

Interiors

Create a space that adapts as your youngster grows, says **Emma J. Page**

Bedrooms for every stage are child's play!



PUTTING together a creative and practical design scheme for a child's bedroom that will stand the test of time is no mean feat.

But an artful blend of hardworking furniture complemented by informal, fun accents will deliver a look that can evolve along with your child.

Here are some handy hacks...

BACK TO BASICS

THOUGH bold-coloured walls and children's wallpapers are tempting, they can be cumbersome to update as your child heads towards double digits.

Instead, opt for neutral walls and add colourful accents via accessories or peelable murals. 'To align your child's bedroom alongside their constant growth spurts, reserve bright colours for furniture and decor,' explains Helen Shaw, of Benjamin Moore paint company.

'A practical neutral or pale hue will stay timeless for years to come. Playful fabrics such as animal prints, bright patterns or bunting will add interest.'

Choose low VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, which are less toxic, such as the Natura range (benjaminmoorepaint.co.uk), which also has zero emissions and is asthma and allergy friendly.

Chalkboard paint, available in thousands of colours, is another great option for a feature wall.

If you're drawn to the cossetting effect of wallpaper, choose a gently patterned one that will transition easily, rather than traditional children's designs.

'I enjoy gender neutral, not too sugary-sweet papers,' says interior designer Louise Robinson (louiserobinsoninteriors.com).

'Check out Christopher Farr's (christopherfarrcloth.com) Tribe Outdoor by Kate Blee, as well as the gently floral ranges at Borastapeter (borastapeter.com).'

LASTING FURNITURE

USE the same approach to choosing beds, wardrobes, desks, shelving and storage.

A Scandi, minimalist style is a popular look, alongside natural

wood and brilliant whites. Shop CamCam Copenhagen (camcamcopenhagen.com) for elegant trellis beds, benches and cupboards, or Scandiborn (scandiborn.co.uk) for chic bunting and rattan mirrors.

'I also love the bedding range at Coco & Wolf (cocoandwolf.com), which uses classic Liberty fabrics to create a heritage feel,' says interior designer Belen White (studiobeleta.com). 'These styles are enduring.'

SLEEP SMART

ONCE your child is past the cot stage, try a single bed that will suit a teen just as well.

'I like to design headboards which have detachable sides upholstered in the same fabric,' says interior designer Sarah Peake (studiopeake.com).

'I use them if a child is just starting to sleep in a bed to stop them falling out. The velcro wings can be removed later and you are left with a pretty single to last years.'

Try a bed with drawers underneath for added storage, or one that incorporates a pull-out mattress underneath, ideal for sleepovers. Ikea's (ikea.co.uk) extendable Minnen, £75, is both timeless and practical.

'High beds can also be a great space saver,' says Louise Robinson. 'Noa & Nani (noaandnani.co.uk) offers cost-conscious options.'

'Try buying the bedframe and adding your own furniture to create something unique.'



EMBRACE INTERESTS

THERE are plenty of fun touches that introduce a personal twist.

'Children should be able to express themselves through visual reminders of their interests to help develop their identity,' says Claire Quigley Ward, co-founder of Pea (frompea.com), which offers fun stackable crates and bookshelves from £13 each.

'Personalised touches, such as their initial, favourite colour and chosen theme will help ignite their adventurous side.'

For added pops of colour, try lacquered furniture for bedside tables or chest of drawers, which have the benefit of being easy to

Ageless: Simple, clean lines. Inset: Add baskets to store toys

wipe clean. Another trick is to create a bookshelf, arranging spines by colour for a bold hit.

'The zeitgeist is to avoid trends — instead, embrace your children's interests,' advises Olive Loves Alfie's Ashlyn Gibson (olive lovesalfie.co.uk). 'Opt for storage that is easy for children to use themselves, such as wooden crates on casters that can be taken from room to room. Don't forget to allow for plenty of floor space.'



Installing a blackout blind and investing in a dimmer switch or night light will also make bedtimes easier.'

INVEST IN A DESK

A DESK is an important addition as children grow. Soft mid-century designs such as Ercol's Shalstone desk in natural oak, £549, John Lewis & Partners (johnlewis.com) has classic appeal. Try adding coloured shelving above, or a framed illustration.

'I recently made an interactive pinboard featuring pen and paper holders to go above a desk in a child's bedroom,' says Sarah Peake. 'It lent interest and inspiration.'

Small bookcases placed at the end of the bed also encourages night time reading.'

Finally, listen to your child's ideas about colour and style and then come to a practical compromise. Bedding, accessories and prints that reflect their passions can easily be switched up as they grow.

What your home really needs is... zinc planters

TODAY, the zinc planter, a container of cast iron coated with zinc, is as often seen on a tiny urban balcony as in the grounds of a mansion. It is designed to be weatherproof and age attractively.

Yet this garden accessory has the grandest of origins, being pioneered by André Le Nôtre, head gardener to Louis XIV, the Sun King. The flower beds at Versailles were lined with citrus trees in oak and cast-iron boxes. Your home needs a zinc



planter, or better still, three, because they enhance a plant.

For the Sun King look, you could spend a princely £995 on the Versailles planter from A Place in the Garden (aplaceinthegarden.co.uk). Or Dobies has a set of 12 small planters (£24, dobies.co.uk). The fluted set of three planters, pictured, from Cox & Cox (£125 to £180, coxandcox.co.uk) is Tuscany-meets-the-Cotswolds — always a good thing.

ANNE ASHWORTH