

HENLEY

Life

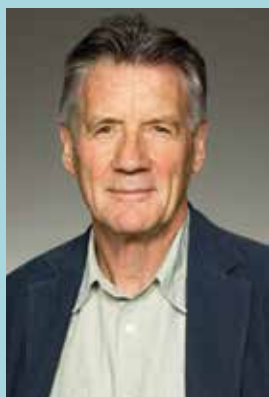
henleylife.co.uk | September 2025

The Right Choice

10-page
independent
education guide

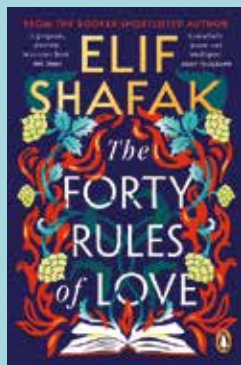
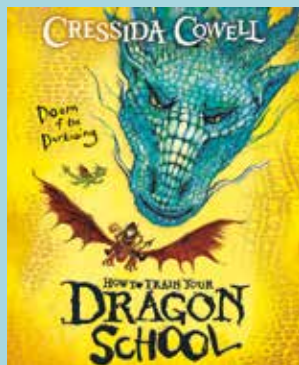
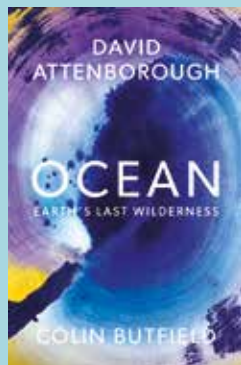
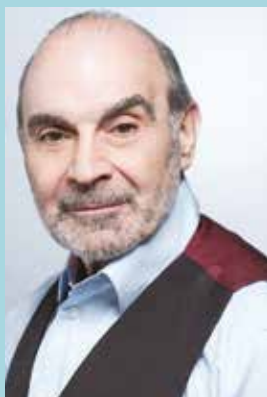
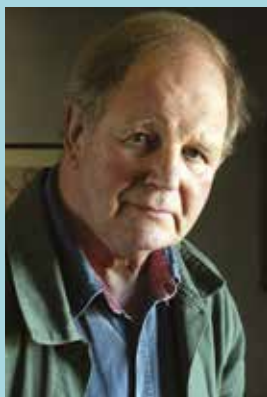
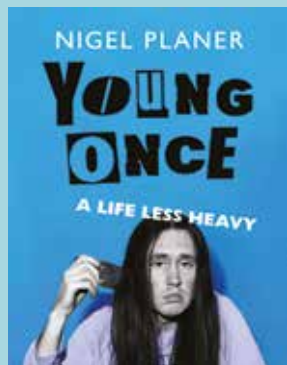
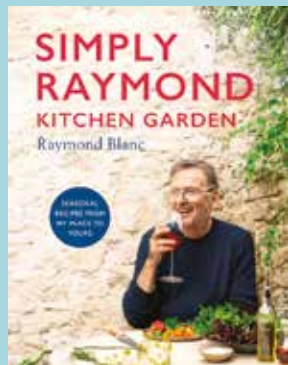
Featuring

The Henley Farm and Country Show



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HENLEYLife

HENLEYLife is a Baylis Community Media CIC
publication, hand delivered to more than 10,000
homes in South Oxfordshire and Berkshire

EDITOR Phil Simms

psimms@henleystandard.co.uk

SUB-EDITOR John Jacklin

DESIGNER Nick Hughes

nhughes@higgsgroup.co.uk

FEATURES WRITER Amanda Stewart

amandastewart@henleylife.co.uk

WHAT'S ON Natalie Aldred

naldred@henleystandard.co.uk

ADVERTISING SALES

Abi Streeton

astreeton@henleystandard.co.uk

Piers Thompson

pthompson@henleystandard.co.uk

Karen Lamming

klamming@henleystandard.co.uk

Judith Toner

jtoner@henleystandard.co.uk

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES
CALL 01491 419419

PUBLISHER Baylis Community Media CIC

PRINTED BY Warners (Midlands) plc.

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Justine McCool
Partner
Head of Litigation



Megan Wood
Solicitor
Litigation



Laura Beales
Paralegal
Litigation

Welcome



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SEPTEMBER is a time of new beginnings. Children start or return to school and the older ones set out on a new voyage of discovery, whether it be at college, university or the world of work.

In this issue we have a special guide to all the best local schools that will help you make the Right Choice. The headmaster of one of those schools, Stephen Blundell, of St Mary's Preparatory School, is the subject of this month's My Henley Life. He provides an insight into his career and his favourite things.

Keeping with the education theme, Amanda Stewart interviews Nick Armitage, the headmaster of Rupert House School in Henley, who tells about how he broke into the sector, as well as the time he appeared in a Steven Spielberg movie...

Farming also features, with a preview of this year's Henley Farm and Country Show and we speak to Stephen Doble, the fourth generation of his family to farm around Shiplake. He has 1,200 acres under his custodianship.

It's also gynaecological cancer awareness month and our women's health columnist, Dr Shilpa McQuillan, advises to listen to and know your body to help you stay healthy for longer.

As ever, we also provide the latest What's On guide for events around the town.

We hope you enjoy.

The Henley Life team

There's no Harm in Trying

Life in our care home might not be what you expect. Pop in and see for yourself.

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Camilla



Sally



Kezia



Ismail

Did you know that the health of your mouth could be affecting your entire body? At **Blandy House Dental Practice**, we believe that **great dental care goes far beyond a clean smile**. It's about supporting your **whole-body health** — and that begins with understanding the powerful link between your oral health and general wellbeing.

The Mouth-Body Connection

Oral health is more than just teeth and gums. One of the most common oral health issues — **periodontitis**, a chronic gum disease — is now known to be a key contributor to **inflammation throughout the body**. The bacteria that thrive in the gums during periodontitis can **enter the bloodstream**, travel to distant organs, and **trigger or worsen serious conditions**, including:

- **Cardiovascular disease** — Oral bacteria may contribute to inflammation and plaque in the arteries.
- **Diabetes** — Gum disease can impair

blood sugar control and make diabetes harder to manage.

- **Rheumatoid arthritis** — Shared inflammatory pathways mean each condition can worsen the other.
- **Gut conditions** — Oral bacteria can travel to the gut, disrupting the microbiome and contributing to conditions like inflammatory bowel disease and colorectal cancer.
- **Respiratory infections, pregnancy complications, and even Alzheimer's disease** have also been linked to oral bacteria.

And the relationship works both ways — **systemic diseases can also impact oral health**, creating a cycle of inflammation and worsening symptoms.

What Makes Blandy House Different?

At Blandy House, we treat each of our patients as individuals. Our experienced and gentle team of hygienists and therapists — **Camilla, Sally, Kezia, and Ismail** work closely with our dentists to provide individualised care that

takes a holistic approach. Your dentist may recommend that you visit one of our hygienists who will then create a personalised treatment plan that might involve regular hygiene appointments, lifestyle and dietary guidance, and a long-term strategy for keeping both your mouth healthy which will contribute to keeping your body healthy.

We understand that a trip to the dentist can be nerve-racking. That's why we take extra time to ensure you feel comfortable, supported, and empowered at every visit.

