



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

For families with children from 0 to 11

• Spring 2026

• Issue 91

• FREE



Perfect Mother's Day!

A love of tennis

Drunk elephant rules



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THE SUNDAY TIMES

SCHOOLS GUIDE
2026

INDEPENDENT SECONDARY
SCHOOL OF THE YEAR
NORTH WEST

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Issue 91 Spring 2026

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M&D Magazine

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A word from the editor

Spring is here. No overcoats needed, the first flowers are out, and in May we celebrate M&D's birthday.

Some things never change. Our readers are still asking the same questions they asked 23 years ago, when the first edition of the magazine was published: what school to choose, how to keep the kids busy over Easter break, where to go for summer holiday, and, of course, Mother's Day – any ideas? And we're still writing about it all, with just as much joy.

There are new things too. Twenty years ago Drunk Elephant or TikTok didn't exist; ten years ago we didn't worry about them. Now... well, check out the feature in this issue – tell us what you think.

We're a bit bookish here – we love the feel of paper, the smell of ink, the way we slowly turn the pages rather than quickly scrolling through them. But we're modern creatures too, happy to keep you updated online. So while you're waiting for the next edition, don't forget to visit our website and social media for current news and views.

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.

Serving up a love of tennis *by Alena Chalmovska*



Invest in a good racquet as your child develops

While the £4.99 LTA starter set is fine for getting your little one up and running, as they develop, they will really feel the benefit of a good racquet.

Tennis was the first sport both of my children showed any sort of interest in, and I'd estimate that our daughter was probably around two years old when she discovered the joy of hitting a ball with a stringed bat. Of course, it was only a sponge ball and a super lightweight bat, but I can still remember the pure joy on her face every time I agreed to dig out the equipment.

As they've grown older, they've both taken on various other interests, but whatever their current thing is, they've both maintained a love of getting down to the local court and whacking a few balls around, especially with their friends.

You don't have to be ultra-competitive to enjoy tennis either. Both our children are in tennis clubs and – while some do run regular tournaments – it's mainly about enjoying the game, keeping physically fit and social engagement, making it perfect for children of all ages.

Here are a few things we've learned over the years that have helped our children get the most out of enjoying tennis.

• Get started with an LTA Club for juniors

One of the first steps toward making tennis a regular part of your child's life is joining an LTA-registered club. LTA stands for The Lawn Tennis Association, and their clubs provide access to courts, coaching, competitions and a welcoming community of players. Membership gives you access to coaching programmes, junior development pathways, organised matches, and club social events. It also means the venue meets national standards for facilities and safety.

Using the LTA's "Find Tennis Near You" tool makes finding a suitable club and course for the age of your

child really quick and easy; and the courses are very affordable, with 11 junior lessons costing around £77. The LTA also sells beginner tennis sets, including a racquet, balls and sweatbands, for just £4.99.

Use public courts for free access

Most local authorities have free to use tennis courts dotted around their administrative regions, and there are several parks in the Greater Manchester area with public tennis courts that are either free to use at designated times or inexpensive to book. These options are perfect for families who want to have casual sessions together without the commitment of club membership.

The LTA also has a search tool to find Barclays Free Park Tennis sessions, which allow you to turn up to a session and enjoy an hour of tennis at various local parks. You don't even need equipment for those sessions as it can be provided to use free of charge.

• Enter the odd tournament

Many tennis clubs run inter-club tournaments or send players – of all abilities – to take part in organised tournaments. Of course, there's no obligation to do this, but it can really help to build a competitive spirit as well as important lessons about sportsmanship.

Our daughter had only been playing at her club for around six weeks when she entered her first tournament, and it was a really fun day out for us all. Playing against peers within her ability range helped with her self-confidence, and playing in a doubles tournament helped her develop communication and co-operation skills too. She even came as runner-up in her first tournament and when her brother saw her being presented with the trophy, he decided he was going to join a club as well.

Christmas and birthdays are the ideal opportunity to buy something that will really move their game forward.

One of the biggest mistakes we made with our son was keeping him using his LTA racquet as he grew stronger. So, at his last birthday, we invested in one of the best intermediate racquets on the market, the Head Radical Team L. It wasn't cheap – around £130 at online retailers – but it's fair to say that it's his most prized possession and has really propelled his game forward.

It's incredibly light compared to cheaper racquets of the same size, and because of the use of graphene inside the racquet, it feels solid when he hits the ball. He's able to generate a lot more power and feels less twisting in his hand when he hits a shot off-centre and on the edge of the racquet. The sound created by the racquet is noticeably different from inferior racquets and sounds "satisfying" according to him. He loves the bold orange colour and takes much better care of it than he did of his cheap one too.

Of course, while the Radical Team L is perfect for our son, it's not going to be best for everyone. Head's comparison tool may be a good starting point when you're ready for this next step and want to find what's right for your little superstar.

• One last thing

The New York Times recently ran an article about a study on the best sports for longevity, and guess which sport came out on top? That's right, tennis. The article listed a range of reasons this might be, including the fact that tennis can be played well into your latter years. So don't be afraid to get yourself signed up to a club as well.

The imperfectly perfect Mother's Day by Cat Allan



The idea of a day in which mums do nothing and get treated, that we get pampered by our off-spring and spend a genuinely nice time together is great in theory, but in practice?? Hmmm...

Two years ago on Mother's Day, I got up earlyish, took my youngest son with me to visit my mum, where we had lunch, cooked very ably by my dad. Following this, I travelled over to Knutsford to my best friend's son's birthday party. The party mum was noticeably a little stressed – no Mother's Day pampering for her then. As I arrived back in Northwich to put my feet up, I got a call from my eldest son, a uni student, asking when I was driving over to Chester, as he was working in the restaurant til 8pm, but as it was Mother's Day he'd like to see me. So, my younger son and I set off to meet him.

