Wendy Arshamian for more information. Tel: 07792 284 974

fuchiaschoolofdance@hotmail.com

27A King Street, Knutsford WA16 6DW

31 July - 4 August in Didsbury

7 - 11th August in Altrincham

Stagecoach Summer Workshops

For children aged 4 - 18.

Your child will experience singing, dancing and drama in a fun filled environment with professional actors, musicians and dancers. There will be time for fun and games and time to work towards a performance for parents at the end of the week. You don't have to be a Stagecoach student to attend.

Tel: 07904 451199 Altrincham

Tel: 0161 789 1349 Didsbury

31 July - 4 Aug 7-11 Aug 10.00am-4.30pm

SciTech 16 - A week of hands on Science and Technology

For children aged between 5 and 12.

SciTech is an opportunity to experience the world of science and technology in a safe, but very hands-on environment. Five fascinating and stimulating science topics will totally engage the children: chocolate technology, microbiology, ophthalmology, perception & illusion, car crash technology. This is science, technology, learning and fun in action!



Price: £250 per child per week
Venue: Wellington School, Wellington Road Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire.
Tel: 0161 903 9133 www.scitech.co.uk

7 - 11 August 9.30 am - 3.30 pm

Animation Workshop at Withington

Open to boys & girls aged 8 - 16.

Organised by the WGS Drama Department.

Create your own stop motion animated short film using a wide range of art materials and resources creating your own puppets, models, and sets. Learn to animate using iPad apps such as Stop Motion Studio Pro & iMovie. Children will work in groups of around three to create their own short films and screen them in front of a public audience at the end of the project! Price: £150. Withington Girls' School, 100 Wellington Rd, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6BL. T: 0161 224 1077 reception@wgs.org, office@wgs.org

9, 10, 11 August 9.30am - 3.30pm

Art and Crafts workshops at Withington

Open to boys & girls aged 7 - 14.

Organised by the WGS Art Department.

The workshops will be held in the Art Studio and each child will get the opportunity to experiment with a variety of exciting materials producing paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture and craft pieces to take home. The artwork will be presented in a small exhibition on Friday 11th August.

Price: £80. Withington Girls' School, 100 Wellington Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6BL. Tel: 0161 224 1077 reception@wgs.org office@wgs.org

17 -23 August 23 - 29 August

Chetham's International Summer School and Festival for Pianists

Children must be 8 at the start of the course.

Participants enrol from all five continents and are inspired, guided and educated by an extraordinary faculty of over sixty internationally celebrated performer-teachers.

With on-site accommodation and meals, the atmosphere is made unique by the fact that faculty and participants dine and socialise together. Chetham's School of Music, Long Millgate, Manchester, Lancashire M3 1SB, United Kingdom www.pianosummerschool.com 01625 266899

The M&D Summer Clubs and Camps listings have been carefully selected to offer our readers useful information. Although every effort is made to ensure that information is correct at time of going to press, M&D cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions. We strongly advise you to check details with the event organisers.

activities

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Weekdays from 24th July - 1st Sept

10am-2pm & 2pm-4pm

£6 per session / 5 sessions for £25

Please call to book 01625 574 774

www.bollingtonleisure.co.uk

**STAGE
COACH**

Summer fun in Altrincham and Didsbury

31st July to 4th August in Didsbury and 7th August to 11th August in Altrincham,

Stagecoach Schools will be running their annual Summer Workshops.

Let your children join in the fun!

In Didsbury 4 to 7 year olds will be taking part every morning from 9.30 to 12.30 and the theme will be based on Tales from Madagascar. 7 to 18 year olds will be working towards a performance based on the current rock musicals that are so popular.

In Altrincham 4 to 18 year olds will be enjoying a workshop based on A Lion's Tale. Your child will have five days to work with professional actors, musicians and dancers teaching them script work, exciting dance routines, and those famous catchy songs. This will lead to a final performance on the last day with sound, lights, and costumes.

Stagecoach Workshops are a truly special way to enjoy the Summer Holidays. You don't have to be a Stagecoach student to attend.

