



# Down with the kids

Consider your child's needs and imagination to achieve the perfect bedroom scheme

Words: Ava James

**Previous page (p83):** Pictured is bespoke children's furniture designed by Mary Gannon of Mary Gannon Design. Her first collection is called *St Ives* and is handmade by craftsmen in the Cotswolds using traditional woodworking techniques. Personalise pieces with your child's name or commission a bespoke item that can be passed down from generation to generation.

**Right:** When designing his daughter's bedroom, interior designer and architect Thomas Greim of TG Studio included her in the process, allowing her to choose the wall and joinery colours, fabric for the blind from Edge Interiors and furniture from a pre-prepared selection. "One important feature of Ruby's room is the built-in cupboard at the end of her bed that makes use of the steep sloping roof. We intended to make use of every square centimetre and built in the deepest drawers our carpenter had ever made," Thomas says. Other child-friendly features include the *Kimono* rug by Mami for The Rug Company and Kartell's quirky *Attila* Gnome stool.



**W**hat does your child's dream bedroom look like? A jungle? A space rocket? A princess's castle? Prepare to be surprised. After all, children's imaginations tend to have no limits, which means that the first step in redesigning any child's bedroom is likely to be making some attempt to marry all those ideas with reality.

"From the parents' perspective, the brief is usually to design a multifunctional space that is future-proofed to allow it to adapt and grow with the changing needs of the child," explains Clare Pascoe of Pascoe Interiors. "This brief is often different from the child's perspective and this is where it gets really fun for designers. Children are great to work with as their creativity is clear of boundaries."

To strike a balance between your needs and those of your child, aim to get him or her involved in the planning of the room. After all, it's their space. To avoid arguments, though, think about pre-selecting a shortlist of furniture, fabrics and colours that you are happy with, and then letting your child make the final decisions. This way, everyone will be happy with the result.

### Sleep tight

Little ones need to sleep in a cot or toddler bed for safety and security, but once they're old enough to move into a single bed your options increase substantially. "Toddler beds work for very small children, as they are low to the

ground and have high sides that are reassuring," advises Tracey Thomas of Great Little Trading Co.

"Make sure the mattress is soft enough. Due to their lighter weight kids tend to sleep more comfortably on less firm mattresses. Bedding should also be pure cotton, because children cannot regulate their heat as efficiently as older children and adults," Tracey adds.

For older children, choices range from single beds to bunk beds, which are perfect for sleepovers. "If you have a bunk bed you're already one step ahead," continues Tracey, "but if not then you could opt for an under-bed truckle or a spare bed such as GLTC's *Bed in a Bag*. They're easily stored away when not in use, and require no inflation so you can just roll them out as you need them."

A storage bed with drawers, shelves or even a wardrobe built in might prove invaluable for all the 'stuff' your child will inevitably accumulate. Shop around for a cabin, mid- or high-sleeper bed. You will find there are plenty to choose from at various price points.

### Homework

Children need space to focus when they start getting homework. Choose a separate desk if you have the room, or opt for one that's an integral part of the bed. Make sure there's space for a computer and printer plus somewhere to set out books and resources.

A good chair is essential. "The desk chair is an important investment in an older child's room," says ►



**Above:** The desk and shelf area in this boys' bedroom by Katharine Pooley needed to be durable and practical but also eye-catching. The bespoke desk, which was made in Italy and finished in sky blue lacquer, is super-practical as it can be cleaned easily. Open shelves allow toys and books to be stored away while still being on display and easily accessible. Priced around £48,000.

**Left:** Sharon Elalouf of Ash Design London was asked to redesign this teenagers' room at a holiday home in Miami. The room had to include areas for the children to do homework and relax with friends, and it also needed to make the most of the amazing Miami skyline views. "We used a lot of vinyl on the beds, headboards and on the desk in the work area," explains Sharon. "We played around with blues, whites and dark purples as well as using heavy rugs and fabrics. We commissioned a graffiti artist who produced some artwork that included the family's dates of birth and the names of some places they loved." The project cost around £12,000.



**Above:** Clare Pascoe of Pascoe Interiors designed this bedroom for two brothers aged five and seven. The design needed to suit the mid-century flair of the house, and the period bunk bed — a rare find — can be separated into two single beds when the boys are older. The Stouby chair in grey felt is by The Couch Potato Company and the floor rug is a fun imitation cowhide. Something similar would cost around £5000.

**Opposite page, bottom:** The white lacquer shelving and seating storage in this playroom designed by Roselind Wilson is by Vycron Design Limited. The cushions on the bench are by Absolute Upholstery and upholstered in Designers Guild Genova in heather and lime. The carpet was specified by Roselind Wilson Design and supplied by BMB Property. An approximate cost is £10,000.

Sharon Elalouf of Ash Design London. "It must be comfortable and ergonomic. We always use Vitra chairs or anything from ranges in The Conran Shop. Parents should invest in a good chair and always go and try it with the child in the shop first."

Lighting is also key, especially for reading and homework time. "We would recommend getting bespoke bedside reading lights and desk lamps for the evening time," Sharon comments. "Flos does great lights for children, and they're contemporary and stylish."

Depending on how much space you have, it's a good idea to provide seating for visiting friends, particularly if your child is older. "If you can include a separate seating area that is great," adds Sharon. "However, in smaller spaces, we have used longer beds with back panels which can act as a sofa in the day or evening and as a bed at night time, without compromising on the quality of the mattress."

