



Wessex
Learning Trust

We Learn Together

Early Years: Safer Sleeping Policy



Wessex Learning Trust

Safer Sleeping Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every 3 years.



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Date: 16 July 2026



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Date: 16 July 2026

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1. Purpose

The Wessex Learning Trust is committed to promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of all children in its care. This safer sleeping policy sets out the expectations and procedures that must be followed by all preschool settings within the Trust when supporting babies and young children during sleep and rest periods.

The policy is designed to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), accidental injury and avoidable harm by ensuring that sleeping arrangements are safe, well supervised and consistent with current safer sleep guidance. It applies to all staff, students, volunteers and visitors who may be involved in the care of babies and children under two years of age, and should be read alongside each setting's safeguarding, health and safety, intimate care and sleep supervision procedures.

This policy applies primarily to babies and children under two years of age, with particular requirements for babies aged 12 months and under. Where children are older than two years, staff should continue to use professional judgement and maintain safe, appropriate sleep arrangements in line with the individual child's needs and the expectations of the setting.

2. Principles of safer sleep

All children should be supported to sleep in a way that is calm, secure and safe. Safer sleep practice is based on the following principles:

- babies aged 12 months and under must only be placed to sleep in a cot, including a carrycot, Moses basket or travel cot, provided the product is suitable for use and meets the relevant safety standards;
- children must be placed on their back to sleep in their own separate sleep space on a clear, flat, firm surface such as a cot, bed or suitable mattress on the floor;
- sleep spaces must not contain unnecessary items that could pose a hazard;
- children must be monitored appropriately while sleeping;
- staff must ensure that babies and young children are not too hot or too cold;
- sleeping arrangements must always support the child's dignity, comfort and individual routine while prioritising safety.

All staff are expected to understand that safe sleep practice is a safeguarding responsibility. Concerns about unsafe sleep arrangements, poor supervision or unsuitable equipment must be reported immediately in line with local safeguarding procedures.

3. Safe sleep spaces

A safe sleep space must be prepared before a child is settled for sleep. For babies and children under two years of age, the sleep space must be clean, secure and free from clutter.

Required features of a safe sleep space

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Sleep spaces should only contain:

- a firm, flat, waterproof mattress
- lightweight bedding which is firmly tucked in around the child no higher than their shoulders to prevent head covering
- or a well-fitted baby sleep bag, where used, in line with the manufacturer's guidance

Where blankets are used, the baby should be placed feet-to-foot at the bottom of the cot, with blankets tucked in securely. This reduces the likelihood of the blanket moving over the child's face and helps maintain a safe sleeping position.

The child must be placed in their own separate sleep space. Sharing a sleep space is not appropriate in preschool settings and must not occur. Each child should have an individual cot, mattress or bed area, depending on their age and developmental stage, and this should be used consistently.

Items that must not be placed in cots or sleep spaces

Cots must not contain extra items such as:

- toys
- pillows
- loose bedding
- bumpers
- wedges
- straps
- comforters for babies aged 12 months and under
- any item that could obstruct breathing, cause overheating or increase the risk of entrapment

Evidence suggests that babies aged 12 months and under are at a higher risk of SIDS if their heads are covered. For this reason, staff must take particular care to ensure that bedding remains below shoulder level and that the child's head remains uncovered. Unnecessary items, including cot bumpers and toys, can increase the risk of accidents and should never be used in sleep spaces.

Sleep comforters may be used for babies and children aged over 12 months only, provided their use is agreed with parents or carers and does not compromise safety. Even where a comforter is permitted, staff must continue to monitor the child appropriately and ensure that the sleep environment remains uncluttered.

4. Positioning children for sleep

Children must always be placed on their back to sleep. This applies to all babies and young children in preschool settings, including those who may appear to prefer another position. Placing a child on their back is a key safer sleep measure and should be followed routinely.

Once babies can move from their back to their front and back again by themselves, they may find their own sleeping position. However, staff must continue to place them on their back to sleep whenever they are settled. The child should not be repositioned unless there is a clear safety or welfare reason to do so, and any concerns should be discussed with parents, carers or relevant professionals where appropriate.

Children should be settled gently and safely, with minimal disturbance. Staff must ensure that the child's face is visible, the bedding is secure and the sleep area remains free from hazards.

5. Use of cots, mattresses and other sleep furniture

Babies aged 12 months and under must only be placed to sleep in a cot. This includes carrycots, Moses baskets and travel cots, provided they are suitable for the child's age and size. Providers may find it useful to check whether products meet the relevant British Safety Standards before use.

Children under two years of age may sometimes sleep on suitable floor mattresses or beds, depending on the setting's provision and the child's developmental needs. Any mattress used must be firm, flat and appropriate for the purpose. Sleeping on soft furnishings such as beanbags, sofas or cushioned play equipment is not permitted.

Where bedside cribs are used, settings must ensure that the crib complies with BS EN 1130:2019. Since 2020, all bedside cribs should meet this standard. This means that cots should no longer have a side that fully drops down.

Mattresses must be clean, intact and suitable for the child's sleep furniture. They must not be damaged, excessively soft or covered in materials that could compromise safety.

