

Winter 2021

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DISCOVER A GREAT READ
FOR YOUR CHILD

Looking
out for your
elderly friends
and family

Welcome

Well, another year over and what a year it has been. Thank you to all the schools and teachers for making the year as normal as possible for our children. Not an easy task. It has been much appreciated.

In our final magazine of the year, you will find some advice on the importance of teaching our children to swim. It's incredible that 25% of children cannot swim more than 25 metres when they leave Primary School! You will also find some good parent safety advice on the dreaded social media platforms. The harm some are doing to our children will have lasting effects into adulthood, we really are turning into the guinea pig generation!

There is also some great advice from the Fire Brigade to keep us safe during the Christmas period plus how we as parents can help our children with their dreaded homework, plus our usual reviews of some fantastic new books.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a fantastic Christmas and a very happy and SAFE New Year. Here's looking to a brighter 2022!

Andy Forster

Publisher

(If anyone has any editorial ideas please let us know. More than happy to chat further. It's you on the front line after all)

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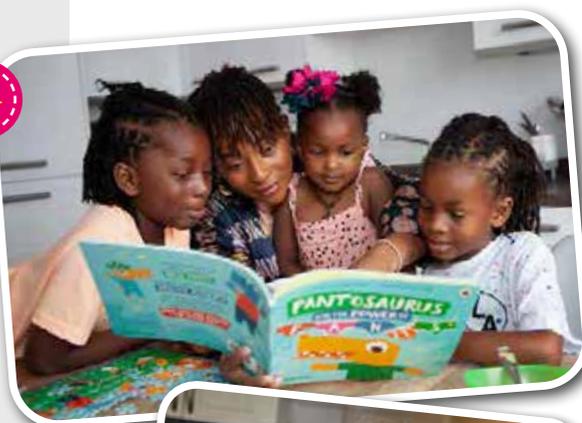
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Discover a great read for your child...

The Twelve Green Days of Christmas

By Barry Timms,
Illustrated by
Sian Roberts

OUT
NOW



Reading age: 3-6

A fun-filled eco picture book based on the classic Christmas song! On the first day of Christmas, what did Santa see? A star that had broken in three! Christmas spirit is in the air and all the animals are feeling the cheer. But in the excitement, what has happened to the forest? There is litter EVERYWHERE! Appalled by what he sees, Santa writes a letter to his animal friends asking them to clear up. And over the course of twelve fun-filled days, they work together to do just that! Based on the sing-along festive rhyme The Twelve Days of Christmas – and the perfect introduction to recycling and reusing for a new generation.

Beano Dennis & Gnasher: The Abominable Snowmenace

By I.P Daley
Illustrator: Nigel
Parkinson

OUT
NOW



Reading age: 7+

Dennis and Gnasher are back for another BOOMIC adventure. More words than a comic, more funny pictures than a book, BOOMIC's are pages of pure entertainment. When mysterious smelly footprints lead the gang to the school kitchen, they find themselves in a race against time to save their best new friend...

The Christmas Carrolls

By Mel Taylor-Bessent,
Illustrated
by Selom Sunu

OUT
NOW



Reading age: 8+

Wish it could be Christmas every day?

Well, for nine-year-old Holly Carroll and her family, it is! Living her merriest life in a house with year-round fairy lights and Christmas trees, a carol-singing toilet and a diva donkey who thinks he's a reindeer, home-schooled Holly tries to spread cheer wherever she goes. The Christmas Carrolls is a heartwarming, hilarious and inclusive tale about the power of spreading cheer, the magic of friendship and what really matters at this most wonderful time of the year.

The Naughtiest Unicorn in a Winter Wonderland

(The Naughtiest Unicorn series, Book 9)
By Pip Bird, Illustrated
by David O'Connell

OUT
NOW



Reading age: 6+

It's time for wintry fun with Mira and Dave the Naughtiest Unicorn! And this time they are going on a very special quest to see the magical winter lights! (Although Dave is more interested in the hot chocolate and chips.) But what lies behind the snowy mountain peaks – could there really be a terrifying YETI lurking there ...? Pip Bird is the pseudonym for a small group of brilliant and funny children's book writers. They all believe in magic and dream of having a Unicorn Best Friend Forever.



Winnie-the-Pooh: Once There Was a Bear (The Official 95th Anniversary Prequel): Tales of Before it all Began...
By Jane Riordan



OUT NOW

.....
Reading age: 5+
.....

These brand-new stories are decorated with beautiful illustrations of Winnie-the-Pooh and friends created by Mark Burgess in the style of E.H.Shepard. He is uniquely suited to this having also illustrated The Return to the Hundred Acre Wood and The Best Bear in All the World. Jane Riordan has a strong pedigree in writing in the style of A.A.Milne, having also created Winnie-the-Pooh Meets the Queen and the re-issue edition Winnie-the-Pooh Goes to London. This timeless story collection is a real tribute to the world's most famous bear and the perfect opportunity for everyone to revisit these favourite friends and find out how they become the larger than life characters that we all know and love.

.....
Monster Hunting for Beginners
By Ian Mark
Illustrator: Louis Ghibault



OUT NOW

.....
Reading age: 8+
.....

Monster hunting isn't as easy as it looks. And Jack should know. Because an ogre has just appeared in his garden and tried to eat his Aunt! After (sort of accidentally) defeating the ogre, Jack finds himself apprenticed to a grumpy, 200 year old monster hunter called Stoop and heading off to Cornwall, where more ogres are causing havoc!

Feeling Good About Me

Ellen Bailey and Lesley Pemberton

OUT NOW



.....
Reading age: 7-9
.....

This fun book is packed with mindful activities and prompts to encourage young readers to express their emotions, including breathing techniques, thoughtful questions, and areas to draw. It is a safe space for children to explore feelings such as low self-esteem and anxiety, with practical tips and information presented in a supportive and affirmative way. A wonderful resource for any mindfulness activities teachers and parents are planning, this book has been developed in consultation with a children's mental health charity, Blue Smile, and a royalty of UK sales will be donated to the charity.

.....
Raven Winter

By Susanna Bailey

OUT NOW



.....
Reading age: 8+
.....

A brand new novel from Susannah Bailey – the bestselling author of Snow Foal. Raven winter is a story of friendship, family and the belief in a very special relationship with a young raven set against the beautiful and the wintery backdrop of the Yorkshire Dales.

Christmas Eve tips for a quiet night

As special as **Christmas Eve** is, watching the little ones get excited for Santa's arrival, most parents have a tricky time getting their adrenaline-filled children to the land of nod at bedtime.

Stick to your usual bedtime routine

Stick to your usual pre-bedtime routine, whether it's a story or a warm bubble bath to get them in the mood for a good night's sleep. The same goes for nap times on Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day too. Keeping toddlers or young children awake can cause over-tiredness which will lead to a more fraught bedtime for all involved.

Don't threaten a no-show

Threatening that the big man won't come might seem like a good idea at the time but it can often create chaos and unnecessary upset. If

your little one is finding the day to be a challenge, remember that this is a time of huge upheaval for them and they may be feeling displaced and a little uneasy underneath all that hyperactive excitement. Try to stay calm and confident, and acknowledge your child's feelings instead.

Keep the stockings out of the bedroom

Keeping stockings out of the bedroom will ensure that children are left to a peaceful slumber and won't be disturbed by rustling as you try to creep in quietly. What's more, the thought of a stranger coming into their bedroom in the middle of the night might actually be a little frightening for younger children.

Plan Your Day Well

Keep any high octane escapades for earlier in the day and settle into a calm

Keeping stockings out of the bedroom will ensure that children are left to a peaceful slumber and won't be disturbed by rustling as you try to creep in quietly.

atmosphere as afternoon hits.

Christmas films are often on the agenda too, so plan these in for the afternoon and save the evening for enjoying relaxing activities like reading Christmas books.

Get Some Fresh Air

Exploring nature provides endless opportunities for creative learning, plus helping youngsters to burn off some physical energy throughout the day can really work wonders when it comes to bedtime. "

Many thanks to Munchkin products, for supplying these tips. ■

Instagram

Parent / Carer Advice



What is Instagram?

Instagram is a social media platform which focuses on the creation and sharing of images, providing users with a range of filters and special effects popular among younger users.

Despite requiring users to be 13 or older, a study in January 2017 indicated that 43% of 8-11 year olds in Britain are using Instagram.

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Safety Tips

! As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Instagram, the importance of not 'oversharing, and any issues they have faced.

! It is safest to change the default privacy settings in your child's account from public to private. If your child is older and you agree for them to have a public account, you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users. You should also monitor messages they receive.

! Given Instagram's reported impact on young people's mental health, keep an eye out for early warning signs of such issues with your child. Seek professional support or consult online services



such as Shout at the earliest point of concern.

! Regularly spring-clean your child's Instagram account with them by removing any posts and images you agree are inappropriate and blocking any concerning contacts. If you have any concerns that somebody might be trying to groom your



child you should immediately contact CEOP.

Reasons for concern

! **Privacy settings**
A key concern regarding children's use of Instagram is the fact that the default privacy setting for accounts is 'public'. As such, unless a child actively alters their privacy settings, all of the pictures they post to Instagram will be available to anybody. This could result in their images being seen by inappropriate individuals and might lead to receiving unwanted communication.

! **Follower lists**
In a world where celebrity success is measured by numbers of social media followers, it is understandable that children might want to grow their own list of followers. A child's non-private account can quickly grow with followers, some of whom might not have entirely innocent motives.