Contact Altrincham 07904 451199, Didsbury 0161 789 1349

SCITECH: 17

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**A Week of Hands-On Science
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For children aged from 5 - 12

July 31 - Aug 4
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*'Sam took all the pressure off us and was great with the kids!'
'It's brilliant! The best party/ball games instructors ever!'
'Our little boy has been talking about it all day and trying to recreate the games.'*

Parties are suitable for girls and boys aged 4-9 years.

If you'd like to book an Enjoy-a-Ball party, please get in touch with Kate via email: southmanchester@enjoy-a-ball.com



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enjoy-a-ball.com
Sam 07973 886 783
southmanchester@enjoy-a-ball.com



Messy fun *Rachael Cooper, Splat Messy Play East Cheshire*



When my little boy was tiny, and again when we first moved here, I found it daunting walking into playgroups not knowing anyone. Having struggled with postnatal depression I was often uncertain where to sit, and who to 'play' with.

So, when I left the corporate world and invested in messy play, I realised the opportunity was going to be more than a class for mums to pass the time.

Then, having a schedule, really help me structure my day with Francis - it still does. Classes give mums a break (of sorts) and a chance to meet others.

I chose Messy Play as it's not often easy to do at home. I know in our previous one-bed, we hardly had enough room to dry the baby grows, let alone the space (and time/energy) to build muddy castles or paint something marvellous for Daddy!

Messy Play, for me, is a chance for mums to try something new (for both their child and themselves). It helps mums overcome fears around messy eating or adjust themselves to this moving, messy baby that used to happily sit (clean) for longer.

For the children, it's about freedom to explore - you can paint your hand, you can stomp in the mud with no socks, heck, yes you can try to eat the sand. It's all safe and from feedback so far it's all good messy fun too.

'Well thought out activities. The children loved her.'
Little Stars, Macclesfield



Splat Messy Play East Cheshire



Weekly themed classes - term time & holidays
Booking essential (discounts for block bookings).
Messy parties available.

Rachael Cooper 07823 334362
rachael@splatmessyplay.co.uk
facebook.com/rachaelplatmessyplay

For information about Splat Messy Play or to book a space, contact Rachael:
tel: 07823 334362 email: rachael@splatmessyplay.co.uk

Fuchsia
School of Dance in Knutsford

Weekly Classes & Summer Schools

w: www.fuchsiaschoolofdance.co.uk
e: fuchsiaschoolofdance@hotmail.com
t: 07792 284 974

Summer Playscheme 2017



Fun courses for young people aged 5 to 11

Monday 24th July -
Friday 1st September 2017

for further details or to request a booking form, please contact the school secretary using the details below

£24 Per Day
8:30 am
to 5:30 pm



www.beechhallschool.org

Email: secretary@beechhallschool.org

01625 422192

School stops for summer, learning doesn't have to



Kumon's **maths and English** study programmes work throughout the summer to ensure your child is constantly learning and developing their ability.

Contact your local Instructor for a free assessment.

Altrincham	0161 905 2474
Bramhall	0161 439 3946
Cheadle	0161 286 0791
Knutsford	01565 621 142
Timperley	0161 980 0851
Wilmslow	01625 532 529
Withington	0161 292 2691

KUMON

Fees vary. Please refer to your local study centre.

kumon.co.uk

Beautiful outdoor rooms

by Ceri Murray, Nest Interior Design

It's that time of year again when we start to open our home up to the outside. In my, somewhat compact, house it's a god send to be able to expand out into the garden (particularly with two boisterous boys and one giddy dog!). Some of us are lucky enough to have summer houses or garden buildings which are a fabulous way of making the most of your space, whether it be an office, den for the kids or simply a place to sit and relax. For those of us that either already have or are thinking of investing in one then here are a few tips on how to make the most of it.

Firstly don't hold back! Treat this as you would any room in your house. To create a lovely interior you need to ensure you get the right colour scheme. Keep the ceiling and walls light to create an airy spacious feel but don't be afraid to add a bold colour on one wall. For the flooring the most practical solution will be a hard floor but with a bright rug to add a pop of colour and pattern. These indoor/outdoor rugs by FabHab and available from Wayfair.co.uk are the perfect solution and I like the fact they are made from recycled plastic straws!