A visit to the hygienist is no longer just about having a scale and polish. At Blandy House, we embrace a modern, holistic approach that includes you in every step of the process. We're here to listen, to care, and to guide you toward better oral overall health.

Take the first step towards a healthier you.

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Diary Dates

SEPTEMBER 2025

**THURSDAY 4TH TO
SUNDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER**

Unnatural Selection

RIVER & ROWING MUSEUM



Artist Izzy Smith has created a series of natural history drawings with a difference. Her artworks can be viewed in "Unnatural Selection", the last art exhibition to take place at the River & Rowing Museum in Mill Meadows.

For more information, visit rrm.co.uk

FRIDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

Unravelling Wilburys

KENTON THEATRE



An homage to the Travelling Wilburys, which comprised George Harrison, Tom Petty, Roy Orbison, Bob Dylan and Jeff Lynne, this band's show features Handle with Care, The End of the Line, The

Devil's Been Busy, Tweeter and the Monkey Man, many more and a great line in comedy banter. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £22.75.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk

TUESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER

Rebecca Poole (alias Purdy) Quartet

CROOKED BILLET, STOKE ROW

Rebecca and her band will go on a musical journey through the greatest love songs of the jazz age, alongside her own, self-penned originals. There is a full regular menu and tickets cost £30 as part of a music cover charge.



For more information, call the gastropub in Newlands Lane on (01491) 681048 or visit www.thecrookedbillet.co.uk

FRIDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER

The Neil Diamond Story

KENTON THEATRE



Bob Drury has received accolades from the Las Vegas crowd as one of the top vocal tributes in the world to Neil Diamond. In addition to Vegas, he has performed in Nashville and across Europe and the UK. Songs covered include Sweet Caroline, Cracklin' Rosie, America, Love on the Rocks, Play Me,

Hello Again, Forever in Blue Jeans and Beautiful Noise. Tickets for the show, which starts at 7.30pm, cost £29.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk

**MONDAY 15TH TO
TUESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER**

The Bay City Rollers

CROOKED BILLET, STOKE ROW



Fifty years ago, the Scottish group's much-loved anthem Bye, Bye, Baby became the bestselling single in the UK. They have gone on to sell more than 300 million albums worldwide and as their fan base grew, it became known as Rollermania. So grab the tartan and come and listen to original guitarist Stuart "Woody" Wood, singer Ian Thomson, bassist Mikey Smith, keyboardist and singer John McLaughlin and drummer Jamie McGrory. Tickets cost £50 as part of a music cover charge.

For more information, call (01491) 681048 or visit www.thecrookedbillet.co.uk

**THURSDAY 18TH TO
SATURDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER**

West Wycombe Chamber Music Festival at Hambleden

CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, HAMBLEDEN

Organised by artistic director, Lawrence Power, the music festival

welcomes celebrated musicians including Vilde Frang, Nicolas Altstaedt, Benjamin Marquies-Gilmore, Timothy Ridout, Simon Crawford-Phillips, John Myerscough and others. There will be five events over the three-day festival, which has a theme of "Across Mountains and Valleys".

For more information, visit westwycombemusic.org.uk

MONDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER

Nettlebed Folk Club presents Seth Lakeman

THE VILLAGE CLUB, NETTLEBED

The autumn season of shows starts with Mercury Music Prize-nominated folk artist Seth Lakeman. His latest studio album, *The Granite Way*, came out in February and is a collection of songs staying true



to his roots and encompassing ancient folklore and stories from the West Country. Tickets for the show cost £24 in advance, £25 on the door and the show starts at 7.30pm.

For more information, call 01628 636620 (between 10am and 8pm only) or visit www.nettlebedfolkclub.co.uk

ONGOING EVENTS

TO SATURDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER

Don't Rock the Boat

THE MILL AT SONNING

Directed by Sally Hughes, Robin Hawdon's light comedy is set on *The Bunty*, a converted barge moored on the River Thames. Property tycoon Arthur Bullhead invites the local planning committee chairman and his wife and teenage daughter aboard. Arthur is trying to secure his dream deal, but will everything go to plan?

For more information, call the box office on 0118 969 8000 or visit millatsonning.com



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A wealth of experience leads to a life in education

BY AMANDA STEWART



A ROLE in a Steven Spielberg blockbuster is among the credits on the notable curriculum vitae of the headmaster of Rupert House School in Henley.

Nick Armitage, 49, was a student when he and a friend played extras in the blockbuster film *Saving Private Ryan* during three weeks of action at a disused airbase in Hertfordshire.

They portrayed Second World War soldiers injured during the allied forces' landings in Normandy and their film make-up was a gory reflection of the servicemen's suffering.

On the last day of filming they drove home without having had their make-up removed. It was a shock for one star of the film, Tom Hanks, who jogged passed their car as they left the set.

"It was the usual student high jinks," Nick laughs. "I was surprised that as we drove along the motorway looking like the 'living dead' that we didn't cause an accident."

The make-up caper is all part of the work-hard play-hard

attitude Nick brings to Rupert House — on a wall in his office hangs a plaque that says simply: "Why Not!"

Nick, who was born in London and grew up and enjoyed a "very happy childhood and country life" in Kingsclere, Hampshire, while being educated at Oundle School in Northampton, took a roundabout route into education.

"My favourite subjects were art, English and history and, although I'm not sure if I was a good pupil, I loved my time at school and hope that I made the most of all opportunities — I was certainly busy on all fronts and never stopped.

"And at that time I wanted to work in advertising."

Nick spent two terms of his gap year, before taking a degree in art history at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, working at a boys' prep school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. "I loved it, and following that I knew that I wanted to teach at some point," he says.

"I was fortunate to gain a place on the graduate scheme at one of the big advertising agencies in London and spent five years working in that world."

Nick's life altered course after meeting Polly, 50, who would



ABOVE: Joseph Boxhall, 4th Officer, Nick's Great Great Uncle, who was asked by the Captain to row one of the last lifeboats away from the Titanic — and that's where the family's rowing history began.



Nick speaking at the school's Centenary Ball in 2024.

become his wife. They both attended the same church in London, helped serve food to homeless people under Vauxhall Bridge and both hold similar values and love sport, community and the countryside.

"When my wife and I got engaged, we had the serious conversation about where we wanted to live and what we wanted to do, and at that point decided that we did not want to stay in London and that I wanted to become a teacher," Nick says.

The couple moved to Cambridge where Nick studied for a post-graduate certificate in education. "We spent the first year of our married life in the city. It was great fun and idyllic in equal measure."

Nick and Polly, a renowned flautist, have a son Zac, 21, a daughter Mamie, 15, and another son Claudie, 7. Their other daughter, Bonnie, died in a riding accident in Gloucester when she was just nine years old. Bonnie would have been aged 19 this year.

She was a pupil at St Hugh's Prep School in Faringdon, Oxfordshire, where Nick was the deputy head and housemaster after joining in 2014 from Beaudesert Park School in Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, where he taught for eight years.

He says: "I had always considered it a calling to work with children and after we lost Bonnie even more so. That old

saying that it takes a village to bring up a child is one that I have always believed in and those school communities especially so. We received tremendous support from the school communities we lived and taught in and they and our church community helped us through the loss of Bonnie."

