



# HENLEY YOUTH FESTIVAL

# NEWSLETTER 2026



HYF Runners - 70+  
 Performers - 250+  
 Competition Entries - 200+  
 School Workshops - 1400+  
 School Performances - 1800+

Under my second year of chair ship, I was delighted to be able to expand the festival bringing back some favourites and adding new events around our Amazing Animal theme. The theme inspired the young people to go 'wild' with their imagination particularly in the art and writing competitions.

Back after some time away the chess tournament and photography competition returned. New for 2026 was Creative Brick Challenge, a fencing after school workshop and a mixed netball tournament.

Thank you to all the volunteers, sponsors and partners that allowed us to put on this year's festival without whom it would not be possible.

However, it is the young people that make the festival what it really is and a special mention should go to Sophie Carter who designed this year's logo, Lucy Easton who animated the logo and Rupert Haynes who made this year's HYF film again.

Our finale event was a hands-on farm experience. This free event, invited families to come and feed, stroke and get up close to the animals including young, orphaned lambs at Badgemore School.

It has been a real pleasure to be part of this incredible festival for the young people again. Seeing their faces light up, showing their enjoyment is something truly special.

Looking forward we will be opening the voting for next year's theme shortly and afterwards the chance again to design our logo. Watch out on our socials for this.



Michaela Clarke  
 Chair of HYF

## Elizabeth Griffin Award



This Award has been presented each year since 2003 by the Griffin family in memory of their daughter Elizabeth to a young person who epitomises HYF. This year's awardee was Alix Maxwell who was surprised at Senior Variety. She first trod the boards at the Youth Festival dancing with her Year 3 friends from Trinity School and her final performance was this year with her sister Holly singing *Let Me Be Your Star* from the musical TV series *Smash*.

## Sing Speak Be Award

Trinity School were the recipients of the Sing Speak Be Award this year. They enjoyed a performance poetry workshop with Coral Rumble and performed their amazing animals' poem at Young Variety at The Kenton.



# Our 2026 Highlights

## Sport

The run kicked off the festival and this year the sports programme expanded with a mixed netball tournament run by Henley Hawks Netball Club and a fencing workshop for Years 6-11 proved popular run by VF Fencing Club in Caversham. Five teams battled it out at the netball tournament with Goal Diggers team winning on goal difference.

Over 70+ runners took part in the HYF Run at Swiss Farm organised by Physiologic. The steep hill challenged the older runners, but they all managed it brilliantly. Trinity School won the £250 prize for the most runners in the event.



## Performance Arts

### Music Makers

Hosted at Rupert House School, Music Makers provides an opportunity for primary aged children to perform. We saw some children performing for the first time to a large audience. Groups performing included Henley Youth Choir, Valley Road School Choir and Sonning Common Recorders. Other instruments played included violin, piano, cello and flute.



### The Kenton Shows - Young Variety, Senior Variety & Gig Night

Three nights at The Kenton saw lots of young talented performers singing, dancing and play instruments. Arthur O'Farrell wowed the audience with his magic and comedy lines at Senior Variety and a first for the festival were Darcey Rose and Roxy from Badgemore School doing a dance routine on hoverboards!



## HYF Film

Thanks to Rupert Haynes for producing our HYF Film this year. [Watch it here](#)

## Schools

### School Workshops

New for this year were circus science, African dance, drums workshops and an amazing hands-on experience with birds of prey which tied with our Amazing Animals theme. Young pupils in Reception and Year 1 enjoyed a fun flamenco fusion session pretending to be amazing animals with Danielle Yglesia. Back this year after a few years away, Explorerdome returned with a science show for Years 7 & 8 at Gillotts School. A drama improv workshop was also provided for Gillotts Drama GCSE students.

Art workshops were provided by Create 'n Make who made 3D animals with Years 1 & 2 and 3D animal collages with Years 3+ and Emily Cooling also created animal art using mixed media for Years 3-6.

Kathryn Fell-Willis returned to provide a workshop on how to photograph animals.

### School Performances

The Globe Players returned to Gillotts School to perform a medley of Shakespeare plays in the show *What You Will* for Years 7 & 8 and *An Inspector Calls* for Years 10 & 11 students.



## Competitions

Returning for this year after 15+ years away, the chess tournament hosted at St Mary's School saw 18 children compete. Phoebe Friend took the crown in the U11s chess tournament winning all five games and Ayden Yasin won the 11+ trophy after Albert Hornsby who officially won passed on taking the trophy home. What a kind sporting gesture. The event was hosted by Chess With Dino.

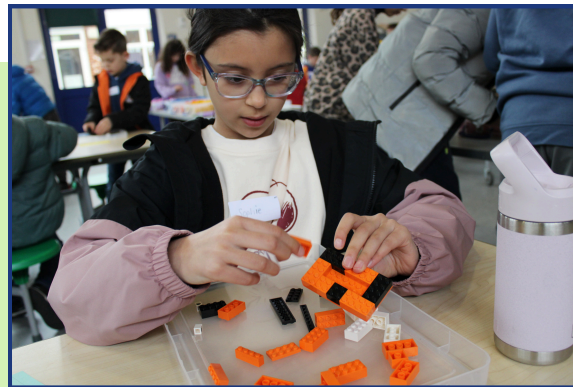
New for this year was the Creative Brick Challenge where children were tasked with building amazing 3D animals and their habitats out of Lego® hosted at Valley Road School by the Creative Brick Company. A family of penguins and an Antarctic scene built by Rupert aged 7 from Badgemore School won the trophy.

Children went wild with their art competition entries which saw an incredible number of talented entries depicting a range of animals from tiny animals to large beasts!

Photography was back for this year inviting photos of amazing pets with Thomas Brass from Sacred Heart awarded the winner (7-11 years) for his photo of Inca the cat and in the 12-18 age group, the winner was Alexander Gordon-Smith, from Gillotts with a photo of his black rabbit. The film competition was won by Bella Minnitt from Trinity School.

Philippa Sudborough, age 7, from Peppard School won the writing competition for Years 1-3 with her story *The Children, the Monkeys, and the Tiger*. In the Year 4-5 category, the winner was Camilla B, age 8, with her story, *The Brightest Star in the Sky*.

Mia Lovegrove from Sacred Heart School was our Young Reporter this year and her reports on netball, Creative Brick Challenge and Gig Night were published in the Henley Standard.





# Thank You

A special thank you to all our sponsors, partners and volunteers, without their support HYF would not be possible. Thank you to Amy Miller, Kirsten Heneghan, Lucy Herbert and Rupert Haynes for giving up their time to take some wonderful photos and videos of the festival this year.

HYF Community - thank you to the HYF Committee, Trustees, Special Advisors, judges, back stage volunteers, workshop and event organisers and so many more.

## Sponsors



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