Sleep Policy

Purpose

At Hopscotch Day Nurseries we aim to ensure that all children have enough sleep to support their development and natural sleeping rhythms in a safe environment.

The safety of babies and children sleeping is paramount. Our policy follows the advice provided by the DfE[1], the Lullaby Trust[2] and NHS[3] to minimise the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in babies up to 12 months of age, and sudden unexpected death in childhood (SUDC) in children over 12 months of age.

No child or baby will be admitted into nursery asleep, all children who arrive at nursery asleep will need to be woken up by the parent/carer prior to the caring responsibility being handed over to the setting.

Sleeping children at nursery

We ensure that:

- Babies aged 12 months and under must only be placed to sleep on their back in a cot[4] (cots refer to: cots, carrycots, moses baskets, travel cots). Coracles must not be used for sleeping for babies under 12 months.
- If a baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or weighing less than 2.5kg or 5.5lb, you should follow the safer sleep advice for a year from their due date, rather than when they were born[5]
- 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 under six months of age must always have an adult with them in the same room for every sleep.
- Babies aged over 12 months are placed down on their back in their own separate sleep space on a clear, flat, firm surface such as a cot, bed or mattress on the floor which has suitable British Safety Standards
- All children are monitored visually when sleeping by walking up to them, looking for the rise and fall of their chest and if their sleep position has changed. Also ensure that the blankets are tucked in below their shoulders and not covering their heads. Checks are recorded every 10 minutes.
- Babies under six months are monitored every 5 minutes whilst sleeping.
- As good practice, new children sleeping during the first few weeks of settling into nursery will be monitored every five minutes until we are familiar with the child and their sleeping routines, to offer reassurance to them and families.
- All children are always within sight and sound of staff while sleeping. This is supported through the use of sleep monitors with both audio and camera functions. In addition, CCTV is in place in both cot rooms and playrooms.
- Children are never put down to sleep with a bottle to self-feed. For safety, children must not wear or have access to loose items while sleeping, including loose clothing, bibs, necklaces, teething beads, or hair accessories.

Sleeping environment

We provide a safe sleeping environment for all babies and children by:

- Ensuring every child has their own separate sleep space.
- Only using safety-approved cots and other suitable sleeping equipment (i.e. mats) that are compliant with British Standard regulations.
- Using a firm flat surface such as a cot, bed or mattress on the floor. Babies aged 12 months and under are only placed to sleep in a cot.
- Using a firm, flat waterproof mattress, a clean fitted sheet, and lightweight bedding which is firmly tucked in around the child below their shoulders to prevent head covering.

[1] https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep
[2] https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/safer-sleep-information/
[3] https://www.nhs.uk/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/sudden-infant-death-syndrome-sids/
[4] https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep
[5] https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Safer-sleep-advice-for-premature-babies.pdf

- Ensuring the child is placed feet-to-foot at the bottom of the cot, with lightweight blankets tucked in, if used
- Ensuring every baby/child is provided with clean bedding, labelled for them, working in partnership with parents to meet any individual needs.
- Ensuring all children are appropriately dressed for sleep to avoid overheating.
- Ensuring all children's heads are not covered.
- Ensuring no extra items such as toys, pillows, extra blankets, bumpers, wedges or straps are used in cots; we will use sleep comforters for babies and children over 12 months only and follow The Lullaby Trust advice regarding the safe use of dummies while babies are sleeping[6]
- Keeping all spaces around cots and sleep mats clear from hanging objects i.e. hanging cords, blind cords, drawstring bags.
- A safe space must be maintained around cots and floor sleep mats to ensure adequate airflow.
- Sleep mattresses are kept clean and in good condition.
- All sleep mattresses are to be cleaned immediately if soiled, after any illness, or following contact with bodily fluids, to minimise the risk of cross-infection and ensure a safe sleeping environment for all children
- Monitoring the sleep room temperature and ensuring it remains between 16-20°C at all times, where possible
- Ensuring babies under six months of age always have an adult with them in the same room for every sleep and are checked every five minutes.
- Ensuring all children over six months of age are always within sight and hearing of staff when sleeping and are checked every 10 minutes; we will use a baby monitor with both audio and camera functions to enable the sleeping children to be seen and heard at all times.

Supporting Children's Sleep Needs

We aim to follow each child's individual needs alongside parental preferences.
If a child who is usually not expected to sleep becomes tired or unsettled, we will contact parents to discuss their needs, and where appropriate, allow the child to rest or sleep.
Similarly, if a child is sleeping and does not wake after their usual agreed sleep time, we will prioritise their wellbeing and allow them to continue sleeping, as needed.

Sleeping twins and more than one child (from the same birth)

We follow the advice from The Lullaby Trust regarding sleeping twins[7], while working with parents to maintain their sleep routines and well-being.

Further considerations

- To ensure children's safety, only staff members who have successfully completed all required training (including key skills) and have a valid, cleared DBS check are allowed to settle children to sleep.
- We will only let babies/children sleep in buggies, pushchairs or prams if they lie flat and we have written permission from the parent.
- We will allow babies/children to sleep outdoors, where appropriate. When children are sleeping outside, we will follow NHS advice relating to head coverings and direct sunlight.
- If a child is unwell and requires their mattress to be slightly elevated, a suitable pillow may be placed underneath the mattress. Under no circumstances should a pillow be placed directly under the child's head.
- If a child uses a sleeping bag, parents will be asked to provide one. It must be used in line with the manufacturer's guidance to ensure safety. At the parents' request, the setting can wash the sleeping bag weekly (or more frequently if needed); otherwise, it should be taken home at the end of each week for cleaning.

[6] https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/baby-product-information/dummies/
[7] https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/premature-babies-and-multiples/twins-and-multiples/

- We will transfer any child who falls asleep to a safe sleeping surface to complete their rest.
- Any child who falls asleep in a pushchair or the petit wagon whilst out on an outing will be transferred to a safe sleeping surface to complete their rest on their return to the nursery; coats, hats, extra clothing and blankets will be removed as soon as they are inside, even if this means waking them.
- We operate a no smoking or vaping policy. Staff who smoke or vape during their break must change their clothing and wash their hands before returning to work.
- Sleep charts are used to monitor who is asleep and to record the sleep checks.
- Where possible, blinds will be drawn and lights dimmed or turned off to create a calm and soothing sleep environment for the children.

We ask parents to complete forms on their baby's/child's sleeping routine with their key person when starting at nursery; these are reviewed and updated at timely intervals. If a baby has an unusual sleeping routine or a position that we do not use in the nursery, i.e. babies sleeping on their tummies or in a sling, we will explain our policy to the parents and not usually offer this unless the baby's doctor has advised the parent of a medical reason to do so. In such cases, we would ask parents to provide written permission to adopt a different position or pattern for their baby/child. The nursery will also complete a risk assessment, which will be shared with parents.

We recognise parent knowledge of their baby/child with regard to sleep routines and will, where possible, work together to ensure individual sleep routines and well-being continue to be met. However, staff will not force a baby/child to sleep or keep them awake against their will. They will also not usually wake children from their sleep.

Individual sleep routines are followed rather than having one set sleep time for all children. We create an environment that helps to settle children that require a sleep, for example dimming the lights or using soft music, where applicable. We will maintain the needs of the children who do not require a sleep and ensure they can continue to play, learn and develop. This may involve taking children outdoors or linking with other rooms or groups of children.

Staff will discuss with parents any changes in sleep routines at the end of the session and share observations and information if they do not receive enough sleep.