

Childhaven Nursery



Dummy and Comforter Policy

Policy Statement

At Childhaven Nursery, we recognise that dummies can provide comfort, reassurance and emotional security for babies and young children, particularly during periods of transition, tiredness, distress and sleep. We take a **nurturing, responsive and individualised approach**, recognising that every child is unique and that their emotional needs must be considered alongside their developing independence and communication.

Our approach reflects the **Childhaven ethos**, our nurturing relationships, **hygge-inspired environment** and the principles of the **Curiosity Approach**. We aim to create calm, secure and emotionally responsive spaces where children feel safe, connected and confident to explore.

We recognise that babies and toddlers communicate through facial expressions, sounds, gestures, eye contact, movement and emerging language. During waking periods, we therefore encourage opportunities for children to explore their voices, engage in back-and-forth interactions and develop communication through warm, responsive relationships.

Our Approach

At Childhaven:

- Dummies are viewed as a **comforting resource**, rather than something to be removed abruptly.
- We work in partnership with parents and carers to understand each child's individual routines, preferences and emotional needs.
- A child's dummy may be offered when they are particularly tired, upset, unsettled or require additional reassurance, and as part of their established sleep routine.
- We aim to gradually reduce reliance on a dummy during periods of active play, exploration and communication where this is appropriate for the individual child.
- We will never shame, embarrass or force a child to give up their dummy.
- Practitioners will use **warm, responsive interactions** and alternative sources of comfort, such as cuddles, familiar objects, songs, gentle conversation and a calm environment.
- Children will be supported sensitively according to their age, stage of development and individual circumstances.

Safer Sleep

Childhaven follows current **safer sleep guidance** and considers the use of dummies as part of each child's individual sleep routine.

Where a child uses a dummy for sleep:

- Parents and carers will be asked about the child's usual sleep routine and dummy use when they join Childhaven.
- The child's individual sleep preferences will be recorded and shared with relevant practitioners.
- Dummies will be stored safely and hygienically when not in use.
- Dummies will **never be attached to a child with cords, clips, ribbons or other attachments while sleeping**, in line with safer sleep principles.
- Practitioners will follow the child's individual sleep plan and our Safer Sleep Policy.
- Children will always be placed to sleep in accordance with Childhaven's safer sleep procedures, with practitioners maintaining appropriate supervision and checks.

Hygiene and Storage

To minimise the risk of cross-contamination:

- Each child's dummy will be clearly identified and stored separately in a clean, hygienic container.
- Dummies will not be shared between children.
- Practitioners will follow appropriate cleaning and sterilisation procedures in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the child's individual requirements.
- A dummy that becomes visibly dirty or contaminated will be removed from use and cleaned appropriately before being returned to the child.
- Dummies that are damaged, cracked or deteriorating will not be used and parents/carers will be informed.

Supporting Communication and Independence

We recognise that children need rich opportunities to babble, vocalise, experiment with sounds, imitate adults and engage in meaningful interactions.

During periods of awake exploration, practitioners will encourage children to remove their dummy when they are comfortable to do so, particularly when they are:

- playing and exploring;
- engaging with practitioners or other children;
- eating and drinking;
- participating in songs, rhymes and stories; and
- developing their emerging speech and communication.

This will always be approached **gently and responsively**, rather than as a demand.

Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers

We recognise that parents and carers know their child best. We will discuss dummy use as part of the settling-in process and ongoing communication with families.

Where parents wish to reduce or stop their child's dummy use, practitioners will work collaboratively with them to develop a **consistent and gradual approach** between home and nursery.

We may share age-appropriate ideas, books, songs and strategies that support children to develop alternative ways of self-regulating and seeking comfort.

Our priority is not to meet an arbitrary age deadline, but to support each child towards increasing independence **when they are developmentally and emotionally ready**.

Our Commitment

At Childhaven, we believe that children should feel **safe, secure, valued and listened to**.

Our approach to dummies reflects our wider commitment to nurturing relationships, emotional wellbeing, respectful caregiving and children's developing independence. We

will provide calm, predictable and comforting experiences, while creating rich opportunities for communication, curiosity, exploration and connection.

We will always balance the child's emotional need for comfort with opportunities to develop independence, communication and self-regulation, working sensitively and respectfully alongside families.

Date policy was put in place 1st September 2026

by Marianne Perry Phase lead 0-2 provision

This policy is due for review before 1st September 2027