The family moved to South Oxfordshire and Nick, who rowed for Cambridge in the lightweight Boat Race in 2004, to Rupert House during the pandemic in 2020. "I had driven passed Rupert House many times when competing at the regatta and had always wondered what was behind its Big Blue Door," he says.

"When the job came up, friends of ours who had been pupils at Rupert House told us what a special place it was and so encouraged me to apply. Everyone I met at that first interview was delightful and it became clear that it was a wonderful community that I was very keen to be part of.

"I was fortunate that Claire Lynas, the previous head, had done a tremendous job of bringing the school through the first lockdown very strongly, so when we needed to go back to remote learning in the January after I started, it was a case of just needing to tweak what had previously been in place."

Nick has immersed himself in the community of Henley and South Oxfordshire. He is heavily involved with Education Henley, which works with local clubs, charities and businesses for the benefit of children and in support of the local community.

He is also a governor at Ewelme Church of England School. "It is a real privilege to be a governor — our youngest child attended the pre-school. It is the oldest continuously inhabited primary school certainly in the UK, dating back to 1437, with all the challenges that such a listed building brings, but just as we have at Rupert House, there is a passionate team there to support the school."

He also has a fundraising role with The Friends of Ewelme Church. "It exists to support the church through different fundraising events, which I help to organise, from talks to

Cont'd

'That old saying that it takes a village to bring up a child is one that I have always believed in and those school communities especially so'



Always happy to be involved and running the guantlet of electrical wires with the Rupert House staff and parent team taking part in the Tough Mudder.

concerts — one of which Polly played in — to a ceilidh in the village hall in November.”

He is also on the advisory board of the charity Nomad, based in the D2 Centre in the Henley town square, which, among many services, runs youth counseling support work and operates a food bank. “We have a long-standing link with the charity as a school.”

Nick is candid about the toughest aspect of being the head of a school: it is “switching off”. Hence, he still runs and is hoping one day to take part in the Marathon des Sables — the gruelling six-day race through the Sahara Desert.

His sporting achievements extend to an Iron Man race in Lancashire, a half-marathon and a marathon, and he says he loves rowing and running in equal measures. He is a member of Wallingford Rowing Club despite injuring a leg jumping off a bench fifteen years ago.

He holds a running club every Friday morning that Rupert House parents can join in with. “The family has a cocker spaniel, Suli, who comes into work with me on Fridays and loves taking part in the running.”

Despite the hectic schedule Nick has never regretted his move into education. “I have been very fortunate to learn and work under some amazing heads over the years, each of which has helped to shape my own leadership style.”

“I try to lead by example and role my sleeves up as much as I am able to, from taking break duties, doing some teaching in Years 5 & 6, to running model making and rowing clubs and helping with trips.

“It is important to be humble and to appreciate the feedback people give. It is also important to have fun — such as making a fool of myself singing I’m a Believer as part of a staff, parent and pupil band at our picnic concert — and, as one former head said to me, wear the jacket lightly, which means to not let issues and concerns get to me too much.

“Having exercise, art and music as hobbies keep me sane, as do my family, friends and faith. We go to Trinity Church in Henley.”

As for Henley, would it be an advertising man’s dream? “I love everything about Henley.

“It is an incredible community, which is very

supportive of the work we do as a school and the work we do together as Education Henley, which is a partnership between all the schools.”

Nick adds: “Henley has wonderful facilities, all of which are on our doorstep as a school, as well as the river, which our children are fortunate to use for paddle boarding, kayaking, bell-boating and rowing activities.

“It is the perfect location for a school and it is a real privilege to be a part of Henley life.”

‘Henley has wonderful facilities, all of which are on our doorstep as a school, as well as the river’

Blandy & Blandy Solicitors

ADVERTORIAL

Blandy & Blandy Ranked as a Top Tier Firm in Chambers High Net Worth Guide

LEADING Thames Valley law firm Blandy & Blandy has been ranked as a top tier firm for ‘Private Wealth Law’ and in band 2 for ‘Private Wealth Disputes’ in Chambers High Net Worth (HNW) Guide 2025.

Chambers and Partners has dedicated 35 years to researching and ranking the world’s best lawyers. The Chambers HNW Guide’s rankings, published annually, are based on extensive independent research involving clients, law firms and other professional services firms.

Blandy & Blandy is one of only two firms located in Reading and the only firm with offices in Henley-on-Thames or Wokingham (the locations of the firm’s offices) to be recognised in the top tier.

Across both practice areas, Blandy & Blandy is credited as having “a

large team with broad depth of knowledge”, “a long-standing reputation for the strength of its private client work” and “a team member available for pretty much any situation.” Solicitors at the firm are described as being “personable”, “approachable”, “empathetic”, “able to explain things in easily understandable language” and capable of “advising in complex situations”.

Jonathan Gater and Caroline Casagrande, partners in the firm’s Wills, Probate, Tax & Trusts team, are both individually recommended (in bands 1 and 2 respectively), whilst consultant Graham Benwell is named as a ‘senior statesperson’ and partner Elizabeth Short is recognised as ‘up and coming’.



In the area of ‘Private Wealth Disputes’, partner and head of Contentious Probate Angela Bowman is named in band 2 in the Thames Valley region. She is singled out as being “particularly well regarded for her work with charities”, “outstanding and exceptionally knowledgeable”, “great to work with”, “very good at looking at complex cases and getting to the heart of the issue” and for her “remarkable” attention to detail.

Blandy & Blandy is also named as a tier one firm in The Legal 500.

For further information or legal advice, please visit www.blandy.co.uk or call 01491 572 323.

THE RIGHT CHOICE

Henley Life education guide

September 2025



The Abbey



MOULSFORD



THE ORATORY



THE ORATORY
PREP SCHOOL



PANGBOURNE

Independent, co-educational day and boarding school, ages 11-18



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SCHOOL



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CAVERSHAM



READING BLUE COAT



SHIPLAKE COLLEGE
HENLEY-ON-THAMES



St. Mary's Preparatory School
A love of learning for life





The Abbey

THE ABBEY is a remarkable multi-award-winning 3-18 all girls community of learning and brilliant experiences. It is a place of curiosity, adventurous spirits, and the excitement of discovery. We focus on individual care and attention in a warmly supportive atmosphere full of fun and laughter. Our students have the assurance to take risks, explore interests and passions, and engage generously with the world and with each other.

Our results are outstanding, but what matters to us is how students achieve them. Our goal is to equip girls to live with confidence, purpose and joy. This

means providing exceptional opportunities across the widest spectrum of learning and activities. We offer more choice in our curriculum than almost any other school, so that students lead their learning and mature into the people they mean to be.

What's special about The Abbey is the atmosphere. We're a diverse, down-to-earth community full of enthusiasm, spark and energy. The best way to get a feel for the school is to visit on an ordinary weekday. Being in the halls for one lesson, feeling the buzz all around you, give you a sense of The Abbey spirit.

We'd love to welcome you and for you to meet some of our students. Come and visit us anytime, we're always ready to welcome new members to our community. www.theabbey.co.uk/events



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Independent Girls' School
of the Year 2024



Why all-girls?

