



room to grow

When your children wake up, what do they see? Careful consideration of colour, style and quality can make children's bedrooms fun and comfortable now, and adaptable for their needs and wants as they grow older.

The environment in your children's bedrooms can affect their sleep and their moods. The look and feel of their bedrooms can determine their desire to spend quiet time at play there – that's peaceful time for you! – and to share their personal 'home' with friends.

Let's start with colour. Psychological research indicates that soft, soothing tones make an ideal background, while the ever-popular pinks, purples, lime greens and reds are great for feature walls and accents. This allows your child to stamp their personality and preference on the room without overpowering it.

According to psychologist Dr Shelley Wu, colours can have physical, emotional and behavioural effects. Bright red, for instance, has been shown to raise blood pressure, respiration and heart rate. Emotional and behavioural effects are less universal, as they are influenced by society and culture, but in general Dr Wu suggests:

- > Red rooms can promote activity, which is probably not ideal when you're trying to get your child to sleep. By all means, use it as an accent, but save large doses for play areas elsewhere in the house.
- > Yellow used in small amounts or softer tints is cheerful, sunny and inviting, and is a popular choice in nurseries. Too much really bright yellow, however, can be hard on the eyes.

> Blue relaxes the nervous system – soft shades of blue stimulate the body to produce calming chemicals. If you want to use stronger or darker blues, combine them with a lighter shade or bright accents to stop the room from closing in.

> Green is the colour most strongly associated with nature and can have calming, relaxing effects.

Children's bedroom designer Rachel Sandy, owner of The Junior Room in Silverdale, Auckland, advises judicious use of colour in your child's room, combining sensible with fun.

"If any colour is too strong, too dominant in the room, it is going to affect the child," she says. "Even if your child really likes a certain colour, you can use it without it going overboard."

Use bright colours in feature walls and pick up decorative themes (think farmyard, fairies, cars, or butterflies) in linens, accessories and artwork.

"If a child's room is too childish or too quirky, it has to be replaced too soon," she says. "People now tend to buy one or two themed items, so they can adapt the look of the room at a minimal cost."

While duvet sets and accent pieces may be selected to last just as long as your child's fairy or farmyard phase, furniture should endure. Pieces with a classic style, in



The Resene KidzColour chart is a great starting point for decorating children's rooms.

Remember, wall colours can be easily changed as a child grows and tastes change.

See the online Resene Inspiration Gallery at www.resene.co.nz/homeown/decorating_inspirations/index.htm for ideas on how others have redecorated children's bedrooms.

softer colours, are likely to outlast years of changing inclinations. And remember, you can always repaint furniture to keep up with major shifts in childhood opinion.

“Structurally, though, furniture needs to grow with your child. It’s got to last, take knocks, and do what you want it to do, for many years, not just for one year,” Rachel says.

When making decorating decisions, most parents want to guide their child’s thinking to ensure a reasonable outcome. In terms of major purchases, it pays to visit stores without your child first, selecting a couple of options you’re happy with, so your child can have an either/or choice instead of free rein.

“They need a little bit of input, but at the end of the day, if it’s new and it’s cute, they’re usually happy,” Rachel says.

And that result is definitely worth achieving.

“A child’s bedroom gives them comfort, security and their own space. It is so important to them.” **H**



current trends in children’s décor

- > Mosquito nets in girls’ rooms.
- > Wall art – This can be fun, kid’s-style art or more adult pieces, such as old-fashioned nautical maps to go with a boat theme, or textbook/encyclopaedia-style pages to complement a butterfly theme. A collage of fabrics, photos or other momentos can make a great piece of personalised art for your child’s bedroom. Or let them play on the walls for themselves – try Resene Blackboard Paint or Resene Magnetic Magic Paint and let them create their own artworks in their own spaces.
- > Fun floor mats – Try, for example, surfboard-style mats to go with beach-themed settings.
- > Do you remember having the same duvet set for most (possibly all) of your childhood? These days, many parents replace their children’s duvet sets every two to three years.
- > Storage, storage, storage – Children need a little empty floor space to play in, so keeping toys and other belongings tucked out of the way is important. Storage units that slide under the bed, large-capacity wardrobes, dressing tables with plenty of drawers, and wall-bracket shelves can all help ensure that there’s a place for everything in your child’s room.