! **Terms and conditions**
Instagram's 5,000-word terms and conditions states that users agree that Instagram can use and sell their sell images for others to use (without paying or further consent). Instagram also retains the right to store, use and share the personal information and direct messages of their users.

! **Grooming**
In 2019 the NSPCC reported that Instagram was involved in more online grooming cases than any other online platform. Where the police recorded the method of communication, Instagram was used in 32% of cases, in contrast to Facebook at 23% and Snapchat at 14%.

! **Mental health issues**
A report by the Royal Society for Public Health found that Instagram rated as the worst social media platform when it comes to its impact on young people's mental health. Being image-centred the RSPH claimed that Instagram (along with Snapchat) appears to be driving feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in young people.

PANTO SEASON

There's something really special about attending a pantomime with loved ones and attending one as a family can really get the festive excitement flowing.

It's a Christmas experience for individuals wanting to immerse themselves in mayhem and mischief.

Pantomimes are famous for captivating audiences of all ages. Whether

young or old, there is something for everyone to enjoy when revelling in the extravagance of the yuletide festive favourite.

"I think everyone loves a pantomime. They're just magical! They bring everyone's favourite fairy-tale characters to life on stage", states Chantelle Nolan, Theatre Manager at St. Helens Theatre Royal. "They're loud and



"I think everyone loves a pantomime. They're just magical!"...
- Chantelle Nolan



colourful with larger than life characters, great songs, lots of jokes and plenty of audience participation."

Panto is a tradition that seems to be maintaining (and gaining) popularity year-upon-year and there is a whole host of choice in Merseyside this year to satisfy your panto cravings!

Liz Gatrack from Albert

Halls explained that, "Panto is a really fun thing to be a part of... Whether you're in the audience, on stage or even behind the curtain, it's something really special. Seeing the audience getting fully involved in the performance is one of the many reasons that I love being a part of the festive shows at Albert Halls." ■



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What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a free messaging app. It allows you to send text and multimedia messages (video, images and voice recordings) to people in the contact list on your phone. It also allows users to set up group chats where the administrators can invite up to 256 people to share messages and images publicly within the group. Although the age limit for WhatsApp was recently raised to 16 it is popular with primary age children and above. So what are the risks?

Safety Tips

-  **As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use WhatsApp and any issues they have encountered.**
-  **With your child, look through the groups they are members of and discuss any areas of concern you have. You may agree that it would be best to leave the group.**
-  **Go to the settings (by pressing the three dots in the top right of the screen) and ensure your child's profile is set to 'contacts only'.**
-  **To leave a group: Open the group in WhatsApp. Press the three dots in the top right of the screen and select 'Group Info'. Scroll down to 'Exit group'.**
-  **If an admin adds your child back into a group they have left, your child can ask them not to do this. If they keep adding them then you can prevent it by blocking the admin. To do this, WhatsApp provide the following guidance:**

1. Go to the group in WhatsApp, then tap or click the subject of the group.
2. Tap or click the phone number of the admin you wish to block.
3. If prompted, tap or click **Message (phone number)** or **Send Message**.
4. A blank chat with the admin will open up. Tap or click the phone number at the top.
5. Tap or click **Block** > **Block**.

Reasons for concern

-  Group administrators can invite people your child does not know into group chats. Some of these people may not have innocent intentions or may be older and post age-inappropriate messages.
-  Some WhatsApp groups can contain images and messages which can cause distress to children. These might include violent images or videos, abusive messages and sexual content.
-  Chain messages are often shared through WhatsApp. These pressure children to post them on to their contacts, e.g. by claiming that failure to do so can result in the child or a family member dying. Many children find such messages distressing but also feel they must share them with others due to fear of the threat.

and killed him. A girl named Loran got this message. She laughed and deleted it. I later came to her house and killed her and buried her in a desert. A boy named

-  WhatsApp does not allow users to decide whether to join a group. Your child will be automatically added to any groups that their contacts add them to. If your child leaves the group the administrator can add them straight back in.
-  Your child may be in WhatsApp groups in which huge numbers of posts are made. The alerts this generates can be an unnecessary distraction and can disrupt sleep.
-  WhatsApp's default privacy settings are that anybody can see your child's profile photo and when they were last online.
-  WhatsApp 'dare games' have become popular with children. These involve the child making a quiz about themselves to share with others and this can lead to oversharing of personal information which can be publicly available.
-  Children can add and then remove other children from groups as a form of exclusion and bullying.

Stay safe this Winter

The days are shorter, the temperature is dropping and the frost is starting to form and that means winter is here. At this time of year, we tend to take steps to make our homes warm and cosy, but in doing so we can open ourselves up to dangers and greater risk of fire.

That's why we've teamed up with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS)

to give you some handy pointers on how to keep you and your family safe this winter.

Firefighters were called to 329 accidental fires in the home in the home between October 2020 and the end of February 2021, with cooking-related fires, smoking-related fires and domestic appliances the most common causes. A number of these fires were also caused by heating

equipment.

We know many of you will be looking forward to a 'normal' Christmas after the difficulties we have faced over the last 18 months, but it's really important that fire safety remains a priority – a fire in the home is the last thing anybody needs right now.

Follow these top tips to make sure your home heating methods don't risk a fire. ■

STAY SAFE WHEN HEATING YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

- ALWAYS USE A FIRE GUARD WITH AN OPEN FIRE...**

...AND MAKE SURE THE FIRE IS COMPLETELY OUT BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE OR GO TO BED.
- KEEP PORTABLE HEATERS AWAY FROM CURTAINS AND FURNITURE.**

- NEVER USE THEM TO DRY CLOTHES.**
- NO HOT WATER BOTTLES WITH ELECTRIC BLANKETS.**

- ALWAYS UNPLUG HEATERS WHEN YOU GO TO BED.**

- TOP TIP: KEEP CHIMNEYS, FLUES AND APPLIANCES CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED.**


FOLLOW US FOR MORE ADVICE ON STAYING SAFE THIS WINTER:

-  [Facebook.com/merseyfire](https://www.facebook.com/merseyfire)
-  [Twitter.com/merseyfire](https://twitter.com/merseyfire)
-  [Instagram.com/merseyfire](https://www.instagram.com/merseyfire)

Looking out for your elderly friends and family



We should be looking out for our elderly relatives, friends and neighbours all year round but it's particularly important that we do so at this time of year.

Older residents can be particularly at risk of fire in their homes, especially as they may still be using old appliances or may not be able to check their smoke alarms on a weekly basis.

The cold is not kind to elderly relatives who can struggle to keep their homes warm – check they are cosy through the winter months and that their windows and doors don't let in the draft. Also, make sure that they are not using unsafe heating methods which may be used

as a cheaper option.

You can play your part by making sure your elderly relatives, friends and neighbours have working smoke alarms. Many Merseyside residents will be eligible for free smoke alarms, particularly those over 65. You can look after your elderly friends, neighbours and relatives by calling 0800 731 5958 to arrange a free Home Fire Safety Check and to ask for fire safety advice.

Don't ignore your neighbours' smoke alarms!

It's really important that you take action if you hear a neighbour's smoke alarm and call 999 if you suspect a fire in a nearby property – a delay in alerting the emergency services to a

fire can be the difference between life and death.

If you hear a smoke alarm, either as a resident or a neighbour, take action immediately and call 999. If you suspect a fire, get out, stay out and call 999. ■

Make sure you follow these smoke alarm top tips:

- Install at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home
- The ideal position is on the ceiling, in the middle of a room or on a hallway or landing
- Consider fitting additional alarms in other rooms where there are electrical appliances and near sleeping areas
- Don't put alarms in or near kitchens and bathrooms where smoke or steam can set them off by accident
- Test your smoke alarms every week
- Replace your smoke alarms every ten years.

Don't let fire ruin the festivities

Whether the highlight of the festive season is spending time with loved ones, the exchanging of gifts, decorating your home both inside and out or tucking into that delicious Christmas dinner, this really is the most wonderful time of the year.

There is so much to think about as we edge closer to the main event, but one thing Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is urging Merseyside residents to put at the top of their Christmas lists this year is fire safety.

While fire safety is

important throughout the year, the extra distractions of Christmas make it especially important to be vigilant.

Most house fires start in the kitchen – take extra care when cooking the Christmas dinner and preparing food over the festive period.

Decorations and heating can also be fire hazards over Christmas and the general winter period so please take extra care.

If you're turning to online marketplaces for electrical items this year – whether it be for gifts or for electrical Christmas decorations – make sure what you are buying is legitimate and safe. Check products for

safety markings. If the certification mark is only on the packaging and not on the product, there's a good chance it's fake. And remember, do not use foreign appliances in UK sockets if they haven't been converted for UK use.

You can protect yourselves, as well as your family and friends, by following some simple safety advice.

The most important thing of all though is to make sure you have at least one working smoke alarm on each level of your home – these should be tested weekly! ■

STAY SAFE THIS FESTIVE PERIOD

REMEMBER, DECORATIONS CAN BURN EASILY SO DON'T ATTACH THEM TO LIGHTS OR HEATERS.

NEVER LEAVE LIT CANDLES UNATTENDED.

DO KEEP CANDLES OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN AND PETS.

DON'T LEAVE PANS UNATTENDED WHILE COOKING

FAIRY LIGHTS SHOULD ALWAYS BE SWITCHED OFF AND UNPLUGGED WHEN GOING TO BED OR WHEN LEAVING THE HOUSE.