Book onto one of our events to see why.



theabbey.co.uk/events/



The Abbey



MOULSFORD

MOULSFORD is a thriving, independent day and boarding school for pupils age 3-13 near Wallingford in South Oxfordshire, set in tranquil and picturesque grounds on the banks of the River Thames.

Moulsford Pre-Prep is co-educational from Pre-School through to Year 2 (age 3 to 7), and the Prep School (Years 3 to 8) is becoming fully co-educational from September 2025, when girls will be welcomed to Year 3.

An important part of the Moulsford experience is living through its values of Kindness, Courage and Curiosity. Our teachers are passionate about nurturing children, building their confidence and self-esteem so that they get the most out of their learning and enjoy coming to school every day.

Small class sizes and exceptional pastoral care ensure that every child is listened to, supported, encouraged and given the opportunity to flourish. Academic foundations laid in the Pre-

School promote curiosity and a love of learning, and the journey through Moulsford leads them on to the UK's leading senior day and boarding schools.

Wraparound care is available to all age groups with an incredible array of activities offered after school, ranging from 'bikeability' and 'crafty fingers' in Pre-Prep through to kayaking and climbing for older children. Day, flexi and weekly boarding options are available to children in Year 5 and above.

Daily bus transport is available from the Henley area.

Open Morning: Saturday 20th September 2025



BECOMING FULLY CO-EDUCATIONAL



MOULSFORD

An independent day and boarding school in Oxfordshire for pupils aged 3 – 13, offering an outstanding education with a focus on providing exceptional pastoral care

WHOLE SCHOOL OPEN DAYS

**Saturday 20th September
& Friday 3rd October**

For timings and to book a place, please call
01491 651438, email admissions@moulsford.com
or visit moulsford.com



THE ORATORY

It is an exciting time for The Oratory. Earlier this year, former Senior Deputy Head, Mr Matthew Fogg, was appointed as Head Master, and the school welcomed a pleasing ISI inspection. Inspectors observed that Oratory “pupils feel safe, secure and happy”, and how “pupils are well informed, balanced, empathetic and confident in discussions.”

At The Oratory, being ‘you’ is crucial. Some schools boast that they turn out a product, but at The Oratory, success has many definitions. Some pupils excel in sports, others simply enjoy participation. Academically, some find things easy, while others work hard to progress. Yet, despite its size, Oratory pupils achieve extraordinary things. The 1st XV rugby team won the County Cup, the U14 team exceeded expectations to place second in their County Cup, and the 1st XI hockey team secured their fourth consecutive league win, and the 2nd XI won theirs as well. These achievements are the result of individuals coming together to achieve more as a team.

This philosophy extends to the school’s academics. Its smaller size ensures that every pupil is known, allowing teachers to provide the support needed for them to flourish, ‘become more’ and to reach their full potential. Pastorally, the school enables pupils to thrive with its wraparound care offering. Flexi, full boarding and day options are available for the busy working families of today.



Find out why you should choose The Oratory:

- Whole School Open Morning — Saturday 27 September.
- 6th Form Open Evening — Friday 12 September




**Be you.
Become more.**

INDEPENDENT BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS & BOYS AGED 11-18



THE ORATORY

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An opportunity to experience the joys of Oratory Life firsthand.



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WOODCOTE, OXFORDSHIRE



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THE Oratory Prep School offers a warm, ambitious education for children aged 2 to 13 in 65 acres of South Oxfordshire countryside.

Here, pupils grow in confidence and curiosity supported by outstanding teaching, exceptional pastoral care and a strong sense of community. They move on to a wide range of senior schools in Year 9, well prepared and full of self-belief. We're extremely proud to have won the "Best Learning Support" category in the 2025 Muddy Stiletto's Schools Awards,

recognising our inclusive and individual approach.

Children enjoy making the most of our outstanding facilities, including a 25-metre indoor pool, full-size astroturf, theatre and dedicated Forest School. Sport is a core part of life at The Oratory Prep School, with expert coaching and an inclusive approach that encourages every child to take part and thrive which is why we've been shortlisted in the "Sporting Achievement" category in the 2025 Independent Schools Awards.

To support busy families, we run school buses from Henley, Reading and Watlington with convenient pick-up points along the way. Our wrap-around care is unmatched with breakfast club from 7.30am and after school care until 6pm with the option of flexi-boarding for children in Year 3 upwards.

Visit oratoryprep.co.uk to book your place at our next Open Morning on 3rd October or arrange a private tour at a time that suits you and your family.



Open Day
3rd October

THE ORATORY
PREP SCHOOL

Award winning independent school for ages 2 - 13 with wraparound care, flexi-boarding, scholarship options & extensive bus routes.

SHORTLIST 2025
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF THE YEAR
AWARDS

Muddy's
BEST SCHOOLS
WINNER
BEST LEARNING SUPPORT

THE RIGHT CHOICE

PANGBOURNE

— Independent, co-educational day and boarding school, ages 11-18 —

The antidote to the anxious generation

THERE are four pillars that develop and sustain a Pangbourne education: Academic Rigour, Exploration, Community and Leadership. These four components ensure all students develop the attitudes, skills and behaviours that underpin success at school and in life. At Pangbourne, each individual is empowered to fulfil their potential and develop the confidence, values and skills to make a positive difference to the world.

Pangbourne not only provides an outstanding academic education with excellent outcomes for all pupils but also an ethos of adventure and exploration. Pangbourne is an independent day and boarding school for girls and boys, aged 11 to 18 years situated within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and

encompassing over 230 acres of Berkshire countryside. The campus provides the perfect setting for all aspects of the adventure programme which takes students outside of their comfort zone and allows them to face their fears as well as build resilience. Pangbourne prepares students to have the ability to act intelligently when faced with a situation for which they have not been specifically prepared and ensure they build resilience and a positive self-narrative, countering the negative and damaging life many adolescents lead online.

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The next Open Morning is on Saturday
4 October 2025.
pangbourne.com/visit



PANGBOURNE

— Independent, co-educational day and boarding school, ages 11-18 —



pangbourne.com/visit
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OPEN MORNING
SATURDAY 4 OCTOBER 2025



ACADEMIC RIGOUR | EXPLORATION | COMMUNITY | LEADERSHIP



REGARDED as one of the UK's leading small independent co-educational schools, Cranford is renowned for its strong focus on pastoral care and consistently attaining high academic results. As an established fully co-educational school, pupils thrive where the attention to each pupil and their teaching and learning needs is second to none. Academic attainment at Cranford is outstanding, GCSE results typically see over 60% of all grades achieved at 9-7 (A*-A). The school consistently achieves a value-added score of +1.3 showing that pupils at Cranford can expect to achieve over a grade higher per subject than they would elsewhere.

With unbeatable pastoral care and superb facilities for sport and the performing arts, Cranford's pupils enjoy educational excellence. Regarded among families as one of Oxfordshire's best kept little secrets, the school rated "Excellent" in all areas by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, is a warmly welcoming, independent day school for boys and girls aged 3-18.

To discover first-hand what a Cranford education can offer your child, open events and personal tours are available throughout the year. Welcome.

