



Dummy and Bottle Policy

Statement of intent

At Playhouse Pre-School, we recognise that some of the younger children who attend may still use a bottle or dummy when they start at the setting.

Playhouse Pre-School welcomes children from 9 months of age and recognises that children in the Caterpillar Room (9 months to 2 years) are at different stages of development. Our approach is therefore supportive and age-appropriate.

We aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to support children's individual routines while also encouraging children to develop appropriate drinking, feeding, communication and self-soothing skills.

Children in the Butterfly Room (2–4 years) are not permitted to bring or use bottles or dummies at Playhouse Pre-School, except where an individual medical, developmental or additional need has been identified and an appropriate arrangement has been agreed with the setting.

Bottles

Children in the Caterpillar Room (9 months to 2 years) who still require a bottle will be supported in line with their individual needs and feeding routine.

- Parents/carers should provide clear information about the child's usual feeding routine, including the type and approximate amount of milk provided.
- Staff will follow the child's individual feeding arrangements and any relevant healthcare plan.
- Bottle feeds will be given by a member of staff in a calm and responsive manner.
- Babies will be held in an appropriate semi-upright position during bottle feeding and staff will respond to the child's feeding cues.
- Children will never be forced to finish a bottle.
- Children will never be left unattended with a bottle or given a propped-up bottle.
- Bottles will not be used as a sleep aid and children will not be left in their sleep space with a bottle.
- Bottles will be clearly identified and stored safely when not in use.
- Parents/carers are responsible for providing bottles and milk in accordance with the setting's food hygiene and feeding procedures.
- Staff will follow appropriate procedures for the safe storage, handling and disposal of milk and prepared feeds.
- Children will be encouraged to develop their drinking skills using an open cup or suitable free-flow cup when they are developmentally ready.

NHS guidance recommends introducing babies to a cup from around 6 months and discourages bottle feeding after 12 months.

Playhouse Pre-School will therefore work with parents/carers to encourage a gradual transition from bottles to cups as children become ready, rather than expecting all children to stop using bottles immediately on joining the setting.

Dummies

We recognise that some babies and younger children use a dummy for comfort and sleep.

In the Caterpillar Room, a child who uses a dummy may continue to use it in accordance with their individual needs and home routine.

- If a child uses a dummy for sleep, staff will follow the family's agreed routine where appropriate.
- A dummy will not be forced on a child.
- If a dummy falls out while a child is asleep, staff will not wake the child to replace it.
- A dummy may be offered again if the child wakes and requires it.
- Dummies will not be used continuously throughout the child's waking day.
- Staff will encourage children to remove their dummy when they are awake, playing and communicating.
- Staff will support children to develop alternative ways of self-soothing and communicating as they become ready.
- Dummies will be stored safely when not being used.
- Dummies must be clean and in good condition.
- Dummies must not have cords, ribbons, clips or attachments around the child's neck.
- Dummies must never be coated with anything sweet.

The Lullaby Trust advises that dummies may be used for sleep and should not be forced on a baby. It also advises gradually stopping dummy use between 6 and 12 months to reduce the potential problems associated with longer-term use.

Butterfly Room – children aged 2 to 4 years

Children attending the Butterfly Room (2–4 years) are expected to be drinking from cups and are not permitted to use bottles or dummies at Playhouse Pre-School.

This supports children's developing independence, communication and oral health and enables children to participate fully in activities and social interactions.

Parents/carers will be informed of this expectation when their child moves into the Butterfly Room.

Where a child has a specific medical, developmental or additional need that means they require a bottle, dummy or other feeding or comfort arrangement, the setting will discuss this with the child's parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant health professionals. An individual plan or risk assessment will be put in place where necessary.

Partnership with parents/carers

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We recognise that children develop at different rates and that families may have established routines at home.

Staff will discuss bottle and dummy use sensitively with parents/carers and will work together to agree a consistent and appropriate approach.

Where parents/carers are considering reducing or stopping bottle or dummy use, staff will support them with this transition in a positive and age-appropriate way.

Where there are concerns about feeding, oral health, speech and language, development or a child's individual needs, parents/carers may be encouraged to seek advice from an appropriate health professional.

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-school Broadwater.

Adopted on 23rd January 2019 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 23rd September 2026 by Z. Munford