

Use of Dummies Policy

At Little Oaks Nursery, we recognise that a dummy can be a source of comfort when a child is upset and that dummies often form part of a child's sleep routine. Babies and young children spend a large amount of time experimenting with their voices, creating sounds, babbling, forming words and exploring their mouths long before they use 'words'. This is the process babies go through to develop and practice the skills required for speech, language and communication. Babies and young children begin to learn to use their voices to attract attention and bring them closer to the people around them through interaction.

Recent studies have shown that overuse of dummies may affect a child's language development as it may restrict the mouth movements needed for speech. As babies grow older and develop, they need to learn how to move their mouth in different ways, smile, blow bubbles, make sounds, chew food and eventually, use language to talk. By having a dummy less, this allows a child to practice these quick mouth movements needed for speech and become more aware of their mouths, hence improving a child's speech. If toddlers continue to suck a dummy whilst developing the skill of talking, there is also a risk that the child will learn distorted patterns of speech, as a result of the teat preventing normal movements at the front of their mouth. These patterns may be difficult to change as the child gets older.

Little Oaks Nursery believes that proactive steps can be taken to ensure children develop the best speech and language possible. We therefore intend that our practitioners and parents will work together in order to give the best start to the babies and children in their care.

Our nursery will:

- Discuss the use of dummies with parents as part of babies' individual care plans
- Only allow dummies for comfort if a child is really upset (for example, if they are new to the setting or going through a transition) and/or as part of their sleep routine
- Store dummies in individual hygienic dummy boxes labelled with the child's name to prevent cross-contamination with other children
- Staff encourage children to remove their dummy when talking to staff or other children to give the child the opportunity to talk without the hindrance of a dummy.
- Immediately clean or sterilise any dummy or bottle that falls on the floor or is picked up by another child.

When discouraging the use of a dummy, staff will:

- Make each child aware of a designated place where the dummy is stored
- Comfort the child and, if age/stage appropriate, explain in a sensitive and appropriate manner why they do not need their dummy
- Distract the child with other activities and ensure they are settled before leaving them to play
- Explain to the child they can have their dummy when they go home or at sleep time.

We will also offer support and advice to parents to discourage dummy use during waking hours at home and suggest ways which the child can be weaned off their dummy through books and stories (when appropriate). Staff will ensure that they fully support parents/carers during this process and provide leaflets and information for all parents/carers regarding dummy use.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>Sept 2025</i>	<i>S. Jackson</i>	<i>Sept 2026</i>