6. Safety standards for equipment

Settings must ensure that sleep equipment is safe, well maintained and appropriate for its intended use. Providers may find it useful to check whether products meet the following British Safety Standards:

- cots, travel cots, Moses baskets and carry cots: BS EN 716-1:2017, BS EN 1466:2014 or BS EN 1466:2023
- bedside cribs: BS EN 1130:2019
- mattresses: BS 7177:2008+A1:2011
- mattresses for cots, travel cots and cribs: BS EN 16890:2017+A1:2021
- sleep bags: BS EN 16781:2018

These standards help to ensure that products are suitable for use with babies and young children and reduce the likelihood of product failure or avoidable injury. Staff should check equipment regularly for signs of damage, wear, instability or contamination. Any faulty or unsuitable item must be removed from use immediately and reported through the setting's usual equipment and maintenance procedures.

7. Temperature and clothing

Children should not get too hot or too cold while sleeping. Maintaining an appropriate temperature helps support comfort and safety.

For babies aged 12 months and under, the recommended room temperature is 16 to 20°C. Staff should monitor the room environment and consider the child's clothing, bedding and general wellbeing when supporting sleep. In extreme temperatures, professional judgement must be used to ensure the child remains safe and comfortable.

To check whether a baby or child is too hot or too cold, staff should feel the child's chest or the back of their neck. Hands and feet are usually cooler and this is normal. If the child's skin feels clammy or sweaty, one or more layers of clothing or bedding should be removed. If the child feels cold, an additional layer may be added, provided this does not increase the risk of overheating or head covering.

Babies should be dressed appropriately for the season, the room temperature and the type of bedding used. Staff should avoid over-bundling, as this can increase the risk of overheating. All decisions about clothing and bedding should be based on safety, comfort and the child's individual needs.

8. Supervision during sleep

Children must always be within sight and hearing of staff when sleeping. Supervision is essential to ensure that any changes in breathing, position, colour, comfort or behaviour are noticed promptly.

Babies under six months

Babies under six months of age must always have an adult with them in the same room for every sleep. This level of supervision is required to support close monitoring and immediate response if the baby shows signs of distress or discomfort.

Children over six months

A baby monitor can be used for children over six months of age, and settings must ensure it allows children to be seen and heard at all times. Monitors are not a substitute for appropriate adult supervision, but they may support staff to maintain safe oversight where the sleep area is within the setting and direct sight is partially limited.

All children must be frequently checked when they are sleeping. Checks should be frequent enough to provide reassurance and to identify any concerns without disturbing the child unnecessarily. During each check, staff should confirm that the child is breathing normally, is in a safe position, remains appropriately covered and does not show signs of overheating, distress or discomfort.

Sleep checks should be recorded in line with the setting's procedures. If a child appears unwell, is difficult to rouse, has an altered colour, or is displaying any unusual signs, staff must act immediately in accordance with first aid and safeguarding procedures.

9. Parental partnership and individual needs

Preschools should work in partnership with parents and carers to understand each child's usual sleep routines, preferences and any relevant medical or developmental needs. Information may include usual sleep times, comfort methods, settling routines, allergies, health conditions, reflux, cultural considerations or specialist advice from health professionals.

Where a child has additional needs or requires an adapted sleep routine, the setting must consider how safety can be maintained while meeting the child's needs. Any agreed arrangements should be recorded clearly and communicated to all relevant staff.

Parents and carers should be informed of the setting's safer sleep expectations, particularly where a child is transitioning into a different sleep arrangement, such as moving from a cot to a floor mattress.

Families should also be advised that comforters may only be used for babies and children over 12 months of age.

10. Staff responsibilities

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy consistently. This includes:

- preparing safe sleep spaces before children are settled
- placing babies on their backs to sleep
- checking that bedding is secure and appropriate
- ensuring sleep spaces remain clear of prohibited items
- monitoring children appropriately during sleep
- maintaining accurate records where required
- responding promptly to any concerns about a child's wellbeing
- following infection control and cleaning procedures for sleep equipment
- reporting damaged or unsuitable equipment immediately
- seeking advice where a child's sleep needs are unclear or where additional support may be required

Managers and room leaders should ensure that all staff receive appropriate induction, ongoing training and regular updates on safer sleep practice. Safe sleeping arrangements should form part of staff supervision, quality assurance and safeguarding monitoring.

11. Record keeping and review

Where required by the setting, records should be kept of sleep times, checks and any relevant observations. Records should be factual, accurate and completed promptly. Any concerns arising during sleep, including unusual breathing patterns, signs of illness, temperature concerns or changes in a child's condition, must be recorded and escalated according to the setting's procedures.

This policy should be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains consistent with current guidance, legislation and local practice within the Wessex Learning Trust. Reviews should also take account of any incidents, near misses, changes in national safer sleep guidance, feedback from staff and families, and the needs of the children attending the setting.

12. Summary of essential expectations

To support safer sleeping in Wessex Learning Trust preschools:

- babies aged 12 months and under must only sleep in a cot, including carrycots, Moses baskets or travel cots
- children must be placed on their back to sleep in their own separate sleep space
- sleep spaces must be clear, flat, firm and free from unnecessary items
- bedding should be lightweight and tucked in securely, or a suitable sleep bag may be used
- babies' heads must remain uncovered
- babies under six months must always have an adult in the same room for every sleep;
- all children must be frequently checked when sleeping
- children must always be within sight and hearing of staff when sleeping

- baby monitors may be used for children over six months, but they must allow children to be seen and heard at all times
- room temperature for babies aged 12 months and under should generally be maintained between 16 and 20°C
- staff must use professional judgement during extreme temperatures and when supporting individual children

All staff must follow this policy at all times to ensure that every child is supported to sleep safely, comfortably and securely in the preschool environment.