



M U M S & D A D S M A G A Z I N E

For families with children from 0 to 11 • Autumn 2025 • Issue 89 • FREE



Rethinking tech

School run

Halloween - cozy to creepy



mgs

The Manchester
Grammar School

Open Evening

Whole School
Thursday 25th September, 4.30pm-7pm

Visit [MGS.org](https://www.mgs.org)

@@X mgs_1515 The Manchester Grammar School

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Issue 89 Autumn 2025

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A word from the editor

As September settles in, many of us are still clinging to memories of summer, while others are already counting down to the Christmas holidays. But right now, the spotlight is on the start of a new academic year - whether that's nursery, school, or university for the older siblings.

This season also marks the busy calendar of independent school open days. If you're considering your child's next step into primary or secondary school in 2026 or 2027, autumn is the ideal time to start visiting. The more schools you see in action, the more informed your decision will be. Our annual School Run section is here to help (pages 5 to 11). This year, as always, we showcase a selection of schools, giving you the chance to hear what they have to say about themselves.

But it's not all timetables and planning. In our Events Watch (pages 14 to 18), you'll find plenty of inspiration for autumn fun: theatre highlights, family outings, Halloween activities, and even gift ideas if you like to get ahead with Christmas shopping. On page 21, one of our readers reflects on Halloween with children of all temperaments - from the thrill-seekers to the thrill-lovers and anyone in between - and offers practical tips for keeping everyone entertained and the household at peace.

Whatever the season means to you - new beginnings, autumn adventures, or festive anticipation - we hope this issue will help you make the most of it. *Zoe x*

The M&D Out and About listings are always carefully selected to offer our readers useful information. Although every effort is made to ensure that information is correct M&D cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions. We strongly advise you to check details with the event organisers.

Altrincham Preparatory School

'Rated excellent in all areas'
(ISI)



Small class sizes, specialist facilities, expert educators for boys aged 2-11

Open Mornings Saturday 4th October and Tuesday 18th November

Telephone: 0161 928 3366 www.altprep.co.uk

WITHINGTON GIRLS' SCHOOL



WHERE GIRLS SHINE

REGISTER YOUR DETAILS FOR PRIORITY
ACCESS TO AUTUMN 2025 EVENTS



Why choose an independent education



Choosing the right school for your son is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. As Chair of Governors at Altrincham Preparatory School, I often speak to parents seeking not only academic excellence for their children, but also a nurturing environment where their child can flourish as a confident, well-rounded individual. Independent education offers exactly this and so much more.

As Altrincham Preparatory School approaches its 90th year, it's humbling to reflect on how far we've come. From a single room in a scout hut in 1936,

where my grandfather and fellow founders began their vision, to the thriving school we are today.

That vision was simple but profound: to provide boys with a foundation of academic excellence, strong values and lasting confidence. Nearly a century later, those principles are alive and well in every APS boy. Independent education is an investment, not just in knowledge, but in character, curiosity and lifelong potential.

APS offers more than just outstanding academic results. With small class sizes, dedicated specialist

by Andrew Hill, Chair of Governors, Altrincham Preparatory School

teachers, and a curriculum that goes far beyond the national standard, we nurture every child's ability and inspire a love of learning. Our boys leave us not just well-prepared for senior school, but equipped with the communication, resilience and leadership skills that today's world demands.

Pastoral care is at our heart. We know each boy as an individual and work closely with families to ensure every child is safe, happy and thriving.

I extend heartfelt thanks to the generations of staff, parents and pupils who have shaped APS over the decades. It is their dedication that has made us who we are.

If you're considering an independent education, I warmly invite you to visit our Open Mornings on Saturday 4th October and Tuesday 18th November.

Discover what makes APS so special by contacting Miss White on admissions@altprep.co.uk for more information.



Juniors shine in sparkling production at WGS



A much-anticipated highlight at the end of every academic year at Withington Girls' School is the Junior School's summer production, which in recent years has included memorable performances of favourites such as *Matilda the Musical Jr* and *Beauty & the Beast Jr*.

This year the Junior School's summer production was *Annie Jr* and once again featured a cast comprising every pupil in the Junior School, with lead character roles performed by the Year 6 group as a farewell to their time in Junior School. The lead roles

were shared, giving the abundant talent amongst the Withington Juniors the opportunity to shine.

Head of WGS Juniors, Mrs Ellie Clark, was delighted with this first summer production since she became Head in September 2024. "Annie Jr was a resounding success, showcasing the remarkable talent and dedication of our Junior School. With boundless enthusiasm and infectious joy, our pupils lit up the stage as they brought the production to life.

"From the opening scene to the final curtain call, the girls demonstrated exceptional confidence,

energy and creativity. Each supporting performer from our Year 3 to 5 classes contributed to a vibrant and polished ensemble performance that captivated the audience."

Mrs Clark acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the WGS Music Department and other staff across the school, as well as the incredible support of parents in ensuring the success of the summer production. "It was a joy to welcome so many parents into school to share in the excitement," said Mrs Clark.

"As the Year 6 pupils took their final bow, they were applauded for performances that were nothing short of spectacular - a memorable conclusion to their journey with us in the Junior School."

For parents seeking a stable, enriching and forward-thinking education for their daughters, Withington Girls' School offers a seamless educational journey, from Year 3 to Year 13, at the top-ranking independent school in the North West based on academic performance in public examinations.

Open events will take place on the evening of Thursday 6th November and the morning of Saturday 8th November 2025.

Please complete an enquiry form at www.wgs.org to be kept updated on these and other admissions events such as taster mornings.



The power of performing arts in supporting children's education

by The Performing Arts Team at Bowdon Preparatory School



improve memory, concentration, and problem-solving abilities. Similarly, acting and storytelling help children develop empathy and critical thinking by encouraging them to see the world through different perspectives. Furthermore, the performing arts encourage discipline and perseverance. Rehearsing for a play or practising a musical piece requires dedication, time management, and resilience - all of which are valuable life skills that benefit children in and out of the classroom.

At Bowdon Prep, we provide opportunities throughout the year for all our pupils to express themselves through performing arts - from Early Years' Christmas Concert, through Year 3's Waxworks monologues to our Year 6 end of year show held in a professional theatre.

Behind the magic of each end of year performance lie months of preparation - rehearsals, choreography, costume fittings, set building, line learning and more. A dazzling production like our Year 6 performance of Matilda at the Waterside Theatre in Sale simply wouldn't happen without a cast who give 100% and support each other every step of the way.

Truly, our pupils have learned to Believe in themselves, to Persevere and to Succeed!

Performing arts - such as music, dance, theatre, and drama - play a significant role in enhancing children's educational experiences. Beyond entertainment, these art forms foster essential skills that support academic growth and personal development.

Engaging in performing arts helps children improve their communication and social skills. When students participate in plays, musical performances, or dance routines, they learn to express themselves,

collaborate with others, and build confidence. These experiences are particularly valuable for shy or reserved children, offering a safe space to find their voice and develop self-esteem.

Cognitive development is another area where the performing arts make a positive impact. Studies have shown that music education, for example, supports brain development in areas related to maths and language. Learning rhythms and melodies can



Bowdon Preparatory
School for Girls

Open Event

Tuesday 18 November
9.30am - 11.30am

BELIEVE | PERSEVERE | SUCCEED

To find out more information or to reserve a place at our open event, please register on our website or contact us:

 www.bowdonprep.org.uk

 admissions@bowdonprep.org.uk

 0161 928 0678

 @bowdonprepschool

Rated
'Excellent'
in all areas

ISI Report
Nov 2022



Start your personal journey at Bridgewater School



When it comes to finding the perfect learning environment for your child, the team at Bridgewater School in Worsley believes that it is as much about instinct as academic success. Which is why all jour-

neys at this family-focused school begin with a personal visit.

At this independent day school for children aged 3-18 years, success and happiness go hand in hand.

At the heart of the school's ethos lies the belief that every individual deserves a range of opportunities which will enable them to flourish, and visitors are invited to experience this holistic approach to education for themselves.

For parents interested in the benefits of a Bridgewater education, the school is holding an Open Day for all year groups on Saturday 8th November. Besides enjoying the opportunity to speak to the Headteacher and Heads of Department, visitors are also able to discuss the many exciting possibilities open to their child with the school's experienced and committed teaching staff. Families will be given a personal tour of the school's unique woodland setting by a member of their student body, and find out more about the individualised support and teaching that they provide.

To register, visit bridgewater-school.co.uk/open-day-2025 and see just how far your child could go.