The success of a children's bedroom very often comes down to well-organised storage. "I like built-in wardrobes as they are neat in appearance and offer the chance to design the interior layout from scratch," says interior designer and architect Thomas Griem of TG Studio. He's incorporated drawers, shelves and even hidden storage compartments

## Case study



into his own children's wardrobes. He also recommends buying large cloth bags for storing toys, as they make it quick and easy to tidy up the bedroom. Another idea is to buy coloured boxes that fit neatly under the bed.

## A space that grows

Future-proofing is a fundamental factor when designing a child's room; it means you can make minor changes as the child grows up instead of redesigning the entire space. Mary Gannon of Mary Gannon Design suggests cots that turn into beds — check out options at Feather & Black and Mamas & Papas — and plain-coloured curtains that can be trimmed with fun buttons and braids. These can be removed and/or replaced with something a little more grown-up as the child gets older.

"If budget allows, buy quality furniture pieces that can be sanded down and re-painted at a later stage and will last through the generations," says Mary. "If you are struggling for an idea, ask your child what theme they would like. Then a quick search on the internet under that heading will yield lots of options."

Ham Interiors takes future-proofing into careful consideration when designing a child's bedroom. Interior



**Designer:**  
Stéphanie Coutas.

**The client:** The designer's own 19th-century townhouse.

**Location:** Paris.

**The brief:** To create sophisticated, comfortable and cosy bedrooms that

reflected the tastes of her 10-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter.

“My son had a very precise idea of how he wanted his bedroom decorated and I followed his ideas and made them work, whereas my daughter gave me a blank page and just asked for a round bed,” says Stéphanie.

For her daughter, Stéphanie pulled together a scheme that included a light grey bamboo carpet by Bomat, wallpaper from Omexco's Stardust collection, a blue leather side table by Fendi Casa and a round bed by Dom Edizioni covered in a faux fur throw and cushions by La Maison de la Fausse Fourrure.

Her daughter's favourite finishing touches include the Air Can table light by Mazzega, the stainless-steel and leather chair by Domus and the Born Wild crocodile sculpture by artist Richard Orlinsky. “I installed RGB lighting in the ceiling so she can transform the colour of her bedroom and ensuite bathroom to pink or blue or purple depending on her mood,” Stéphanie comments.

In her son's bedroom, Stéphanie designed the Skeleton rug (which was made by Thomas Tramp) and teamed it with light oak wood parquet flooring. Also noteworthy are the Soft Shell armchair by Vitra and Tolomeo table light by Artemide. “My son designed his room with me and, as he likes Super Mario, he chose the stickers and placed them on the wall,” adds Stéphanie.

designer Rhian Sutcliffe explains. “We tend to keep the larger expensive pieces – such as the curtains and carpets – quite neutral and add colour with accessories. This makes it easy to change the look of the room as the child grows older, without having to spend a fortune each time.

“That is often the key difficulty: choosing things that the child won't quickly grow out of while keeping the cost within budget,” Rhian continues. “However, it's fun to do and you can be a bit more adventurous with colour and pattern than in a room for adults.”

Roselind Wilson follows a similar system for her designs. “We use a neutral base palette so that the scheme can be updated or changed with new trends. There are always exciting and fun ideas for rooms. We use wall stickers a lot for a colourful burst of fun to theme a room. They are inexpensive and can be easily changed or updated.”

There are also a large number of websites that sell artwork and posters for children at a reasonable cost. Mary Gannon recommends [www.art.co.uk](http://www.art.co.uk). “They can easily be changed as the child grows,” says Mary, “and if you buy plain wood frames you can paint them in appropriate colours, and then simply re-paint when required.” [KBB]



## Case study



**Designer:** Mary Gannon of Mary Gannon Design.

**The clients:** The founder of Nada Design.

**Location:** Cambridge.

**The brief:**

To design a bedroom with a retro seaside theme for five-year-old Alex. His parents particularly wanted a wardrobe where he could hang up his own clothes, and a toy box that doubled as a seat.

Mary used items from her own range of children's furniture. The first collection to be launched is the St Ives range, seen here, consisting of the beach hut wardrobe, £1900, chest of drawers, £1300, and sailors' chest toy box, £950. "Customers can choose their own colour palette and all the pieces are handmade here in the UK," Mary says.

For this room the clients opted for a soft blue and white palette, which ties in well with the Laura Ashley bedding. Mary then selected Lighthouse wallpaper by Thibaut, £85 per roll, available through Mary Gannon Design. A similar project would cost around £8500.





Photography: Jake Eastham



**Left:** The Oxford desk, £270, from Great Little Trading Co is ideal for parents looking for a desk that will grow with their child. Team it with the desk chair, £75, also available in cloud grey.

**Opposite page, bottom left:** Pictured is lime washed wood flooring from Amtico's Signature collection priced around £70 per sq m.

**Bottom right:** Taylor Howes Designs was commissioned to create a cheerful and playful space for a four-year-old girl. The joinery is bespoke and made in a matt lacquer melamine finish, the wallpaper is from Designers Guild, the curtains are Zimmer+Rohde and the Ghost chair is a Kartell classic. The central pendant is from French manufacturer Mathieu Lustrerie.

**Below:** Nubie's large multicoloured Daisy Weave rug features a hemp centre and 100% wool petals. It is priced £299.

**Right:** Anita Kohn of Living In Space used accessories to add colour and texture to this children's bedroom. The joinery is custom-made by Living In Space, as are the cushions. The

fabric for the blinds is called Flower Cut Out Lilac from Vanderhurd. This project cost around £15,000 including joinery, carpeting, accessories and furniture.

**Bottom:** Pictured is Secret Garden wallpaper in blush pink (also available in Waterlily and Moonbeam), priced £70 per roll from Hibou Home.



## SourceBook

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