



Comforter Policy

Policy Statement

At Little Elms we recognise that comforters, such as dummies, are a source of comfort for a child who is settling and/or upset, and that it may often form part of a child's sleep routine.

Dummies

We recognise that the overuse of dummies may affect a child's language development as it may restrict the mouth movements needed for speech. As babies get older, they need to learn to move their mouths in different ways, to smile, to blow bubbles, to make sounds, to chew food and eventually to talk. As babies move their mouths and experiment with babbling sounds, they are learning to make the quick mouth movements needed for speech. The more practice they get the better their awareness of their mouths and the better their speech will be.

Little Elms therefore do not encourage the use of dummies but are aware of the comfort that it may bring to the child to soothe them when upset.

During the settling/starting period, the key person will:

- Discuss the use of dummies with the parent as part of the Settling In Pack
- Dummies must be provided by the parent/carer. Large blankets or muslin cloths should be cut to a practical size
- Only allow dummies for comfort if a child is upset (for example, if they are new to the setting) or as part of their sleep routine
- Store dummies in individual hygienic pots labelled with the child's name to prevent cross-contamination with other children. Blankets and/or muslin cloths must be clearly labelled with the child's name
- Immediately clean or sterilise any dummy that falls to the floor or is picked up by another child
- Ensure the dummies and storage pots are sterilised after every use. Other comforters such as muslin cloths and teddies are to be washed daily, ready for the next session the child attends.

When discouraging the use of dummies, staff will:

- If age/stage appropriate, make the child aware of where the dummy is stored and explain in a sensitive and appropriate manner why they do not need their dummy.
- Distract the child with activities and ensure they are settled before leaving them to play.
- Offer other means of comfort such as a toy or teddy bear.
- Explain to the child they can have their dummy when it is sleep time or when they go home.
- Work alongside the parent to support the child in reducing their use of the dummy at home and nursery to maintain consistency in routine.

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 (where appropriate).



Associated Documents:

- *Settling In Pack (First Settle)*