The future of girls' schools - still worth the hype?



With the rising cost of independent education, many parents are questioning whether single-sex schools - particularly for girls - are still worth the investment. Recent policy changes, including the proposed removal of VAT exemption for independent schools, have sparked concern. Five girls' schools have already announced closures this year, and 16 are transitioning to co-educational models. But what does this mean for our daughters? As Head of Manchester High School for Girls, I've seen first-hand the transformative power of all-girls education. Research consistently shows that girls thrive academically and personally in single-sex environments. They are 83% more likely to take A-

level Chemistry and 40% more likely to apply for engineering degrees. These aren't just statistics - they represent real opportunities for girls to break barriers and shape the future. Girls' schools also offer something less tangible but equally vital: a safe, supportive space where girls can grow in confidence, find their voice, and develop leadership skills. Importantly, they also provide a powerful platform for participation in sport. According to the Youth Sport Trust's 2024 Girls Active report, 62% of girls want to be more active in school, but many face barriers such as lack of confidence, body image concerns, and fear of judgment.

by Helen Jeys, Head Mistress,
Manchester High School for Girls

Single-sex environments help remove these barriers. Girls in girls' schools are significantly more likely to participate in competitive sport, take on leadership roles in teams, and report higher enjoyment of PE. Sport becomes a space for confidence, resilience, and teamwork to flourish.

At Manchester High, our legacy is rooted in female empowerment - a true school of firsts. From the daughters of Emmeline Pankhurst to today's trail-blazing alumnae like the first female helicopter pilot in the British Army and the first female Chief Cashier of the Bank of England - our students know they can make a difference.

While I respect the value of co-educational and state schools, I worry that fewer families will be able to choose the right environment for their daughters. We must protect the diversity of educational options available to parents.

As the newly elected President-elect of the Girls' Schools Association, I will continue to champion the value of girls' education, especially for girls in the North. When girls are given the space to thrive in the classroom, on the sports field, and beyond - everyone benefits.



Beyond the classroom *Building friendships and confidence at MGS*



The start of a new school year always brings a mix of excitement and anticipation - but for many pupils, the confidence to stride into September begins months earlier.

For junior pupils at The Manchester Grammar School, a highlight of the summer term is a residential trip to Plas Menai, held each June in the beautiful surroundings of North Wales. Over the course of

the week, pupils take part in a diverse programme of water and land-based activities, from stand-up paddleboarding, dinghy sailing, and kayaking to high ropes courses and team challenges. The experience encourages Junior School pupils to develop resilience, teamwork, and self-belief - whether they are mastering a new skill on the water or helping a friend through a challenge. The trip also plays a vital role in building friendships across year groups.

Shared experiences, laughter, and moments of achievement foster bonds that often endure long after pupils return to school, giving them the assurance and enthusiasm they need to start the next academic year with confidence.

Later in the summer term, Senior School and Sixth Form pupils take part in Activities Week, a tradition which replaced the former 'camps week' more than 15 years ago. For one week at the very end of term, lessons pause and pupils from years 7 to 13 chooses from over 30 experiences. Around 450 pupils typically opt for residential trips, including camping in the Lake District, exploring the Welsh countryside, or joining sports tours. Others immerse themselves in activities based at school or around Manchester, such as Watersports, Cookery courses, Taskmaster challenges or Science workshops.

These opportunities challenge pupils to try new things, work collaboratively, and embrace learning in its broadest sense. The friendships and confidence they gain ensure they return in September ready not only for the academic challenges ahead, but also for the joy of contributing to a vibrant and supportive school community.



Choosing the right school *Laura Hough, Admissions Manager, The Grange School*



Visiting school open days is an essential first step in the journey to choosing the right school. But it's only the beginning. Open days offer a valuable introduction: a chance to see the school in action, meet staff, talk to pupils, and hear about the school's ethos and vision. However, one visit alone can't tell the whole story. That's why we encourage families to return and experience The Grange School in different ways, ensuring they truly find the right fit.

In addition to open days, we offer a range of opportunities for families to get to know us better, such as taster days and activity mornings. These events allow children to immerse themselves in school life - joining lessons, meeting future classmates, or trying out clubs and sports. It's in these more informal, interactive settings that pupils often get a real feel for what it might be like to be part of our community.

Each visit reveals something new. Parents may come back to meet different members of staff, attend a school perfor-

mance, or simply observe the buzz of a typical school day. This helps families move beyond the polished surface and truly experience the warmth, energy, and everyday atmosphere that define us.

We believe that choosing a school is about far more than facilities or results - it's about relationships, community, and finding a place where your child will feel known and inspired. That's why we're happy to welcome you multiple times. We want every family to feel confident, comfortable, and excited about their decision.

Open day is just the start. By taking the time to visit, ask questions, and get involved through taster days and activity mornings, families give themselves the best chance of finding not just a good school - but the right school.



A bright future grows at Forest Prep

by Graeme Booth, Headmaster of Forest Preparatory School



As Forest Prep School proudly steps into its 101st year following a joyful centenary celebration, the excitement continues to grow. This new chapter brings the launch of our eagerly anticipated Outdoor Learning Area - a space where children will not only explore the natural world but also meet our two pygmy goats, connecting back to the school's origins on an old orchard farm.

Our outdoor learning programme is carefully aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) goals. Research from the Institute for Outdoor Learning shows that children engaged in outdoor education display improved focus, confidence, and emotional well-being. We're embracing this evidence, blending play and purpose in our beautiful, natural environment.

At Forest Prep, we pride ourselves on small class sizes (1:12 ratio), ensuring every child is individually supported and challenged. With specialist teachers in Art, Sport, Music, and French, our broad curriculum allows children to explore passions - and perhaps discover a new one.

Though we are proudly non-selective, we offer thorough grammar school preparation. From Year 2, verbal and non-verbal reasoning are taught as part of the core curriculum, with structured 11+ support beginning the summer before Year 5, including evening classes throughout the year.

We currently have a limited number of places available in our Reception and Nursery classes.

Want to find out more? Come to our Early Years Open Morning on Saturday 11 October 2025, 10 - 11.

Can't make it or missed it? Book a personalised tour on a day to suit you.

Call **0161 980 4075** or email enquiries@forestschool.co.uk to book your tour.



Saddling up for success The King's School National Champions



As pupils at The King's School settle into the new academic year, one group returns with particularly fond memories of last term - the equestrian team. Finishing the previous year with an outstanding display at the National School's Championships, including multiple medals and national titles, they showcased not just competitive excellence, but the deeper values that riding nurtures.

Held at Hickstead, the spiritual home of English equestrianism, the competition was amongst the best qualifying schools from across the country. By securing top ten places in 8 classes, King's pupils proved that young Cheshire riders are among the crème de la crème of the sport.

It was due reward for the hours and hours, not only of riding time, but of grooming and mucking out that all the young people put in to build that special winning relationship between horse and rider. Beyond the rosettes and medals, equestrian sport at King's offers pupils an education in resilience, patience, and empathy. From early mornings in the stables to the focus required in competition, riding instils discipline and responsibility, while the partnership with a horse fosters trust and compassion. These are qualities that serve pupils just as well in the classroom as they do in the arena, shaping confident, well-rounded young people ready to take on any challenge.





WILMSLOW
PREPARATORY
SCHOOL

Our pathway to your child's success

Wilmslow Preparatory School is a small co-ed prep school with a big reputation. The unique Wilmslow Prep Pathway allows us to prepare your child to move on to the secondary school that is right for them.

The Pathway has been designed by our expert team to structure our educational provision throughout your child's school career, enabling them to fulfil their potential by the time they leave us at 11.

Small class sizes, specialist teachers and dedicated and tailored teaching allow us to incorporate key elements of the national curriculum but takes learning well beyond these boundaries.

Join us for our next Open Morning:
Saturday 20th September 10am - 12noon

If your child would benefit from our focused approach, please get in touch!

www.wilmslowprep.co.uk
01625 524246

admissions@wilmslowprep.co.uk
Wilmslow Preparatory School, Grove Avenue,
Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5EG





THE GRANGE
JUNIOR SCHOOL

OPEN MORNING

Saturday 27th September 2025

Closer than you think!
Our own private school bus service from Altrincham, Bowdon, High Legh, Mere and Knutsford, plus excellent transport links via road and rail.



grange.org.uk
01606 539039



The Kings'

1502



THE SUNDAY TIMES
SCHOOLS GUIDE
2024

TOP 10
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FOR
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
NORTH WEST

- Small classes
- Nurturing & inspiring
- Exceptional facilities
- Award-winning curriculum
- Wide enrichment & extracurricular offer

Whole School Open Day

**Saturday
11 October**
9am-2pm

 REGISTER NOW at www.kingsmac.co.uk

Wilmslow School protects parents from VAT increase



Wilmslow Preparatory School has taken another step in protecting its parent body from the Government's policy to introduce VAT on private school fees; announcing that it will carry some two-thirds of the 20% VAT charge, with a discretionary school credit.

