**Frog 69 MTB**

The suspension on kids’ bikes is often awful – but not always. **Victoria Hazael** and son Noah test a higher-performance hardtail from Frog.

The last few years of primary school can be an awkward age for children’s mountain bikes. Size XS adult bikes that may fit younger teens are still too large, while a junior, rigid-forked all-rounder may not cut it on singletrack trails with small drops and logs to ride over. Fortunately, there are some children’s hardtails with decent, air-sprung forks, such as Frog’s MTB 69.

This is a proper mountain bike so it has a commensurate price tag: £755. With the cost-of-living crisis beginning to bite, many families won’t be able or willing to splash out that kind of sum. Our Frog MTB 69 is rented from The Bike Club (**bikeclub.com**) for £25.99 a month; Cycling UK members get a discount. (For more on the pros and cons of renting versus buying, see **cyclinguk.org/buy-v-rent**.)

We already own a Frog MTB 62. As my eldest grew, we were happy to progress to a Frog MTB 69. We’ve had the bike since the start of this year and it’s been used for family off-road rides, trail centre singletrack, sections of routes like King Alfred’s Way, and a spot of Go-Ride level XC.

The aluminium frame is big enough for small bikepacking bags, which is important to me as I encourage the kids to carry their own tools and supplies. But its standout feature is its 100mm-travel fork. Being air-sprung, it’s easy to set up for your child’s (changing) weight. There’s rebound damping, so it doesn’t just pogo back up over bumps. Learning gears when you are younger takes practice, so having a visual display of them helped. The 1x drivetrain is intuitive and an 11-40t wide ratio cassette provides enough range for steeper climbs. The hydraulic disc brakes have junior-sized levers that can be pulled by smaller hands, although more modulated braking would be nice given that this will probably be your child’s first bike with powerful, hydraulic disc brakes.

In 2021 Frog upgraded the tyres on this model to actual mountain bike tyres; previously they were more like a hybrid or gravel tyre. The clearance is now a bit tighter. If racing is your child’s passion, note that the rims aren’t tubeless ready.

**Verdict**

A very capable mountain bike with a well-thought-out suspension fork that’s suitable for lighter riders. Unlike cheap coil-sprung forks, which just add dead weight, this one makes a palpable improvement to the ride.