

Chinese New Year - creating a dragon

Chinese New Year (also known as the Lunar New Year) is the longest holiday in the Chinese calendar and falls between 21 January and 20 February.

Learning aims

- Understanding the World
- Communication and language
- Expressive Arts and Design
- Mathematics
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Literacy.



Resources

- Medium sized cardboard box (dragon's head)
- Various bright coloured paints & brushes
- Coloured/shiny paper
- White paper/card
- Scissors and glue
- Large piece of cloth (red or yellow) for dragon's body
- Tape
- Chinese music
- Camera to photograph progress for a project book.

More about Chinese New Year:

- Families start preparing for the celebration about two weeks before by spring cleaning their homes and buying new clothes. Homes are decorated with lots of good luck banners in reds and golds as the colour red represents joy and prosperity and is believed to scare away demons. Mandarin mini orange trees are used to decorate homes and represent good luck
- Red envelopes, (known as lai see or hongbao envelopes) are given out as gifts during Chinese New Year and each envelope has money inside
- On the last day of Chinese New Year, everyone carries beautiful paper lanterns and walks along the streets
- A dragon dance is a traditional dance in Chinese culture. The dragons bring luck to a community and the longer they dance the more luck they bring. Dragon dances occur at special times of the year, such as Chinese New Year.

Activity Outline

- Talk to children about Chinese New Year and make links to some of their own important celebrations and traditions
- Share a range of colourful photographs of Chinese dragons and watch a video of dragon dances
- Ask the children if they would like to make their own dragon for a dragon dance. Pin up some of your Chinese dragon pictures in your project area for inspiration and encourage children to transform your cardboard box into a colourful dragon's head
- Ask children to cut triangle shapes from the white paper/card to along the edges of the box for the dragon's teeth
- Once dry, attach your cloth to the dragon's head (ideally the cloth should be long enough to act as the dragon's body and fit several children underneath)
- Once it is complete choose a volunteer to be the 'head' and lead the dance and the other volunteers can be the body (children should hold the head/cloth above their head and move to the music)
- Photograph each stage of your project and create your own project book so children can re-visit the experience.

Working with Babies

Provide babies with various size cloths to explore; you can do this alongside some Chinese music. Create a treasure basket based on Chinese fruits e.g. dragon fruit, star fruit, durian, taking care to risk assess for allergies.