DON'T PLACE CANDLES NEAR YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE OR OTHER MATERIALS THAT CAN EASILY CATCH FIRE.

THE MAJORITY OF FIRES START IN THE KITCHEN SO THIS IS A HIGH RISK AREA

AVOID COOKING WHEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR WHEN TIRED - BE CAREFUL NOT TO FALL ASLEEP WHEN COOKING.

DO NOT OVERLOAD SOCKETS

MAKE SURE EVERYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD KNOWS HOW TO ESCAPE IN AN EMERGENCY.

TAKE TIME TO CHECK ON OLDER RELATIVES AND NEIGHBOURS THIS CHRISTMAS.

CHECK YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS CONFORM TO THE BRITISH STANDARD AND ARE IN GOOD WORKING ORDER BEFORE USE.

REMEMBER ALWAYS USE AN RCD ON OUTDOOR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT.

Facebook.com/merseyside
Twitter.com/merseyfire
Instagram.com/mersey_fire

From everyone at Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, we wish you all a very happy, healthy and safe Christmas.



What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social media app where users share short video clips of 15 seconds duration. It started out as an app named 'Musically' and was used to share videos of dancing and lip-syncing to music. Much of the content on TikTok still reflects these origins, but popular videos now also include pets, makeup, magic tricks, fashion, art, people reacting to situations, etc. According to OSA research, TikTok is now as widely used by 11-14 year olds as SnapChat and Instagram.



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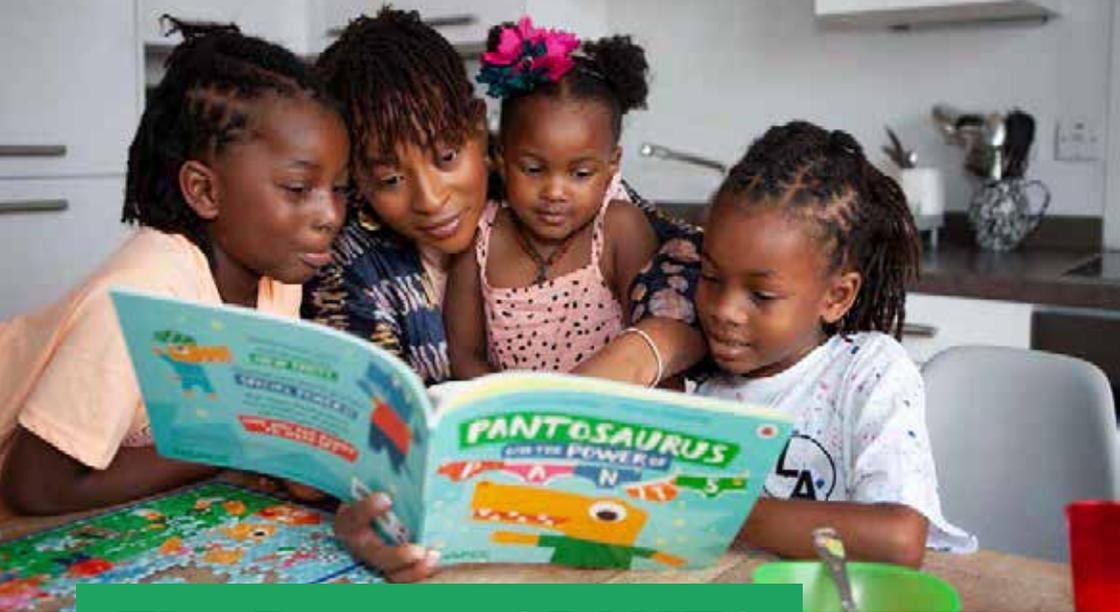
Safety Tips

- ! As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use TikTok and any issues they have encountered.
- ! Discuss whether it would be best to change your child's account to private to avoid interactions with non-friends. If you agree to keep the account public you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users.
- ! Help your child to spring clean their account from time to time by removing videos you agree to be inappropriate.
- ! Ensure your child knows not to post videos in their school uniform. Also discuss how recording videos at school might break school rules and what the consequences could be.
- ! The TikTok settings allow you to set a time limit for how long each day you want your child to be able to use the app. This can be password protected to ensure they stick to the limit.



Reasons for concern

- ! TikTok has a minimum age rating of 13 and anybody under 18 should have parental permission to use the app. However, new users simply enter a date of birth to indicate their age and there are no verification steps. As such, children of any age can create an account by using a false date of birth.
- ! New users will be shown a range of video clips the app feels may be of interest. Many of these will quickly expose users to offensive language which will be inappropriate for children.
- ! The clothing worn and the type of dancing in some videos could be deemed sexualised and therefore something that might be inappropriate for younger users to be exposed to.
- ! The default privacy settings in the app are concerning. Although only friends can send users direct messages, the videos posted by users can be seen by anybody and anybody can like / comment on the videos. New users are also available for anybody to perform a musical duet with. Such default settings can leave children vulnerable to unwanted communication from others.
- ! Many children in the UK are posting videos to TikTok where they are wearing their school uniform, making it possible for strangers to identify their location.
- ! The nature of videos children are posting to TikTok (singing, dancing, etc) can leave them vulnerable to receiving negative comments which can have an impact on mental health.
- ! The company that owns TikTok is facing legal issues and stands accused of illegally collecting data on children (when it was Musically) and the app has been deemed a 'potential security risk by the FBI'.

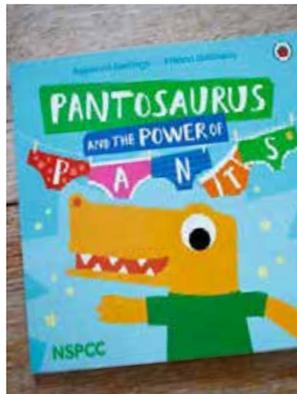


The Power of PANTS

The NSPCC's first ever children's book, **Pantosaurus and the Power of PANTS**, has hit the shelves and will support families to have simple conversations with their children, to help keep them safe from sexual abuse.

This very special book has been designed for children aged 5 to 9 years of age with vital safeguarding messages at its heart. It is all the more extraordinary because our journey to this point has been a real joint effort.

The book was only



made possible following a crowdfunding campaign that took place last year which saw NSPCC supporters raise £46,440 for the project. I can't thank enough all those who

donated for their support. Their efforts will help to change children's lives for the better. Our Talk PANTS messaging, resources such as the new book and existing online music video help support parents to explain to children how they can speak out about anything that makes them uncomfortable, and give them the confidence to do that.

The new book, written by Rebecca Girlings and illustrated by Fhiona Galloway and Jamie Nash features the NSPCC's yellow cuddly dinosaur Pantosaurus who is celebrating his

5th birthday this year. In the book, Pantosaurus is getting a new pair of pants and Dinodad tells him that they will give him special powers. Pantosaurus then experiences a problem at school and just as Dinodad told him, his super pants give him the power to speak up.

The book will help children learn about the PANTS rules, from P through to S, each letter of PANTS provides a simple but valuable rule - that their private parts are private, their body belongs to them, and that they should tell an adult they trust if they're worried or upset. We've actually been talking PANTS since 2013, to ensure children are given this vital information, which is shared using age-appropriate language and a catchy music video by our dinosaur mascot, Pantosaurus. The video is available on our YouTube page and online at www.nspcc.org.uk As well as being fun, it has a serious message to give children essential information and confidence. Since Talk PANTS was launched, the video has been viewed more than 2.3 million times, sparking more than 1.5 million conversations. You can pick up your copy of



The PANTS rules: PANTS stands for...

- Privates are Private
- Always remember your body belongs to you
- No means no
- Talk about secrets that upset you
- Speak up, someone can help



the new book from selected Matalan stores or at Matalan.co.uk, selected Blakemore Retail SPAR stores or our

NSPCC shop and all profits from the sale of this book will support the NSPCC's vital work. ■

Homework



Does nagging, stress and arguing seem like an all-too familiar routine when trying to get your children to complete homework? It isn't as simple as casting a spell, or waving a magic wand, but getting your children to complete their homework can be made easier.

Although we may class it as a burden especially when searching the house top-to-bottom for an 'I think I completed it' piece of work when in a rush to leave, there is a reason behind homework – it wasn't intended to cast misery upon all in its wake. It is a great tool to

Homework is also a good way to enforce self-discipline, time management and organisation – skills which are learnt and built upon when physically practiced, and homework proves itself as an excellent medium.

reinforce information learnt throughout the day and allows more practice for information to lodge itself firmly in our grey matter. Homework is also a good way to enforce self-discipline, time management and organisation – skills which are learnt and built upon when physically practiced, and homework proves itself as an excellent medium.

Create a homework routine which children will follow. Discuss possible

times for homework to be completed after the school day with your child. Do not enforce and set a time yourself (although, do set an agreed cut-off point!), let them choose – it allows for the practice of organisation and time management, and also sets a basis of independence of which to complete homework upon. Allow time for fun and rewarding activities once homework is completed. A homework routine will lead into habit once



practiced – don't slip out of it! Remove distractions from an agreed place to complete homework, such as the kitchen table or somewhere else quiet and comfortable. Replace homework responsibility from yourself to your child. It may seem hard, but it is crucial that your child learns that the consequences for not completing homework are determined by their own actions. This is a conscious approach for teaching your child how to be responsible. Providing that you are creating a positive and structured environment to complete homework and a defined plan of action, homework incomplete is a child's responsibility; as are the consequences! Teachers are usually unimpressed with incomplete tasks and upon seeing their teacher's reaction; your child will most probably complete their next homework

assignment!

