

use of dummies, bottles and cups



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. This policy outlines the approach that we will take in sensitively balancing babies and children's needs in the use of dummies, bottles and cups within our nursery.

Dummies

At Clare house we recognise that a dummy can be 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. The more practice they get the better their awareness of their mouths and the better their speech will be. The overuse of a dummy may restrict these movements from taking place and therefore affect a child's language development in the longer term. If toddlers continue to talk with a dummy in their mouth this may lead to distorted patterns of speech because the teat prevents normal movement of the front of the mouth.

The nursery aims to:

- Discuss the use of dummies with parents as part of babies' individual routine
- 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
- If a dummy or bottle falls on the floor or is picked up by another child, this is cleaned immediately and sterilised where necessary.
- Check dummies for wear and tear before each use to ensure there is no risk of choking or ingesting worn parts
- Never tie a dummy to a child's clothing as this poses a risk of strangulation

When discouraging the dummy staff will:

- Work with the child's parents to ensure a consistent approach between home and nursery
- Have a designated place for the dummy to be stored which the child will be aware of
- Ask children to take their dummy out of their mouth when talking
- Comfort the child and if age/stage appropriate explain in a sensitive and appropriate manner why they do not need their dummy
- Put children's emotions into words and reassure them if they are insecure or worried
- Distract children's attention with other activities and ensure they are settled before leaving them to play
- Offer other methods of comfort such as a toy, teddy or blanket
- Support children to find other ways of soothing and relaxing themselves
- Explain to the child they can have their dummy when they go home or at sleep time
- Remember that changes in habit can take time to become established
- Praise children when they go without their dummy

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).

Bottles and Cups

Regardless of whether a baby has been breast or bottle fed, it is likely that if they are starting at a day care setting before the age of 12 months they may need to be bottle fed at some point during the day. This opportunity for close, intimate contact with a familiar person supports the development of an attachment with the baby's key person and settling into the nursery environment. Whether breast or bottle fed it is advisable for babies to progress to drinking from a cup alongside weaning from around the age of 6 months old. Long term bottle use can delay the ability to adapt from sucking to sipping making the progression more difficult and has also been linked to the development of speech disorders. Prolonged exposure to milk and sweet sugary drinks such as fruit juice or squash from a bottle can lead to tooth decay.

The nursery aims to:

- Ensure that the baby's key person takes greatest responsibility for bottle feeding to develop a positive, consistent and nurturing feeding routine with a familiar person
- Never prop a baby up with a bottle during feeding time as this is both dangerous and inappropriate to babies emotional needs
- Only give a bottle containing milk or water
- Start to discuss with parents the use of open cups and introduce them to the child at snack and meal times in the period from when a child is 6 months old
- Only provide free flow beakers and open cups, controlled flow beakers will not be given to children of any age

Further advice on bottle feeding and sterilisation, and healthy eating and drinking procedures can be found in the nursery's Food and Drink Policy

