

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEDGEHOGS NURSERY & SUNBEAMS CLUB



Use of a Dummy Policy



Updated: July 2025
Review Date: July 2028

In Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery and Sunbeams Club (the school), we understand that dummies can provide comfort and reassurance for babies, particularly during times of transition, distress, or as part of their sleep routine. We aim to support each child's emotional wellbeing while also promoting healthy speech, oral development and hygiene, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and NHS guidelines.

We recognise that prolonged dummy use, particularly while awake and active, can impact a baby's language development. As babies grow, they begin to experiment with sounds and mouth movements, which are essential for developing communication skills. Limiting dummy use during waking hours supports babies in learning to babble, smile, chew, and eventually form words.

School approach in Hedgehogs is to work with families. We will discuss the use of dummies with parents/carers during settling-in and as part of each child's individual care plan. Staff will review and agree with families when and how dummies are to be used in the setting.

When Dummies May Be Used?

- for comfort when a baby is upset or unsettled
- during sleep routines.

We will encourage alternatives during active and social times to promote interaction and speech development.

Hygiene and Safety

- Each dummy will be stored in a clean, labelled, individual container, provided by the parent, to prevent cross-contamination.
- If a dummy is dropped or touched by another child, it will be immediately cleaned or sterilised or put in the child's bag to go home before being returned to the baby.
- Dummies will be checked regularly for signs of wear or damage and disposed of as necessary.

Encouraging Reduced Use

As a baby approaches 18–24 months, we will begin to gently support reduced reliance on dummies during the day:

- Children will be shown where their dummy is kept and encouraged to access it only at agreed times (e.g., nap time).
- Staff will offer comfort through cuddles, songs, soothing voices, and familiar toys or blankets.
- Distractions such as sensory play, music, or outdoor activities will be used to settle and engage babies.
- We will support emotional regulation and bonding through responsive caregiving, building trust and confidence.

Working in Partnership with Parents

- We will offer ongoing advice to families about weaning off dummies, in line with NHS recommendations.
- Parents may be signposted to age-appropriate books and stories that support children in understanding dummy use and eventual transition away from it.
- Any changes to a child's dummy routine will be discussed and agreed upon with parents to ensure consistency between home and nursery