At a time when many schools have raised fees by 15 - 17%, and some have even been forced to close, Wilmslow Prep will apply an 11% credit to fees for the 2025/26 academic year, starting this September.

The central Wilmslow school, which this year

celebrates its 116th birthday, announced the new school credit earlier this year to allow parents to plan their finances.

When the VAT policy became a reality following the election last July, Wilmslow Prep moved quickly to reassure parents by carrying the VAT charge, which came into effect from January, in full.

The School's latest commitment further demonstrates their desire to do everything they can to support parents and provide reassurance against increasing costs.

Speaking about this, chair of governors, Diana Stephenson said, "Last year's introduction of VAT left parents little time to plan, particularly as it was widely expected that the increase would be imposed from the start of the 2025/26 academic year, as opposed to part way through the year.

"That's why we took the decision to initially fully cover the VAT charge. We have maintained our support for parents through our latest announcement of the credit for the forthcoming academic year. This has provided a welcome buffer for our parents.

"Needless to say, our actions have been well-received by the parents. The credit continues to demonstrate our commitment to WPS families."



FOREST PREPARATORY SCHOOL

- Verbal and Non Verbal Reasoning
- 11+ Preparation
- Monthly payment scheme
- Outdoor learning curriculum for EYFS
- Class sizes have a 1:12 ratio from Reception to Year 6.
- Flexible wrap-around care

Rare Opportunity - 'Reception Place' Available for Immediate Start

Contact **Forest Preparatory School** to book a personalised tour

www.forestschool.co.uk 0161 980 4075

Whole School Open Day
Saturday 8th November, 10am-2pm

Bridgewater School
WHERE INDIVIDUALS COUNT

Bridgewater School,
Dunwood Hall,
Worsley Rd,
Worsley M26 2WQ

Call 0161 794 1463 or visit bridgewater-school.co.uk/open-day-2025 to reserve your place.

Rain? Bring it on! M&D Competition

The ultimate kids' jacket for autumn adventures



It never goes amiss to be prepared for rain in this country. Now that autumn is truly upon us, having a warm, waterproof jacket is a must. Whether you're getting your little one ready for school or nursery, or planning plenty of outdoor family fun with puddle-jumping and leaf-kicking, PO.P's Stormy Jacket is the piece of clothing to have this season.

PO.P, also known as Polarn O. Pyret, is a Swedish childrenswear brand that offers high-quality products with a play-friendly design and no details that restrict movement - comfortable clothing for kids that can be washed again and again. As their website proudly states, each garment is 'made to be passed down to three children, at least.' Isn't that any parent's dream?

The Waterproof Stormy Jacket stays true to the brand's values. Designed for play, this school staple is warm, windproof, waterproof, and durable, while remaining lightweight and breathable. It also features a smart button solution, making it easy to attach to fleece jackets, lightweight vests, and other jackets. With an adjustable hood, drawcord hem, and adjustable cuffs, this quality basic wears well, washes beautifully, and will keep looking new for the whole school year - and the next!

For several years in a row, the PO.P Waterproof Stormy Jacket has been voted 'Best in Test' for shell jackets by the Swedish Best in Test panel. It also took the top spot in the children's raincoats category by the English site IndyBest.

The jacket is available from www.polarnopyret.com. But if you're feeling lucky today, why not try our competition first? We've teamed up with PO.P to offer one of our readers a Waterproof Stormy Jacket in their choice of colour and any size from 1 to 10 years.

To enter, simply visit our website using the QR code and submit your entry.



MATHS ENGLISH

Free Registration

16 September - 31 October

KUMON OPENS A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

| | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| kumon.co.uk | Altrincham 07951 078744 | Moss Side 07538 615111 |
| | Altrincham North 07784 385806 | Timperley 07979 981491 |
| | Heaton Moor 07356 026227 | |

Terms and conditions apply. Fees vary. Participating centres only. Please refer to your local study centre. Subject to availability.

Greenbank

Preparatory School and Day Nursery
Cheadle Hulme
 Cheshire SK8 6HU

0161 485 3724

NURSERY, PRESCHOOL, SCHOOL

Rethinking Tech One family's journey into the digital world

by Paul Wojnicki



In today's world, technology often gets a bad rap when it comes to children. Many parents worry about screen time, online safety, and the potential for distraction. But for Paul Wojnicki, our travel writer and a father of two young children, the story is quite different. He believes that technology, when chosen wisely and used intentionally, can be a powerful force for learning, creativity, and connection. In this article, he shares how his family has embraced apps, games, and devices not as digital babysitters, but as springboards for developing real-world skills and passions.

• Early learning with trusted names

We were using apps to get Harrison and Ella started with their maths and reading skills well before they started nursery. Of course, finding the right apps can be tricky and many are plagued with adverts or in-app purchases. We started with the BBC's CBeebies learning app as it was packed with fun learning games and used characters familiar to them from the Cbeebies channel. There are no in-app purchases or adverts and the games are all based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, so it's the ideal introduction for pre-school children. We also liked Khan Academy Kids, one of the top-rated educational applications, which has activities for maths, reading, social skills and emotional development.

• We've learned languages together

Our family's favourite app over the last two years has been Duolingo, which we've been using to learn French. Harrison is on a 700+ day "streak" and Ella on a streak of over 350 days. They haven't missed a day in all that time, which is great, but both been known to come downstairs in a blind panic in the middle of the night after waking up and being convinced they've missed their ten-minute French lesson.

Apart from offering tuitions for 40+ languages, Duolingo have also branched out into maths and is great for working on numeracy skills. There are programs but we've never felt the need to subscribe and have found the free activities have been more than enough to keep us going.

• Learn how to code

Ella first learned coding skills on ScratchJr, which is aimed at ages 5-7. We found it was a great app to introduce coding using visual programming blocks to snap together commands to animate characters, create scenes, and build her own projects. It encouraged creativity, problem-solving, and logical thinking in a playful environment. Later, we invested in a coding robot, which allowed her to use similar block based commands to experiment with real-world robotics and really develop her understanding of sending commands to a physical object, as well as her problem solving skills.

• Fostering creativity

Our kids love nothing more than making things, and while I would argue that making things from wood, cardboard and papier-mache is far more satisfying than drawing a picture on a screen, these two things don't have to be mutually exclusive. After a recent visit to a gaming museum and developing a fascination with Atari Pong, Harrison started building his own Pong controllers using Arduino Uno and electronics kit. We did this together and used ChatGPT to guide us, it was a great bonding experience and introduced him to using AI for constructive purposes. He also loves to make miniaturised football trophies on his 3D printer. Ella has always enjoyed making cards and stickers and now uses a Cricut machine to print designs to iron onto t-shirts for her and her friends, as well as making personalised stickers and cards for them on birthdays.

• Learn an instrument

Apps like Simply Piano and Yousician are great ways to help learn an instrument. Harrison picked up piano incredibly quickly using Simply Piano and learns more from the app than he does from his piano lessons run by our local authority. I've been happy to pay for the pro plan, but there are plenty of free exercises on both apps too. Of course, nothing compares to private lessons with individual feedback from a tutor, but not everyone can afford this or fit it into their schedule. The beauty of Simply Piano and Yousician is that they're done at home at a time that suits you. They also adapt to your child's learning pace and actively encourage practise through 'rewards' and stars.

• Don't forget the advantages of gaming

Contrary to the stereotype of technology isolating children, it can strengthen social bonds when used responsibly. Multiplayer online games, such as Minecraft or Roblox, promote teamwork and collaboration. In Minecraft's creative mode, children work together to build elaborate structures, requiring negotiation, planning, and compromise. Harrison has even learned the basics of flying a small plane and glider on a couple of simulators, and he plans to join a gliding club when he turns 14. We took a tour of the club recently and were surprised to find they used the same software on their own simulator.

One of the most significant advantages of technology for growing children is its ability to enhance cognitive development. Educational apps, interactive games, and online learning platforms have really helped our children's learning journey, and for the most part we've had very little in the way of negative experiences. Technology is simply a tool. It can be used well or poorly, helpfully or harmfully. As parents, it's not about banning screens altogether - it's about making conscious choices. By curating what children engage with and taking part in the journey, we can ensure that tech supports their development rather than distracting from it. The difference lies not in the device, but in how we use it.