Moulsford, Wallingford Oxfordshire OX10 9HT, 01491 651218
cranfordschool.co.uk



'Excellent' in all categories
Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)
November 2022



'Class sizes are small, and
I know my child is being
stretched and challenged.'
Junior School Parent



Open Morning

Saturday 11th October 9:30am - 12:00pm

Excellence in Independent Education
for Boys and Girls aged 3-18
Book your guided tour online:
www.cranfordschool.co.uk



CRANFORD
SCHOOL



*Inspiring a love of
learning that lasts
a lifetime*

LIFE at Dolphin School is never dull. Every day is an adventure, and this Autumn Term is no exception. We have three residential trips going out this term to Boulogne, North Wales and Northumbria, and our usual array of day trips for all year groups. As well as our traditional events, such as the student-led Charities Fair, Year 5 production, and our Year 5 and Year 6 DPQs



(Dolphin Project Qualifications), we have added some new and exciting items to this term's calendar: a STEM Week running from 22 - 26 September, culminating in our STEM Day and Open Morning, which will include a host of workshops and fun activities for all of the family.

We are delighted to highlight our latest Good Schools Guide Review, which you can find on the Good Schools website; this write-up, completed during our recent Arts Week and Arts Day, sums things up: "why can't more schools be like Dolphin?"

You can find out more about what the future looks like for Dolphin School, including emerging plans for a distinct Year 9-11 offering, at an information evening on Tuesday 23rd September (please book in using the QR code below)



Dolphin School inspires a love of learning that lasts a lifetime

- 'Stay & Play' sessions for prospective parents for our Nursery and Reception classes are being held on Tuesday 14 October and Tuesday 11 November, 10:15am to 11:45am — please email admissions@dolphinschool.com to book your place.
- Book in a free EYFS Taster Day on one of our weekly Freedom Friday Forest School sessions, running, 9am-12pm in our very own copse. Enjoy s'mores, French songs and the great outdoors.
- STEM Day and Open Morning — Saturday 27 September, 11am - 3pm.
- Information Evening — Tuesday 23 September from 5pm.



Please visit our website to learn more, or
contact: admissions@dolphinschool.com

www.dolphinschool.com
0118 934 1277

Waltham Road, Hurst, Berkshire, RG10 0FR

THE RIGHT CHOICE



An Exceptional Values-Led Education

WE offer an exceptional values-led education where every individual is empowered to flourish. Academic excellence is nurtured through an innovative, future-ready curriculum, enriched by outstanding opportunities for personal development. We inspire courageous thinkers and doers — young people with the character and confidence to imagine and shape a better world.

We are the only school in England to be recognised by the ISI as having a Significant Strength for its values-led approach. We give our Quaker values currency and purpose, believing in the unique potential of each individual and nurturing a community of kindness.

Here it's about more than just learning, it's about becoming who you're meant to be. That means pushing yourself, not being afraid to fail and taking every opportunity — all within a supportive community. We've won the national ISA Award for Pupil Personal Development so however you want to shine, we'll help you shine bright.

We won the Independent Schools Association Award for Future Readiness 2024-25 and in a world of by-standers, we choose to make a difference. You will gain the skills to understand the complex problems you see around you in the world and the tools to work with others to be changemakers.



Discovering Kind Hearts, Fierce Minds and Strong Spirits

QUEEN ANNE'S is a local independent school for girls aged 11-18. We have a 'no limits' approach to learning and development that produces excellent academic results and outstanding achievements in every field.

Conveniently located in Caversham, Queen Anne's has an excellent local transport network that ensures easy and safe commuting for students. Part of the network spans from Shiplake, through Henley and up to High Wycombe.

We pride ourselves on offering a seamless transition from primary to secondary school. We offer many opportunities to visit us including Open Mornings, personal visits, taster days and induction days.

At Queen Anne's, students can encompass all their activities during the school day, allowing them valuable family time at home. Three days a week school continues until 6.15pm, enabling students to take part in clubs and complete homework. There is an extensive range of clubs, such as art, textiles, dance, drama, choir, football, badminton, tennis, lacrosse, beekeeping and more! Transport fits around school hours, or there is the option to flexi board.

Our next open morning is on Saturday 20 September. Discover the school, meet students and staff and learn how choosing Queen Anne's for your daughter will give her the best platform to grow, excel and make lifelong connections. To book, please scan the QR code, email the admissions team at admissions@qas.org.uk or call 0118 918 7333.



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SCHOOLS



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OPEN MORNING
SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

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www.qas.org.uk/visit



An independent day and boarding school for girls aged 11 - 18

Visit us to discover why we are an award-winning school





READING BLUE COAT

READING Blue Coat is a co-educational independent day school for students aged 11–18, within a picturesque 46-acre campus beside the River Thames. We offer a challenging academic education, delivered by expert teachers in exceptional facilities, enabling pupils to achieve excellent results and progress to top universities and destinations.

Education at Reading Blue Coat extends beyond the classroom. Our broad and engaging co-curricular programme encourages students to explore new interests, gain valuable life skills and develop their individual strengths. Whether through music, sport, drama, or our distinctive Adventure Education programme, students are challenged and supported to grow into confident, well-rounded young people, fully prepared for life beyond school.

We warmly invite you to our whole school Open Morning on Saturday 4 October, 9.30am - 12.30am. Come along and explore the academic and co-curricular opportunities Reading Blue Coat has to offer your child.

For more information, visit our website rbcs.org.uk



SHIPLAKE COLLEGE HENLEY-ON-THAMES



SHIPLAKE College starts the 2025-2026 academic year with a record roll of 580, up from 535 the previous year. Now with girls and boys in Years 7 to 9 and the Sixth Form, as it continues its journey to be fully co-educational, there is a strong 40% of girls in each of these year groups.

2025 was a significant year for the College's Boat Club, the top boys' and girls' crews achieving silver medals at the Schools' Head of the River, both taking gold at the National Schools' Regatta and both reaching the finals of Henley Royal Regatta, with the boys' eight winning the coveted Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup for the first time in the College's history.

A community that focuses on kindness, personal bests and positive attitudes, every pupil is placed at the heart of Shiplake life and the College's ethos is underpinned by the Three Is – Inclusive, Individual and Inspirational. The setting is beautiful and uplifting but it is the people who provide the magic and create Shiplake's authentic and unique culture. When you walk through the doors you will be greeted by warm smiles and exuberant waggy tails.

Our next open mornings take place on Saturday 20 September (whole school) and Saturday 11 October (Sixth Form) — go to www.shiplake.org.uk/visit to book attendance.



Open Morning Saturday 4 October

Founded in 1646, Reading Blue Coat is situated in a picturesque 46-acre campus along the River Thames.

The school offers a welcoming community where academic excellence and a rich array of co-curricular activities allow our students to flourish. We warmly invite you to explore the opportunities available for your child.

An independent day school
for students aged 11-18

rbcs.org.uk



Check out our fly-through drone tour!

Co-educational boarding and day senior school

Open Morning: Saturday 20 September, 9am-12noon
Go to www.shiplake.org.uk/visit to book attendance

THE RIGHT CHOICE



St. Mary's Preparatory School
A love of learning for life

NESTLED in the heart of Henley, St. Mary's Preparatory School and Nursery continues to go from strength to strength, quietly establishing itself as one of the area's most exceptional independent schools.

