



Willow Tree Federation

Appletree Nursery School and Little Pips



Use of Dummies and Comforters Policy

Mission Statement

The children are at the heart of everything we do at Willow Tree Federation. We take a holistic approach to child development and we are privileged to support our children, families and the wider community to change and enhance lives. We celebrate the wide diversity of the backgrounds, beliefs, talents and interests of our children and we recognise learning happens in communities and empowers them. As a federation at the heart of its community, we understand and respect the positive impact we can have. We plant the seed that grows the future!

Date written	September 2026
Written by:	Lucy Naylor- headteacher
Date Policy became effective	September 2026
Review Date	September 2027

At the Willow Tree Federation, 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. If baby uses a dummy at home, then you should continue to use the dummy when baby sleeps in our care.

We also recognise that long-term dummy use may lead to: incorrect positioning of teeth – upper teeth may be pushed further forward than is ideal, or the top and bottom front teeth may not touch. This can change the way the teeth meet when the child bites and can also affect speech development, especially s and z sounds. 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.

For further information about Dummies please see:

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/7-dummy-factsheet-2020.pdf>

At Appletree Nursery School and Little Pips we will:

- discuss the use of dummies with parents as part of babies/toddlers individual care
- 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
- please provide these
- immediately clean or sterilise (Appletree Little Pips) any dummy or bottle that falls on the floor or is picked up by another child.

When discouraging the dummy, staff will:

- make each child aware of a designated place where the dummy is stored
- comfort the child and, if age/stage appropriate, explain in a sensitive and appropriate manner why they do not need their dummy
- distract the child 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
- explain to the child they can have their dummy when they go home or at sleep time.

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).

Comforters

We also recognise that some children may need a comforter from home such as a soft toy or blanket when they are settling and/or upset, and that it may often form part of a child's sleep routine. We discourage such items once the children have reached pre-school age (3-4 years).

The nursery aims to:

- ensure only individual children has access to the comforter
- only allow comforters if a child is upset (for example if there is problems at home or they are new to the setting) and/or as part of their sleep routine
- store comforters in the child's drawstring bag when not in use
- a comforter will be checked to ensure it is age and stage appropriate. This is to ensure the safety of other children in the setting, for example, if a soft toy from home has small loose buttons it may not be allowed in case another child swallows the parts.