Encourage your child to let you know about their progress. No doubt they will inform you when they have completed a task to a high standard and have received praise for it from a teacher. This will show that homework and their progress is something you are interested in, yet also maintaining a sense of independence. Praise your children for completing tasks, but do not scald poor

work – it'll only lead to a shouting match! Remind your child of what was agreed and remind them of the good work they have done in the past and what they can do to do better next time. Ask them if they are struggling with any aspects of the homework set – homework highlights what our children are doing well at, and what they may be doing not so great at, in and out of the classroom. They may need more hands-on help, whether it is from you, or guidance from a teacher on a more thorough basis. Get to the bottom of the problem, but never complete the homework yourself; give guidance, as eliminating your child from their own learning path can be more damaging than helpful. ■



Swimming – Are we doing enough?



Swimming as we all know is a life skill that everyone should have, but nearly half of all children cannot swim the length of a pool by the time they leave primary school.

Why is this? Budget cuts? Maybe. Fewer swimming pools? Could be? That doesn't stop us parents from taking our children swimming ourselves.

1 in 3 children say swimming is their favourite family activity but are we as

parents taking them enough and are we teaching them properly? Swimming is great for child development.

It is a unique sensory experience, which accesses all five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

Swimming even encourages a baby to meet physical milestones more quickly e.g. sitting up, crawling, and walking. As well as being fun, swimming can aid in mobility and cardiovascular functions, increasing

fitness especially in babies, enabling them to move and breathe better resulting in significant improvement in overall language and communication skills. With improved coordination children can pick up other activities quicker like riding a bike, horse riding or even skateboarding.

Research has also found that swimming encourages a connection between the mind and body, stimulating brain development and increasing intelligence. I



should go more myself!

It's a great way for improving fitness without putting stress on the skeletal form as it works the large muscles of the body, honing in on gross motor skills and building coordination.

In babies, swimming has also been accredited with improved eating and sleeping behaviour immediately after a lesson.

It's never too early to start swimming lessons as swimming from a very early age encourages a lifetime of physical activity and wellbeing, providing an early introduction into other sports and activities whilst also highly benefiting baby development. A child who has swimming lessons from an early age will develop a lifelong confidence and enjoyment of water. Swimming lessons teach life saving water safety and

Swimming is great for child development. It is a unique sensory experience, which accesses all five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

survival skills that will stay with children forever. Most importantly, swimming lessons are lots of fun!

With drowning now the third highest cause of death

amongst children in the UK, we as parents should be doing our best to give our children this life skill. You never know when they will need it! ■



Healthier Family Eating Habits for New Year



It is an annual right-of-passage to make diet related resolutions. A new year marks a time to get rid of the past and to turn over a new leaf – a great excuse for trying to incorporate healthier habits into your family’s lifestyle.

Sharing a New Year’s resolution as a family can make goals more achievable, as there is a common ambition shared

and each member can support one another. Take a look at our (manageable) New Year’s resolutions which may help guide your family to achieving healthier eating habits in 2022.

One more serving of fruit/veg per day

According to Diabetes UK, 66% of adults eat three or fewer portions of fruit and/or vegetables a day. Incorporating fresh fruit and veggies into your family’s diet is extremely important

and making small steps can be extremely beneficial.

Try packing a piece of fruit into your child’s lunch box, offer your child a handful of blueberries as a snack or maybe serve some extra vegetables alongside an evening meal. Get creative.

Prepare healthy meals together

Preparing healthy meals as a family can encourage children to be interested in healthy food – children are much more likely to



Eating together can help encourage fussy eaters to try new foods without bribery and coercion – seeing other members of the family enjoying their food can be enough persuasion.

enjoy something which they are proud of making themselves. Preparing meals together can also encourage long-term healthier habits.

Preparing meals together gives families the opportunity to spend quality time with one another.

Eat together

Eating together can help encourage fussy eaters to try new foods without bribery and coercion – seeing other members of the family enjoying their food can be enough persuasion.

Eating together as a family is a great way of bonding and can allow families to reflect on each other's day.

Make changes

Making small changes to your family's diet can make

a big difference to everyday health:

- Swap sugary drinks for water or milk
- Swap chips for some vegetables or homemade sweet potato wedges during your evening meal
- Swap unhealthy snacks for healthy alternatives such as fruit and nuts. We like to swap crisps with celery sticks with a tzatziki or hummus.

These aren't massive changes, but if we can all do a little to change a child's diet then their health will improve immeasurably. ■



Motor Development in Children



By understanding **Motor Development** we can help our children to develop physically to create a solid foundation of movement. This will stand them in good stead for sport, activity and life in general

What is Motor Development?

According to Wikipedia "Motor development refers to the development of a child's bones, muscles and ability to move around and manipulate his or her environment."

Through The Years Nursery age

By now children can climb up stairs using a method of bringing both feet together on each step before proceeding to the next step. As their legs strengthen

hopping, skipping & jumping will improve. Improved Upper body mobility will lead to speed and accuracy of their throwing and catching. Hitting a ball with a bat from the floor is possible now, as is kicking a large ball.

Reception

By now children will be walking up the stairs like adults. Running becomes faster and smoother. Hops become Skips. They also have more control when riding their tricycles (or bicycles), and can drive them faster. Most movement will be in one direction: Forwards.

Year 1

By now children are refining all their skills. Their running speed and accuracy of movement is improving as



is their ability to ride a bike. Agility is improving, they can move sideways. Now you'll see your child using the swing and see-saw themselves. They often start jumping rope, skating, hitting balls with bats, and so on. Many children of this age enjoy learning to play organized activity such as football, swimming, karate, gymnastics, or dance.

Year 2 and beyond

Up to 5 are the formative years and are so very important. From now its continued refining and honing of those skills

How can we Help?

Here are some helpful principles we can use to help our children to develop.

Keep it varied. Practice makes permanent is a phrase I like to use a lot with my athletes. That means if you practice something well you'll become good at it, equally if you practice a move regularly but badly you'll be moving badly! This applies to the types of movement too. If you practice one movement a lot then you'll master that one movement but to the detriment of another. So keeping activity varied to include as many different focuses as possible will help your child develop into an all round physically capable little person.

Keep it Short. Our children are sponges for knowledge and learning. They also have a short attention span. There is no better way to put a child off doing something by making it tedious and long winded. They'll get bored, dislike it, and not make any progress. Keep it short, fun



Many children of this age enjoy learning to play organized activity such as football, swimming, karate, gymnastics, or dance.

and on their terms, and they'll be happy to do it again another time, time and time again.

KISS. "Keep it Super Simple". Whenever you're explaining an activity, helping them learn a movement or advising them on how to correct a movement, it is best to be as simple as possible. Be to the point. Don't use double negatives, sarcasm, obscure terms and check they understand.

When giving feed back stick to the focus chosen and avoid overloading your child with extra information. This will only lead to confusion and a negative experience. Stay on task until it is well practiced before moving to the next task.

Have Fun. Learning is

always better and more beneficial for your child and you when it's fun. Keep the game or activity really simple, add silly tasks, use animals or their favourite characters and only add rules when they hit the later years. Perhaps allow them to decide the goal of the game, keep that goal simple, be patient and enjoy it. If you're not enjoying it chances are your child isn't either.

In the end your child will develop according to both their DNA and their environmental stimulus, so as parents it's our job to expose them to as many movements as we can, keep it fun, simple and to enjoy the time we get to spend together.

Written by Coach George from Crossfit ASG





How parents can handle the challenges of going 'back to school' after a year away due to covid

I know we are half way through the school year but with new variant of Covid about, some children will be feeling the pressure of going back to school after the Christmas break.

Symptoms of stress and anxiety in children

Stress manifests differently within children compared to adults and so it's useful to become familiar with the signs. Symptoms can include an upset stomach or vague stomach pain, other physical symptoms with no obvious illness, new or recurrent bedwetting, nightmares, using the

toilet often, clinging (being unwilling to let an adult out of sight), anger, crying, whining, aggressive behaviour, stubborn behaviour, going back to behaviours from a younger age, beginning to lie, beginning to bully, overreacting to minor problems, skin picking, pulling hair out, nail biting,



and thumb sucking. Being aware of some of the signs will mean that the parent can respond quicker to any distress the child may be experiencing.

Comfort zone VS stretch zone

Take some time to notice your child's common stress factors. Being in tune with this can help you spot stressful situations early and reduce the stress more quickly. School can be stressful for children (and parents) because there are lots of new stretches all at once. What stretches do you expect your child to experience? Think about places, people, and

activities. Because your child will be very stretched at school, you can help them to rest and relax by encouraging them to do comfort zone activities when they get home.

Communication is key

The way that you

communicate with your child is critical for their own communication skills, ability to self-express and the development of the bond between you. When speaking about sources of challenge, stress, and anxiety you have an excellent opportunity to help your child into a confident problem solver. Active listening, learning to label emotions, acknowledging your child's emotions, encouraging realistic expectations, and praising progress are all key to enable a helpful adult response. It is important to pay attention to the good stuff, whilst also challenging the worry itself, before planning on how you can move forward. When you are discussing serious topics with your child, try to frame it in the positive – this means focusing on the good outcome that you want rather than the bad outcome you are trying to avoid.