When looking at furniture, space is likely to be a key consideration. Where possible think wall mounted drop down tables/desks and bench style seats with underneath storage. These retro style wall mounted desks from made.com are a fabulous practical solution and so stylish too!



If your outdoor room is connected to the mains then don't forget your lighting, this is a really great way to make the area feel welcoming as the evening draws in. These *Mason Jar* lights from **Rocket St George** would add just the right amount of vintage style and soft lighting.



Finally don't forget accessories; throws, pictures, candles and cushions are all vital to creating a beautiful interior.

If you are thinking of creating a den for the kids, then what a perfect spot for their craft activities to take place! Wall mounted storage is a neat and cheerful solution (shelves from aspace.co.uk) and painting one wall with some blackboard paint gives them the freedom to get creative with no chalk dust indoors!



At nest we work on a variety of projects, as we charge by the hour you can enjoy exactly the right amount of input from us. We can both recommend all relevant contractors and work with you to ensure your new space is tailored to your requirements. Just get in touch for an initial chat and quote **M&D** Spring for 10% off initial consultation fees.

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design & decoration

Full details of our company can be found on our website at www.nestinteriordesign.co.uk and we can be reached by telephone on 0161 414 0032 or email enquiries@nestinteriordesign.co.uk

DIDSBURY ARTS FESTIVAL

24th JUNE-2nd JULY 2017

Didsbury Arts Festival is back! With 100 amazing events packed into nine days, this year's festival will be bigger and better than ever! With live music, visual arts, film, drama, comedy, family fun and much, much more, there's certainly something for festival-goers of all ages!

Join in the opening celebrations at Fletcher Moss Park on Saturday 24 June (from 11am) with live music on the terrace, art on the railings and art workshops. Celebrate DAF in song with the return of choir master, John Overington, Didsbury's answer to Gareth Malone. Enjoy lunch-time recitals, dance, children's story-telling and art in people's homes. As part of the centenary celebrations of the birth of Roald Dahl, the talented Magnard Ensemble will perform Dahl's Revolting Rhymes - loved by kids everywhere - to a musical setting by composer, Paul Patterson. Bring a picnic to Didsbury Park for a family-friendly afternoon of live music and entertainment. Join The Strange Train Company for a magical, mystery tour in search of 'Didsbury's Lost American Ice Cream Store'.

This year's festival theme is ROOTS, celebrating Didsbury's rich history and diverse community. Author, Howard Jacobson, heads a host of literary luminaries with other festival highlights including short film events; exhibitions and workshops; an outdoor performance - Flight - celebrating the life of RSPB founder, Emily Williamson, and a concert by soloists of the Hallé Orchestra and Manchester Camerata. Meanwhile, the Maggie's Centre at The Christie Hospital will open its doors for a fundraising musical evening. All proceeds will boost the Centre's work supporting cancer patients and their friends and families.

For a full list of events, prices and booking information, pick up a free festival programme from Didsbury Library and other local venues.

