

Dear Parents / Carer

We're writing to let you know that the children will soon be starting woodwork. We believe this is a wonderful medium for children to work with but I'm sure a few of you may be surprised that we allow the children to use real tools – such hammers and saws! So we wanted to take this opportunity to explain why we think woodwork is such an important activity and reassure you that safety is always prioritised.

Woodwork has a long history in early childhood education dating right back to the beginnings of early childhood education with Froebel's Kindergarten in Germany back in the 1800s. Since then it has been embraced by many countries all over the world.

Woodwork is one of those really special activities that truly engages children and encompasses all areas of learning and development. Children really respond to the challenge and very much enjoy working with wood and real tools.

It encompasses so much learning – children will be developing their physical coordination, fine and gross motor skill and hand eye coordination; they will learning basic mathematical concepts, such as shape and measure and develop their mathematical thinking skills; they will be developing their understanding of the world – seeing tools as basic technology, understanding wood as a material and observing many scientific concepts such as the rotation of a wheel, levering nails back up or using a drill to drill holes; They will be developing their language with new vocabulary, using language to talk about their ideas and to problem solve; and children can develop their mark-making and drawing to express ideas on paper and also mark on the wood itself.

But there are two areas where woodwork really excels. Firstly it develops children's self-esteem and confidence – it is really empowering for children to create with real tools and they take great delight in their achievements - it really develops a can-do spirit, and secondly it develops children's thinking skills –their creative and critical thinking as they problem solve and express their imaginations with wood – which is not easy to work with!

In terms of safety, this is prioritised at all times. We adhere to strict guidelines such as the children must wear safety glasses at all times and sawing is only ever done with 1:1 adult supervision. Of course we cannot eliminate all risk, and there will be the occasional bruised thumb, but part of children's development is that they need to learn to manage risk and make judgements to protect themselves so they are better able to make decisions in all situations that life presents.

Children manage to get through a lot of resources with woodwork and our biggest challenge is keeping up with demand. We would very much like to encourage you to help out by bringing in any offcuts of soft wood such as pine and other resources such as bottle tops, corks and lids. They really can join a lot together quite quickly so we need on-going help with this! Thank you.

Woodwork is also wonderful activity to also do alongside your child at home – tools make great presents! The book 'Learning Through Woodwork' by Pete Moorhouse could make good reading to inspire you.

We very much look forward to the children showing you what they have created – but remember the real product that is being made is the changes within the child! As children make with wood they are learning skills that will empower them to shape their world - encouraging them to become the innovators, makers, sculptors, tinkerers, engineers and architects of tomorrow!

The Early Years Team