Guide to events

September

Heritage Open Days

Every September, thousands of museums, galleries, factories, archives, churches, and historic buildings throw open their doors for free. It's Heritage Open Day, England's biggest celebration of our shared stories, landmarks, and traditions. Here's M&D's family-friendly guide to unique opportunity, when doors open wide and admission is on the house.

13 September

½ hour from 10:30 to 12 then from 13:30 to 15:00

Stockport Garrick Theatre

Take a backstage guided tour of Stockport Garrick Theatre. Audience members usually only see the public rooms and the auditorium, this is an opportunity to look behind the scenes. Plus a history presentation and photo ops.

Stockport Garrick was established in 1901 and has occupied the current premises since 1920. It is part of an old mill building on the A6, near to The Hat Museum, Stockport Garrick Theatre Ltd Exchange Street, Stockport, Greater Manchester, SK3 0EJ

13 September 11:00 & 14:00

RAILWAY 200: at Castlefield Viaduct

A comical, educational and entertaining look back at our railways

Complete with original new music, this show will take you back to the golden age of rail. Come and find out how it all started, what the Bronte's had to do with trains and what was the British Rail Flying Saucer?

2025 sees the 200th anniversary of the world's first passenger steam railway. The UK (and the rest of the globe) is celebrating this milestone. Gare Du Nord Theatre, along with Avanti West Coast have put together a 75min show detailing the events from the past 200 years in a comical and educational retelling. The show features famous historic people and the ups and downs of the railway from the past two centuries. It features original new music and songs especially written for the show.

This performance is suitable for families with children over 7 year's old.

Castlefield Viaduct, Castlefield Manchester, Greater Manchester, M3 4LG

13 September 10:00-12:00

17 September 14:00-16:00, 18:00-20:00

Rubbish to Resource - your recycling in action

Find out exactly what happens to the recycling from Greater Manchester once your bin has been collected. Discover how the state-of-the-art technology in the Materials Recovery Facility sorts and separates the recycling ready to be transformed into something new. You will also have an opportunity to take part in activities to dispel those recycling myths, ask questions and understand why getting it right is important. This is a two hour session that includes a tour plus some indoor recycling activities.

Longley Lane, Sharston, Manchester, M22 4RQ

13, 17, 20 September 10.30-1600

14, 21 September 13.00-16.00

Long Street Methodist Church and School

Part of Middleton's 'Golden Cluster' of historic



school is pure Arts and Crafts with a lovely 'out-door room' garden accessed through an Art Nouveau gateway topped by a cubic modern sculpture.

97 Long Street, Middleton, Manchester M24 6UN

13, 20 September 13:00

Daisy Nook Canal History Walk

Guided walk at an easy pace to see and hear about the surprising number of historic features in this small section of the Droylsden to Hollinwood canal and hear some of the history of the canal and the area.

The walk will take around 90 minutes. Daisy Nook Country Park, Stannybrook Road, Newmarket Road, Ashton-under-Lyne Greater Manchester, M35 9WJ

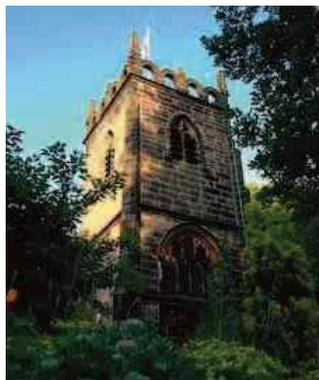
14 September 10:00-17:00

Avro Heritage Museum

An opportunity to visit The Avro Heritage Museum at Woodford and experience the historical importance and legacy of the world famous aircraft manufacturing company, A V Roe & Co Ltd. (Avro). A full range of exhibits with aircraft from 1909 to 2011. Follow the amazing aircraft designs from the 1909 Roe triplane replica, to the Avro Anson, Avro Lancaster and the only complete anti flash white Vulcan bomber. Be inspired by cockpit tours and flight simulation, VR experience and behind the scenes tours. Woodford Aerodrome, Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, Greater Manchester, SK7 1AG

14 September 14:00 - 16:00

St James' Church, Didsbury



Founded 1236. Grade II* listed building with many memorials and stained-glass windows to famous Lancashire and Cheshire families, including the Mosleys, the Nevills, the Watts family, Queen Elizabeth II's ancestors, Fletcher Moss's family, Bradshaw's printer and many Victorian merchants. Baptism place of the last Lancashire Martyr, St Ambrose Barlow, in 1585. The graveyard dates back to 1326, and the New Walker organ was installed in 2017. Tithes maps, jams, chutneys and crumbles on sale.

Meet the bellringers and try your hand at ringing the bells which date from 1727.

Disabled access. St James' Church, Stenner Lane, Didsbury, Greater Manchester, M20 2RQ.

13, 14, 20, 21 September 10:00-16:00

Museum of Transport, Greater Manchester
An opportunity to ride on historic buses from the Museum of Transport, Greater Manchester. Tours using historic buses will run every hour, calling at the Manchester Jewish Museum, Science & Industry Museum and the People's History Museum in Manchester city centre. Children under 16 must be accompanied. Museum of Transport, Boyle Street, Manchester, M8 8UW.

16, 20 September 09:00 - 17:00

Dunham Massey

Enjoy a day full of nature, beauty and history. Visit the historic house, take a walk around the gardens and deer park, explore the mill and the beautiful surroundings. Dunham Massey, Woodhouse Lane, Altrincham, WA14 4SJ. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

16, 17, 18 September 14:00

Tour, exhibition & refreshments

Architectural story of Cheadle Hulme School



Three open afternoons exploring the rich architectural heritage of CHS. Discover hidden gems through the exhibition of historical plans and photographs from the School's archive, showcasing the evolution of the school's buildings over time. Take a guided tour of the site, enjoy their heritage and community exhibitions, and participate in the 'Draw Our School' activity, where you can capture your own artistic interpretation of this unique architectural landscape. Refreshments (tea and cake) will be available for a donation to the Cheadle Hulme School Bursary Fund.

Cheadle Hulme School, Claremont Road Cheadle Hulme, Greater Manchester, SK8 6EF

17, 18 September 10:00 & 13:00

East Lancashire Railway 'behind the scenes tour'

Take a sneak peek into the various departments, visit Castlecroft Sheds, where all of the engines are stored and maintained. This tour will give you an incredible insight into what really makes the ELR so special.

There are two sessions beginning at Bury Station, max 12 people per session. Each tour will take approximately 2 hours.

What's Included:

- Walk around Undercroft
 - Visit to Castle Croft Sheds
 - Tour of Platform
 - Chance to interact with volunteers along the way
 - Complimentary access into Bury Transport Museum
- East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bolton Street, Bury, Greater Manchester, BL9 0EY

20 September

Sale Town Hall is throwing open it's doors

Sale Town Hall, one of the areas most notable buildings, designed and built in 1915 by architect Charles Thomas Adshead for Sale Urban District

Council. This is a great opportunity to gain a fascinating insight into a landmark civic building and find out more about local history.

Join for a fun day of talks, children's activities and access to areas usually closed to the public. Town Hall, 1 Waterside Plaza, Sale, Manc. M33 7ZE.

20, 21 September

Quarry Bank Open Days weekend

The working mill is the beating heart of Quarry Bank. Explore one of Britain's greatest industrial heritage sites.

Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA Tel: 01625 527468 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

21 September 12:00 - 14:00

250th Manchester St.Mary's Scout Group

This scout group was formed in 1916 and has a long history of providing fun, friendship and fresh air in the scout hut and garden. The group is holding a Heritage Garden Party to celebrate its history with displays, garden games and refreshments. Enjoy a wildflower area and allotment, and there is plenty of space for fun and games. Each week during term time, leaders teach social and practical skills to Rainbows, Brownies, Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers. The resources are often made from recycled materials. Ellen Street, Droylsden, Manchester, M43 7YA

21 September 11:00 - 16:00

Presentations: 11:00, 13:00 & 15:00

Stockport Plaza Super Cinema and Variety Theatre

It's going to be a full day of FREE events and an opportunity for you to investigate behind the scenes of this much loved Art Deco gem as they celebrate over 90 years of serving the community. Special Plaza Heritage Day presentations are scheduled for 11.00, 13.00 and 15.00, no need to book, simply turn up on the day and experience the very best of yesterday today.