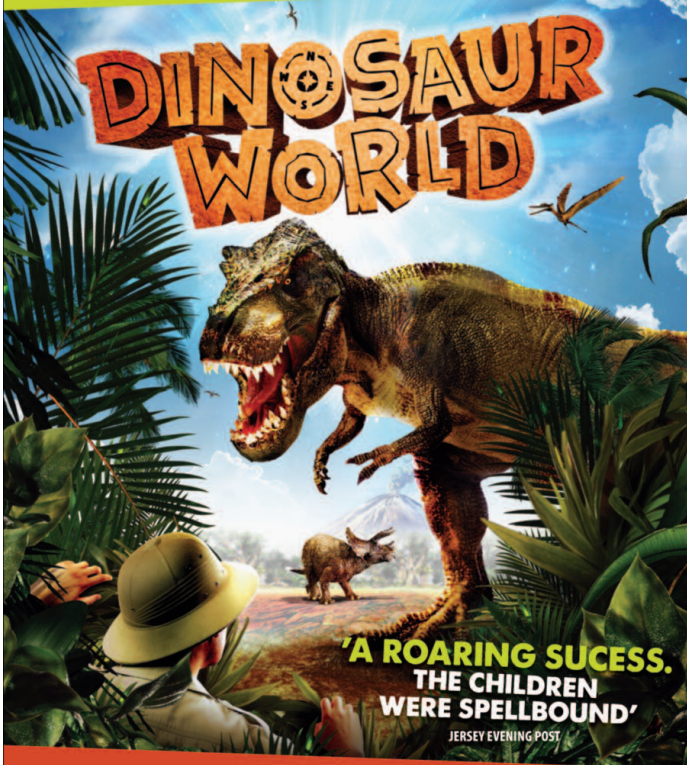
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Some serious fidgeting

by Sandi Mann



Schools have banned them. Parents of kids with ADHD swear by them. And, I admit, I love them. Just what are we to make of the new craze for fidget toys that is sweeping the country?

Fidget toys, for those who don't know, come in a variety of guises, but the most common ones are either fidget cubes or, my personal favourite, spinners. The cubes are six sided shapes with a different activity on each side allowing you, for example, to press a button, twiddle a knob, click a clicker etc. The spinners are different; these consist of three prongs that can be spun with surprisingly satisfying effect. Originally designed for children and adults with ADHD who needed something to fidget with to help them focus and concentrate, these toys are increasingly popular with both adults and kids - whether they have special needs or not. In fact, this is one product aimed at a special needs market that has quickly and, rather bizarrely, become mainstream. This is a great advantage, since here is a product designed to help a child with difficulties but that doesn't single them out.

The spinner seems more aimed at those on the autistic spectrum. The spinner's appeal lies in its motion, sound and even feel - if you hold it near your face you can feel the air like a gentle breeze. I can see the appeal for those with ASD who find these sensations pleasing (their enjoyment of repetitive motion is termed 'stimming'); in fact, have a go with a spinner and you will suddenly see why autistic people find this so mesmerising.

But, the real question is, are they helpful for neurotypical children? In my view as a psychologist and clinician, I would have to say that these 'kidult' gadgets are brilliant. Since a young client of mine showed me a spinner, I have recommended them for various uses ranging from ADHD to anger management. My own fidget cube, purchased for a mere couple of quid off Amazon, was quickly appropriated by my 15 year old, who claims that fidgeting with it has stopped her biting her nails. Certainly fidget gadgets can save chewing on clothes, hair, nails, nametags, pencils and other random objects that many children find offers some kind of comfort. Other young clients of mine keep a spinner in their 'calm down box', for taking out when the red mist descends. They are surprisingly therapeutic, having a calming effect as your eyes become glazed by the mesmerising and repetitive motion of the spins. These relaxing properties can be beneficial for anyone, especially if you learn to associate the motion with being calm and relaxed. At an exam I invigilated last week at my University, a student clutched one in her hand the entire time. I suspect she refrained from actually spinning it out of courtesy for others, but clearly the learned association with the relaxing properties was enough. This brings us to the downsides of the gadgets, the first being that they can be incredibly irritating and distracting for people around the fidgeter. Both toys can be a bit noisy, with clicks and whirrs which, in a silent room, can be annoying. The spinner is probably especially distracting to others as your eyes

are drawn to it almost hypnotically. In fact they may well be distracting for the user too as it is very hard to draw your eyes away from it; it can also be rather addictive which can stop the user getting on with more productive tasks (and thus may reduce concentration rather than aiding it). I can understand why so many schools ban them in the classroom, possibly with exceptions for kids with ADHD or ASD. But, the bottom line for these gadgets is that it is suddenly cool to fidget - and possibly even cool to have ADHD or ASD. Whereas kids with these conditions stood out before with their stress balls and special seats and cushions, now they just seem to get all the fun stuff to fiddle with. And for 'normal' kids to want to be like those other kids, well that has an appeal in itself.