I entered the multi-storey car park, got into the parking bay, reversed right up to the point when there was a loud bang and the rear windscreen exploded. With the absence of the windscreen, I could clearly see the sign that read 'Do Not Reverse Park – Overhanging Ledge' In my defence, a lot of other cars had reversed in too, but they obviously weren't as distracted and fraught by Mother's Day as this particular mum and had seen the offending ledge.

As I sat there, partly in shock and partly in anger at my own stupidity, I questioned, as one would in such circumstances, if this was possibly the worst Mothering Sunday ever to have happened to anyone. To add insult to injury, the son we were visiting didn't finish for another 45 minutes and we were left sitting in a very draughty car waiting for him.

He did eventually show up and after a glance and a rather surprised reaction to the state of the car, the decision was made not to go for a planned celebratory afternoon tea, but to drive him straight back to his halls. On the way, as the rain started to drip into the gaping hole in the back of the car and the rear window brake light swung back and forth, like a disco light, partially covered with a rugby sock I'd found in the boot, I was telling my sons of the day's disappointments in no uncertain terms.

All the way to the halls, they were listening, a little sheepishly, to my complains, and when we arrived, they persuaded me to come upstairs 'just for a second'. They then both disappeared inside his room only to emerge a few minutes later with flowers, chocolates and a card.

I felt extremely guilty about the way I'd spoken to them. After all – the older one had just wanted to see his mum on Mother's Day and the younger

was a very keen participant of the heart-worming conspiracy. It was just unfortunate that the day was so long and busy, and felt like nothing but stress.

It made me think, is all this really necessary? The elaborate preparations, present hunting, expensive lunches, brunches, dinners and afternoon teas... After all, shouldn't we really appreciate our mothers (and others) all the time? Well, of course it's nice to have a day dedicated to you, but I think my fondest memory of Mother's Day, didn't involve any of the above.

It was some time ago - my boys were much younger and I was woken up to breakfast in bed. My sons had made it themselves; a Full English, cereal, orange juice and tea. The egg was hard, the toast chewy, the bacon slightly burnt, the cereal had been prepared first and became a soggy mush by the time of serving, the O.J. was actually sublime and I think by the colour of the milky water that the teabag had jumped back out of the cup for fear of scalding. The whole thing was imperfectly perfect. Unexpected, inexpensive, made with love.

I probably spent the rest of the day doing all the chores that I usually do on Sundays, but that single act became more important and memorable for me than all the flowers or treats in the world would have been.

I suppose whatever your tastes – expensive or not – it's still the little things that make a Mother's Day. Enjoy it how you can, but aim for perfection and it starts to feel like Christmas three months on, just lighter. Especially if we have to manage another Mother's Day like last year, when the clocks went forward – I mean, what was that about?!

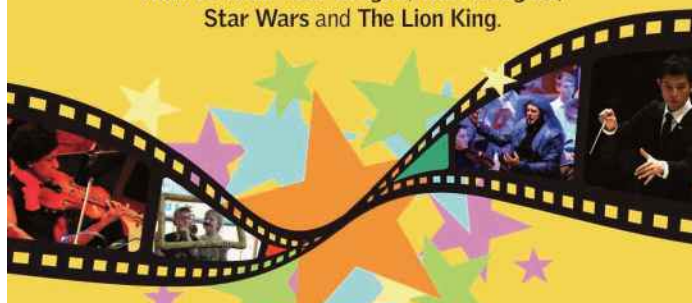


HALLÉ FAMILY CONCERT: FILM FAVOURITES

SUN 17 MAY, 11.30AM,
THE BRIDGEWATER HALL, MANCHESTER

Lights, camera, **ACTION!**
Fantastic family film music for everyone to
enjoy with the Hallé orchestra.

The concert includes music from
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,
Beauty and the Beast, The Incredibles,
How to Train Your Dragon, The Avengers,
Star Wars and The Lion King.



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halle.co.uk/concerts



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390 Parrswood Road, Didsbury M20 5NA

OPEN DAY



MONDAY 27th APRIL 2026
Pop along anytime from 10am
until 4pm - no appointment is
necessary.



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See how your donations help to
support hundreds of families from
across Greater Manchester.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

For more information:

[www.franchishouse.org.uk/
open-day-spring-2026](http://www.franchishouse.org.uk/open-day-spring-2026)



out and about

SciTECH:26



A HOLIDAY CLUB LIKE NO OTHER!

Bringing hands on Science & Technology
to Inquisitive Minds since 1991

for Children aged 5 to 13

Easter Holidays

Wed 8th - Fri 10th Apr 2026

Baguley Hall School. M23 1LB



Summer SciTech

Bookings open in March

Mon 27th - Fri 31st July 2026
& Mon 3rd - Fri 7th August 2026
Baguley Hall School. M23 1LB



www.scitech.co.uk

Holiday clubs open for booking

SciTech has announced that bookings are now open for its
upcoming Easter and Summer Holiday Clubs at Baguley Hall
School in Wythenshawe.

• 8-10 April – Easter SciTech

Activities include **Food Science**, where participants explore molecular gas-
troonomy, blind tasting, and liquid nitrogen ice cream - you don't just learn
about it, you get to eat it too!; **Animation**, allowing children to bring draw-
ings, computer images, and even toys to life; and **Time**, where they can build
devices to measure, slow down, and speed up time.

• 27-31 July, 3-7 August – Summer SciTech

Two weeks of discovery with activities in **Forensics, Structures, Chemistry,**
Energy, and Ophthalmics.

Both clubs run 10:00-16:00, with optional
extended care from 08:30-10:00 and 16:30-18:00.

Spaces are limited. For full details and booking
visit www.scitech.co.uk/events/scitechp1.



EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

ADVENTURE DAYS

Travel to Wonderland
18 Feb, 27 May, 12 Aug 2026

Wizards Adventure
19 Feb, 9 Apr, 28 May, 6 Aug, 29, 30 Oct 2026

Dino Adventure
20 Feb, 29 May, 7 Aug 2026

Villain Academy
8 Apr, 13 Aug 2026

Goldilocks Adventure
21 Aug 2026

Great Kids Days Out

Peter Rabbit

3-4 APRIL 2026

PETER RABBIT™ IS COMING TO BURY TRANSPORT MUSEUM

COME AND MEET HIM AT INTERVALS THROUGHOUT THE DAY!