Take some time to notice your child's common stress factors. Being in tune with this can help you spot stressful situations early and reduce the stress more quickly. School can be stressful for children (and parents) because there are lots of new stretches all at once

As children are also exposed to concerning news stories and conversations regarding Covid, it can be useful to have set questions, responses or statements ready to discuss with a worried child. For example, sentences reinforcing how germs are a normal part of life and that we can do things to stay healthy are very useful. Showing children basic hygiene practices before starting school such as how to wash their hands and use sanitiser can also help. This can be made into a fun activity by having a song / rhyme to support good hand washing.

Other activities and techniques

Exercise, laughter, affection, and mindfulness are great stress-busting tools. Techniques such as body scanning (taking time to notice how each part of the body is feeling), belly breathing (breathe in through their nose and out through their mouth, focusing on how their belly moves up and down), and object focusing (get your child to sit for a minute or two and stare at an object – focusing on one thing) can also help children to find their calm.

**Written by Youssef Darwich,
Co-Founder at Hapi Plan**



Christmas Decorations



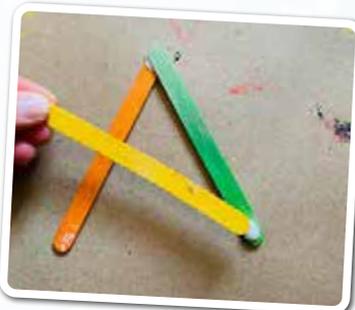
- What you'll need:**
- 5 x popsicle sticks
 - PVA Glue
 - Sequins
 - String

Follow these simple instructions to make a fun Christmas tree decoration using lollipop sticks. You can make lots of different shapes and use lots of bright colours. You can make them just for fun, or make them into special Christmas decorations for your family and friends.

By Lauren and Aquila



Step 1: Glue two popsicle sticks together at one end to make a triangle shape.



Step 2: Glue another popsicle stick as shown above to begin to create your star shape.



Step 3: Continue until you have created this star shape using all 5 popsicle sticks and leave to dry.



Step 4: Once dry, you can decorate your star with glitter and sequins (or anything else you like)

Step 5: Tie a piece of string through the top point of the star, and hang on your Christmas tree, or anywhere you'd like to spread some Christmas cheer.



For more fun crafts follow Aquila on @aquilaexplores



Snapchat

Parent / Carer Advice



13

What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the image-based social media platforms which is incredibly popular with children. One of the key features of Snapchat is that, by default, messages sent through Snapchat disappear seconds after they are viewed by the recipient. The minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 but it is a popular and widely used platform among children younger than this.

Safety Tips



As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Snapchat, the importance of not 'oversharing', and any issues they have faced.



The default privacy setting of 'My Friends' prevents children from sharing 'snaps' with users unknown to them. However, children may change this setting and make their posts public. Ensure your child is aware of the importance of maintaining strong privacy settings and check the settings your child has selected.



In the settings options, ensure your child has Snapmap set to 'ghost mode'. This will ensure that nobody can see their current location.



Ask your child if they know how to report or block a user who sends them anything that upsets them. This can be done by going to the friends list, selecting the person creating the issue and then selecting the gear icon.



Remind your child that although Snapchat automatically deletes images once seen, somebody can copy the image and share it with others.

Reasons for concern



Abuse and bullying

As messages disappear shortly after being read, Snapchat has become a popular tool for abuse such as online bullying as abusers feel they will not be held to account for messages posted once they are deleted. This is supported by the fact that if somebody takes a screenshot of a message posted on Snapchat then the person who posted it is informed that this has happened, making it more uncomfortable for people to take evidence of abuse they have suffered or witnessed.



The Snap Map

The Snap Map allows users to see the live location of their friends on a map. Cartoon-style avatars are used to represent people in a move that was clearly designed to be popular with younger users. This feature can result in children sharing their location (including effectively their home address) with individuals.



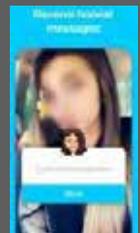
Addiction-inducing features

Children are naturally more prone to addictive behaviour than adults. As such, the inclusion of features such as 'Snap Streaks' (where two users share pictures with each other on consecutive days) encourages addictive behaviour. Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis. This can result in children increasing their daily usage of the app.



Risk of secondary apps

Snapchat allows users to link to secondary apps that can be used inside Snapchat. A recent concerning example is YOLO which allows users to offer people the opportunity to anonymously ask them questions. Such apps have led to online bullying and hate crime.



London

Times and events
may vary, please
check with venue
for confirmation

HACKNEY EMPIRE'S JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

Co-directed by Clive Rowe
and Tony Whittle

Till 2 Jan 2022

When happy-go-lucky Jack is tempted into selling his family's beloved cow for a fistful of magic beans, he finds himself tangled in an adventure of epic proportions! Join Jack on his journey up an enchanted beanstalk as he tries to outwit a rampaging giant, all with the help of his larger-than-life mum. Jack and the Beanstalk will get the festive season underway once more, with all the fun, magic, mischievous mayhem and razzle dazzle that Hackney audiences love and sadly missed last Christmas.

www.hackneyempire.co.uk

THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE FROZEN – THE MUSICAL

On Now till Mid 2022

Prepare to fall in love with Disney's FROZEN all over again, as a brand-new theatrical experience arrives in London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Incredible special effects, stunning costumes and jaw-dropping scenery bring Elsa and Anna's journey to life in a whole new way. And with all the beloved songs from the movie – as well as a few surprises from the writers behind Let it Go – you'll be transported to Arendelle from the moment the curtain rises.

www.lwtheatres.co.uk

LONDON ZOO

Experience the Magic of Christmas at London Zoo this December.

27 Nov - 3 Jan 2022

We've got everything you need for a jam-packed fun family day out this

Christmas. Santa's arrived early to London Zoo to do some research on what the animals would like for Christmas. But he'll need your help, because with over 20,000 animals there's far too much for just him and his elves to manage. Head out across the Zoo gathering information along the way, before reporting back to Mrs Claus in the polar post room, sending off your trail card to Santa and helping to make sure all the animals get the perfect present this Christmas!

www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo

WIZARDING WORLD – FANTASTIC BEASTS – THE WONDER OF NATURE

Natural History Museum

Now till 3 Jan 2022

Discover where the real world and the Wizarding World intertwine, and how the wonders of the natural world have inspired myths, legends and magical creatures for generations. Embark on a journey where not all is as it seems, where magical beasts and fantastic animals share abilities and behaviours that allow them to dazzle, attract and escape. www.nhm.ac.uk

DOCTOR WHO: TIME FRACTURE UNIT HQ, MAYFAIR

2 Jan 2022 - Choice of two entry times 12noon /12.45pm

Why not start the year with an adventure? Doctor Who: Time Fracture puts fans at the heart of the story, plunged into a journey across space and time. Featuring amazingly realistic worlds – audiences will discover that it's time to step up, be the hero and save the universe!

www.immersivedoctorwho.com

BEATRIX POTTER: DRAWN TO NATURE

V&A Museum

12 Feb 2022 - 8 Jan- 2023

Tickets on sale now

Realised through a major partnership between the V&A and the National Trust, the exhibition will celebrate the life and work of one of the best loved children's authors of the 20th century. Using playful staging and immersive design, it will showcase original watercolours, drawings and manuscripts as well as personal artefacts including letters, photographs, furniture and decorative art. It will take visitors of all ages on a journey to discover Potter's extraordinary and multifaceted life as a natural scientist, farmer and conservationist in the Lake District, bringing to light the places, people and animals that inspired some of Potter's most beloved characters, from Jemima Puddle-duck to Benjamin Bunny and Peter Rabbit and inviting visitors to celebrate her legacy and impact in both literature and the natural sciences. **Supported by Kathryn Uhde**

South East

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The Hexagon Reading

4 Dec - 3 Jan 2022

Come and join us for The Hexagon's spectacular family pantomime, Beauty and the Beast with children's television megastar Justin Fletcher as Billy Pastry alongside Reading's favourite Dame - Paul Morse as Nanny Pastry. Familiar faces also return with Karl Loxley as The Beast/ Prince and Sarah Giorgina as Beauty along with David J Higgins as Mr Crust. Rachel Delooze as The Entrantress. Ryan Alexander Full as Bear Botemme.

www.whatsonreading.com

HOME IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

An Oxford Playhouse production
Oxford Playhouse

9 - 31 Dec

Kayla's mum is away a lot, but Kayla doesn't mind. She's got Snowy, her teddy and Grandpa - plus Mum always sends postcards. But on Christmas Eve, Kayla decides to go on her own adventure. Join Kayla and Snowy as they journey around the world, making new friends with the animals they meet along the way! But what about Grandpa left behind? Will Kayla and Snowy get back home in time for Christmas? Take a starlight adventure with amazing puppets made by theatre company Smoking Apples. www.oxfordplayhouse.com

CINDERELLA

Mayflower Theatre Southampton

10 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

A strictly magical star cast has been announced with Craig Revel Horwood as The Wicked Stepmother, Debbie McGee as

The Fairy Godmother and the legendary Richard Cadell & Sooty in Mayflower Theatre's pantomime for 2021 - Cinderella.