If you are wondering what the attraction is, try one for yourself; you probably won't look back. My spinner has helped me though many a tedious meeting at work.

And now, if you will excuse me, I have some serious fidgeting to do.

Dr Sandi Mann is the director of The Mind Training Clinic and specialises in the treatment of phobias, panic attacks and anxiety conditions. She is also author of *Surviving the Terrible Teens* and *Dealing With Difficult Eaters*, both published by Crimson. www.mindtrainingclinic.co.uk

Summer holidays and rainy days

by Jane Archavir

With the summer holidays just around the corner, here at Giddy Goat Toys we know that summer in England does not necessarily mean endless weeks of back-to-back sunshine. With the mixed bag of weather we normally get, we like to plan for all eventualities. Come rain or shine, we've picked out a selection of our favourite toys, games and puzzles for summer holidays and rainy days.



For mini travellers, these Orchard Toys Mini Games (**£5.75**) are just the thing to put in your bag to keep them entertained on journeys and days out. Suitable for ages 3-8 years there are five different mini games to choose from; Dinosaur Dominoes, Penguin Pairs, Build a Beetle, Jungle Snakes & Ladders and Little Bus Lotto.

For rainy days, we have colour changing umbrellas (**£9.99**) in several fun designs. They are also useful for shading little ones from the summer sun, should we get any.



For budding fashionistas, the Top Model Pocket Colouring Book **£4.50** is a pocket sized version of our best-selling fashion and design colouring and sticker books. Each book features a selection of pre-drawn models and pets for you to colour in and style. They've also included a sheet of fun stickers to embellish your designs too. The books are ideal for popping into a handbag or taking away on holiday.

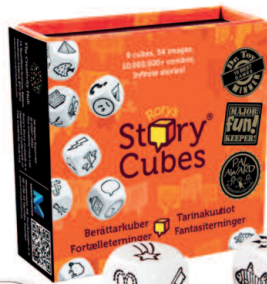


Brand new and bonkers is the Exploding Kittens **£19.99** card game. It's for people who are into kittens, and explosions, and laser beams, and sometimes goats. It was the most backed game on Kickstarter ever. It's utterly, brilliantly bonkers and is a firm favourite with the Giddy Goat gang. Suitable for ages 7+ and for 2-5 players, Exploding Kittens is small enough to pack in your hand luggage and funny enough to keep the family hilariously entertained for the summer. Exploding Kittens, you heard it here first!



For a small, inexpensive treat to occupy the kids on a journey, Giddy Goat have six different sets of transfers (**£1.75**) to choose from, including Space Fun, Happy Horses, Zoo and Home Sweet Home. Just rub the transfer onto the background included and let your imagination run wild.

Summer is usually the perfect time to get outside and enjoy yourself. Long summer days with trips to the park for a run around and an ice cream are top of the agenda for most kids. Giddy Goat have a good selection of bats and balls, Nerf guns and super-soakers; but pick of the pops this summer is a good old fashioned skipping rope (from **£3.99**) and the ever popular Aerobie Frisbee **£10.99**. The Aerobie Frisbee is one of our best-selling outdoor toys, and is officially the world's furthest thrown object as certified by the Guinness Book of World Records (1,257 feet / 383 metres). Can you break that record?



For something truly pocket sized, Rory's Story Cubes **£12.99** are virtually a travel essential. The story cubes are a pocket sized story generator. Roll the nine dice and start telling your story. Rory's story Cubes are a fantastic, fun way to inspire creative thinking, encourage social confidence, develop language, improve vocabulary and promote problem-solving skills. They are the ideal travel companion for ages six and above.



Whether you're packing for a getaway or you're having a staycation this year, keeping the kids entertained and stimulated is the secret to a harmonious summer. At Giddy Goat Toys in Didsbury, our knowledgeable and helpful team are on hand to help you find suitable toys, games, puzzles and books to keep the family happy this summer, come rain or shine.