Academic achievement remains outstanding across all year groups, with pupils from the Early Years through to Year 6 consistently surpassing national expectations. Results continue to rise year on year, a testament to the dedicated teaching staff and nurturing environment.

The school is proud of its Year 6 Class of 2025, with every pupil securing a place at their senior school of choice — and several earning prestigious scholarships in recognition of their achievements.

On the sports field, St. Mary's maintains a strong tradition of sporting excellence. The school's teams regularly perform at a high level in local, regional, and even national competitions.

From their very first day, children benefit from specialist teaching and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Combined with award-winning pastoral care, this holistic approach ensures that every child feels known, valued, and supported.

St. Mary's parents say: "The teaching is of the highest quality; we wouldn't hesitate to recommend St. Mary's to anyone."

To find out how your child could benefit from the best start to their early education, book your place at the school's forthcoming Open Day on Friday 26th September: admissions@stmarys-henley.co.uk or call 01491 573118.



St. Mary's Preparatory School
A love of learning for life

Starting School in 2026?



Open Morning
Friday 26th September
Book via: stmarysprep.co.uk



HENLEY
Life

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experiences

*Special education feature
coming in our
October edition*

Primary school awarded a 'My Happy Mind' accreditation

BY AMANDA STEWART

AHENLEY primary school has received recognition from the NHS for the work it does with pupils to bolster their mental health.

Badgemore Primary School in Hop Gardens has been awarded a My Happy Mind Bronze accreditation from the programme, which is supported by NHS England.

Gaynor Styer, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, is full of praise for the scheme. "Should more schools be involved? Absolutely. Aside from being NHS backed, the programme has very recently won a King's Award for Enterprise for innovation."

Badgemore, which reported this year that its Year 6 pupils "smashed the national averages with brilliant SATs results in all areas", is an academy and part of the charity the Circle Trust and teaches 127 youngsters. Mrs Styer says: "It is a whole-school personal, social, health and economic based scheme and all the pupils take part."

To promote the My Happy Mind strategy every class chooses Happiness Heroes. "There are two per class from Years 1-6," Mrs Styer says. "It has five themes; understanding how your brain works, your unique character strengths and learning to celebrate them, why gratitude matters, why positive relationships matter and how to build them and how to set meaningful goals that matter and how to keep resilient in times of challenge."

She adds: "The programme combines the latest research, science and technology to help children develop lifelong habits and the programme content equips all children with the

knowledge, skills and tools they need to thrive in the modern world. "It has been successful as it is a complete mental and emotional wellbeing package. It is taught to every single child and there's a curriculum for every year group from Reception to Year 6. There is also a staff wellbeing programme."

Parents can also get involved in the scheme via an app. "Mums and dads are given a QR code that provides them with access to the myHappymind platform which contains a wealth of games, videos, breathing activities and resources to reinforce and further promote the learning that has taken place in school."

Abi Streeton's son Joshua, 9, was chosen to be a Happiness Hero by his Year 4 classmates. Abi has worked at The Henley Standard and Henley Life Magazine for 12 years focussing on promoting local schools and education.

Joshua says: "I was very happy to take part. My responsibilities were things like looking after children when

they were sad and helping them if they fell over. I really enjoyed it.

Abi said: "We explored together what it meant to be a my happy

mind representative and touched on mental health and how important it is".

"It has made Joshua more confident as he likes helping people.

"He got awarded the 'most caring' in his year at the end of term, which my husband Andy and I were very proud of.

"His teacher, Miss Botterill, wrote 'For truly standing out in a class full of girls as being a kind and caring gentleman you always show respect, thoughtfulness and a big heart'."

'The programme combines the latest research, science and technology to help children develop lifelong habits'



LEFT: Joshua Streeton and with his mother Abi RIGHT: The Happiness Heroes from across the years at Badgemore Primary School

Let's go to the Henley Farm and Country Show

BY AMANDA STEWART

THE Henley Farm and Country Show returns on September 13 notching up another year in its long history and acting as a reminder of the man who ploughed his own furrow when he instigated founded the event in 1891.

The show, one of the largest events in the area, is one of the few one-day agricultural shows in Oxfordshire. It is organised by the Henley and District Agricultural Association and is held at the Henley Showground, near Hambleden.

Its roots lie with Richard Ovey, of Badgemore, who was described as a visionary and brave landowner who, despite intense competition from other established agricultural societies, decided to go it alone and found an association in Henley.

Henley farmers had supported field and show-day classes at the Royal East Berks, Wokingham Agricultural Association, Chiltern Hills, South Bucks and the Royal South Bucks shows and yet the town did not have its own agricultural association. Ovey, driven by

an idea he had nurtured for a long time, held a ploughing match at Hernes, his estate, in the autumn of the following year — spurred on by Sir William Anker Simmons, a close friend who was knighted for services to agriculture.

Besides ploughing, there were classes for butter, poultry, eggs and collections of vegetables plus ploughing, rick building, thatching and shepherding.

In 1898 Ovey called a public meeting to discuss broadening the association's events and the following September, the last year of his presidency, the first expanded Henley Show was held at the Hernes estate.

Traditionally the show is held on the second Saturday in September and has taken place every year since with the exception of the world war years and in 1952 because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Lady Brunner, who was president in that year, was invited to be president again in 1954.

A wide range of presidents has meant that over the years the show has been held at a variety of venues because in the earlier days quite often it was staged on land that belonged to the president.

But since 1998 the event, which has been described as the best one-day agricultural show in the country, has been held in the stunning surroundings

of Greenlands Farm, Hambleden.

Thousands of people are expected to attend the show this year and, of the four show rings, the main one, is showing a display of agricultural machinery, from plough to combine harvester, scurry racing, Shetland pony racing, driving classes, livestock, classic car and tractor parades.

There is also a display of heavy horses. The Sheep Show has been a popular attraction at the top of The Village (ring four), along with a gun dog display and Falconry.

In ring two and the top of ring three, the Woodland Pony Club run its annual show. A combination of show jumping and showing classes.

Sheep classes will display many interesting and rare breeds and there is a companion dog show, taking entries on the day.

Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.

Many visitors return to do their Christmas shopping from the varied trade stands and the market area includes delicious food and drink.

The highly competitive produce tent will be full of lovely cakes, flower, fruit, vegetables and art.

More than 80 classic cars and vintage tractors are on display and the winning exhibitors take part in a Grand Parade in the main ring in the afternoon.

The show opens from 8.30am to 5.30pm, with tickets available online or at the gate on the day. There is no charge for car parking.

Tickets for adults are £15 on the day (£13 online), children aged five to 16 is £5 (£3.50 online) and those aged 65 and over is £8 on the day (£10 online).

For more information on the association and to book tickets for the show, visit www.thehenleyshow.co.uk



ABOVE: Left to right, James Hick, Chief Executive of the British Horse Society, with BHS team, Patricia, Sarah & Amanda

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For the love of farming

BY AMANDA STEWART

SOUTH Oxfordshire farmer Stephen Doble credits Jeremy Clarkson's television series with bringing his way of life to a wider audience despite the show being slightly crazy.