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Manchester High launches its first pre-school



A well-known Manchester Girls' School is opening a pre-school, for the first time in its 152-year history. Manchester High School for Girls (MHS), in Fallowfield, is extending its offering to welcome girls as young as three, from September 2026.

The independent all girls' school, which boasts alumnae including all three of suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst's daughters, is opening spaces for a select number of pupils.

Head Mistress, Mrs Helen Jeys, said: "We are a proud school of firsts, and this is the first time in our

history that we are extending our education to three and four-year-old girls. With strong foundations in place, girls are equipped to grow with resilience, ambition and integrity throughout their educational journey and beyond.

"As an organisation that believes so passionately in girls' education, it is an understandable and deliberate evolution for us to offer a pre-school at Manchester High."

MHS's pre-school is set to provide a nurturing, yet academic environment for some of Manchester's

youngest girls, with teaching on early phonics and numeracy skills and a focus on emotional and social development.

There will be a maximum of 16 spaces available in the class, and the girls joining will be called the 'Little Ivies'.

Mrs Ruth Anderson is Head of EYFS at MHS and will be leading the pre-school. She said:

"The Early Years are not a prelude to a successful education; these years are the vital foundation. The symbolism of the ivy, long associated with Manchester High School for Girls, offers a powerful metaphor for this work. Ivy grows slowly but purposefully, anchored by strong roots that allow it to flourish over time. The pre-school represents those roots: the starting point of girls' education, where confidence is established, identity is affirmed, and potential begins to climb."

With limited places available from September 2026, interested families are encouraged to get in touch with the School directly to find out more: email registrar@mhs.manchester.sch.uk, call **0161 224 0447** or scan QR code to visit the website.



Guide to events

Saturdays (monthly) | 14:00 - 16:00

Lego Club | Manchester Central Library
No need to book in advance – this is a drop in club. First come first served. Suitable for ages 4 and above
Manchester Central Library
Saint Peter's Square, Manchester M2 5PD
www.manchester.gov.uk/centrallibrary

Saturdays and Sundays during term time, daily during school holidays

Take gaming to the next level

Play the very best video games from the past five decades and try out over 150 consoles in the ultimate hands-on gaming experience. From the Atari 2600 to cutting edge virtual reality, discover gaming gadgets and classic consoles that have shaped home entertainment throughout the years, plus a selection of games created in Manchester. Face off against friends and family in multiplayer showdowns, rediscover your childhood favourites and unlock new memories together.
Science and Industry Museum
Liverpool Road, Manchester M3 4FP
Tel: 033 0058 0058
www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk

Till 31 August

Spies, Lies and Deception

A free, family-friendly exhibition at Imperial War Museum.
In the undercover world of spies, lies and deception, nothing is what it seems. Everyone has something to hide. Young recruits can visit the "Mission Room" to embark on a top-secret exhibition trail, piecing together information to find out if they have what it takes to succeed in the world of spies.

The reading age for Spies, Lies and Deception is 8+, but the exhibition is also suitable for younger children to explore with their parents and carers.

IWM North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road
Manchester, M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000
www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-north

Till 31 August

Bubble Planet: An Immersive Experience in Manchester

Bubble Planet is an incredible adventure that immerses you in the magical world of bubbles. Explore a crazy planet that pushes the limits of your imagination. Go on a journey with 10 rooms, each with a different theme. Travel through fantastic landscapes designed to stimulate the senses. Enjoy an immersive experience with VR tech, simulators, and illusions. Explore this spherical universe full of soap bubbles, air bubbles, and even virtual reality
Depot Mayfield, 11 Baring Street, Manchester, M1 2PY www.bubble-planet.com/manchester

March

1 - 8 March 10:00 - 16:00

Winter Family Trail with Speechly the Pineapple Express delivery! Speechly the Pineapple is posting letters around the estate while the house is closed. Collect stamps and discover seasonal surprises along the trail, all while helping Speechly with the 'pineapple post'. Perfect for young explorers.
Dunham Massey
Altrincham, Greater Manchester, WA14 4SJ
Tel: 01619411025
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dunham-massey

4, 18 March & 1, 8, 22, 26 April 10:30 - 12:00

Baby Social

A welcoming group for new parents and carers meets in the exciting sensory setting of the new Things of the Least exhibition. NHS Infant Feeding Support specialists are joining in to provide information, guidance and support.
Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street
Manchester M2 3JL. Tel: 0161 235 8888
www.manchesterartgallery.org/event

6 March 10:00 - 12:00

Motherhood & Milk: March Meet Up!

Come along for a chat in a welcoming, supportive space for mums in Greater Manchester. This session is all about easing the transition into the new life of motherhood, with the focus on how to manage the increased demands on your time and energy so that a bit of breathing room can be reclaimed.
St. Paul's Church, Moor Lane, Salford M7 3WX
Email: motherhoodandmilk@gmail.com

6, 20 March, 24 April, 8, 22 May 14.30-16.00

Experitots

A regular event specially designed for children aged 0-4. During these playful sessions, toddlers and their adults are encouraged to explore and experiment together. The team of friendly Explainers will be on hand to support young explorers throughout the event. This year Experitots sessions will take place in the Special Exhibitions Gallery, where at the cost of £10 you can enjoy a multi-sensory adventure with Horrible Science: Cosmic Chaos.