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Making arrangements for your children after separation

Nick Hodson, Principal Lawyer - Family and Children Team, Slater and Gordon Lawyers



Anyone who has experienced a family break up or has lost contact with their children knows how difficult life can be. It is often extremely upsetting for everyone involved, especially the children. They are in the middle of the dispute between their parents and are often most harmed by the ordeal. As a children's solicitor, I often see the damage done to the children. It is helpful to try to make parents see issues from their children's perspective. Most children want to maintain a relationship with both of their parents and they want their parents to try and reach agreement.

Here are a few answers to some of the most frequently asked questions:



Q I can't agree the contact arrangements with my ex-partner. What should I do?

It might be that you need a little extra help to reach agreement about your children and one option would be to think about mediation. A mediator is an independent person who helps people without being on anyone's 'side'. There are other options such as the Separated Parents Information Programme [SPIPs]. This is a course that is designed to help parents become clear about what their children need most from them and learn the fundamental principles of how to manage conflict between separated parents. It shows parents practical solutions to help their family make the best decisions for their children.

Q I want to make an application to the Family Court - what do I need to know?

If you do decide to make an application, you must have attended an initial meeting with a mediator called a 'Mediation Information and Assessment Meeting' [MIAM]. Such a meeting may not be necessary if you have been the victim of domestic violence. Once the court has your application, it will refer your case to CAFCASS and set a date for the first hearing.

Q What is CAFCASS?

It stands for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. It is independent of the court and social services. It is there to help you and your ex-partner reach a safe agreement about the arrangements for your children. Before the first hearing, it will carry out background safety checks with the police and social services to find out if there are any safety or welfare issues connected to your family. A worker from CAFCASS will also telephone you and your ex-partner to find out more about the current circumstances.

Q What happens at the first court hearing?

The aim of this hearing is to see whether it is possible for you and your ex-partner to make a safe agreement for your children which the court could approve. The court will also try and narrow down the issues between you. A CAFCASS worker and the judge will speak to both parents. Sometimes it is possible to reach a satisfactory agreement and a final order could be made at that hearing. If no agreement can be reached, the court will ask CAFCASS to do a full report which will involve making detailed enquiries which will involve a worker meeting with your children.

Q My ex-partner has been violent towards me - will the court take this into account?

The Family Court takes any domestic violence extremely seriously. The court may set up a 'finding of fact' hearing to hear the allegations of domestic abuse and decide whether contact is in the children's best interests. A court also has the power to order a party to attend a domestic abuse perpetrator programme. These courses help people who have been abusive to partners to change their behaviour and develop respectful, non-abusive relationships.

Q How will the court make a decision about my children seeing my ex-partner?

The law makes it very clear that the welfare of the children is the court's paramount consideration. Any order is an assessment of what is best for your children. It puts the children at the heart of the decision. The Family Court will take into account the evidence from you, your ex-partner and the recommendation made in the CAFCASS report. Quite often, the views of older children will carry a lot of weight.

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A guide from Chipmunks Footwear