The Plaza Super Cinema and Variety Theatre Mersey Sq., Stockport, Grtr Manchester, SK1 1SP

For more information about Heritage Open Days visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Also this month

Mid-week during term time

Operation Ouch! Brains, Boggles and You - The pre-school Explorer Pass

This Pass allows you and your little one to play and discover at your own pace, gives you the flexibility to change your plans and helps you make the most of quieter mid-week visits by returning as many times as you like during term time.

Highlights for little explorers include:

- A dedicated Mini Medics soft and sensory area designed to inspire ages 4 and under to play and experiment.
 - Multi-sensory experiences including a smell library, noise makers, different textures to explore and a foam pyramid to crawl and climb on
 - A giant ear to crawl through, a super-sized eye to ignite curiosity in little learners and a huge nose to travel out of.
 - An infinity mirror, busy boards and activity panels, balance beam and more.
- Plus, lots more for little learners to touch, play with and investigate!

Science and Industry Museum, Liverpool Road Manchester M3 4FP Tel: 033 0058 0058 www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk

Continued on page 17 ...

I have secret plans
and clever tricks...



ROALD DAHL'S
THE ENORMOUS
CROCODILE
THE MUSICAL



ROALD
DAHL
STORY
COMPANY

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Have an out-of-this-world Autumn at Jodrell Bank!



Put the stars at your fingertips this autumn with a trip to Jodrell Bank, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to the UK's largest radio telescope! From interactive exhibitions and jaw-dropping live science to space-themed crafts and an outdoor playground, there's something for aspiring astronauts of all ages (whatever the weather)...

Embark on a journey through the Solar System - no rocket required! Guests can uncover the secrets of space across four activity-filled pavilions, offering hands-on exhibits, immersive planetarium-style shows in the Space Dome, and spectacular science demon-

strations, with a chance to test the team's knowledge on your burning questions about the cosmos.

This October half-term, prepare for an explosive week of unforgettable fun! Take part in a brand-new science show where the team will bust some of the Universe's biggest myths, follow the latest site trail through 35 acres of stunning autumn countryside, and get creative at the cosmic craft station. Don't miss the exciting line-up of Space Dome Shows for all ages and be sure to dress for the occasion: out-of-this-world costumes are highly encouraged!

From November, Jodrell's popular Astro Nights return! Stargazers can join expert-led evening sessions

to explore the night sky with telescopes, binoculars, and planispheres. Keep an eye out for special nights designed for Girl Guides, Scouts, and other uniformed groups; it's a stellar experience not to be missed.

For little space explorers who dream of the stars, the Ted's Space Adventure Dome Show is an interactive introduction to wondrous new worlds, perfect for preschoolers and packed with music and rhyme.

Need a break from all the adventure? Families can relax at scenic picnic areas, grab a bit at two cafés serving locally sourced treats, and browse a gift shop full of mini spacesuits, ice cream, and space-themed souvenirs to remember your mission by.



Every ticket at Jodrell Bank is now an annual pass, so you can enjoy the adventure as many times as you like for 12 months at no extra cost. Book online to save an extra 10% on admission!



out and about

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE DAY OUT THOMAS

IT'S PARTY TIME!

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY
4 - 5 OCT 2025

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW!

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Bluey & Bingo

BLUEY & BINGO ARE COMING TO BURY TRANSPORT MUSEUM!

20TH SEP 2025

COME AND SEE THEM AT INTERVALS THROUGHOUT THE DAY!

BBC STUDIOS

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

HALLOWEEN GHOST TRAINS

YEAR OF THE BAT

30 - 31 OCTOBER, 1 NOVEMBER 2025

SANTA SPECIALS

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

22, 23, 29, 30 November, 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 - 24 December 2025

SEND sessions available

Brass band on board

Interactive winter wonderland walkthrough

Meet Santa on the train

BOOK ONLINE NOW: WWW.EASTLANCSRAILWAY.ORG.UK

Guide to events

7th Sep; 5th Oct; 2nd Nov; 7th Dec

Relaxed Visits to Jodrell Bank

Relaxed visits: 10.00 til 11.00 on the first Sunday of the month.

Come to Jodrell Bank for a relaxed start to the day - sound in the exhibition spaces will be at a reduced level and there'll be a relaxed early showing of the free film 'Introduction to Jodrell Bank' at 10.15

Prepare for your visit with the handy Familiarisation Guide. You can also get to know the site in advance by reading Jodrell's Accessibility Statement.

Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre, The University of Manchester, Macclesfield, Cheshire, Sk11 9DL
Tel: 01477 571 766 www.jodrellbank.net

10 September 13:30 - 15:15

Concerts in the Chapel - Manchester Reed Trio: 'Pride & Prejudice' themed

Listen to a chamber ensemble playing timeless classical compositions to captivate audiences of all ages, with a nod to Lyme's role as 'Pemberley' in the BBC's 1995 'Pride & Prejudice' series. The acoustics of the historic chapel enhance every note, creating a symphony of sound that resonates through the centuries-old walls.

Manchester Reed Trio is a dynamic and versatile chamber ensemble, comprising of the oboe, clarinet and bassoon. The flexibility of the instrumentation leads to a varied and sonorous sound world. They are alumnae of the Royal Northern College of Music with further training at the Musique et Santé in Paris and have since played in a wide range of venues, both internationally and across Europe. Price: £22.00

Lyme Park, Disley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 2NR
T: 01663 762023 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lyme

13 September 14:00 - 15:00

Quarry Bank kitchen garden walk, talk and taster

The garden team at Quarry Bank are delighted to offer a series of events for you to enjoy. Join Gardener Cath to explore the kitchen garden and discover what was grown in the 19th century for the Greg's dinner table, and the produce that the team grows today. The walk will end with the opportunity to pick your own fruit and vegetables for you to take home.

Admission charges do not apply. Both members and non-members will need to purchase a ticket. Price: £12.00 Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA. Tel: 01625 527468
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank

20 September

Blue and Bingo

The excitable sisters from Down Under are coming to visit the Bury Transport Museum. There will also be a fun fair with three rides suitable for toddlers, face painters, petting zoo and craft activities for you and the family to enjoy, all included in the general admission ticket price.

Complete your day out with a ride with one of the heritage steam or diesel trains through the Irwell valley. Ticket Price includes a ride on any train services on the day of your visit - just pick the time that suits you! General admission tickets must be purchased online.

The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY
www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

21 September: 10:00 - 12:00

16 November: 14:30 - 17:00

Operation Ouch! Brains, Bogies and You - Relaxed sessions

Operation Ouch! Brains, Bogies and You brings the hit BBC Children's and Education TV series to life for a second unforgettable exhibition experience, following the success of world-premiere exhibition Operation Ouch! Food, Poo and You. These sensory-friendly sessions are specially designed for those who prefer an adjusted environment. At these times, Operation Ouch! will have a smaller capacity, with adjusted sound levels throughout the exhibition. There will also be additional sensory activities to enjoy with the Explainers.

Science and Industry Museum, Liverpool Road Manchester M3 4FP. Tel: 033 0058 0058
www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk

27 September 11:00 - 16:00

Harvest Festival

A chance to celebrate the annual harvest by joining in with the Farm's very own harvest festival. See the steam engine running, have a go at scarecrow making and spinning or make your own corn dolly.

Harvest Blessing at 1pm with Barnton Silver Band.
Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

27 September 11:00 - 15:00

Apple day celebration



Fingers crossed for a bountiful apple crop, and a big Apple Day celebration this year! Come to the Apprentice House Orchard to sample freshly pressed apple juice and take part in apple themed activities; and why not take a bag of apples home, for a small donation.

*Please note that this event will only go ahead, if there are enough apples.

The apples from the gardens are harvested and sold at the donation table near the garden entrance.

Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA
Tel: 01625 527468
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank

October

4 - 5 October

Day Out With Thomas at East Lancashire Railway



The steam team's number one blue engine - Thomas himself - is waiting for you on the East Lancashire Railway, for one great big adventure! You'll meet Sir Topham Hatt at the station, say hello to Thomas on the platform and then climb aboard a carriage. Thomas will pull your train through the amazing countryside on a fun-filled

journey to the Ramsbottom station. After a quick break, one of the dazzling diesel trains will pull you and Thomas back to Bury Bolton Street, where the doors to Bury Transport Museum are open for you.

Here you'll take part in Thomas-themed activities, listen to the stories and enjoy hilarious performances by Rusty and Dusty - Sodor's cheeky station sweepers. They'll be singing, dancing and entertaining throughout the day. You can also have fun with face painting, balloon modelling and tabletop activities! There are also four funfair rides suitable for toddlers.