Ages 3 and under free.
Science and Industry Museum, Liverpool Road
Manchester M3 4FP
www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk

7 March 10:00-12:00

A Taste of Altrincham Kid's Fun Faces Craft Workshop

Kids craft event For children Age 4-10
Using examples of the artist Giuseppe Archimboldo, create portraits/faces out of actual fruit and vegetables or colour printed images.
Altrincham Town Hall, 25 Market Street
Altrincham WA14 1PF
www.visitaltrincham.com/event

7 - 8 March

Junior Woodland Rangers - Off-Road Driving Experience

This exciting and engaging off-road driving experience for children is a hands-on, nature-focused trail where children become Junior Woodland Rangers helping to care for Tattton's woodlands and wildlife as they drive their Mini Land Rovers. There are 10 themed checkpoints along the trail, each designed around a small piece of equipment the children will carry in their Ranger Box. Complete the 10 'Ranger missions' to earn their Ranger Badge! All tasks are safe, short (2-4mins), suitable for ages 5-9 years, and can be done beside their Mini Land Rover. Drivers must be strictly 5-9-years-old.
Tattton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400
www.tatttonpark.org.uk

7 - 8 March 10:00 - 17:00

Living History Weekend: The War of the Roses & Early Tudor England

See the daily chores that kept the castle fed, watered and running for its inhabitants. Find out about the life under siege with a chance to see, feel and have a go at handling Tudor



photo: Gareth Buddo

weapons. Each day (12.15) an intrepid Tudor re-enactor leads a fascinating tour which opens a window on Tudor times where visitors are welcome to ask questions and get a real feel for the history of the castle.

Bolton Castle, Nr Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4ET
Tel: 01969 623981
www.boltoncastle.co.uk

11 March & 18 April 17:30 - 18:30

Fostering and supported lodgings information

Meet local foster carers, the fostering team and the supported lodgings team to find out more about fostering local children and young people.
Stopford House (main reception)
Piccadilly, Stockport, SK1 3XE
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

13, 20, 27 March, 3 April 16:00 - 18:00

Dungeon Crawlers

Enjoy an exciting adventure at Dungeon Crawlers - fantasy role-play club for ages 7 to 11 years. Sharpen those dice, dust off spell books, unleash your imagination and embark on thrilling quests in the realm of fantasy. Calling all brave heroes and cunning wizards!
Stockroom, Merseyway Shopping Centre
Stockport, SK1 1PR
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

15 March 12:00 - 14:00

Stockport Mother's Day Craft Event

Treat your Mum, Gran or motherly figure in your life this Mother's Day with a tote bag painting (kids options available too!). Unleash your creativity at the craft session in the heart of Stockport!
Alfredo's, 23-27 Little Underbank, Stockport
SK1 1LA www.alfredos.social

20 March 13:00 - 14:30

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities - EPEC

Everyone is welcome who wants to learn more about EPEC, whether you're a parent, thinking about volunteering, or work with families in Stockport.

Come along to learn about free EPEC parenting courses in Stockport, find out how parents can get involved and grow in confidence, connect with the EPEC team and volunteers, discover how EPEC supports families across Stockport One Stockport Family Hub, Abingdon Road, South Reddish, Stockport, SK5 7EU
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

22 March 19:30

Hallé Youth Ensembles Celebration

Join Hallé as they celebrate the talents of their youngest musicians - singers and players alike. Always a Hallé favourite, this celebratory performance offers each of the Hallé's Youth Ensembles a chance in the spotlight. This joyful showcase will linger in the memories of those on stage and in the audience.
Hallé Concerts Society, The Bridgewater Hall
Lower Mosley Street, Manchester M1 5HA
Tel: 0161 907 9000
www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk/whats-on

26 March - 18 April 10:00 - 16:00

Easter Adventures at Dunham Massey

This Easter explore Dunham Massey and enjoy a family friendly trail filled with fun activities for all ages. Hop around 10 trail points and let the adventure begin. The trail is £3.50 per person, includes a chocolate egg, or a vegan 'Free-From' chocolate egg
Dunham Massey, Altrincham, Greater Manchester, WA14 4SJ
Tel: 01619411025
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dunham-massey

28 March 14:00 - 15:00

Storytime and Mindfulness for Children (4+ years)

You are invited to a relaxing session featuring story reading and gentle exploration of feelings in a comfortable, supportive environment.
Manchester Central Library, St Peter's Square
Manchester M2 5PD
www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries

28 March - 12 April

A hidden kingdom where magic waits around every corner



Step into a kingdom filled with enchantment, where adventurers follow a magical map on a mesmerising journey this spring.

Meet whimsical creatures, embark on interactive quests, and experience a spring adventure unlike anything you've ever imagined, all while enjoying relaxing lakeside views, delicious treats, and fun for the whole family.
Partridge Lakes, Glaziers Ln, Culcheth Warrington
WA3 4AQ www.springlanduk.co.uk

28 March - 12 April 10:30 - 16:45

Easter adventure at Quarry Bank

A bunny-themed outdoor Easter adventure. Little ones can bounce, jump, and hop their way around ten trail points for heaps of Easter fun. Trail sheets £3.50 each, available from Visitor Reception and is required for each child who wishes to receive an egg.
Quarry Bank, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 4LA
Tel: 01625 527468
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank

28 March - 4 May

The Giant Wheel

The Giant Wheel Co. brings you the ultimate experience in panoramic views with their transportable 35m state-of-the-art "Vision" Ferris wheel. Ideal for all ages, the wheel offers a calm yet thrilling ride with unforgettable views of the gardens and surrounding landscape - perfect for family fun and memorable photos.
Experience the UK's largest transportable observation wheel and some of Cheshire's finest scenery.
Tattton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400 www.tatttonpark.org.uk

29 March - 19 April

The Easter Detectives: Who Framed the Easter Bunny

A delightful new interactive experience is set to bring mystery and excitement to families visiting RHS Garden Bridgewater this Easter. The Easter Detectives trail challenges families to uncover the

Guide to events

truth, follow the clues hidden throughout the garden, and solve the mystery of who framed the Easter Bunny. Visitors can purchase a £3 activity pack for each detective in their group and embark on a puzzling adventure designed to spark imagination and teamwork as they work to solve the mystery of the missing chocolate in time to save Easter.