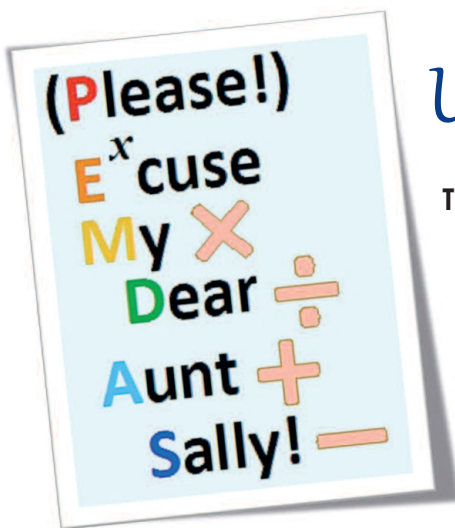


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- Younger children aren't likely to tell you that their shoes are starting to feel too tight. So look for indicators such as refusing to put them on or crying every time you do so.
 - Check shoes fit every week or so; if they're too small they can inhibit proper development.
 - Get your child to stand up when trying shoes on. First check the heel and see there is enough space to fit your little finger between your child's heel and the heel of the shoe. Then check the front and make sure there is a thumb-width space from the longest toe to the front of the shoe.
 - Feet are seldom precisely the same size, so always buy for the larger foot. If the shoes will be worn with socks, make sure your child is wearing socks when they try them. You want to make sure the shoes don't rub or cause pain in any area of the foot.
 - Your child's shoes should provide support and stability and have a flexible and non-skid sole.
 - It is also recommended to choose lightweight materials such as soft leather, canvas or cloth so that your child's feet can breathe. Make sure you can bend the shoe in your hand without much effort and check toe flexibility; it should bend with your child's toes.
 - Look for a stiff heel, too; press on both sides of the heel counter. It shouldn't collapse.
- Whether for everyday wear at school or for occasional party do, the best shoes for your child are the ones that fit well and are functional.

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I often hear parents saying: 'My child is behind in maths because they have poor memory and quickly forget what they were taught', or 'My child has a brilliant memory, they know all their number bonds and multiplication facts but struggle with a simple maths problem'. In both cases, the problem is rote learning: learning by repetition and memorising. It is a method which prevails among school teachers and private tutors alike.

Understanding maths by Oksana Kiseleva

The rote learning of mathematics is not only largely ineffective; it is also harmful in the long term.

Children intrinsically have a brilliant memory, and learn new things very quickly, provided that they understand and are interested in what they are doing. Therefore, rote learning is not only largely ineffective, it is also harmful in the longer term. For a start, children can easily get bored and lose interest in maths, which well explains their 'memory lapses'. Moreover, the lack of solid understanding of underlying concepts often results in children confusing arithmetic rules. Most importantly, a child can develop a feeling that however hard they work they are still 'rubbish' at maths. Such feelings can damage a child's confidence for life.

Unfortunately, rote learning has been a traditional method of teaching mathematics in this country for gener-

ations. This is how most teachers were taught mathematics themselves and they therefore prefer to follow familiar teaching methods. It is surprising how many mnemonics are used to help children to memorise arithmetic rules bypassing understanding. Just one example: 'Multiplying fractions is not a big problem, top times top with bottom times bottom'. My opinion is that such memory-aids block children's minds, preventing them from thinking and reasoning.

At the same time, it is well known that children's mathematical abilities are not fixed, and there exist excellent programs that help children to develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts. However, implementing such programs in a school environment

would require a total reassessment of the existing teaching methods, which might require a change in mentality.

Oksana Kiseleva holds a PhD from Manchester University. She graduated from the top specialist maths school run by Moscow University, and is the author of a number of articles that can be found on the M&D website.

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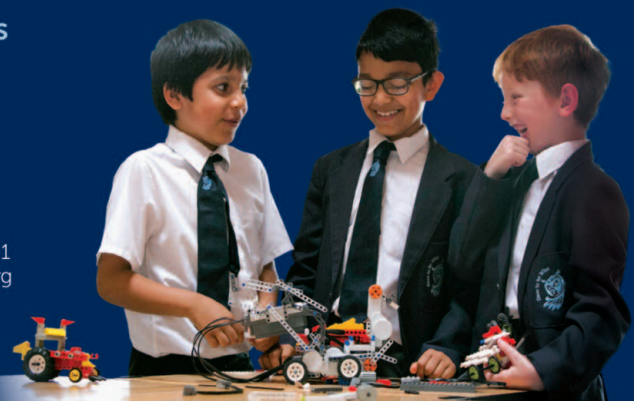
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Family holidays + school terms = fines

When I was growing up I read constantly of pupils who 'sagged off', 'went on the wag', 'bunked off' or 'played hookey.' William Brown in the 'Just William Stories' did it. The Bash Street Kids, Dennis the Menace and Lord Snooty's Gang all did it regularly. Possibly the most upmarket practitioner was Huckleberry Finn, who almost made a career of it. Missing school was seen then as a game, but has recently assumed considerably more importance.