The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY.
www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

5 October

Apple Day

A scrumptious Sunday in the Gardens to celebrate the wonderful apple.

Learn about the different varieties of apple grown in the Kitchen Garden, and taste them.

After visiting the gardens enjoy apple-based treats on sale in the shops and restaurants. Apple Day runs in conjunction with the Shop and Eat Local weekend, which celebrates delicious Tatton produce with tastings in the Housekeepers Store, food demonstrations at the Farm and a special menu at the Stables Restaurant.

Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

11 - 31 October

Fright Fiesta

Celebrate Halloween with a burst of colour, music, and family fun at Gulliver's Fright Fiesta! Enjoy a festival-style atmosphere filled with friendly frights, fabulous costumes, and lively entertainment. Show off your best fancy dress or explore the park's spooktacular rides for thrills the whole family will love. Highlights include daily shows like Gilly's Spooky Dance Party, the Trick or Treat Train, and the interactive Ghost House LIVE. With plenty of surprises around every corner, Fright Fiesta is all about joy, laughter, and magical Halloween memories. Book early to secure your spot and save on this unforgettable family day out!

Tickets: from £19
Gulliver's World, Shackleton Cl, Old Hall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 9YZ

16 - 19 October

Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair

Manchester's iconic Victoria Baths will once again become a hub of creativity as the Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair (GNCCF) returns. This award-winning event, recognised as the North's most prestigious craft fair, will showcase a meticulously curated collection of work from over 200 of the UK's most talented artists and makers. With a rigorous selection process, the GNCCF guarantees a showcase of truly unique and original pieces. The event offers a rare opportunity to purchase original, handcrafted work directly from the makers themselves, with everything from luxury jewellery to bespoke furniture. This year's event promises to be a vibrant celebration of artisan craftsmanship, with over 60 first-time exhibitors joining established names. Victoria Baths, Hathersage Road, Mcr. M13 0FE.

24 October - 1 November

Halloween at Quarry Bank

Step into the shadows for a spine-tingling adventure after dark. Wander misty paths where Demon Eyes glow, Giant Skeletons tower, and whispers echo through eerie catacombs. Be dazzled by

glowing fire spheres, a mesmerising laser garden, and a thrilling fire show before venturing into the haunted mill itself. Refuel with fiendish feasts, spooky sips, and marshmallows toasted over open flames. With limited capacity and timed entry, this unforgettable night of chills, thrills, and glowing surprises is the perfect Halloween experience for all ages - book now before it vanishes into the dark! Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA
Tel: 01625 527468
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank

25, 26 October 10:00 - 16:00

Autumn Gift Fair

Find something extra special at this food and gift fair. A unique shopping experience inside. The Mansion's Tenants Hall - a wing of the stately mansion house that's not usually open to the public. You'll find lots of local suppliers selling items including jewellery, candles, crafts and gin. Enjoy some retail therapy plus get some great ideas for presents not usually found in high street shops. Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

25 - 31 October 10:30 - 17:00

1, 2 November 10:30 - 17:00

October half term at Quarry Bank

This half term is jam-packed with Halloween fun. No matter what the weather may bring, there is something for little ones to enjoy. Spooky tours of the Apprentice House, Halloween trail around the Upper Garden, spooky trail around the Mill, enjoy Halloween themed crafts in the Learning Space. (Offered Monday to Friday only), relax with a pumpkin spiced latte, whilst the children enjoy a sweet treat, browse the autumn and Halloween themed range of gifts and homeware in the Mill Yard Shop.

Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA
Tel: 01625 527468
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank

25 - 31 Oct. / 1 and 2 Nov. 10:30 - 17:00

Half term at Dunham Massey

Discover the changing colours of the season at Dunham Massey. Follow self guided walks through the parkland or join the family trail celebrating art in the natural world. Make sure to visit the house to see From Here to There: a tour for children as Speechly is dressed for the season. Why not dress up too?

Dunham Massey, Woodhouse Lane, Altrincham, WA14 4SJ. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

26, 27 October

Carnival of Monsters

Run for the hills! A Carnival of Monsters tumbles onto St Ann's Square - a family-friendly freak-show with roaming circus performers, sideshow stalls, hula hooping workshops, a hall of mirrors and the Halloween in the City market. St Ann's Square, Manchester City Centre.

29 October

The Wizarding Adventure



Continued on page 18 ...

Guide to events

Master the Art of Magic. Grab your wizard robes and get ready for an epic adventure at the Wizard Academy! Join the delightfully wacky professors as they reveal the secrets of real magic. Get ready for a whirlwind of spells, creatures and magical mayhem, because at Wizard Academy the impossible is just the beginning! Food and drink will be available to purchase from our café on Platform 3/4 at Bury Bolton Street Station and from the Rawtenstall Buffet. The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

30, 31 October, 1 November

Halloween Celebration of the Year of the Bat!



Are you ready for a fang-tastically frightening time on board of a Halloween Ghost Trains? Count Brian the Vampire, his trusted henchman Bogeye and the whole monster squad are just dying to meet you at the East Lancashire Railway to celebrate the Year of the BAT this October! Legendary Monster Hunter Dr Hurtz Von Driver will be waiting to greet you as you arrive, and will share tales of his terrifying adventures before deciding if you have the right stuff to join the Monster Squad. You will then prove your bravery by passing through the Haunted Halloween Walkthrough to reach the Platform. (note, expect some jumpscare!). On the platform BE WARNED, unexpected singing and dancing could break out at any moment, led by Vampire Veronica and her groovy ghoules. Here you will also find a Halloween BBQ offering a range of devilishly delicious treats so that you can make sure you're fuelled up for the frights. As soon as your spooky steam train pulls into the Platform you can hop on board and head into the dimming light as you join the terrifying tale of the "Blood Bat of Irwell Vale". Don't be too frightened, the Monster Squad will be there to protect you, with returning favourites like Zombie Bob who will make sure you have a FANGSTASTIC time! The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY. www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

31 October 16:00 - 19:00

Spot the Pumpkin



The Knutsford Pumpkin Path is a much-loved family Halloween trail through Knutsford Town Centre, perfect for little ones and grown-ups alike. Families can follow the trail to spot pumpkins hidden in shop windows, each with a carved letter to collect on entry forms for a chance to win prizes! Taking place on Halloween evening, the event brings the town to life with road closures, performances, spooky characters, games at the Market Hall, and themed window displays. Dress

up in your best Halloween costumes - there may even be prizes - and enjoy special offers from local businesses along the way! Knutsford, Cheshire.

November

4 Nov. 19.00 - 21.00 (check-in from 18.30)

Astro Night: Calling all Brownies, Cubs, Guides, and Scouts...

Discover constellations and comets, learn about the incredible power of radio astronomy and earn your next badge at Astro Night this winter! Follow an exciting itinerary of astronomical activities and talks, revealing the secrets of space and Jodrell Bank's crucial role in mapping the Universe! Evenings include an immersive Space Dome Show, covering topics such as the constellations and navigation using the night sky, an inspiring talk from Jodrell's talented team of Explainers, and a chance to get hands-on with planisphere crafting! Then, step outside (weather permitting) for a practical stargazing sessions using binoculars and telescopes. From shooting stars to sparkling constellations - what will you discover?

A great opportunity for curious young explorers, this is an exclusive evening for members of recognised uniformed groups and their leaders Book as a group for an adventure that's out of this world - reduced rates available for leaders. Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre, The University of Manchester, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9DL Tel: 01477 571 766 www.jodrellbank.net

20, 27 November 16:00 - 18:00

3, 9 December 16:00 - 18:00

Christmas at Dunham Massey - Quiet sessions

Quiet access sessions with reduced stimuli are available this Christmas for visitors of Dunham Massey. The session will begin at twilight before the illuminated trail opens to the public, making the transition into the dark much easier. Dunham Massey, Woodhouse Lane, Altrincham, WA14 4SJ. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

22 November - 31 December

The Christmas Mansion

Step into the magic of Christmas at Tatton Park's grand Mansion, where the halls are decked, the fireplaces glow, and festive wonder awaits around every corner. This year's Christmas Mansion promises a brand-new seasonal spectacle, with beautifully decorated staterooms, immersive displays, and enchanting surprises to delight visitors of all ages. While the theme is kept under wraps for now, you can expect the usual breathtaking attention to detail and festive sparkle that makes this a must-visit tradition. Expect a magical journey through the Mansion's lavish state rooms and servants quarters, decorated for Christmas. Seasonal music, twinkling lights, beautiful decorations and entertaining costumed characters. This is a chance to soak up the atmosphere of one of Cheshire's most iconic historic homes. Price: Adult: £15, Child: £11 (Free for children under 2) Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

22 November 18:00 - 20:00

Astro Night: Kids

Join the Jodrell Bank team and Macclesfield Astronomical Society for a stellar evening of family fun, perfect for budding young stargazers. Start your adventure with a journey through the night sky in the immersive Space Dome Show, then head outdoors (weather permitting) to get hands-on with binoculars and telescopes. From

shooting stars to sparkling constellations - what will you discover? You'll also pick up top tips for stargazing from Jodrell's expert team, create tasty marshmallow constellations, and learn how to craft your very own planisphere! There will also be the opportunity to dress up and take part in our astronaut challenge...

