

## **Design Technology in the Early Years at Fairfield**

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the foundational knowledge for design and technology forms part of the learning children acquire under the 'Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Expressive Arts and Design and Physical Development' branches of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Our children develop this knowledge through first-hand practical experiences. We encourage them to develop their own ideas, decide which materials to use to express them and to put them to the test! We want our children to explore, observe, solve problems, think critically, make decisions and talk about why they have made their decisions. Our children learn to construct with a purpose in mind and we teach them to use tools that are appropriate to the job in hand, for example; scissors, glue, string, hole punches, staples and tape whilst managing risk and working safely.

Communication and Language underpins our Early Years curriculum and we place great importance on using language of designing and making, for example words such as 'join', 'build' and 'shape' we also encourage evaluative and comparative language, for example, 'longer', 'shorter', 'lighter', 'heavier' and 'stronger'. We read and explore pop up books and books with sliders and discuss the mechanisms that make these books come to life to prepare children for learning in KS1.

Junk modelling is a favourite in our Early Years and children enjoy joining, fixing and talking about their masterpieces. During our local area study, we make houses out of recycled materials and investigate structure and joins.

At Christmas in Early Years, we put our skills of designing, cutting, joining and making to the test to create decorations for our school tree as we join the rest of the school in showcasing our DT skills.

After reading the story of 'The Three Little Pigs,' we investigate which materials would be good for building houses and attempt to blow them down to see if they withstand the huff and puff of the wolf! We also investigate igloos during our 'Around the World' topic and attempt to build our own-super strong sugar cube structures.

During our Seaside topic, our children make their own boats. We make predictions and decide which material would be best to use. After building them, we test them to see if they float or sink. We have a boat race to see whose boat can get the furthest and talk about the structure of the best boats!

Both Nursery and Reception classes have their own 'creative areas' with a selection of readily available resources to allow them to design and create independently, choosing their own resources to carry out the plan. It enables them to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. Through this, our children develop independence and learn about planning and adapting initial ideas to make them better.

We encourage lots of loose parts creative play and our children have free access to construction resources such as empty boxes, Lego and Duplo in order to use their imagination and explore structure. We want our children to make imaginative and complex 'small worlds' with blocks and construction resources and improve them as they play. Our children name and keep their models so they can build and improve on what they have made. Outside, we encourage designing and building on a larger scale and our children enjoy using planks, crates and fabric to build imaginative dens, structures and accessories to their role play.

Our curriculum also offers opportunities to explore healthy eating through sharing non-fiction texts and practical exploration of cooking techniques. We mix and make Divali sweets, cut fruit for Handa's fruit salad, watch Gingerbread men turn solid, pour drinks for picnics, mix, pour, make and eat pancakes with our dream toppings and create repeating pattern fruit kebabs too!

Our curriculum also develops digital literacy skills by teaching children to access, understand and interact with a range of technologies in preparation for future learning in this area.

A mix of adult led and child-initiated activities encourage our children to design and create both independently and collaboratively, share and talk about their ideas, choose resources and develop knowledge in preparation for Key Stage One Design Technology.