www.mayflower.org.uk

CINDERELLA

New Theatre Royal Portsmouth

15 - 31 Dec

Join New Theatre Royal and Jordan Productions this Christmas for the most magical pantomime of them all - Cinderella! Left at home by the ugliest of sisters, Cinders cannot go to the ball. However, with the help of her Fairy Godmother and brilliant buffoonery from Buttons, the most exciting night of her life can begin.

www.newtheatreroyal.com

SING-A-LONG-A THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

Theatre Royal Brighton

8 Jan 2022

Sing-a-Long-a Productions, producers of Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music and Sing-a-Long-a Grease brings you their newest show, the smash hit film musical that everyone can't stop singing - The Greatest Showman! Look out 'cause here it comes.... The live host will teach everyone a unique set of dance moves, show you how to use our interactive prop bags, and also get you to practice your cheers, your boos and even a few wolf whistles. Fancy dress is strongly encouraged and full audience participation essential.

www.atgtickets.com/venues/theatre-royal-brighton

THE SMEDS AND THE SMOOS

Theatre Royal Winchester

22 - 23 Jan 2022

Based on the book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler Soar into space with this exciting adaptation of the award-winning book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler. On a far-off planet, Smeds and Smoos can't be friends. So when a young Smed and Smoo fall in love and zoom off into space together, how will their families get them back? Music, laughs and interplanetary adventures for everyone aged 3 and up, from Tall Stories - the company that brought you The Gruffalo and Room on the Broom live on stage.

www.theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk

RATTON SCHOOL: BUGSY MALONE

Royal Hippodrome Eastbourne

26 - 28 JAN 2022

Ratton's splurgetastic production of Bugsy Malone shoots into The Royal Hippodrome Theatre. Let the cast transport you to 1920s New York - A world of gangsters, speakeasies, hopes and dreams. Including hit numbers such as 'Fat Sam's Grand Slam', 'My Name is Tallulah' and 'Tomorrow', anybody who is anybody is sure to be there!

www.royalhippodrome.com



South West

SNOW WHITE AND THE HAPPY EVER AFTER BEAUTY SALON

Salisbury Playhouse

3 - 31 Dec 2021

In a magical 1950s fairytale wonderland, young apprentice Snow is working hard in her Aunt Trish's Beauty Salon. She curls the tails of the three little pigs, sharpens the teeth of the Big Bad Wolf, and perfectly sets Prince Charming's quiff. But, suddenly stumbling upon Aunt Trish's magic mirror puts Snow's life in peril. Will she be able to survive as she heads underground and attempts to carve her own path to a happily ever after? With toe-tapping live music, dazzling design, puppetry and laugh out loud entertainment, this Christmas Musical will delight the whole family!
www.wiltshirecreative.co.uk

ALADDIN

Weymouth Pavilion

11 Dec - 3 Jan 2022

Follow the adventures of our hero, Aladdin, as he makes his way to the Cave of Wonders and discovers the magic that lies within! Featuring stunning scenery, colourful costumes, toe-tapping tunes, comedy by the bucketful and eye-popping special effects, this is one pantomime you won't want to miss! Make this one of your three wishes this Christmas!
www.weymouthpavilion.com

MAKE YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

The Box Plymouth

18 - 19 Dec: 10am-11.30am,

12.30pm-2pm and 2.30pm-4pm

Make your very own Christmas decorations from fabric, felt and ribbons to hang on the tree! Use the incredible galleries at The

Box as inspiration to capture your imagination. Whether it will be the mammoth, Captain Scott's polar adventures, a snowy owl, these decorations can be treasured every year. www.theboxplymouth.com

THE HARDWICKE PLAYERS PRESENTS HANSEL AND GRETEL

The Kings Theatre Gloucester

13 - 15 Jan 22

It's panto time again – oh yes it is – but who is nibbling at Fairy Berry's house, and why is Granny Gertrude using fowl language? Why is Minnie always moaning and why is Heinz's sight a wonderful thing? Why has Goldilocks decided to Grabitt and what has caused Red Riding Hood to Legitt? Why is no one laughing at the Big Bad Wolf and why are the three little piggies following the yellow brick road? For the answers to all of these, and for plenty more fun and slapstick and songs make sure you make a date with "Hansel and Gretel". Go on, you know you want to really..... oh yes you do!
www.kingstheatregloucester.co.uk

SING-A-LONG-A THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

Princess Theatre, Torquay

30 Jan 2022

The live host will teach everyone a unique set of dance moves, show you how to use our interactive prop bags, and also get you to practice your cheers, your boos and even a few wolf whistles. Fancy dress is strongly encouraged and full audience participation essential.
www.atgtickets.com/venues/princess-theatre-torquay

THE BALLAD OF MULAN

Exeter Northcott Theatre

12 Feb 2022

Woman, warrior, legend.

For ten years Mulan, disguised as a man, has fought for the Chinese Empire. Now the fighting is coming to an end, one last battle and she will be going home – but can she return to her old life and become a woman again? A search for identity in a violent world. www.exeternorthcott.co.uk

COME WHAT MAY

Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre

13 Feb 2022

An all-singing, all-dancing extravaganza as you enter the secret world of one of the greatest movie-musicals of all time. Bursting at the seams with timeless classics including Come What May, Your Song, Diamonds Are A Girls Best Friend, Roxanne and Lady Marmalade plus hit songs from The Greatest Showman and other iconic movie musicals. Travel back in time as the children of the revolution take you on a thrilling non-stop journey into the sexy, disreputable and glamorous underworld of Paris It's a 'Spectacular, Spectacular' evening of unforgettable dancing, dreams, adventure and above all – love!

www.bournemouthpavilion.co.uk

SHREK

Everyman Theatre Cheltenham

Tue 22nd - Sat 26th Feb

Presented by Cheltenham Operatic and Dramatic Society. Following the story of the box office smash hit, Broadway's Shrek-tacular tale comes to Cheltenham in a musical make-ogre full of great songs, hilarious characters and fairytale magic! Far, far and away the most fun you'll have at the theatre this year.

www.everymantheatre.org.uk

Never miss an event, no matter where you are in the UK
this Summer.. we've got you covered!

North West

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Albert Halls

27 Nov- 31 Dec 2021

Beauty and the Beast starring Melody Thornton from the Pussycat Dolls & Dancing On Ice as Fairy Fabulous plus the hilarious Nick Newbould as French Franc & Mark Two as Dame Dolly Doughnut. The show features spectacular scenery, glittering costumes, amazing special effects and plenty of audience participation!
www.alberthalls-bolton.co.uk

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Epstein Theatre

16 Dec - 9 Jan 2022

Beauty And The Beast is sure to wow families this Christmastime with a tale of love and kindness. Audiences will go on a magical adventure during the family friendly pantomime. The timeless story of Belle, a beautiful young woman who falls in love with the most unexpected of princes, who has been cursed to look like a hideous beast. Will the Beast learn to love and be loved? Will the spell be broken in time for all to live happily ever after? Find out in this spectacular production with all the Regal Entertainments high production values, great sets, beautiful costumes, great comedy moments all with a sprinkling of Christmas magic.
www.epsteintheatre.co.uk

GOLDOLOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS

St Helens Theatre Royal

10 Dec 2021 - 9 Jan 2022

The circus comes to town this Christmas in Regal Entertainments' magical pantomime, Goldilocks and the Three Bears. It promises to be just right with its mix of unbelievable

circus tricks, madcap comedy capers, Regal Entertainments high production values, and a smash-hit selection of chart hits to sing and dance along to.
www.sthelenstheatreroyal.com

THE SNOW QUEEN

The Atkinson

13 - 23 Jan 2022

All Souls Dramatic Club return to The Atkinson with a brand new adaptation of the classic Hans Christian Andersen tale, The Snow Queen. The local amateur theatre company have been performing in Southport for over 60 years and are now back with the biggest of bangs. The award winning production team and 40 strong cast promise to bring a show full of family friendly fun, frolics, friends and frost! It's panto time!
www.theatkinson.co.uk

DO SOMETHING SATURDAYS

FACT

15 Jan: 10am - 11am or 11am - 12pm

29 Jan: 10am - 11am or 11am - 12pm

5 Feb: 10am - 11am or 11am - 12pm

Imagine, create and discover at FACT with free workshops for all the family. Explore the galleries with an activity trail, play video games on the cinema screen or explore a new world with virtual reality. Visit fact.co.uk to find out when the next Do Something Saturdays takes place. www.fact.co.uk

SPACE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

Liverpool Cathedral

18 - 27 Feb 2022 and start at

18:00/18:15 each evening.

As darkness descends, the lights will go up at Liverpool Cathedral in February 2022, as the building becomes transformed by a light and

sound show like no other.