RHS Garden Bridgewater, Occupation Road, Off Leigh Road, Worsley, Salford, Greater Manchester M28 2LJ
www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rhs-garden-bridgewater

29 March 11:00 – 13:00

The Baby Fayre Buxton

You are invited to The Palace Hotel for a day filled with all things baby-related. From adorable clothing and accessories to essential gear and innovative products, this event is a must-visit for parents-to-be and families with little ones. Explore a variety of vendors offering unique items for babies and toddlers. Whether you're looking for the perfect gift or just want to browse the latest trends in baby care, The Baby Fayre Buxton has something for everyone. Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to discover new products and connect with other parents Palace Hotel Buxton, Palace Road, Buxton SK17 6AG www.thebabyfayre.co.uk

April

3 April 14:00 :18:00

Alice in Wonderland Children's Easter Party

Families are invited to step into a magical world this Good Friday, as guests and their little ones tumble down the rabbit hole at an Alice in Wonderland-themed Children's Easter Party. Joining Alice, the Mad Hatter, and friends, attendees can enjoy an afternoon filled with fun, laughter, and a touch of wonder. With interactive entertainment, themed activities, and plenty of Easter surprises, the event offers a delightful way to celebrate the holiday.

Price : £15.00 per person
Last Drop Village Hotel, Bromley Cross, Bolton Greater Manchester BL7 9PZ
www.lastdropvillage.co.uk

3 April

The Quays Easter Duck Race 2026

Then Come along to this annual duck race on Good Friday! Vote for your favourite and win some amazing prizes while having fun Salford Watersports Centre
15 The Quays, Salford M50 3SQ
www.medequip4kids.org.uk
www.salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk/

3 – 5 April

Living History Weekend: Easter in the Medieval Church & the Battle of Towton

The Church in Castle Bolton is nestled within the village, with the church and the castle sharing an historic legacy that is revealed over the weekend. Learn about the Battle of Towton and how Bolton Castle played its part in this legendary battle and spend a day peppered with costumes, activities, learning and fun, all in equal measure.

Bolton Castle, Nr Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4ET Tel: 01969 623981 www.boltoncastle.co.uk

3 – 19 April

Easter holiday at Jodrell Bank

Embark on a stamp-collecting mission with the latest site trail, get hands-on with cosmic crafts and bring science to life with explosive live

demonstrations in Jodrell's Telescope Talk – there is something for everyone!
Jodrell Bank, Bomish Lane, Lower Withington Cheshire SK11 9DL www.jodrellbank.net

4 April 14:00 – 16:00

Drum Festival

This Drum Festival is all about community connection through diverse music, bringing people together across cultures. Expect a vibrant showcase of talents, highlighting different styles, traditions and influences in drumming. Stockroom, Merseyway Shopping Centre Stockport, SK1 1PR
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

8 April 10:00 – 12:00

ND and SEND information and advice session

Are you a parent or carer of a neurodivergent child or young person, or are you a parent or carer of a child with SEND looking for information or advice?

Come along and have a chat with colleagues from the multi-disciplinary team which includes representatives from the: Educational Psychology Service, Jigsaw Team, Neurodevelopmental Team, Children's Therapy Services, Hearing and Vision Service. No formal diagnosis required.
One Stockport Family Hubs, 120 Garners Lane, Adswold, SK3 8QW
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

8 April

Carnival Creations: Venetian Mask Making Workshop



Step into the magic of Venice's famous Carnival in this family-friendly mask-making workshop, inspired by the upcoming 2026 Canaletto exhibition. Discover the fascinating history behind this spectacular festival, then unleash your creativity as you design your very own carnival mask. To finish, bring your masterpiece to life with costumes and props for a fun photo opportunity! This workshop is intended for family visitors - children of all ages are welcome to attend. Each child must be supervised by an adult.
Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
Tel: 01625 374400 www.tattonpark.org.uk

9 April, 28 May

Meet the Wizards



Grab your wizard robes and get ready for an epic adventure at the Wizard Academy. Learn powerful incantations and perfect your wand-waving skills! Use your imagination and learn how to soar through the skies on a broomstick. Discover the proper way to greet mystical creatures. There's nobody that can do magic better than you! Take care of a real dragon egg – who knows what might hatch? Get ready for a whirl-

wind of spells, creatures and magical mayhem, because at Wizard Academy, the impossible is just the beginning!

The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY
Tel:0333 320 2830
www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

11 – 12 April

Lord Scrope's Weekend



photo: Gareth Buddo

Visit Lord Scrope's household and learn about the turbulent time of the Wars of the Roses. It is the year 1461 after the battle of Towton, the biggest and bloodiest clash on English soil resulting in victory for the Yorkists. Come to the castle as the household prepares to finish off the Lancastrians. Experience the sights and sounds of a busy Medieval kitchen responsible for feeding the garrison, see the work of the tradespeople who kept the castle running day in day out and learn how you would fight and survive as a common soldier during the Wars of the Roses. Bolton Castle, Nr Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 4ET. Tel: 01969 623981 www.boltoncastle.co.uk

16 April 9:00 – 12:00

Children's speech and sound screening

Does your child use lots of words but you find it difficult to understand them? For example, they may say "tat" instead of "cat". If so, call and book a slot at this drop-in session for support with how to help your child's speech sounds/pronunciation (not lack of words) develop further. The session will involve play based activities, as well as your child looking through pictures. To book your slot, call 0161 2044 153.

1st Floor, 1 Wellington Road House, Wellington Road, Stockport, SK4 1AF
www.stockport.gov.uk/events

16 April 9:30 – 11:30

Sleep seminar for parents and carers

Do you have a child aged 2 to 10 years of age? Do you struggle with your child's disrupted sleep? Do you feel exhausted?

If yes, then the Parenting Team would like to invite you to come along to their virtual sleep seminar. The session will include useful information about: understanding sleep cycles, establishing bedtime routines, how to support children's sleep patterns. Some helpful handouts will also be provided.

Online: www.stockport.gov.uk/one-stockport-family-hubs

29 April 10:00:16:00

From pregnancy to parenthood, in the heart of Yorkshire.

