

Reading Early Years Schools Federation



Sleep and Safer Sleep Policy

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Sleep and Safer Sleep Policy

1. Policy Statement

Reading Early Years Schools Federation (REYS Federation) recognises that sleep and rest are essential to children's physical health, emotional wellbeing and development. We are committed to providing a safe, consistent and responsive sleep environment for all children in our care.

This policy reflects current best practice and statutory safeguarding and welfare expectations and is informed by:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026
- Department for Education safer sleep guidance
- NHS safer sleep advice
- The Lullaby Trust safer sleep recommendations
- Local safeguarding procedures

Safe sleeping arrangements are statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements under the EYFS. Any departure from the requirements must be acted upon immediately and managed under REYS Federation safeguarding, incident, disciplinary and whistleblowing procedures, as appropriate.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Ensure all children sleep safely and comfortably
- Minimise the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) and Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood (SUDC)
- Meet statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements
- Ensure consistent practice by all staff
- Work in partnership with parents and carers

3. Individual Sleep Arrangements

- Each child's sleep routine is discussed with parents and carers during induction
- Individual sleep arrangements are documented and reviewed regularly
- Where possible, routines reflect the child's home sleep patterns, provided they are consistent with statutory safer sleep requirements
- Any changes in sleep behaviour, health or needs are shared promptly with parents and carers
- Safer sleep requirements cannot be overridden by parental preference

4. Safe Sleep Procedures (Mandatory Practice)

4.1 Sleep Position

- Children under two years of age are placed down on their back for every sleep in their own separate sleep space on a clear, firm and entirely flat surface.
- Children under two must never be placed on their side or front initially.
- Once a baby can roll independently from back to front and from front to back, they may remain in the position they adopt. Staff must continue to place them on their back at the start of every sleep.

4.2 Sleep Spaces and Use of Cots

- Every child has their own separate sleep space.

- Children under two sleep on a clear, firm, flat surface such as a cot, bed or suitable mattress on the floor, subject to the additional cot requirement below.
- Babies aged 12 months and under must only be placed to sleep in a cot.

For this policy, a cot includes:

- Standard cot
- Travel cot
- * Floor beds, coracles, sleep pods, nests and other low-sided sleep spaces do not meet the cot requirement for babies aged 12 months and under.
- * All sleep equipment must be suitable for the child's age and size, meet the applicable safety requirements, be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and be included in the setting's equipment checking arrangements.

4.3 Sleep Environment and Bedding

For children under two years:

- The sleep space must contain a firm, flat, waterproof mattress, a tightly fitted sheet and only the permitted lightweight bedding described below.
- Lightweight bedding must be firmly tucked in around the child and no higher than the child's shoulders.
- Alternatively, a well-fitted baby sleep bag may be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. No additional bedding is used with a sleep bag.
- Where a blanket is used, the child is placed feet-to-foot at the bottom of the cot, and the blanket is firmly tucked in.
- No toys, pillows, duvets, loose or extra bedding, cot bumpers, wedges, straps, pods or nests are placed in the sleep space.
- Children's heads and faces remain uncovered at all times.
- REYS Federation operates a clear sleep-space approach. Comforters and soft toys are not placed in the sleep space of any child under two.

4.4 Temperature and Clothing

- Rooms used for the sleep of babies aged 12 months and under are maintained, where reasonably practicable, between 16°C and 20°C. Professional judgement is used during extreme temperatures.
- Appropriate layers of clothing and bedding are used to prevent overheating or becoming too cold.
- Outdoor clothing, including coats and hats, and excess layers are removed before sleep, even if this wakes the child.
- Staff check the child's chest or the back of their neck if concerned about temperature and remain alert to clammy skin, sweating, unusual coldness or other signs of discomfort.

4.5 Monitoring and Supervision

- All sleeping children are frequently checked, at least every 10 minutes. Ten minutes is REYS Federation's minimum local control and does not replace continuous staff awareness.
- Checks include breathing, colour, sleeping position, temperature, whether the head and face are uncovered, safe positioning of bedding, and confirmation that the sleep space remains clear.
- The time, observations and identity of the checking practitioner are recorded accurately.
- Babies under six months of age always have an adult present in the same room for every sleep.
- All sleeping children remain within sight and hearing of staff at all times and are never left unsupervised.

- For children over six months, a monitor may support supervision only where it allows the child to be seen and heard. It does not replace direct staff supervision or recorded checks.
 - If there is any concern about a child's breathing, colour, temperature, responsiveness or general wellbeing, staff must summon assistance immediately. Unusual sleepiness or difficulty waking must not be treated as routine sleep.

4.6 Equipment Safety and Standards

- Cots, mattresses, sleep furniture and bedding are checked before use and as part of a regular checking schedule.
- Mattresses are clean, firm, flat, waterproof, well-fitting, and free from rips, tears, sagging or other damage.
- Sleep areas are free from cords, blind loops, bags, hanging items, heaters and other hazards.
- Damaged, recalled or unsuitable equipment is removed from use immediately.
 - REYS Federation will seek evidence of applicable product standards when purchasing or checking equipment. Current standards identified in Department for Education guidance include:
- Cots and travel cots: BS EN 716-1:2017
- Moses baskets and carrycots: 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
- Baby sleep bags: BS EN 16781:2018
 - Compliance with a product standard does not by itself demonstrate that a product is suitable for safer sleep. Equipment must also meet EYFS requirements, be appropriate for the child, remain undamaged, and be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

5. Travel and Equipment-Related Sleep

- Car seats, seated or inclined buggies, sofas, chairs, beanbags, pods and nests are not used for sleep.
- A lie-flat pram or pushchair is not used as a child's main separate sleep space.
- A baby aged 12 months and under who falls asleep while travelling is transferred to a cot as soon as they return to the setting.
- Any child who falls asleep in a car seat is transferred to their separate safer sleep space as soon as they return to the setting.
- A child over 12 months who falls asleep while travelling is, where possible, transferred on return to their own separate sleep space on a clear, firm, flat surface.
- Coats, hats and excess clothing are removed and bedding adjusted to prevent overheating, even if this wakes the child.