Stephen, 44, is the fourth generation of his family to farm around Shiplake and has 1200 acres under his custodianship.

"I enjoy the series," he says. "Some of it is a bit daft and possibly edited for television, but he has managed to engage

the general public with farming and that can be only a good thing."

He adds that Kaleb Cooper, Clarkson's right-hand man in the series, Clarkson's Farm, has played his part. "He's done a great job at showing what a fantastic life farming can offer."

Stephen, who is married and has a daughter, 8, and a son, 5, is steeped in farming. "The family has been tenants here since my great grandfather moved to Shiplake Farm from Devon in 1904 as farm manager and was lucky enough to gain



'The family has been tenants here since my great grandfather moved to Shiplake Farm from Devon in 1904'





the tenancy.” Stephen took over the 380-acre farm from his parents, Brian and Pat in 2011. “It was very much a mixed farm, with arable, pigs, sheep, poultry and dairy but each generation has specialised a little more so we are now just arable and beef.”

Stephen, a tenant of the Phillimore Estate, studied agriculture and business management at Newcastle University. He owns some land in Shiplake and shares farmland with other people in the area.

“I looked at engineering and joining the army before I left school but I never had any doubt what I was going to be.

“I am lucky to have a two-minute commute, but we start at 7.30am, earlier if we’re pushed, and keep going until the job is done. When we’re not too busy I aim to be back in time for my children’s bed time.

“The best part is the variety. On a daily basis a farmer might need to be a botanist, mechanic, cow whisperer and book-keeper, which is great but the juggle can get a bit much at times. “We struggle to grow massive yields on our light land

so we aim to grow for premium markets: bread making wheat, seed barley, quinoa, poppy seed and millet is a new one this year. Our Aberdeen Angus beef cattle go for Sainsbury’s taste the difference range.”

Stephen is always ready to promote farming. “We’ve hosted open days, which were great, and it has been fantastic to have the reception classes from Shiplake primary visit. We don’t

exhibit at any shows but we compete in the crop classes in the Henley Show and Nettlebed farming classes, which are part of our farming heritage and a bit of fun.

“We also help the Binfield Heath Flower Show, we usually top

the fields and supply straw bales things like that. We support where we can.”

But the weather has not supported him and other farmers this year. “It has affected our yield by a third, the grass and arable are much thinner, but we managed to carry fodder over from last year.”

He smiles and adds: “You need to go into farming because you love the job.”

‘We’ve hosted open days, which were great, and it has been fantastic to have the reception classes from Shiplake primary visit’

WOMEN'S
HEALTH

By Dr Shilpa McQuillan,
accredited menopause
specialist, GP and
community gynaecologist

Gynaecological Cancer Awareness month —

Let's break the silence and talk about it



Every September, we shine a light on gynaecological cancers — those that begin in the female reproductive tract. These include ovarian, cervical, uterine (womb), vaginal, vulval, and the lesser-discussed fallopian tube cancers.

Gynaecological cancers can affect anyone with female reproductive organs, including trans men and non-binary people.

Whilst you may feel shy or awkward, it's vital to raise awareness, have open conversations, and recognise the signs early — because being proactive saves lives.

Why Are Women Still Delaying Seeking Help?

Shockingly, many women still do not know what symptoms to look for. You might feel embarrassed to talk about genital health, or the topic may be too close to home, triggering painful memories if a loved one has experienced cancer. For others, fear of cancer itself

can prevent seeking help. Let's break the taboo and start talking.

The First Step — Know Your Body

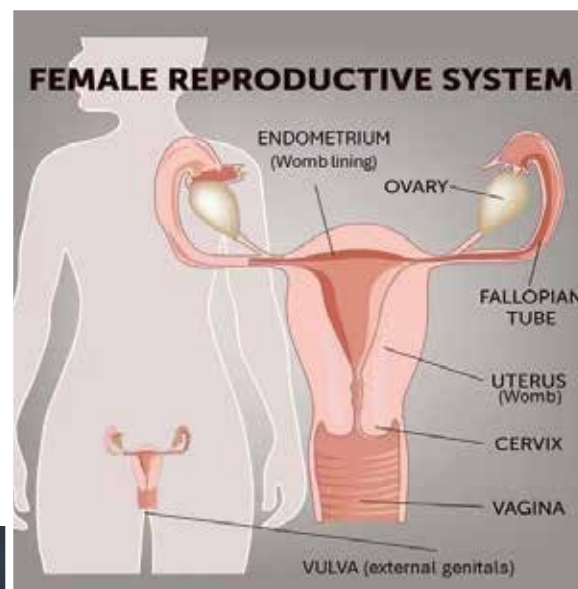
If you don't know what's normal for your body, how will you recognise when something isn't right? And how will you confidently tell your healthcare professional where the issue is? I'm often surprised how many patients admit they're unsure of the difference between the vulva and vagina.

How to empower yourself?

- Be curious about your body — check your genitals regularly with a mirror.
- Track your periods and any pattern changes for example heavier flow or clots.
- Take note of any other symptoms — discharge, bloating, pelvic pain, or new bowel/bladder symptoms.
- Keep up to date with

screening and health checks. If you're unsure why certain tests are important, ask questions so you can make informed decisions.

Remember: everybody is unique. What's normal for one person may be unusual for another. By knowing your baseline, you'll spot changes sooner — and seek help earlier.



Know What to Look For

Symptoms vary depending on the cancer type (see illustration below). These symptoms don't always mean cancer — many benign conditions cause similar signs — but they should never be ignored. If you notice something unusual, check in with your doctor.

Sarah's Story

"I was 38, a busy mum of two, and almost ignored the spotting I noticed between periods. I thought it was stress. Something told me to see my GP. Tests revealed early-stage cervical cancer. It was scary, but because it was caught early, my treatment worked. Now I tell every woman: listen to your body and don't wait to get checked."

Sarah's experience shows how trusting your instincts can make all the difference.

While age increases risk, these cancers can affect women of all ages. Cervical cancer, for example, is most common in women under 65.

"I've had my womb removed, so I can't get gynaecological cancer."

Not true. A hysterectomy removes the womb, sometimes the cervix and ovaries, but not always all reproductive tissue. Remaining tissue can still develop cancer. Stay aware of your body and report unusual symptoms.

"I have no symptoms, so I don't need screening."

Many gynaecological cancers are silent in early stages. Some vague symptoms, like bloating or mild pelvic discomfort, may seem harmless. Routine screenings are crucial — they can detect changes before symptoms appear. Keeping a diary of your health and speaking up if something doesn't feel right is the best

remember, screening is a snapshot tool for prevention and new symptoms should always be checked, regardless of your last result.

"Having the HPV vaccine means I can't get cervical cancer."

The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine dramatically reduces the risk of cervical cancer and some other cancers linked to the HPV virus but does not protect against all cancer-causing strains or other gynaecological cancers. You still need screening and be vigilant to any unusual changes.

"The contraceptive pill causes cancer."

Research shows long-term use of the combined pill may slightly increase cervical cancer risk but also significantly reduces the risk of womb and ovarian cancers. Your doctor can help weigh up the risks and benefits for you personally and help support you to make informed choices.

"I need to worry as there's cancer in my family."