The Yorkshire Baby & Toddler Show bringing you the best local and national businesses, from award-winning baby wear to expert photographers, household names and more, all showcasing fantastic products for you and your little one. But it's not just about shopping (though there's plenty of that too!). This is your chance to connect with midwives, pregnancy experts, and baby specialists who are here to offer advice, reassurance, and all the support you need. Learn life-saving child first aid, hear from inspiring speakers on all things parenting, and let your

little ones dive into free, fun activities designed to spark their imagination.

The Pavilions, Railway Road Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate HG2 8NZ www.yorkshirebabyshow.co.uk

May

2 – 4 May

Day Out With Thomas

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 Ramsbottom Station.

Once one of the dazzling diesel trains brings you and Thomas back to Bury you can visit Bury Transport Museum and find more Thomas & Friends™ themed activities, including performances by Rusty & Dusty – Sodor Station Sweepers. There's also face painting, games and four funfair rides suitable for toddlers.

The East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bury, Lancashire BL9 0EY

T: 0333 320 2830 www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk



16,17 May

The South Manchester Food Festival 2026

A weekend jam-packed with brand-new production, eccentric live entertainment, and an abundance of culinary delights. Mark the date, grab your family and friends, and lock yourselves in for Manchester's ultimate foodie celebration this Spring.

Wythenshawe Park, Wythenshawe Road, Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester M23 0AB
Tel:01619982117 www.southmanchesterfood-festival.com

17 May, 11.30am. Free

The Hallé Orchestra Family Concert: Film Favourites

Join the Hallé and entertaining presenter Tom Redmond for the magic of the movies, with a hand-picked selection of music from all your favourite family films. Performed live by the Hallé, this will be fun for all the family. Fancy dress is very welcome – why not come as your favourite film character?

Free activities and family fun from 10am. Tickets: adults – £23.50, children U17 – £13.50, family (4 tickets, at least one child) – £50.25. Concessions and discounts available.

The Bridgewater Hall, Lower Mosley Street Manchester M1 5HA. Tel: 0161 907 9000
www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk/whats-on

18 May 11:30 – 12:30

Nature walks

Head into the Southern Woods with one of the expert Rangers to explore nature.

Learn about the species of plants and animals that make this habitat so important, and how they are cared for.

These walks will take place fortnightly until the end of September. Giving you the chance to enjoy this experience as the seasons change.

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

out and about

Where learning extends beyond the classroom



At Bridgewater School, a holistic approach to education supports all aspects of a child's development. From the earliest stages of learning, children benefit from strong staff-to-pupil ratios, allowing for individual attention and tailored support. Combined with specialist teaching and dedicated facilities, this helps to create an inclusive and engaging learning environment where pupils can progress with confidence.


Learning extends beyond the classroom through a programme of trips and workshops designed to deepen understanding and encourage curiosity. A broad range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities gives pupils opportunities to explore interests and develop important life skills. These include creative outlets such as music and drama, physical development through sport, and outdoor learning through the Bridgewater Forest School initiative, all of which support personal growth and self-confidence.

The school's ethos centres on providing a well-rounded education that balances academic progress with social, emotional and physical development. Bridgewater School aims to support each child in reaching their individual potential.

Families are invited to attend the EYFS & Prep Open Morning on Saturday 28th March, from 10am–1pm, to learn more about the school's approach.

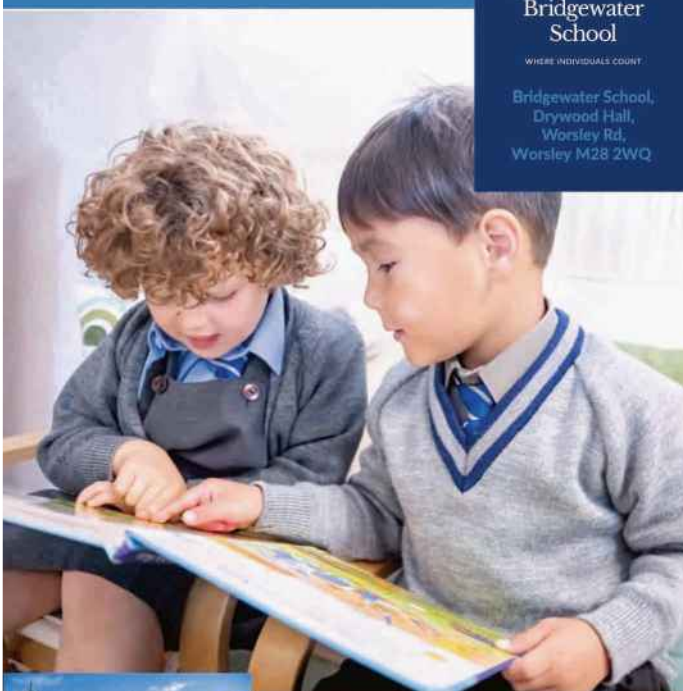


EYFS & Prep Open Morning
Saturday 28th March, 10am-1pm




Bridgewater School
WHERE INDIVIDUALS COUNT

Bridgewater School,
Drywood Hall,
Worsley Rd,
Worsley M28 2WQ



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



King's
1502

THE SUNDAY TIMES
SCHOOLS GUIDE
2026

TOP 10
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FOR
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
NORTH WEST

'BEST EVER' A LEVEL RESULTS 2025



Infant & Junior Open Morning

Saturday 21 March
10am – 12noon

To register, scan QR code or go to:
www.kingsmac.co.uk



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The King's School in Macclesfield | www.kingsmac.co.uk | 01625 260000

Home and school: a partnership for confidence

by Kris Powell, Bowdon Preparatory School

These qualities do not emerge by chance. They are nurtured through supportive relationships, meaningful experiences and opportunities to reflect on strengths, emotions and progress. A confident child is more likely to participate in class, collaborate with others and approach new situations with curiosity rather than fear. Strong self-esteem supports emotional wellbeing, while self-knowledge enables children to manage their feelings, set goals and make thoughtful choices.

Parents play a vital role in this process. Open communication, shared expectations and consistent messages between home and school help children feel safe and confident. Encouraging independence, praising effort and listening attentively all reinforce a positive sense of self. When schools and families work together, children benefit from a strong network of trust and care.

