

Oyster Bay Nursery

Use of Dummy Policy

Date written: October 2026

Date of last update: October 2026

Date agreed and ratified by October 2026

Date of next full review: September 2027

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any lessons learnt and/or updates to national or local guidance and procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Debra Hines
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)	Grace Sidders Rachel Finch
Nominated Individual	Debra Hines
Nursery Manager	Grace Sidders

1. Policy Statement

At Oyster Bay Nursery, we recognise that dummies can provide comfort and reassurance for babies and young children, particularly when settling into nursery, feeling upset or tired, or following a familiar sleep routine.

We also recognise the importance of supporting children's speech, language, communication and social development. Frequent dummy use while children are awake can reduce opportunities for babbling, making sounds and engaging in conversations with adults and other children.

Our approach is to use dummies sensitively and appropriately, respecting each child's individual needs while encouraging communication, independence and other ways of feeling secure.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Support children's emotional wellbeing and sense of security.
- Respect parents' wishes and work in partnership with families.
- Promote speech, language and communication development.
- Maintain good hygiene and reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- Establish consistent, age-appropriate approaches to dummy use.
- Encourage children to develop alternative comfort strategies as they grow.

3. Partnership with Parents and Carers

During settling-in discussions, transition calls or home visits, staff will discuss dummy use with parents and carers as part of understanding each child's individual care routine.

Parents will be asked to share information about:

- When their child usually uses a dummy.
- Whether it forms part of their child's sleep routine.
- How their child is comforted when upset.
- Any preferences or concerns about reducing dummy use.

Staff will work with parents to agree a consistent and supportive approach. We recognise that a child may need additional comfort during significant changes, such as starting nursery, changes in family circumstances or periods of illness.

4. When Dummies May Be Used

At Oyster Bay Nursery, dummies may be offered when appropriate:

- To comfort a baby or young child who is upset or unsettled.
- During settling-in periods or times of change.
- As part of an agreed sleep or rest routine, where appropriate and in line with safe-sleep guidance.
- When a child needs additional reassurance and a dummy is an established part of their comfort routine.

Dummies will not routinely be available throughout the day for children who are settled and actively playing or communicating. Staff will encourage children to remove their dummies when they are ready to engage in play, interact with others, eat, or participate in language-rich activities.

Staff will use their judgement and respond to the individual child rather than applying a rigid approach that causes unnecessary distress.

5. Supporting Speech, Language and Communication

Staff will provide a language-rich environment where children have frequent opportunities to listen, babble, make sounds, talk, sing and interact with others.

To support communication, staff will:

- Encourage children to put their dummy away when they are settled and ready to play or communicate.
- Talk, sing, read stories and engage in back-and-forth interactions with children.
- Respond to children's sounds, gestures, expressions and emerging words.
- Offer encouragement when children communicate without their dummy.
- Avoid criticising, shaming or pressuring children about their dummy use.
- Offer other comforting activities, such as a favourite soft toy, a story, a cuddle where welcomed, or quiet time with a familiar adult.

Staff will recognise that every child develops at their own pace and will work with parents if there are concerns about speech or language development.

6. Safe Storage and Hygiene

To prevent the spread of germs, dummies must be handled and stored hygienically.

Staff will:

- Ensure each child's dummy is clearly identifiable.
- Store dummies separately in individual, clean, labelled containers.
- Keep containers in a designated, hygienic location away from contaminated items.
- Follow appropriate hand hygiene when handling dummies.
- Clean dummies in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and current hygiene guidance if they fall on the floor or become contaminated.
- Clean or sterilise a dummy when required and when this can be done safely and appropriately.
- Prevent children from sharing dummies.
- Check dummies for damage and remove any that are cracked, torn, sticky or otherwise unsafe, informing parents when a replacement is needed.

A dummy that has been placed in another child's mouth must not be passed directly to another child. It must be cleaned or sterilised as appropriate before it is used again.

Staff will not dip dummies in sugar, honey or other sweet substances. Honey must never be given to children under 12 months of age.

7. Dummies and Sleep Safety

Where a dummy forms part of a baby's sleep routine, staff will follow the nursery's safe-sleep procedures and current NHS guidance.

Staff will ensure that:

- Babies are placed to sleep in accordance with the nursery's safe-sleep policy.
- Dummies are offered only where appropriate and in line with the child's care routine.
- A dummy is never forced into a baby's mouth.
- Dummy clips, cords, ribbons or other attachments are not used during sleep.
- A dummy is not attached to clothing, bedding or soft toys while a baby is sleeping.
- Staff follow the nursery's procedures for sleep supervision and checks.

Parents should discuss any specific sleep-related concerns or medical advice with the Nursery Manager so that the child's care arrangements can be reviewed.

8. Gently Reducing Dummy Use

When a child is settled and ready to engage in activities, staff will gently encourage them to put their dummy away.

Staff will:

- Keep the dummy in the child's labelled storage container when it is not needed.
- Explain in simple, positive language where the dummy is and when it may be available again.
- Offer reassurance and alternative comfort strategies.
- Redirect the child's attention to an engaging activity once they are settled.
- Praise and encourage the child's efforts to play, communicate or settle without a dummy.
- Work with parents to maintain a consistent approach where possible.

Staff will not remove a dummy abruptly if doing so causes significant distress, nor will they use dummy restriction as a punishment.

9. Working Towards Giving Up a Dummy

Oyster Bay Nursery will offer parents information and support if they wish to reduce or stop their child's dummy use.

Where appropriate, staff may suggest:

- Gradually limiting dummy use to sleep or specific comfort situations.
- Using stories or books to help children understand the transition.
- Introducing other familiar comfort objects or calming routines.
- Agreeing consistent approaches between home and nursery.
- Seeking advice from an appropriate health professional if parents have concerns about dental health, speech or language development.

We encourage families to consider reducing dummy use as their child grows, with the aim of supporting children to move away from routine dummy use before their preschool year where appropriate. This will be approached flexibly and without pressure, recognising each child's individual circumstances.

10. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy consistently and sensitively.

The Nursery Manager will ensure that:

- Staff understand the nursery's approach to dummy use.

- Parents are informed of the policy.
- Appropriate storage and hygiene arrangements are maintained.
- Individual needs and parental preferences are considered.
- Any concerns about a child's dummy use, comfort, speech or language development are discussed sensitively with parents.

Staff must maintain confidentiality and communicate concerns respectfully and professionally.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if guidance changes or the nursery identifies a need to amend its procedures.