

EmpowerHer Girls Rugby Festival 2025 – Inspiring Confidence, Courage and Character

Our Owl Class girls spent an exceptional day at Chinnor Rugby Club in Thame as part of the EmpowerHer Girls Rugby Festival 2025, a national initiative designed to boost girls' confidence, raise aspirations and promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through sport.

The aim of the EmpowerHer programme is to help girls step out of their comfort zones, challenge limiting beliefs, and build self-esteem through carefully designed *confidence clinics*, practical activities and inspirational role-model encounters. The festival creates a safe, supportive environment where girls are encouraged to take risks, develop resilience and recognise their own strength - all deeply aligned to our school values and our personal development curriculum.

Inspiring Role Models and Real-Life Stories

The girls had the privilege of meeting an impressive group of women who are leaders in their fields, including:

- Maud Muir, England Red Rose and World Cup winner, who shared her journey through rugby - the challenges she faced, the persistence required, and the pride she feels representing her country.
- Dr Rebecca Sheriff, a leading clinician in youth mental health, who provided empowering messages on confidence, self-belief and overcoming internal barriers.
- The Oxford University Women's Rugby Team, who modelled teamwork, discipline, academic ambition and athletic excellence.

To the excitement of everyone, the girls also had the unforgettable opportunity to see the Rugby World Cup trophy, giving them a tangible symbol of achievement and possibility.

A Day of Skills, Challenge and Achievement

Rugby Skills Sessions

Led by RFU-qualified coaches, the girls took part in inclusive rugby sessions designed to build teamwork, fitness, agility and confidence. The sessions were accessible and supportive, ensuring pupils of all abilities could take part. They played exceptionally well in the mini-tournament and proudly came second in the match table - a fantastic achievement!

Meet & Inspire Session

Listening to Maud Muir speak about her career helped pupils understand that perseverance, courage and resilience are essential qualities in both sport and life. Her message that *"You don't have to be the best to begin — you just have to begin"* resonated strongly with the group.

Legacy Impact for Our School

As part of the EmpowerHer programme, our school will receive a free rugby coaching session, delivered by RFU-qualified coaches later this term. This legacy opportunity means more pupils will benefit from high-quality coaching, further enriching our PE curriculum and promoting girls' participation in sport.

Broader Curriculum Impact

The EmpowerHer Festival contributed significantly to our school's work on:

- Physical Education – improving skills, stamina and confidence.
- Personal Development – building resilience, aspiration, self-belief and teamwork.
- Wellbeing & Mental Health – understanding mindset, managing worries and recognising strengths.
- Equality & Inclusion – challenging stereotypes around sport and female participation.
- Cultural Capital – meeting elite athletes, university sportswomen and leading professionals.

Staff accompanying the trip commented on the girls' positivity, willingness to try new challenges and the pride they showed throughout the day.