Travel through space, light and time without leaving the inside of the architectural splendour of the Cathedral building. A breath-taking installation comes to life after dark with the stunning architecture of the Cathedral as you are surrounded by the awe-inspiring wonders of the universe.

www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/space-the-universe-and-everything

EXCITING SCIENCE

Albert Halls

16th February 2022

This Brand New, Exciting & Educational show will amaze & astound all ages from 4 years & upwards, as we put the "Exciting" back into Science. So, stand clear and prepare for action, as this show is full of Wiz, bang, pop And splurt. Exciting Science – Prepare to be amazed!

www.alberthalls-bolton.co.uk



West Midlands

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Belgrade Theatre Coventry

24 Nov - 8 Jan 2022

Things are looking bleak for beautiful Belle! Kidnapped by a frightening beast, she is locked away in a terrifying castle with little hope of escape. Will the Beast change his ways in time? And will Belle ever get back home? There's only one way to find out! www.belgrade.co.uk

FREE FAUX ICE RINK

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre
Queen Square, Wolverhampton

1 - 23 Dec

Book your 30-minute skating session, free for all the family. We are 'ice-static' to bring you a synthetic rink that's pretty close to skating on the real thing, here in the heart of the city at Wolverhampton's Queen Square. With skates available in all sizes, as well as themed skating aids to help first timers it is great fun for all ages. (Children under 8 years must be accompanied by an adult)

www.grandtheatre.co.uk

DEAR SANTA

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

Birmingham Hippodrome

13 - 24 Dec

Santa is determined to deliver the most fantastic Christmas present to Sarah, but he doesn't get it right straight away! With the help of his cheeky Elf, he finally settles on something 'perfect', just in time for Christmas Eve. From the author of the well-loved children's book Dear Zoo, Rod Campbell, comes Dear Santa and it's LIVE!

www.birminghamhippodrome.com

FAMILY LEGO SESSIONS

Birmingham Science Museum

28 - 31 Dec 2021

Join the learning team in Thinktank's LEGO Lab this holiday as we get creative with lots of different building challenges to try! Sessions start at 12.30pm, 13.30pm and 3pm and last 45 minutes. The sessions are designed for families with children age 3 plus. Sessions costs £2.50 per person, in addition to the Thinktank admission charge. You will need to book a ticket for all adults and children attending (including those aged 1-3).

www.birminghammuseums.org.uk

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

Tamworth Assembly Rooms

7 - 16 Jan 2022

Join the Tamworth Pantomime Company this January for a magical family adventure. Snow White is accompanied by the hilarious Nurse Nelly, hapless Muddles, the Evil Queen and of course, seven dwarves, for fun, singing, slapstick and romance. The show stars Tamworth's Dame Alex Farrell, local performer Olivia Shepherd, funny man Sam Beech and the baddie you love to hate, Terry Batham, plus a whole host of well-known faces.

www.tamworthassemblyrooms.co.uk

SCHOOL OF ROCK

The Alexandra, Birmingham

31 Jan - 5 Feb 2022

School of Rock is the global hit musical based on the iconic movie starring Jack Black. Wannabe rock star Dewey Finn is cast out by his dive-bar bandmates and finds himself in desperate need of cash.

Featuring 14 new songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber, all the original songs from the movie, and a band of insanely talented kids that play live every show, School of Rock will warm your heart and blow you away in equal measure.

www.atgtickets.com/shows/school-of-rock/the-alexandra-theatre-birmingham/

HI DE HI

The Core Theatre Solihull

31 Jan - 2 Feb 2022

Based on the TV show of the same name, all of your favourite characters are there including Jeremy, Gladys, Ted, Spike, Barry, Yvonne and Peggy. It's the start of a new season and founder Joe Maplin announces that he is setting up a camp in the Bahamas and needs female yellowcoats to go and work there. The annual 'Miss Yellowcoat' competition will decide who. Imagine the rivalry!

www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

East Midlands

TREASURE ISLAND

Derby Theatre

Now till 31 Dec

Theresa Heskins' award-winning adaptation of Treasure Island is inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale of buried treasure and buccaneers. Brimming with a bountiful supply of live music, sumptuous sets and costumes, drama and aho me hearties, this is a thrilling theatrical voyage for all ages to embark on. Batten down the hatches and book now for the truly wonderful Treasure Island - a pirate-filled production perfect for the whole family. www.derbytheatre.co.uk

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Mansfield Palace Theatre

27 Nov - 2 Jan 2022

Mansfield Palace Theatre has an excellent reputation for staging wonderful fun family pantomimes. Sleeping Beauty will be no exception to this! Book now to secure your preferred seats and date and be ready to enjoy this wonderfully wicked pant! Starring: Amy Thompson - Channel 5, Milkshake presenter Adam Moss - Returning comic Rebecca Wheatley - Casualty
www.mansfieldpalacetheatre.ticketsolve.com

DICK WHITTINGTON

Royal & Derngate Northampton

10 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Dick Whittington is the purrrfect pantomime adventure that follows our hero to seek his fame, fortune and happiness in London Town. With help from the magical Fairy Bowbells and his trusty feline friend, what could possibly go wrong? This year's show

will star infamous TV baddie Ricky Champ (EastEnders) as the dastardly King Rat, children's favourite Phil Gallagher (Cbeebies' Mister Maker),
www.royalallderngate.co.uk

SHREK THE MUSICAL

Loughborough Town Hall

25 - 29 Jan 2022

Join Shrek and his loyal steed, Donkey, as they set off to rescue the beautiful, yet feisty, Princess Fiona. Add the hilarious, vertically-challenged Lord Farquaad, a love-struck dragon, a gang of fairy-tale misfits and a biscuit with attitude and you've got an irresistible mix of adventure, laughter and romance, guaranteed to delight audiences of all ages!
www.loughboroughtownhall.co.uk

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Theatre Royal Birmingham

1 - 5 Feb 2022

Direct from London, the smash hit production of C.S. Lewis' classic The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe Step through the wardrobe into the enchanted kingdom of Narnia. Join Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter as they wave goodbye to wartime Britain and embark on the most magical of adventures in a frozen, faraway land where they meet a Faun, talking Beavers, the noble king of Narnia, Aslan, and the coldest, most evil of all, The White Witch. www.trch.co.uk

OI FROG AND FRIENDS BASED ON THE BOOKS BY KES GRAY & JIM FIELD

Curve Theatre Leicester

16 - 20 Feb 2022

It's a new day at Sittingbottom school and FROG is looking for a place to sit,

but CAT has other ideas and DOG is doing as he's told. Who knew there were so many rhyming rules and what will happen when FROG is in charge? Join FROG, CAT and DOG in Oi Frog & Friends!, the Olivier Award nominated action-packed stage adaptation of Kes Gray and Jim Field's bestselling books. Expect songs, puppets, laughs and more rhymes than you can shake a chime at.
www.curveonline.co.uk

OLIVER!

Palace Theatre Newark

1 - 2 Mar 2022

New Youth Theatre present the award-winning musical Oliver! - the adaptation of the classic Dickens novel Oliver Twist, in which spring to life with some of the most memorable characters and songs ever to hit the stage.
www.palacetheatretickets.com

ZOG AND THE FLYING DOCTORS

New Theatre Royal Lincoln

14 - 15 Mar 2022

Based on Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's bestselling sequel, Freckle Productions (Zog, Stick Man, Tiddler & Other Terrific Tales, Tabby McTat) bring the creative team behind Zog, Emma Kilbey and Joe Stilgoe, back together for this truly modern take on the classic fairy tale.
www.newtheatreroyal.lincoln.ticketsolve.com

Yorkshire & Humberside

ROBIN HOOD

Lawrence Batley Theatre Huddersfield
3 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Ready, aim, fire! For our new pantomime Robin Hood coming to Huddersfield December 2021. The townsfolk of Nottingham are trembling in their boots as the big bad Sheriff of Nottingham taxes them out of existence. Who can save them but Robin Hood... and a very sassy Maid Marion! With jaw-dropping effects, a side-splitting script and more fun than you can shoot an arrow at, come and join Robin and all his Merry Men for the panto adventure of the year. Following the success of Sleeping Beauty and Aladdin, Robin Hood is set to hit the mark with all the mischief and musical hilarity we come to expect from pantomime at the Lawrence Batley Theatre.
www.thelbt.org

DISNEY'S BEDKNOBS AND BROOMSTICKS

Leeds Grand Theatre
8 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Enter a world of magic and fantasy as Disney's classic movie Bedknobs and Broomsticks makes its world premiere as an exciting new stage musical. With the original songs by the legendary Sherman Brothers (Mary Poppins, The Jungle Book, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang), including Portobello Road, The Age Of Not Believing, The Beautiful Briny, and new music and lyrics by Neil Bartram and book by Brian Hill; Bedknobs and Broomsticks will be brought to life by award-winning theatre-makers Candice Edmunds and Jamie Harrison.
www.leedsheritagetheatres.com

CINDERELLA

York Theatre Royal
10 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

In this timeless, rags to riches story, expect magical transformations, sparkling sets, stunning costumes, catchy songs and heaps of hilarity. The brand new pantomime will be a fabulous fun-filled treat for your whole family. Join us for a lavish, spectacular production where everyone can have a ball. Starring CBeebies Andy's Dinosaur Adventures and Andy and the Oddsocks' Andy Day(Dandini), The Travelling Pantomime's Faye Campbell (Cinderella) and Robin Simpson(Manky), Paul Hawkyard (Mardy), Crackerjack's Max Fulham (Buttons), Benjamin Lafayette (Prince Charming) and Sarah Leatherbarrow (Fairy). www.yorktheatroyal.co.uk

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

Hull New Theatre
11 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Mirror, Mirror on The Wall, Hull New Theatre's panto will be the fairest of them all! Starring musical theatre and Coronation Street star Faye Brookes, panto favourite Neil Hurst and the ultimate panto dame Nigel Ellacott this year's Hull New Theatre panto will be the ultimate fairy-tale adventure for you and your family. Brought to you by Crossroads Pantomimes, the world's biggest panto producer, you can be sure of a show packed with special effects, comedy in abundance, beautiful costumes and stunning sets.
www.hulltheatres.co.uk

GANGSTA GRANNY

Lyceum Theatre
19 - 22 Jan 2022

From the acclaimed producers of Billionaire Boy and Awful Auntie comes the award-winning West End production of this amazing story by David Williams, the UK's best-selling author for children.
www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk

EXCITING SCIENCE

Theatre Royal Wakefield
22 Feb 2022

Warning... warning... extreme fun alert! This brand new, exciting and educational show will amaze and astound all ages from four years and upwards, as we put the exciting back into science. With fun and fact-filled experiments, watch in amazement as we recreate a volcanic eruption, turn a vacuum cleaner into a missile launcher or take aim at you with our smoke blaster! So stand clear and prepare for action, as this show is full of wiz, bang, pop... and splurt!
www.theatroyalwakefield.co.uk

DICK WHITTINGTON

The Bradford Playhouse
23rd Feb 2022 - 26th Feb 2022

Join us in this traditional Panto which is guaranteed to be fun filled family entertainment. Whether you're young or old there's something for you. They say "When you're tired of London, you are tired of life" here at Drama Unlimited we say 'When you're tired of Panto, you've forgotten how to enjoy yourself.' So let fairy Bow Bells sprinkle her fairy magic on you this season and come enjoy this fantastic Pantomime adventure!
www.bradfordplayhouse.org.uk

Never miss an event, no matter where you are in the UK
this Summer.. we've got you covered!

