



North Islington Nursery School and Children's Centre
Woodwork Policy

The Benefits of Woodwork in the Early Years

At North Islington Nursery School we provide a woodwork area within the outdoor workshop area in Ocean Room (nursery class with children aged 2-5 years).

We believe that there are many risks in the world around us and it is important for children to be aware of these, and learn how to manage these. Staff at North Islington introduce the use of real tools as soon as the children enter the nursery class and they ensure the children are not in danger of harming themselves or others whilst working with the tools.

Why real tools and not plastic ones?

- We believe that young children are able to learn about cause and effect through risky play experiences, by observing the effects the tools can have on particular materials. This will support their problem solving and logical thinking whilst offering a 'real life' experience.
- Role play experiences allow children to act out scenarios that they have observed from adults around them. However, the use of plastic toys gives them little opportunity for realistic play.
- Real tools are far more interesting to young children, offering them a sense of accomplishment and enthusiasm for constructing, building, engineering, and creating.
- In a risk-averse society, we believe that it is important not to deny young children the opportunity to experiment with their surroundings using real tools.

What are children learning in the woodwork area?

We find that woodwork is a great opportunity for children to develop Characteristics of Effective Learning:

Playing and Exploring: Children have the opportunity to investigate materials, experience new things and develop the attitude of 'having a go'.

Active Learning: Woodwork encourages concentration and supports the attitude of keeping on trying – particularly if they encountered difficulties using new tools and techniques. The sense of enjoyment and achievement is also demonstrated through activities in the woodwork area.

Creating and critically thinking: Children are encouraged to plan ahead and develop their own individual ideas. Making links between ideas and transferring skills and knowledge about materials are also demonstrated. Whilst working in this area children continually develop strategies for doing things which they refine as they become more skilled and competent.

Woodwork also supports children's learning and development across the 7 areas of the EYFS

Physical Development:

- The muscles in children's hands become stronger as they manipulate wood
- Children learn about their own strength and force – varying the amount of force used to saw or hammer
- Hand eye co-ordination skills are developed when hammering small nails into wood or when attaching materials together
- Awareness of safety – keeping fingers and hands away from the hammers, saws and drills.

Personal, Social and Emotional development:

- Children demonstrate deep levels of involvement when engaged in a woodwork activity
- We notice that children who may not often persevere at other tasks, always try harder at woodwork activities – perhaps they do so because it is ‘real’
- Children often return to unfinished woodwork the next day
- Woodwork encourages children to share and take turns – negotiating and discussing rules and techniques
- They learn how to keep themselves and others safe
- Children learn to follow agreed rules and understand the serious consequences of misusing tools
- Children take great pride in their achievements and are keen to share/showcase them, boosting their self esteem
- For most children, woodwork will be a new activity so just by being involved is an accomplishment in itself

Communication and Language:

- In the woodwork area, there is always much excited discussion and language is continually developed – children learn new describing words and the names of unfamiliar tools
- Children listen hard to instructions and often remind each other of agreed guidelines
- Children talk enthusiastically about what they are doing or making

Creative Development:

- The processes involved in woodwork provide the basis for the important learning to take place rather than the end product. Children need to practise and refine techniques before they begin to use their imagination to plan ahead and create intended models or similar.
- Children develop the skills in combining materials and making changes to the physical properties of wood.

Understanding of the World:

- Children will be finding out about the properties of wood and the other materials that they use to combine with the wood.
- The children will learn about how tools are used to manipulate wood and other combined materials
- Adults introduce discussions regarding the sourcing of wood – where it comes from

Mathematical Development:

- Even without adult involvement – woodwork provides excellent opportunities for children to experience maths – size and weight of wood (problem solving)
- Adults use number alongside children and help them to work out problems – How many wheels will we need for the truck? Which length of wood would be best for your model? Let’s think about shapes for the windows.....
- Tape measures are provided for measuring and comparing
- String and fabric is cut to the desired length/size
- Shapes are selected for their physical properties and are connected together

Literacy:

- Often children will combine mark making with woodwork – adding drawn features to models.
- Children will write their name on models to ensure their work is not lost - it is precious

- Books are stocked in the woodwork area for children to look up about materials, to refer to when planning and to also inspire and provoke interest

Risks and Actions

Hazard	Possible scale of injury	Precautions in place to reduce risk	Risk rating
Injury to eye	High	Safety glasses must be worn by all children using tools and wood in the workshop area. Glasses will reduce the risk of sawdust in eyes	Low
General risk of injury through misuse of tools	Medium	Children will be closely supervised by staff during the first term of school until all children have been trained in using tools safely. 2 children ONLY at the woodwork benches. Staff will remain vigilant of children using the area at all times and will assist where appropriate.	Low
Impact to fingers/hand	Medium	Children trained to tap nail lightly to fix into place then remove hand before hitting harder. Staff to eliminate distractions. Children trained in safe use on 1:1 ratio before being supervised 1:4	Low
Splinters	Low	Wood pieces will be checked before being provided. Children will be shown how to use sandpaper. Very rough or splintery wood will not be used	Low
Using a saw	Medium	1:1 supervision. Wood MUST be in the vice before sawing commences Adult to stand in front of the sawing so that no other children can go into this space. When using hack saw/western saw only use one hand. The other hand should be placed by side of child or behind their back. When using the Japanese saw – tow hands are used. Saws are held on a high shelf or in the locked shed and children only have access to them once supervised	Low
Children with additional needs relating to behaviour/language and understanding not adhering to rules	Medium	Some children will need 1:1 support when using tools in this area. Staff will decide upon this.	Low
Dust	Dust inhaled/in eyes	Safety glasses worn at all times All 'heavy' sanding is to be done outside	Low

- **Staff are aware of the appointed first aiders but all staff are trained to manage minor injuries.**
- **There are first aid boxes within the classroom**
- **Staff follow school procedures of informing parents immediately if injury is caused to a child's head.**
- **Staff routinely check the tools and equipment provided in the workshop area – agreeing on suitability and safety.**