At Bowdon Preparatory School, pastoral care sits at the heart of everything we do. We take great pride in knowing our pupils as individuals, their interests, personalities, strengths and areas for growth. This

understanding allows us to support each child academically, socially and emotionally, helping them to develop confidence in who they are and belief in what they can achieve.

We view parents as partners and work closely with families to ensure every child feels secure, supported and celebrated. Our leadership team places strong trust in our staff, creating a culture where teachers feel valued and empowered. Quite simply, it means that day in, day out, our children are taught by happy adults who love what they do.

Bowdon Prep is a special place and close-knit community where families feel welcomed and proud to belong. This approach was recognised in our most recent ISI inspection (2025), which noted that “the development of pupils’ self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence is a significant strength”. Through strong pastoral care and rich opportunities, pupils develop self-belief, resilience and a genuine love of learning that supports them far beyond their time with us. everything else follows.



Self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge are fundamental to a child’s happiness, resilience and success. When children feel secure, understood and valued, they are more willing to take risks in learning, persevere through challenges and develop strong relationships.

Bowdon Preparatory School



“The development of pupils’ self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence is a significant strength”

ISI REPORT, 2025



Open Morning

16th June 2026
9.30am–11.30am
Reserve your place



Join us for our Open Morning to see why children love learning at BPS.

Call: 01619280678 Email: admissions@bowdonprep.org.uk or scan the QR code to book.

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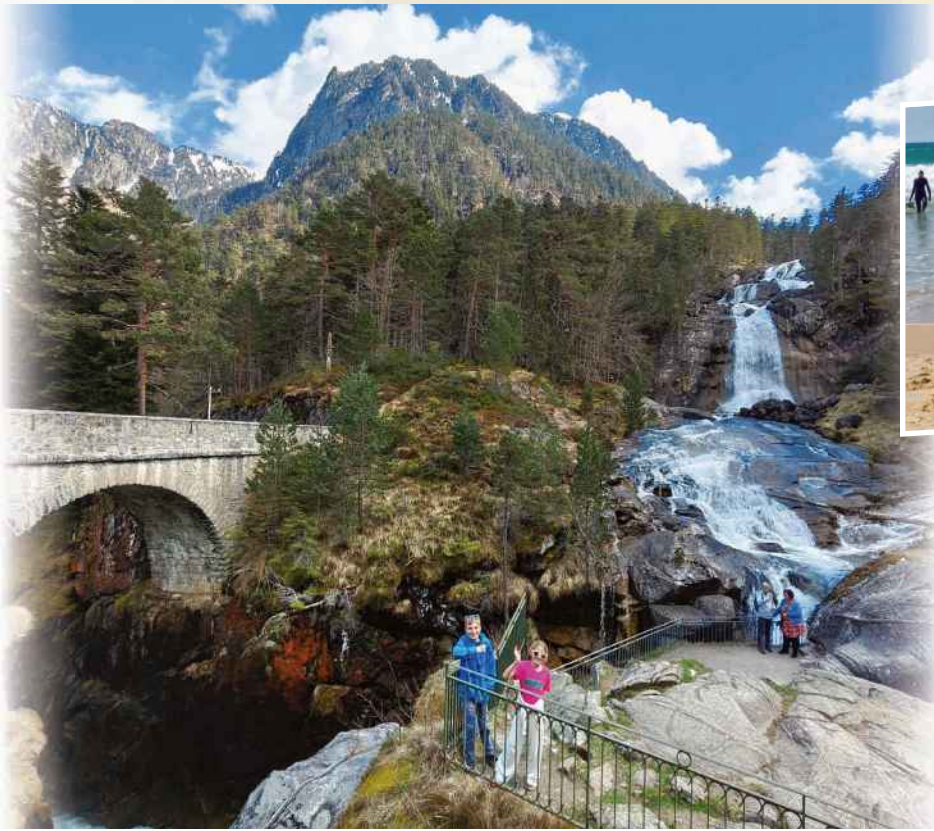
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Jen on 01606 539039
www.grange.org.uk

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Hartford, CW8 3AU

Pyrenees adventures - from snowy peaks to sunny beaches

by Paul Wojnicki



“It looks like that scene E.T.” my wife says, as our ten-year-old daughter peddles her bike across the sky, in a scene that could have come straight out of the classic 1982 movie.

The only noticeable difference is that the snow-capped peaks of the Pyrenees are behind her, instead of the moon, oh, and she doesn't have a basket with an alien inside it. Still, there's no need for tacky 80s CGI here at Hautacam. Ella is riding a real bike across the sky... with a little help from the zipline that's holding it – and her – in the air.

She slowly peddles her way across the valley below her, with her mum and her brother yelling encouragement. For my part, I'm grilling the instructor on what happens if someone freezes in terror half-way across the wire, and whether or not the bike has ever broken down or derailed. I'm not entirely sure if I'm asking this for Ella's sake, or my own, but he assures me that the worst that has ever happened is the chain coming off the bike.

A few moments later we're all patting Ella on the back for her bravery, and it's my turn to ride the “Zippy Bike” across the tightrope.



I won't go into details about the horror I felt during the following 30 seconds or so, but I will confirm that it's perfectly possible to complete the crossing with your eyes closed.

Once I've recomposed myself, we check out some of Hautacam's other attractions, starting with the toboggan that the kids adore and want to ride time and time again. When they've finally had enough of that, we head across to “Big Jump”, which sees us sitting – one at a time – in a large inner tube and hurtling down a ski jump. Big Jump then launches us briefly through the air before we land softly in a giant air bag. It's fantastic fun for all of us, except my wife. She might have been fearless in the face of Zippy Bike, and taken on the toboggan at speeds I would never dare reach, but when it came to Big Jump I'm almost certain that her screams are still echoing across the Pyrenees now.