The Supreme Court ruled in April 2017 that parents can't take children on term-time holidays without risking being fined. Briefly, if a child is at an English state school and aged 5-16, parents are unlikely to get permission to take them on a holiday in term-time. If parents take them out of school anyway, they could face at least a £60 fine. Head teachers can now only give permission for term-time absences in 'exceptional circumstances' such as visiting seriously ill family members, attending a family member's funeral or if a family member is in the Armed Forces and returning from operations. The Department for Education says parents are 'unlikely' to get permission for a family holiday. One of the Government's targets is for schools to ensure that attendance is as high as possible. A school consistently reporting less than 95% attendance will come under scrutiny.

The topic of term-time holidays is hotly debated and opinions are widely divided. Some parents argue that holidays are educational experiences, while others argue that parents are criticised for not spending time with their children, yet are often only able to get time off from work during term-time. Many parents call for a better balance between education and family life.

On the other hand, there are claims that even one day off can be disruptive, and that term-time holidays can have a lasting impact on learning. The Department for Education states 'It is irresponsible to take a child out of school without good reason. Every extra day of school missed can affect a pupil's chance of gaining good GCSEs, which has a lasting effect on their life chances.' However, a recent poll showed 69% of parents with school-age children

thought they should be able to take term-time holidays if booked in advance, for a strict number of days and not at important times.

This law is clearly unpopular, since it hits most of us in our pockets and purses. A week's holiday in this country for a family of four this year, increases in price from £499 at the beginning of July to £999 at the end of July when the school holidays commence. Such exploitation would not be accepted if it were applied to the prices of children's food or clothing, so why do we accept it meekly as a fact of life which applies to holidays? Perhaps there is much more to be done between the holiday industry and Government to level an obviously uneven playing field? Pressure from parents might just persuade the powers that be to take some action.

Missing those few days does make a difference. Most teaching and learning is organised into sequences, which means that the pupil who misses out a part of the sequence will find it increasingly difficult to cope with the next, more complex part. Children who then find the learning too difficult are often put off learning altogether. And there's the attitudinal aspect. If parents think it more important to take holidays, their child will appreciate the value judgement that school and education are of lesser importance.

Anything that interferes with continuity is likely to create difficulties and lower the child's attainment. There can also be social difficulties for the child who is moving in and out of the various friendship and working groups that children form in school. Teachers additionally have to focus on the child who needs to catch up, distracting them from attending to the

needs of the majority of class members. So regular and systematic school attendance is important.

One writer argues that their child on holiday has seen Leonardo's 'Last Supper' in Milan and the Coliseum in Rome; has climbed the Leaning Tower of Pisa, stood on Romeo and Juliet's balcony in Verona and is now an expert on pasta, cheese and ice cream - experiences which schools cannot possibly provide. So be it! Parents must always make their own decision about what they see as the best interests of their children. But it might be as well to pause and think a bit more deeply about the issues. After all, not all holidays involve such a cultural diet, do they? Is it worth taking a child out of school for a 'fortnight's chillin' out round the pool'? As for increasing family time together, perhaps it is as well to consider if we are making the best use of the 175 days each year when children are not normally in school. Then we might consider when and why we started to view costly foreign holidays as a frequent entitlement, rather than a luxury product to be enjoyed occasionally.

Teachers are professionals who rely on being part of a strongly supportive community which values what they do. Removing children from school during term-time sends a message to the school community and, more importantly, to that child, that we as parents don't take their education seriously. Taking a child on holiday when school is in session is disruptive for the child and their entire class, and the cumulative effects of doing so on a regular basis will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the pupil's future life chances, all of which are far more important issues than the £60 fine that will now be imposed ■



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During separation,
your children
are your number
one priority.
They're mine too.

Let Nick Hodson put your children first.

Nick Hodson is a principal lawyer and Head of our Specialist Children Team at Slater and Gordon. A member of The Law Society's Children's Accreditation Panel, he specialises in complex cases involving children, and both public and private law proceedings.

Having represented children in court for over 15 years, he believes that their well-being is always the number one priority. Working to help all the adults in the child's life reach the best possible outcome.

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