



Sleep Policy

Sleep is a basic need for everyone, and it plays such an important role in helping our brains and bodies rest and recover. As children's brains and bodies are extremely active and still developing, sleep is especially important for them. Sleep helps children's brains to remember, analyse and store important information. Sleep is crucial for children's growth, as well as their mental, physical, social and emotional development.

When children are tired, it can have an effect on their mood, attention and behaviour. Lack of sleep can impact a child's ability to engage, communicate, and general ability to 'cope' with day-to-day activities and events. Research shows that sleep is necessary for children to develop; executive attention, cognitive performance, resiliency, vocabulary acquisition, memory, and motor skill development.

The NHS recommends that children should have the following amount of sleep, per 24 hours, in order for their brain and body to develop;

New-born babies 0 to 4 months old – 8 to 18 hours (including naps)

Babies 4 to 12 months old - 12 to 16 hours (including naps)

Toddlers 1 to 2 years old - 11 to 14 hours (including naps)

Children 3 to 5 years old - 10 to 13 hours (including naps)

When a child starts at Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, the child's allocated key person will discuss the child's sleep routine with the child's parent(s), including timings, duration, location, position, use of comforters etc. The child's parent will be asked to complete an 'All About Me' and routine sheets. Comforters, muslins, dummies, specific blankets, or teddies, where required, should be provided from home and these will be stored with the child's personal belongings. At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we always follow safer sleep guidelines. If a baby/child has adopted an unusual or unsafe sleeping routine, the parent(s) must be made aware that this cannot be followed at nursery. It is our duty to advise signpost parent(s) to support, if we believe unsafe sleep is occurring at home. At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we promote safer sleep and follow guidelines set out by the NHS* and the Lullaby Trust**, to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

At Walmer Bridge Day Nursery, we recognise that nursery is a busy environment where children are physically and mentally busy. We aim to ensure that all children have enough sleep to support their development. Therefore, we offer 'calm' areas within each room; babies, toddlers, and pre-school, where children can relax, rest, and sleep, when needed.

We recognise parent knowledge of their child with regard to sleep routines and will, where possible, work together to ensure each child's individual sleep routines and well-being continues to be met. However, practitioners will not force a child to sleep or keep them awake against their will. They will also not usually wake children from their sleep. Practitioners will follow child-led behaviour. Depriving a tired baby or child of sleep is not the best care for that child. The needs of the child must always take priority.

Practitioners should be aware of the individual needs of their key children. Individual sleep routines are followed for each child, rather than one set sleep time for all children. If a child is asleep during a mealtime, they will not be woken up to eat, but instead offered their meal once they have woken naturally.

As part of the daily 'handover', key persons should share and discuss sleep information with parents, upon collection of their child from nursery. Sleep(s) should also be recorded on the child's daily 'Parenta' diary. Regular discussions about sleep routines should occur between a child's key person and their parent(s), to ensure any changes are reviewed and updated in timely intervals.

At Walmer Bride Day Nursery, we endeavour to create an environment that helps to settle children that require a sleep, e.g. dimming bright lights or using soft music, where applicable. Practitioners must also continue to meet the needs of the children that do not require a sleep and ensure they can continue to play, learn and develop. This may involve providing quieter/calmer activities, taking children outdoors or temporary joining with other rooms/groups of children.

When preparing babies/children for a routine sleep, practitioners should;

- Prepare them for sleep by creating a calm, quieter environment, having a story or having a cuddle.
- Sit with them and offer comfort by gently stroking, patting or rocking. Practitioners attend safeguarding regular training and appropriate methods of comfort is regularly reviewed.
- Provide children with their dummy, teddy, comforter, blanket.
- Sleep routines are a very intimate part of a baby's day. Babies should never be left to cry themselves to sleep or be left for long periods of time to 'drop off' to sleep.
- If a child is able to settle themselves, then a practitioner will sit close to them.
- Use clean, light bedding or blankets – bedding and blankets are always regularly cleaned, using non-bio wash powder. Sleep mats should be cleaned regularly.
- Ensure babies/children are appropriately dressed for sleep e.g. remove cardigans/jumpers, to avoid overheating and remove any loose clothing and bibs.
- Ensure babies/children have a fresh, clean nappy.
- Ensure babies/children do not have anything in their mouth, including food, to avoid the risk of choking.

The safety of sleeping babies and children is paramount. To minimise the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), practitioners must always make sure that:


- Babies and children must always be placed flat on their backs to sleep.
- If a baby has rolled onto their tummy, we turn them onto their back again unless they are able to roll from back to front and back again, on their own, in which case we enable them to find their own position.
- Babies and children should sleep in a cot, in a coracle/pod, or on a sleeping mat on the floor – all of our nursery sleep equipment meets British Standard regulations.
- Sleep mats and mattresses are regularly checked for any signs of damage.
- Cots should be checked regularly to ensure they are safe and secure - screws and bolts should be tightened periodically.
- We do not use cot bumpers and ensure that cots/coracles are clear from clutter, e.g. teddies/cushions.

- We keep all spaces around cots and beds clear from hanging objects i.e. mobiles, hanging cords, blind cords, drawstring bags etc.
- Cots and coracles should not be positioned next to a radiator, to avoid overheating.
- Babies and children should not sleep in car-seats, bouncers (or similar), as breathing can be compromised in this position.
- Sleeping in prams is only permitted if they lie completely flat and if requested and consented by the child's parent(s). Babies and children sleeping in prams, must be checked more regularly, every 5 minutes. Pram sleeping should not be encouraged and only be used as a last resort.
- If a baby or child falls asleep on a practitioner, e.g. during comforting/cuddling, attempts should be made to transfer them into a cot or onto a sleep mat. Practitioners should not allow long periods of 'contact napping'.
- Babies and toddlers are never put down to sleep with a bottle to self-feed, as this poses a choking risk.
- Babies and toddlers are monitored when sleeping, and are always within sight or sound of a practitioner, as per the Statutory Framework for Early Years.***
- Practitioners must complete a 'Sleep Observation Monitoring Form', when any child(ren) are sleeping
- Practitioners should check on sleeping babies and children every 10-15 minutes.
- Practitioners should observe sleeping position, surroundings, skin colour, breathing, level of sleep, body temperature, room temperature etc.
- Children should not be put to sleep with any loose clothing or bedding.
- The room temperature should be a comfortably between 16 -20°C.

* [Safer sleep advice for babies - Start for Life - NHS](#)

** [The Lullaby Trust - Safer sleep for babies, Support for families](#)

*** [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
November 2025	Katy-Leigh Eastham (Nursery Manager) 	November 2026
This policy was reviewed on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Changes made?