

You can order paint and pottery plates or small pottery animals online from **Party Pieces** (www.partypieces.co.uk, see *Party Kit*).

This is also where **Primark** comes into its own – look there for inexpensive t-shirts and baseball caps to decorate. Also an ideal spot for fun, good-value going home gifts. www.primark.co.uk

Sue Pearl at **Felt Better** offers felt-making parties for ages 6–14. Children make a piece of felt art and felt beads. £150 for up to 10 children, including all materials. Additional children £6 each. Party bags – feltmaking kits – are available at £5 each so that new found skills can be continued at home! *Tel 01608 658 213 or www.feltbetter.com.*



Host a charm bracelet party and catch the latest trend in jewellery. **Pacific Jewels** have an excellent range of charms – either buy them as kits or book the whole package, where Kristina comes and hosts the party in your home. Charms are sourced from all over the world, and are packed in age-specific kits. Prices start from £22 for a kit and 15 charms; discounts for orders of 10 or more. If Kristina hosts, she charges £30 per child, but the charms are limitless. My eagle-eyed 7-year-old daughter spotted the kit right away on my crowded desk...

Call 020 8997 7619 for more information or visit www.pacificjewels.co.uk.

Chiswick-based **Petit Artisan** sell gorgeous craft items for you to decorate or make, from bird feeders to moneyboxes. Each item comes presented in a sturdy brown paper carrier bag or a jute shoulder bag – ideal for going home with. *Call 020 8749 9488 or visit www.petitartisan.com.*

COOKING PARTIES

Children love food and what better way to cater for their party than getting the kids to make a meal for themselves?

Cookie Crumbles

Tel 0845 6014173
www.cookiecrumbles.net
Carola and her team bring everything for the children to make their own tea. Animal themes for 4-6s include pizza snakes and elephant cakes. For 7-10s, menus include disco divas, beach breezers and pirates' bounty. £165 for 6 children or £299 for 15. Max 30. Book well ahead. They provide extra trestle tables. Party bags from £2.95; recipes, wooden spoon, cookie cutter and sweeties.

Gill's Cookery Workshop

7 North Square NW11
Tel 020 8458 2608
Gill has been running cookery parties for 10 years. Expect cakes, bread rolls, pizza, Krispie cakes, ice cream and a fruit drink. Parties usually take place at her house, and cost from £225 for 12 children, £10 for every extra child (max 20).

The Kids Cookery School

107 Gunnersbury Lane W3
Tel 020 8992 8882
www.thekidscookeryschool.co.uk
Ages 5+, 8–12 children, Sats only, £28 per child, incl food, drink and goodies to take home. Choose a 3-course menu from a list beforehand. The children cook for 2 hours and eat and play party games for the remainder. Cake not provided, but fairy cakes are one of the options!

Splat Cooking

Tel 07974 386212
www.splatcooking.co.uk
£260 for 12 children (more by arrangement) incl invitations, ingredients, utensils, aprons, chef's hats, party bags, rolling pins or cookie cutter and laminated recipe card for each child. Or order a cooking party kit from £8 per kit and run it yourself.

MAKEOVER PARTIES

Magical Makeovers

Tel 01932 244347 or 07957 681824
www.magicalmakeovers.com
Suitable for 6-16 year olds (girls!) – this can make a fun add on to a sleepover. A professional make-up artist will visit you



Make a date with a snake

and make over the girls – make-up, hair and nails. From £160 for up to 8 children; larger groups are possible.

Mini Makeovers

Tel 020 8398 0107
www.minimakeovers.com
Parties are themed for different ages – 5-7 year olds are made up as princesses, over 7s have funky hairstyles and glittery make-up. One make-up artist for every 4 girls, so there is no hanging around. Tea is recommended at the end of the party, to allow fingernails to dry! Parties cost from £180 for 9 children; whole class parties can be accommodated.

ANIMAL LOVER PARTIES

Battersea Park Children's Zoo

Battersea Park, SW11
Tel 020 7924 5826
www.batterseaparkzoo.co.uk
From £25 per head including entry, zoo tour, animal encounter, arty activity, room hire, party food and party bag. Age 4+

Impeyan Productions

Tel 01992 446 211
www.impeyanparties.com
For younger children, show is combined with magic and the animals may include a barn owl, spider, lizard and snake. For kids of 8+, they concentrate exclusively on the animals and also bring a fruit bat, armadillo and a scented skunk. From £240 for 1 hour or £300 for 2 hours in central London, at home or a venue of your choice.

London Aquarium

Tel 020 7967 8000
Book a birthday tour for up to 30 children and a member of staff will guide you around the aquarium and answer questions. Tour lasts 20 mins for 3-4 year-olds, 45 mins for 5-6 year-olds and 1 hour for 7+. They will try and schedule the tour to coincide with a feed. Prices from £6.25

per child (group rate, one free adult for every 10 children). Large classroom available to rent (£60/ph). Bring your own food and decorations.

London Butterfly House

Syon Park, Brentford, Middx.
Tel 020 8560 0378
An hour-long safari round the butterfly house; handle the insects, feed the birds in the aviary. Move to a decorated room (yours for the two-hour party); tables and chairs provided (bring your own food). £6.50 per child, min 15, max 25. Four free adults per party. Only available at weekends: 11am-1pm or 2-4pm.

London Zoo

Tel 020 7449 6235 for party bookings. www.zsl.org
Package includes invitations, a meal at a reserved table in one of the restaurants, zoo entry, a goody bag, animal mask and sticker for each child and leaflet with games ideas for around the zoo. £15/head for ages 3-15. Why not combine a zoo party with a ride on **The London Waterbus** to Camden Lock from Little Venice. £4.20 per child, £6.40 per adult return.
Tel 020 7482 2660

The Tropical Rainforest

Syon Park, Brentford, Middx
Tel 020 8847 4730
1/2 hour tour round the rainforest to watch the crocodiles and piranhas being fed. Back in the party room (exclusive hire for 2 hours) meet and greet some of the animals from mini beasts to snakes. Then tea – tables and chairs supplied, you bring the food. £6.50 per child. Min 15 children; 4 adults free with up to 25. Weekdays 4-6pm, weekends 11am-1pm and 4-6pm.

Wetland Centre

Queen Elizabeth's Walk, Barnes SW13
Tel 020 8409 4400
www.wwt.org.uk
Parties can be held on Sat from 2.30-4.30pm and on Mon during school holidays. Package includes 1 1/2 hours of activities. £10 each for children and £5.50 per adult (adult/child ratio must be 1:5), invitations and goody bag. Min 10, max 20. Tea is an extra £5.50 per head – hot or cold menu. A birthday cake is an additional £15. If you bring your own food, they cannot guarantee space in the café but there is lots of room outside for picnics.