East of England

ALADDIN

Cambridge Arts Theatre

2 Dec - 9 Jan 2022

All your wishes shall be granted this Christmas as Cambridge Arts Theatre's spectacular family pantomime Aladdin flies into town on a magical carpet ride. This enchanting tale is brimming with singalong songs, sparkling costumes and side-splitting jokes for the whole family to enjoy. Christmas in Cambridge just wouldn't be complete without the Arts Theatre pantomime and Aladdin promises to be bigger and better than ever before.

www.cambridgeartstheatre.com

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Kings Lynn Corn Exchange

9 Dec - 31 Dec

A baddie wanting boos, goodies with some gags, a heroine in hot water... but what has happened to the Handsome Prince? Join us for a spectacular adventure as Dame Dotty and son, Potty Pierre cause chaos at the chateau. <http://www.kingslynncornexchange.co.uk>

MOTHER GOOSE

Pavilion Theatre Gorleston

9 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Join Mother Goose and her new friend Priscilla in the quest for true happiness; dancing around greed, good and evil, wholesome gags and ... golden eggs! Mother Goose is the most classic tale of rags to riches with all the ingredients of a great pantomime adventure including magic, romance, comedy and song all wrapped up in this year's egg-stra special spectacular featuring colourful costumes and a talented cast. www.gorlestonpavilion.ticketsolve.com

ALADDIN

Regent Theatre Ipswich

17 Dec - 2 Jan 2022

Heading to Ipswich on a magic carpet will be Home and Away's Nic Westaway as Aladdin, X-Factor runner-up Marcus Collins as Genie, Ipswich panto favourite Mike 'Squeaky' McClean as Wishee Washee and making her professional debut is Selena Barron as Princess Jasmine. Other cast include Emily Galvin as Spirit of the Ring, Darren Machin as Widow Twankey, Andrew Goddard as Abanazar and Glyn Dilley as Emperor. www.ipswichtheatres.co.uk

THE ADDAMS FAMILY MUSICAL COMEDY

Milton Keynes Theatre

11 - 15 Jan 2022

Everyone's favourite kooky family are coming back on stage in this spectacular musical comedy from the writers of multi award-winning hit musical JERSEY BOYS, with music and lyrics by TONY AWARD nominated Andrew Lippa and starring Joanne Clifton (Strictly Come Dancing and The Rocky Horror Show) as Morticia. Join them, Uncle Fester, Lurch, Pugsley and more for a heart-warming story of love, family and friendship... with a twist! www.atgtickets.com/shows/the-addams-family/milton-keynes-theatre

THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

Mercury Theatre Colchester

27 Jan - 6 Feb 2022

Let Colchester Operatic Society sweep you away with the magic of this truly unforgettable musical as they perform this powerful story and fill the stage with beautiful choral harmonies. This local amateur dramatic company are

well known for producing professional quality shows at this theatre and are excited to be back on the Mercury stage after performing Oliver! in collaboration with us in Autumn 2019 at Mercury at Abbey Field.

www.mercurytheatre.co.uk

OI FROG AND FRIENDS!

Norwich Theatre

9 - 13 Feb 2022

Oi Frog & Friends! Live on Stage Based on the bestselling books by Kes Gray and Jim Field. It's a new day at Sittingbottom school and FROG is looking for a place to sit, but CAT has other ideas and DOG is doing as he's told. Who knew there were so many rhyming roles and what will happen when FROG is in charge?

Join FROG, CAT and DOG in this Olivier Award nominated action-packed stage adaptation of Kes Gray and Jim Field's bestselling books.

www.norwichtheatre.org

ZOG AND THE FLYING DOCTORS

New Theatre Peterborough

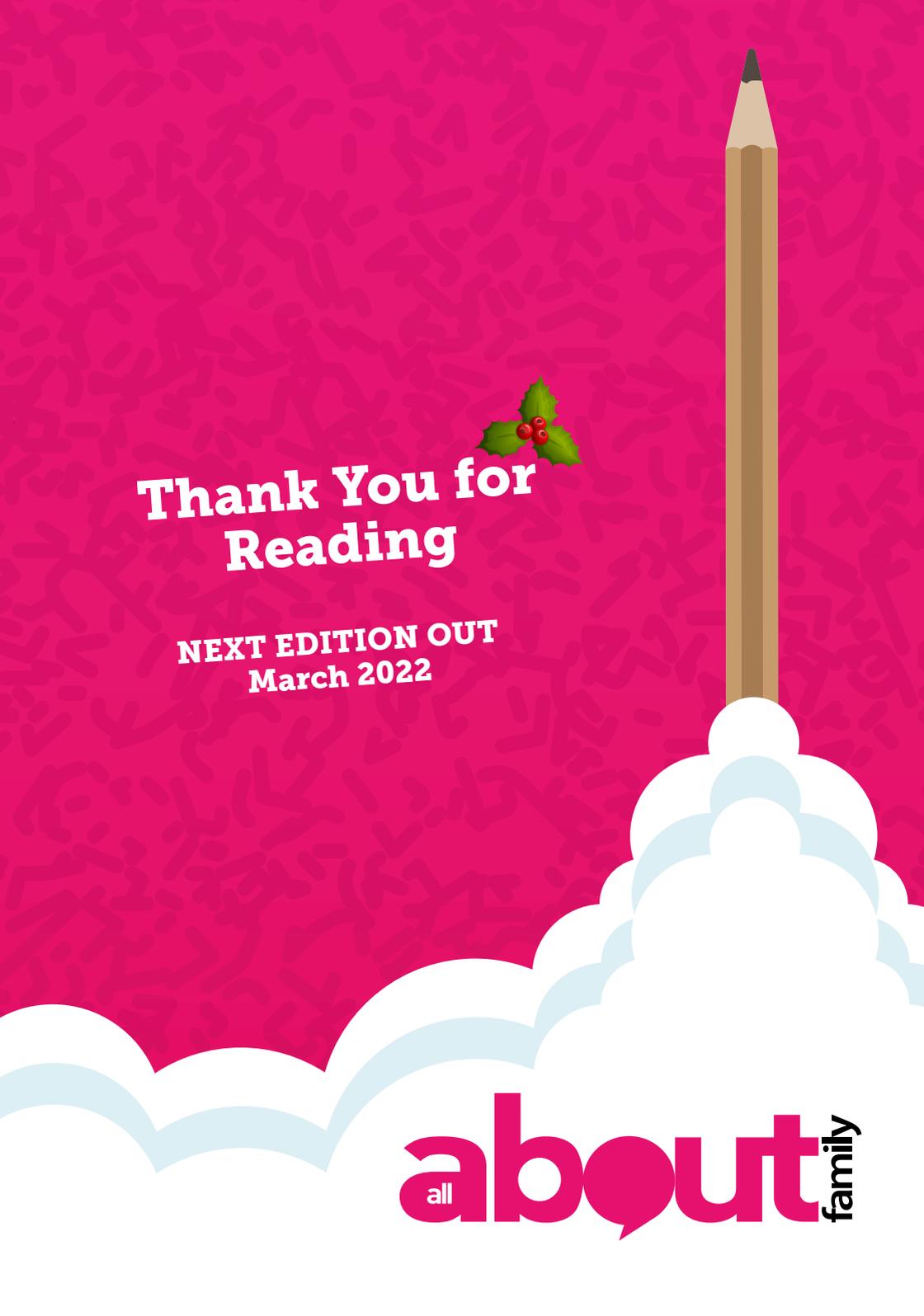
11 - 13 Mar 2022

Based on Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's bestselling sequel.

Zog, super keen student turned air-ambulance, still lands with a crash-bang-thump. Together with his Flying Doctor crew, Princess Pearl and Sir Gadabout, they tend to a sunburnt mermaid, a unicorn with one too many horns and a lion with the flu. However, Pearl's uncle, the King, has other ideas about whether princesses should be doctors, and she's soon locked up in the castle back in a crown and a silly frilly dress!

www.newtheatre-peterborough.com





**Thank You for
Reading**

**NEXT EDITION OUT
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all about family