Don't forget to stop by the First Light Café where you can enjoy a delicious selection of drinks and treats - from hot-dogs to hot chocolate - truly the icing on the cake!

Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre, The University of Manchester, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9DL Tel: 01477 571 766 www.jodrellbank.net

22, 23, 29, 30 November

Santa Specials on the East Lancashire Railway

All aboard the East Lancashire Railway's famously festive Santa Specials for a magical Christmas adventure. Families begin their journey at Bury Bolton Street Station, stepping through a sparkling winter wonderland filled with festive scenes, a talking Christmas Tree, Mrs Claus, cheeky elves and even a choir of carol-singing polar bears. Then it's time to climb aboard a beautifully decorated steam train for an 80-minute return trip to Rawtenstall. On board, the fun continues with festive music, singalongs with a brass band and appearances from favourite Christmas characters. Santa himself will visit every family, spending time with each child and handing out a special age-appropriate gift, while grown-ups can enjoy a mince pie and festive tipple. Children receive drinks, chocolate and an activity pack, with gluten-free and dairy-free options available. A joyful festive experience full of memories for the whole family.

The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY. www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

22 November - 24 December

Father Christmas at the Farm

Step into the festive farmyard at Tatton Park's Farm and meet Father Christmas in his charming grotto! This heart-warming experience is perfect for families looking to make unforgettable Christmas memories. What's Included: A personal visit with Father Christmas in his grotto and a special gift for every child. Festive photos on Santa's sleigh and a craft activity in the Mill; make your own magical reindeer food to sprinkle around on Christmas Eve! Live music from choirs and brass bands, plus roaming entertainers. Seasonal treats to warm you up in the pop-up Christmas Café, located in the Farm's Clydesdale Barn. If you book a later time slot, you can still arrive earlier to enjoy all the festive activities before your visit with Santa in his grotto.

Price: Adult - £11.50 (includes Farm entry) Child - £13.00 (includes Farm entry + gift from Father Christmas) Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

27 - 30 Nov and 1 - 24 Dec 11.00 - 16:00

Christmas Gift Fair

Find something extra special at this seasonal food and gift fair. Showcasing some of our favourite local artisans this unique shopping experience is held inside The Mansion's Tenants Hall - a wing of the stately mansion house that is not usually open to the public. The Gift Fair makes the perfect start to the festive season. You'll find lots of local suppliers selling items including jewellery, candles, crafts and gin. Enjoy some retail therapy with a festive atmosphere plus get some great ideas for presents not usually found in high street shops. Enjoy free entry to the show. Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

27 - 30 November 10:00 - 16:00

Animal Crackers III: Christmas at Lyme

Animal Crackers returns for another fun-filled Christmas at Lyme. The house once again becomes home to a menagerie of magnificent and unusual beasts with some familiar faces as well as new guests. The third year of Animal Crackers sees Fox returning with his host of wild and wonderful friends, alongside a mystery guest. Join in the theatrical fun as Animal Crackers takes you on a self-guided journey of mischievous merrymaking through the house, designed by artist Sophie Tyrell. Have a dance party with King Stag, perform a puppet show, and do karaoke with the badgers. With larger-than-life installations and a traditional Christmas theme, it's an immersive and festive experience for all the family. Lyme Park, Disley, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 2NR T: 01663 762023 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lyme

29, 30 November

12-5pm on Saturday and 11am - 4pm on Sunday **Knutsford Christmas Market** This two-day festive street market is held at the end of November or beginning of December each year. The market features over 120 traders per day selling the finest foods, drinks, crafts and gifts in the area - the perfect place to start your Christmas shopping! This year the market will be a two day event on Princess Street, Silk Mill Street and the middle section of King Street, bringing the whole town alive with Christmas spirit. With live entertainment, hot food, mulled wine and more - where better to get in the festive spirit? Knutsford, Cheshire. www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/christmas-market



Santa Specials on the East Lancashire Railway



1/2 price Taster sessions



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- Friendly classes for kids & adults!
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Reimagining early years with Bridgewater Nursery

Meet Marria Durrani, founder of a new nursery with a fresh approach to early years education



At Bridgewater Nursery in Altrincham, 38-year-old mother, educator, and passionate advocate for children's wellbeing, Marria Durrani brings fresh energy and purpose to her role as Nursery Manager. We sat down with her to learn more about her journey, her approach, and how Bridgewater is building a nurturing space where children can truly thrive.

Q Marria, can you tell us a little about your background and what led you to early years education?

A I actually have a degree in Politics and International Relations, which surprises some people! But after having my own children, I felt a deep pull toward early years education. I wanted to be part of something that truly shapes the foundation of a child's life. I went on to complete a Level 3 qualification in Early Years Education, and I've never looked back.

Q What is your vision for Bridgewater Nursery?

A My vision is simple but powerful: I want to create an environment where children thrive holistically - emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Everything we do at Bridgewater is centred around that idea. It's about giving children the tools to flourish in all areas of life.

Q You've placed a strong emphasis on nutrition at Bridgewater. Why is that so important to you?

A Nutrition is the key to everything. When children eat well, they grow well, not just physically, but emotionally and mentally too. I think it's something that's often overlooked in the early years sector, and I wanted to change that.

Q How have you put that belief into practice at the nursery?

A We've developed a really special food programme. We work with a dedicated nutritionist and source 100% organic produce from local farmers. Our seasonal menus are carefully planned to be nutritious, balanced, and appealing to young children. It's about giving them the best start in life - and that starts with what's on their plate. Plus, building connections with local growers adds a lovely sense of community.

Q What other areas of development are you passionate about at Bridgewater?

A Holistic development goes beyond food. We offer a range of enrichment activities that help children discover their interests and develop confidence. From cooking classes that teach practical life skills, to music sessions that encourage self-expression, we try to offer something meaningful for every child.

Q Can you share a few of the activities the children enjoy?

A Absolutely! We run Stretch 'n' Grow classes to promote fitness and motor skills, Kidslingo Spanish to introduce language through fun and song, and yoga sessions that build mindfulness and flexibility. These are not just fun - they support emotional regulation,

coordination, and cognitive development in ways that are appropriate and engaging for young children.

Q How would you describe your overall approach to early years education?

A It's a modern approach rooted in traditional values - care, community, and curiosity. I believe in preparing children not just for school, but for life. It's about nurturing the whole child in a safe, inspiring, and loving environment.

Q What motivates you most in your role as Nursery Manager?

A I want to set a new standard for what early years education can look like when wellness and learning go hand in hand. I'm not just here to run a nursery, I'm here to create lasting change. If I can help just one child feel confident, healthy, and inspired each day, then I know I'm doing something right.

Q What's next for Bridgewater Nursery?

A We're continuing to grow and evolve, but the core mission stays the same. We'll keep refining our programmes, listening to our families, and putting children at the centre of everything. I truly believe we're changing the nursery world - one nutritious meal, one joyful activity, and one inspired child at a time.

From cozy to creepy *discovering your child's Halloween style*



by Lucy Lamb

Bold and Boisterous

Does your child run toward the skeleton with flashing eyes? Are they the first to sign up for the haunted maze? Boisterous kids often love fictional fear - it's exciting, empowering, and just the right kind of adrenaline.

"Fictional fear is a tool. It lets kids test boundaries and build resilience, all while knowing they're safe," explains Dr. Margee Kerr.

Things to try:

- Visit a kid-friendly haunted house or 'spooky walk' (avoid gore-heavy scenes).
- Encourage bold costume choices like zombies, mummies, or werewolves, then help them invent a backstory.
- Hold a sleepover with a scary-story contest and using flash-lights.
- Set up a 'mad science lab' with slime, goo, and bubbling potions.
- Read suspenseful but age-appropriate books like *Goosebumps* or *Coraline*.