5.1 Arrival and Collection of a Sleeping Child

- Parents and carers must tell a member of staff if a child is asleep on arrival and provide relevant information, including when and where the child fell asleep, whether the child has been unwell, and the child's most recent food, drink or medication.
- Children must be handed directly to a member of staff on arrival and collected directly from a member of staff at the end of their session. Children must never be left in a car seat, buggy, reception area or sleep space without staff knowledge and supervision.
- For safeguarding reasons, we will not usually accept children who are sleeping upon arrival, nor will we normally dismiss sleeping children to parents or carers. Any exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the

individual circumstances, the child's safety and wellbeing, and the professional judgement of staff.

- In exceptional circumstances where a sleeping child is admitted to the nursery, a member of staff must immediately check the child's breathing, colour, temperature and general wellbeing.
- A baby aged 12 months and under who is admitted whilst asleep in car or travel equipment must be transferred promptly to a cot and placed on their back. Outdoor clothing, hats and excess layers must be removed, even if this wakes the baby.
- A child over 12 months who is admitted whilst asleep in travel equipment must be transferred promptly to their own clear, firm, flat and separate sleep space.
- Where a child remains asleep at the end of their session, staff will ordinarily wake the child prior to collection to support a safe and appropriate handover.
- Where a sleeping child is collected as an agreed exception, the child must be handed directly to an authorised adult following a full verbal handover. Staff must ensure that the adult has secure physical control of the child before responsibility is transferred.
- Staff do not place or secure a child in a vehicle. This remains the responsibility of the parent, carer or authorised collecting adult.
- The child's sleep start time, routine checks, waking time and any collection whilst asleep must be recorded.

All staff must:

- Read, understand and follow this policy at all times
- Complete safer sleep training during induction and appropriate updates thereafter
- Read and follow relevant NHS and Lullaby Trust safer sleep advice
- Complete sleep records accurately and contemporaneously
- Report any departure from the policy, concern, incident or near miss immediately to the team leader or designated safeguarding lead
- Know and follow emergency and paediatric first-aid procedures
 - At least one member of staff with a current paediatric first-aid certificate is present on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and accompanies children on outings as required by the EYFS.

7. Partnership with Parents and Carers

REYS Federation will:

- Share this policy with parents and carers
- Discuss sleep routines and preferences during induction
- Provide daily feedback on sleep start and finish times, duration, checks where appropriate, and any significant observations
- Explain where a requested home routine cannot be followed because it conflicts with safer sleep requirements

Parents and carers are asked to inform the setting of:

- Changes to sleep routines or an unusual change in sleep pattern
- Medical or developmental conditions affecting sleep
- Illness, respiratory symptoms, unusual tiredness, difficulty waking, recent medication, or any other concern about the child's wellbeing
- Premature birth, low birthweight, or written medical sleeping instructions where relevant to the child's care
 - Parental preferences are respected only where they align with safer sleep requirements. REYS Federation will not place a child to sleep on their front or side, use unsuitable sleep equipment, add prohibited items or use bedding contrary to the

statutory requirements. Any exception supported by written advice from an appropriately qualified health professional requires an individual care plan and risk assessment agreed with the parent or carer.

8. Safeguarding, Incidents and Risk Management

- Safer sleep practice forms part of REYS Federation safeguarding and welfare procedures.
- Any departure from safer sleep requirements is reported immediately. The child's immediate safety is secured, and the matter is considered under safeguarding, incident, disciplinary and whistleblowing procedures as appropriate.
- Sleep areas and arrangements are risk assessed regularly and whenever circumstances change.
- Incidents and near misses are recorded, reviewed and acted upon. Learning is shared with relevant staff.
- Where a child is unusually sleepy, difficult to rouse, has altered breathing, abnormal colour or appears unwell, staff follow emergency, illness and paediatric first-aid procedures and contact parents or emergency services as appropriate.

9. Inclusion and Additional Needs

Where a child has medical, developmental, additional or complex needs, an individual risk assessment and care plan will be completed with parents or carers and, where relevant, health professionals.

Any deviation from the usual safer sleep arrangements must be supported by clear written advice from an appropriately qualified health professional. The plan must identify the required arrangement, supervision, review date and emergency response.

10. Records

- Individual sleep information and parental instructions are recorded and kept up to date.
- Sleep records include the sleep start and finish time, required checks, significant observations and action taken.
- Equipment checks, risk assessments, incidents, near misses and relevant staff training are recorded and retained in line with REYS Federation record-retention arrangements.
- Information is handled in accordance with data protection and confidentiality requirements.

11. Policy Review

- This policy is reviewed annually.
- The policy will be reviewed sooner following a change in legislation, the EYFS statutory framework or national safer sleep advice; a significant incident or near miss; or an identified concern about practice.
- Next scheduled review: September 2028.

12. Related Guidance and Documents

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026
- Department for Education, Help for Early Years Providers: Safer sleep
- NHS advice on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- The Lullaby Trust safer sleep guidance for early years settings
- REYS Federation safeguarding, first aid, illness, risk assessment, whistleblowing and collection procedures