While family history can play a role, most gynaecological cancers are not inherited. Inform your doctor if you have a family history — it may influence more regular screening or specialist care but remember genetics is just one piece of the puzzle — lifestyle factors, age, and even chance all contribute.

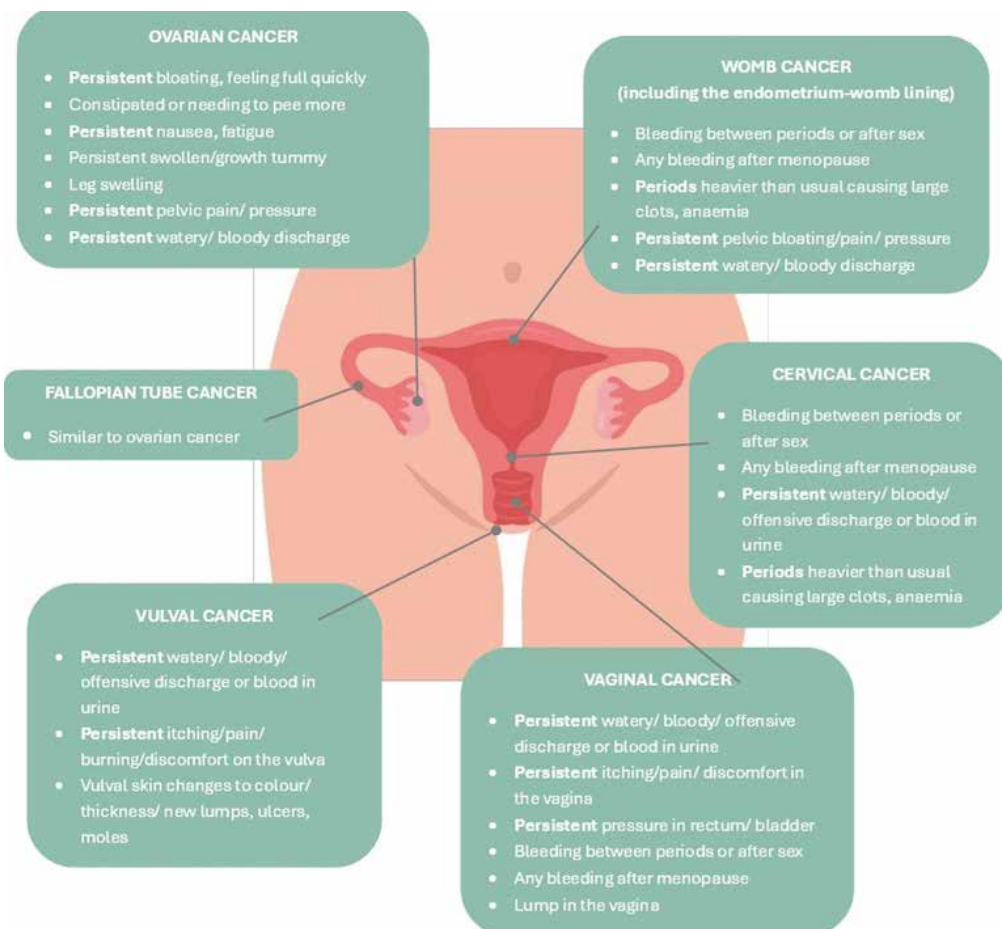
My take home message

Awareness begins with open conversations, regular self-checks, attending screening, and having the courage to seek help when something feels off.

No concern is too small — getting early reassurance is always better than a late diagnosis.

Share information from reputable sources, encourage loved ones to prioritise their health, and most importantly — listen to and know your body.

For more information and support, visit:
Macmillan | The Eve Appeal | Target Ovarian Cancer | Ovarian Cancer Action | GRACE Charity



Get the Right Advice — Your Cancer Myths, Demystified

When it comes to gynaecological cancers, myths often lead to confusion, fear, or false reassurance. Let's clear up some common misunderstandings:

"Only older women get gynaecological cancers."

way to catch potential problems early.

"My smear test was normal, so my new symptoms can't be cancer."

A normal cervical screening is reassuring, but it only checks for cervical cancer (and precancer). It does not rule out cancers of the womb, ovaries, vagina, vulva, or fallopian tubes. It's also important to

Dr Shilpa McQuillan leads the Berkshire Menopause Clinic in Henley and is an accredited menopause specialist, community gynaecologist and women's health GP.

For more information, email info@berkshirermenopauseclinic.com or visit www.berkshirermenopauseclinic.com

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Stephen Blundell

HEADMASTER AT ST MARY'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

STEPHEN Blundell became head of St Mary's Prep in August 2024 after being deputy head of Wetherby Prep in London for 10 years. He was educated at Rossall School in Lancashire before reading History at the University of Sheffield. He joined Chesham Prep in 2009 where he completed his Graduate Teacher Training and later completed a Masters in Educational Leadership.

He is married to Georgie, a teacher and has two children Jack and Alice. In his spare time he plays golf and is an avid sports fan. Stephen is a passionate headmaster who promotes kindness as a key aspect of a child's education. He is keen to ensure St Mary's immerses itself as much as possible in the local community and to be a key part of the town.

1 What brought you to the Henley area and why do you stay?

I became head of St Mary's Prep in Henley in August 2024. I love the School and becoming part of Henley, it is a brilliant community. People in Henley are very proud that they are in Henley, which is lovely.

2 What would you change about Henley?

Create another bridge!

3 How do you spend your leisure time locally?

Spending quality time with my wife Georgie and two children Jack and Alice. I also am a keen golfer and love all things sport.

4 What are your top three local haunts?

Boston Road Baker, the wonderful Cheese Shed and the Chequers Inn, Fingest.

5 Do you have a favourite song?

Good question. I love Desert Island Discs, it's one of my all-time



favourites. Choosing one is really tricky, but I would have to say 'Not Nineteen Forever' by the Courteeners.

6 Which film or play has inspired or moved you the most?

I love all things sport, so my two picks would be the 1997 British Lions film 'Living with the Lions' and 'Gold Fever', which is a documentary about the 2000 GB men's rowing team.

7 What do you treasure most about life in the UK?

When we have the weather, there is no better place in the world.

8 If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would it be?

It would have to be Sydney.

9 Is there anyone, or anything in the area that you particularly admire, would recommend or think deserves a mention?

I love the water, so anything associated with the river is wonderful. I am really pleased that the children at St Mary's are able to access the river regularly, through our extra-curricular provision. I used to live in Putney, so the river was a big part of my life. There is nothing better than a river walk, followed by a good pub.

10 What did you want to be when you were a child?

A professional Rugby Player.

11 Which things do you wish you had known when you were younger?

Don't take it for granted and try to be a child for as long as possible. It's the greatest time of your life.

12 Which three people would you choose to have dinner with, if you could?

Tiger Woods, Noel Gallagher, Sam Burgess

13 Where do you like to travel to on holiday?

We spend a lot of time in Cornwall. It's our favourite place in the world.

14 What are your ambitions?

To continue to grow and develop St Mary's and to lower my golf handicap.

15 Do you have any regrets?

I don't have regrets. Each experience forms and shapes you to where you are today. So, try to own your mistakes and learn from them.



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