

Children's Pottery at Nära Nurseries

Our Children's Pottery enrichment programme offers young children a unique, hands-on experience in creative expression. Through real pottery wheels and a full set of accompanying resources, children will explore the process of shaping, moulding, and decorating clay. This sensory-rich activity provides an exciting opportunity for children to develop fine motor skills, patience, and artistic confidence while experiencing the joy of creating something from scratch.

Working with clay is a highly engaging activity that encourages problem-solving, creativity, and perseverance. Whether shaping their first pinch pot or experimenting with textures and patterns, children will develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work.



Frobel and Clay

Friedrich Froebel (1782 – 1852) was a German educator best known for founding the concept of kindergarten and pioneering early childhood education. He emphasised the importance of play in learning and designed special learning materials called 'Gifts and Occupations' to encourage children's play and hands-on learning. The 'Gifts' were solid objects, like blocks, that helped children explore shapes and structures, while the 'Occupations' included flexible materials like clay and sand for creative expression. He believed these activities worked

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together as part of a complete learning experience, giving children the chance to explore and express their ideas in different ways—through knowledge, creativity, and real-life experiences. The materials were carefully chosen to help develop the child's understanding of two and three-dimensional form, for developing problem-solving skills, supporting physical development, creative expression and for communicating and representing ideas.

Froebel hoped that through connecting with these carefully chosen natural materials they would gain a greater understanding of their connection to nature and life as a whole.

The Role of the Adult

Froebel placed great emphasis on adults observing children's play. The skill of the educator is to know when to carefully observe and when to support and guide. As children explore and play with clay, the adult may need to observe, comment, play alongside, extend or introduce new skills and techniques.

Well-being and development

As children explore clay, they develop a sense of well-being, emotional balance and cognitive growth. They also engage in key experiences that reflect important Froebelian principles, including:

- **Connectedness** – Learning is meaningful and connected to the children's interests and experiences.
- **Play and first-hand experiences** – Play and first-hand experiences, with open-ended, natural resources are essential.
- **Creativity** – children are given the opportunity to play, developing imagination and symbolic representation. They are able to make connections and explore ideas, thoughts and feelings.
- **Freedom and Guidance** – Free-choice and self-activity are important, with guidance from the adult.

The Intention of Children's Pottery

Our Children's Pottery enrichment is designed to:

- **Develop fine motor skills** – Moulding, pinching, and rolling clay strengthens hand muscles and improves dexterity, supporting early writing and self-care skills.
- **Encourage creativity and self-expression** – Children explore different shapes, textures, and colours to create unique pottery pieces, fostering imagination and confidence in their artistic abilities.
- **Enhance sensory development** – Clay provides a rich tactile experience, helping children explore different textures and engage their senses in a meaningful way.
- **Build problem-solving and critical thinking skills** – Children experiment with different techniques, learning how to adapt their approach when working with clay, water, and tools.
- **Promote patience and perseverance** – The process of working with clay, waiting for it to dry, and adding decorative details teaches children the value of persistence and careful planning.
- **Support social and emotional development** – Working alongside peers in a shared creative space fosters collaboration, communication, and a sense of community.



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Pottery Resources

Each child will have access to:

- Child-friendly pottery wheels
- A selection of clay types for different projects
- Carving, smoothing, and shaping tools
- Sponges and water trays for refining techniques
- Natural materials such as leaves and shells for texture exploration
- Paints for decorating finished pieces
- A drying and display area to showcase their creations
- Children will be introduced to these materials through guided sessions with educators who will demonstrate how to safely and effectively use the resources

Children will be introduced to these materials through guided sessions with educators who will demonstrate how to safely and effectively use the resources. Over time, children will gain confidence in handling tools and clay, progressing from simple hand-building techniques to more intricate pottery creations.

The Learning Process

Pottery sessions will begin with guided exploration, where children are encouraged to experiment freely with clay before moving on to specific projects. Educators will introduce key pottery techniques such as:

- **Pinching and shaping** – Forming simple pots and figures using hands
- **Rolling and coiling** – Creating long clay ropes to build bowls and sculptures
- **Slab building** – Flattening clay and cutting shapes to assemble into structures
- **Wheel throwing** – Using pottery wheels to shape symmetrical forms

Each session will be carefully structured to ensure children have the opportunity to practise and refine their skills, with plenty of time for free exploration and imaginative creation.

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Development and Learning Impact

Pottery is more than just a creative activity; it provides essential learning experiences that support children's overall development:

- **Fine Motor Skill Development** – The repetitive motions of kneading, pinching, and smoothing clay help strengthen hand muscles, preparing children for tasks like writing and dressing independently.
- **Mindfulness and Focus** – Working with clay requires concentration and patience, helping children develop their ability to focus and engage in calming, meditative activities.
- **Emotional Expression** – Clay provides a safe and non-verbal way for children to express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas, building self-confidence.
- **Mathematical Understanding** – Measuring, shaping, and comparing sizes and volumes of clay helps introduce concepts of proportion, symmetry, and spatial awareness.
- **Scientific Exploration** – Observing how clay transforms from soft to hard when dried, and how decorative embellishments change when drying, introduces children to basic scientific principles.
- **Collaboration and Social Skills** – Working alongside peers in a shared creative space fosters teamwork, turn-taking, and an appreciation for different artistic styles.



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Home Learning

We encourage families to extend their child's pottery experience at home with simple, engaging activities. You can support their learning by:

- Setting up a small clay station with air-dry clay for simple hand-moulding projects.
- Encouraging children to decorate their creations with paints or natural materials.
- Reading books about pottery and ceramics to spark their curiosity about the craft.
- Visiting local pottery studios or museums to see real-life ceramic art in action.

By supporting your child's creative journey at home, you can help them build confidence, develop patience, and nurture their artistic talents.

