



Use of Dummy in Nursery Policy

At Little Explorers Day Nursery & Preschool, we recognise that dummies can provide comfort and reassurance for babies and young children, particularly during periods of transition, separation, tiredness, illness, or emotional upset. Dummies may also form part of a child's sleep routine and self-soothing strategies.

We are also aware that prolonged or excessive dummy use during waking hours may impact children's communication, language, social interaction, oral development, and opportunities to practise speech sounds. We therefore work in partnership with parents/carers to support children's emotional wellbeing while encouraging age-appropriate communication and development.

Our Approach

We will:

- Discuss dummy use with parents/carers as part of the child's individual care routine and settling-in process
- Respect parents' wishes and children's individual emotional needs
- Support children sensitively and gradually to reduce dummy use during waking hours where appropriate
- Ensure children are never forced to give up a dummy before they are emotionally or developmentally ready
- Consider individual needs, including SEND, medical, sensory, or additional emotional needs where a dummy may form part of a child's comfort or self-regulation strategy
- Review dummy use regularly with parents/carers to support children's overall development and wellbeing

Hygiene and Safety

To minimise the risk of infection and maintain high hygiene standards:

- All dummies brought into nursery must be clean, clearly labelled with the child's name, and supplied by parents/carers
- Dummies will be stored in individual hygienic containers or dummy boxes to prevent cross-contamination
- Staff will regularly check dummies for signs of wear, cracks, tears, or damage
- Any dummy that falls on the floor or becomes contaminated will be cleaned or sterilised immediately where appropriate
- Damaged dummies will be removed from use and parents/carers informed
- Dummies will never be attached to cords, ribbons, necklaces, or unsafe clips due to strangulation risks
- Staff will follow current safer sleep guidance at all times

Use of Dummies Within Nursery

Dummies are generally only used:

- For comfort when a child is upset, unsettled, tired, or going through a transition
- During sleep or rest times where this forms part of the child's usual routine
- When agreed as part of an individual care plan or emotional regulation strategy

Where appropriate, staff will gently encourage children to participate in play, communication, and social interaction without their dummy during waking hours.

Supporting Children to Reduce Dummy Use

When supporting children to reduce dummy use, staff will:

- Use sensitive, age-appropriate approaches
- Help children understand where their dummy is kept
- Offer reassurance, comfort, and emotional support
- Use distraction, play, stories, songs, and engaging activities
- Offer alternative comfort items where appropriate, such as a teddy or comfort blanket
- Praise and encourage children's confidence and communication
- Work consistently in partnership with parents/carers

We may also provide parents/carers with information and guidance on reducing dummy use at home where requested.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is guided by:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2025
- NHS guidance on dummy use and oral health
- Current speech and language development guidance
- Safer sleep guidance for early years settings

This policy was adopted on	Reviewed
24/01/2022	19th May 2026