The following morning, we take the short walk from our Airbnb to the ski lifts in Cauterets. It seems strange to be walking in ski gear, given the fact that it's already 14 degrees in the village and the afternoon is predicted to reach 20 degrees, but once we've been onboard the cable car for ten minutes or so the snow starts to appear, and a couple of minutes after that we're surrounded by it.

Cauterets has one of the longest seasons in the Pyrenees, with the slopes only closing in late April. It's incredible to think that just two days ago we were on the beaches of Hendaye and Biarritz, just a couple of hours' drive from here, surfing and playing in the sea. It's as though we're having two different holidays for the price of one, and by taking the ferry

we were able to bring our ski clothes, beach clothes and clothes for every season in between – this is April after all.

Bringing our car on the ferry also meant that we could stop at San Sebastian – with one of the best city beaches in the world – and visit the island of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe, made famous by Game of Thrones. We even got to see dolphins swimming at the front of the ship a few times during the mini cruise on the ferry to Spain.

After four hours of skiing in Cauterets, the kids are ready for lunch, and the snow is starting to soften with the heat. The resort closes the slopes at 2pm in any case at this time of year, to preserve the snow. We eat lunch in the village and then drive 15 minutes to Pont d'Espangna to visit nearby Lake Gaube, a lake famous throughout France for its emerald, green waters and mountain backdrop.

The hike to the lake is mildly strenuous and takes us about an hour. The scene is every bit as good as the postcards suggest, and we're the only people here, well apart from a few marmots that we spotted along the way.



Practicalities

Brittany Ferries has several sailings per week between the UK and northern Spain, departing from Portsmouth and Plymouth. The resorts of Hautacam and Cauterets are around 3.5 hours' drive from Bilbao, but with superb beach resorts along the way, making it the perfect way to combine a mountain holiday with a beach holiday and a mini cruise.

Beauty influencers, drunk elephant & the wild west of TikTok

by Samantha Gibbons



Drunk Elephant because 'it makes her skin healthy.' Her fifteen-year-old cousin has already moved on to makeup – proof that the consumer cycle simply shifts stages.

Why does this matter? Beyond wasted money, these trends risk damaging young skin and shaping fragile self-esteem. Unrealistic beauty ideals contribute to anxiety, low self-worth, and disordered behaviour, eroding resilience and self-acceptance at ever-younger ages.



As Head of Manchester High School for Girls' Preparatory School, Samantha Gibbons has a front-row seat to the shifting landscape of childhood. In recent years, she has observed the growing impact of social media and aggressive beauty marketing – forces that now play a significant role in shaping young girls' lives.

This summer, our Year 5 girls visited the Lake District for their residential. After a busy day outdoors, their teacher told them to brush their teeth and head to bed. Instead, a few politely asked when they could fit in their 'beauty routine,' opening vanity cases full of skincare products.

The British Beauty Council valued the UK beauty industry at £27 billion in 2023 (around \$500 billion globally). Though half the size of fashion, it is one of the fastest-growing and most resilient consumer industries, driven by online purchasing, wellness culture, and beauty influencers. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok flood young feeds with 'perfect' skin and routines to 'fight ageing'. For tweens – especially girls aged eight to twelve – these constant messages suggest that beauty requires products and that ageing is something to battle before it begins. At a stage when identity is still forming, such exposure breeds comparison and insecurity.

We adults understand the formula: social media creates a problem, then sells the solution. Be thinner, prettier, more popular – just buy this product or follow this trend. Even when we think we see through it, we are still part of the data-driven system that sustains it. As Kaitlyn Regehr writes in *Smartphone Nation*, awareness of how our data is used is vital if we are to reclaim digital control – and teach our children to do the same.

Curious, I downloaded TikTok this summer. Within minutes my feed was filled with *Get Ready With Me* videos – some starring girls as young as four or five, confidently displaying multi-step skincare routines using brands like Drunk Elephant 'to stop wrinkles like old people'. One video showed a three-year-old explaining her 'skincare' routine under her mother's direction. Teenagers parody these clips, while dermatologists warn against retinol and then promote 'safer' products. It feels like the wild west of marketing, and one can only wonder what the next stage will be when these children begin to age in reality.

These routines can involve seven or more steps – cleansers, serums, moisturisers, eye creams, lip balms, bronzers, sunscreen – performed religiously day and night. Playful product names such as 'O-Bloos Rosi Drops' or 'Pekee Bar' create a cult-like brand language that bonds children and excludes adults. As Gen A–Z expert Chloe Combi calls it, this is 'The Church of Drunk Elephant, where only the faithful are welcome'.

The cost is equally striking: a single Drunk Elephant 'Babyfacial' costs around £65. Girls now request skincare for birthdays and compare collections at school. Even those not on TikTok encounter the trend as online culture seeps into playground life. The rise of 'Sephora Girls' – tweens making skincare shopping trips – shows how retailers deliberately target ever-younger consumers through playful, immersive environments.

Yet dermatologists agree that children need little more than a simple cleanser, moisturiser, and sunscreen. My eight-year-old niece insists she loves

To empower our girls, we must help them understand marketing, authenticity, and self-acceptance. This reinforces my belief that delaying social media access until the teenage years is essential. A BBC report recently linked declining girls' academic performance since Covid to poorer mental health, disrupted sleep, and social media exposure. The Smartphone Free Childhood movement, supported by figures like Robbie Williams and Kate Winslet, argues persuasively that delaying phone use protects wellbeing. In our Preparatory School, we share this philosophy.

We use screens judiciously, support the Smartphone Free Childhood movement, and engage parents with ongoing guidance. Our curriculum encourages rich offline experiences – sport, art, music, outdoor learning – helping girls develop confidence and identity beyond the screen. Yet, we know the work is ongoing.

Ultimately, the greatest lesson we can give our girls is that beauty lies not in filters, followers, or fleeting trends but in authenticity. By helping them see through marketing illusions and embrace their individuality, we nurture genuine confidence. The wrinkles and laughter lines that one day appear will not be flaws but signs of a joyful, well-lived life. True beauty is being unapologetically oneself – and that is a message worth celebrating.


THE SUNDAY TIMES

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