"Children enjoy the pretend element of fear," says Dr. Markham. "It helps them build coping skills - without the stakes of real fear."

Somewhere In Between? That's Fine Too.

Most kids fall somewhere between the extremes. They might like spooky stories, but only if they're not alone. Or they might go trick-or-treating in a scary costume, but skip the haunted house.

The key? Follow their cues. Let them explore both the silly and the spooky, and check in often to see how they're feeling. Beneath the costumes, candy, and chaos, Halloween is quietly teaching kids some pretty big life skills.

First, there's bravery and boundaries. Choosing how scary is too scary helps kids build confidence. When they get to say, "I'll go through the haunted house, but only with Mom," they're learning to push their limits in a way that still feels safe.

Then there's imagination. From inventing costumes to telling spooky stories, Halloween gives children full creative license. They get to step into other identities, explore new emotions, and play in a world that feels different from everyday life.

Emotional regulation is another hidden lesson. Feeling scared, then safe again is powerful. Whether it's jumping at a skeleton decoration or getting startled by a sibling in a mask, that rush-recover-repeat cycle helps kids practice managing their reactions.

And finally, there's social bonding. Shared laughter after a mild scare, trading candy on the living room floor, or walking the trick-or-treat circuit with friends - it all helps build connection.

No matter what kind of Halloween kid you've got, the season offers something meaningful beneath all the sugar and slime.

My older daughter has never liked scary stories. Or sad ones, for that matter. Bambi was too much for her... way too much. We had to stop the movie not long after it started, right after the part where the mother dies. She wouldn't touch a deer-themed anything for years. Even "mild peril" was an emotional landmine.

Her younger sister, on the other hand, demanded a Frankenstein costume for her Halloween party at age five. Reassuringly, the idea came from someone else, but she latched onto it with the devotion of a tiny horror fan. Her big brother had been reading an abridged version of *Frankenstein* at the time (horror elements still there, language modified for teenagers of the 21st century), and she decided it was her turn to join the monster ranks.

My son, aka big brother, is the Halloween middle ground. He can be startled in a haunted house but bounce back quickly. He likes gory costumes but also enjoys a soft, squishy Shrek outfit because he thinks the ears are funny. He likes a bit of adventure, sure, but also loves the cosy rituals of carving pumpkins and drinking hot chocolate afterward.

During the spooky season, that is upon us now, he isn't the challenge. His sisters are. If Halloween has taught me anything as a parent, it's this: kids don't all approach fear the same way. Some crave it. Some reject it outright. Some enjoy it, but only on their own terms.

There's no one-size-fits-all costume, activity, or Halloween playlist. The trick is figuring out what is your child's fear style and what kind of "scary" (if any) your child actually enjoys.

Experts agree that fictional fear, like monsters, eerie costumes, or suspenseful stories, can help kids build emotional resilience. But only if the experience feels safe and voluntary.

"Children want to confront fear in a controlled way, it's part of learning how to manage big emotions," says sociologist Dr. Margee Kerr. "But not all kids enjoy that process equally - and that's okay."

In our family, Halloween evolves into three very different celebrations. Here's my guide to the parents of little monsters of all types.

Sensitive & Sweet

Not every child enjoys being spooked. Loud noises, eerie costumes, or even the dark can feel overwhelming, especially for younger kids or those who are naturally sensitive. But Halloween can still be magical without the monsters.

Things to try:

- Dress up as friendly characters - unicorns, bumblebees, or favourite storybook heroes.
- Create a cosy movie night with *Room on the Broom* or *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*.
- Host a daytime trick-or-treat walk in a quieter neighbourhood.
- Read not-so-scary books that celebrate the season (without the screams).
- Let them decorate cookies or paint pumpkins instead of carving.

"When kids lead the activity, they feel safer. Let them choose when to engage or take a break," says parenting psychologist Dr. Laura Markham.

Time out “Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time” - Anon

by Cat Allan Director of Noodle Performing Arts, Cheshire



When I first started Noodle Cheshire almost 8 years ago, it was all about getting kids onstage. The benefits of building their confidence, language and social skills. All of that is still true today and the results are clearly there to see. It's still about the children but now we're also starting to bring the grown-ups into the mix.

I can't tell you how many times over the years a parent has said to me "Sorry I'm just all over the place at the moment" and I have replied, "I know how you feel!" As parents (or just adults sometimes) we seem to spend all of our time running in circles and meeting ourselves coming back. It's the endless cycle of ensuring every part of our child's needs are met, whether physical, social, emotional or educational. It's a non-stop whirlwind of ferrying kids to clubs, play-dates, and keeping up with school demands. Especially the ones that pop up last minute - the kind where showing your face will cost you time (and probably earnings), but not showing up will cost you your child's goodwill and your reputation as a decent parent. And, usually, these selfless acts of raising the next generation go wildly unappreciated, if indeed noticed at all. It's a thankless task.

My sons are now grown and though they are both technically adults at 20 and 18, they certainly aren't quite fully fledged yet but they are getting there. I have gone back in time by 10 years though to play step-parent to two lovely girls aged eight and ten. The experience the second time around is fascinating. There's an element of handing back and not having the buck always stop with me. An interesting concept for me.

I have always been a "get on with it" type of gal. I have always had a minimum of 2 jobs at any one time, have been a single parent for much of my adult life and always seemed to be very busy without achieving much. A busy fool as my partner would

say. And I never did anything for myself - too busy, too skint, too responsible...

Then in 2023 I had my first brush with breast cancer. It was life changing. I was treated quickly by a fantastic team at Wythenshawe Hospital and following surgery I needed no further treatment. It wasn't long before things were full-on again.

COVID-19 was fading away but the stress of it still lingered, we had finally just put on the show that had taken 3 years to stage due to the pandemic and the years spent locked down meant that we suddenly were in huge demand as the masses and their children clamoured for entertainment and social interaction. Add to this a part time admin job and the amount of work felt stifling. By April 2023 I literally wanted it all to stop. Not forever, just for a bit. And it did.

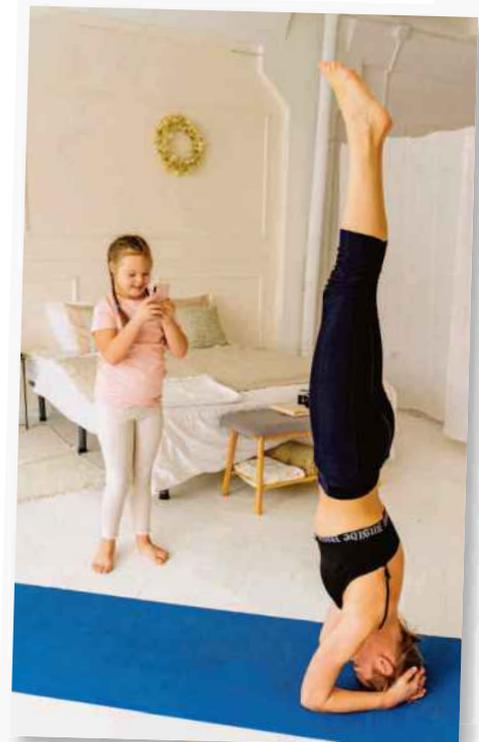
The cancer came back in May, I had surgery in July and was back to work in September. This time though I didn't go back fully. I learned that to get treatment I had to relinquish something, and for the first time I finally gave up control of the business to my team, stopped teaching and became the office boss. Turns out, things held together just fine without me doing it all.

Fast forward and I am preparing to have surgery again following my second recurrence, (it's become an annual thing) and by now I have finally learnt to say the following things: "I can't do that sorry", "I'm not available", "I don't want to" and most importantly, "No". I've spent time with excellent people at St Luke's Hospice learning that wellbeing and mindfulness are much more than just buzzwords. I've learned that there is no time like now to do the things you enjoy.

Our time is so short and so precious and as we all know, the rule is to put your own gas mask on first - not someone else's. As parents, we consistently give up our time, our money and in some cases our

dreams for our kids. And that's fine, but there needs to be a balance, we should be able to stop the world for an hour or two, sometimes just 10 mins is enough to reset ourselves. So at Noodle we decided we wanted to give back to those parents (and adults in general!) who are chasing their tails around life. We have moved into our own new studio which allows us the space and time to run yoga, wellbeing and meditation, and adult dance fitness sessions alongside children's performing arts classes.

It's been a long time coming but we can't wait to start. Noodle kids will always take centre stage, but hopefully now, those behind the scenes will get a look in too!





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