



Dolce Casa Montessori

Sleep and Safe Sleeping Policy

At Dolce Casa Montessori, we believe that children should be given regular opportunities to sleep and rest in a safe, calm, and secure environment, in line with their individual needs and routines.

We recognise that sleep is essential for children's physical health, emotional wellbeing, and learning. Sleep routines are respected as a highly individual and intimate part of a child's day, and we work in close partnership with parents/carers to ensure continuity between home and nursery wherever possible.

Our safe sleeping practice follows the guidance of The Lullaby Trust and the DfE safer sleep guidance for early years settings (published with The Lullaby Trust, May 2026), and complies with the safer sleep requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework, to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

SIDS is the sudden and unexpected death of a baby, usually occurring during sleep, most commonly between one and six months of age. Research shows that placing babies on their backs to sleep is one of the most significant protective factors. This policy also aims to minimise the risk of sudden unexpected death in childhood (SUDC) in children over 12 months of age.

Procedure

During the initial settling sessions, the child's Key Person will discuss sleep routines, patterns, and preferences with parents/carers.

Parental wishes will always be considered; however, children will never be forced to sleep, wake, or stay awake if their behaviour indicates a different need.

Dolce Casa Montessori works in partnership with families to follow each child's individual routine while maintaining strict safe sleeping procedures.

Babies under 6 months must be placed:

- In an individual cot
- On their back
- In the feet-to-foot position
- With lightweight blankets firmly tucked in around the child, no higher than shoulder height, so that the head cannot become covered
- On a firm, flat, waterproof mattress — cots must not be inclined, tilted, or propped

Babies under 6 months who roll into another position will be gently returned onto their backs.

Once a baby is over 6 months, or can roll independently from back to front and front to back, they may be left to find their own sleeping position.

For babies born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or weighing less than 2.5kg (5.5lb) at birth, safer sleep guidance will be followed for a year from their due date rather than their date of birth.

Last Review: July 2026

Babies over 6 months must be placed:

- In an individual cot or sleep mat
- On their backs initially
- In the feet-to-foot position
- With cellular blankets only, firmly tucked in no higher than shoulder height, so that the head cannot become covered

Before any sleep or rest period, children will:

- Have clean hands and face
- Have nappies changed or be taken to the toilet
- Be offered a drink

When settling children to sleep, all hair accessories, dummy cords, bibs, hearing aids, or potential choking hazards will be removed and stored safely.

Children must not be put to sleep until at least 20 minutes after eating, unless they have fallen asleep during a meal. In this case, staff will ensure the child's airway is clear and offer a small drink of water.

Cellular lightweight blankets will be used for all children under 2 years.

Sleeping bags may be used for non-mobile babies and must be:

Provided by parents/carers

Well fitted, and checked by staff to ensure correct size and tog rating in line with manufacturer recommendations.

Unsuitable Sleeping Devices

- Babies must never be left to sleep in: pushchairs/buggies, car seats, bouncy chairs, swings, or hammocks.
- If a baby falls asleep in any such device, they must be transferred promptly to a flat, firm sleep surface.
- Seated devices must never be placed on high or soft surfaces.
- Any child who arrives at the nursery asleep — for example in a sling, carrier, or car seat — will be transferred to a safe sleeping surface to complete their rest. Coats, hats, extra clothing, and blankets will be removed as soon as the child is inside, even if this means waking them.

A Clear Cot Is a Safe Cot

At Dolce Casa Montessori, all cots must be kept completely clear:

- No pillows or duvets
- No cot bumpers
- No loose bedding
- No soft toys or comforters for children aged 12 months and under (comforters may be introduced only for children over 12 months; dummies may be used at any age, with dummy cords always removed)
- No products or loose items

- No sleep positioners, wedges, pods, nests, rolled-up towels, or any soft items placed on top of the mattress
- Cots must never be covered
- Bibs must always be removed
- If a child falls asleep anywhere other than a cot or sleep mat, they will be gently transferred to an appropriate sleep space as soon as possible.

Pre-Sleep Equipment Check

Before each sleep session, staff must inspect cots, sleep mats, bedding, and mattresses and confirm all are in good condition. Each child will have their own clean, labelled bedding, including a clean fitted sheet. All bedding will be washed as required and at least weekly.

Mattresses must be firm, flat, and waterproof, with no raised or soft sides.

Cots must not be inclined, tilted, or propped in any way.

All cots, mattresses, sleep mats, and sleep bags must meet current British Safety Standards, and this will be verified when equipment is purchased or provided. All spaces around cots and sleep mats must be kept clear of hanging objects, including blind cords and window cords.

Transition from Cot to Sleep Mat/Pod

Only once a child is over 12 months of age may they begin transitioning from a cot to a sleep mat. Until then, children must only be placed to sleep in a cot.

This transition will be planned carefully, considering:

The child's developmental stage

Safety

Parental preference

Sleep mats will:

Be spaced to allow safe movement

Not touch one another

Be arranged in a top-to-toe position

Sleep Environment

Wherever possible, children will sleep in a space where staff and other children are present, supporting continuous supervision.

Separate sleep rooms will be avoided where possible.

Rooms will be well ventilated and maintained at 16–20°C.

Lighting will be soft but sufficient to allow staff to observe children safely.

Cots and mats will be positioned away from radiators in use, hazards or unsecured objects, and hanging or blind cords.

Soft music or white noise may be used to support settling but will be turned off once children are asleep.

Children will be dressed appropriately for sleep, including the removal of shoes, excessive layers, tight clothing, hats, and hooded clothing. Children's heads must never be covered during sleep. Bottles and beakers are not permitted in cots or on sleep mats. Babies will never be left to cry themselves to sleep or left for prolonged periods without comfort.

Supervision and Monitoring of Sleeping Children

The Nursery Manager holds overall responsibility for ensuring safe sleep practices.

A designated practitioner will be responsible for sleep monitoring during rest periods.

- Babies under 6 months must sleep in the same room as an adult at all times.
- All sleeping children must be in sight or hearing of a staff member at all times.
- Children will never be left alone in a room whilst sleeping.
- Sleeping children will be physically checked every 10 minutes. Checks will include:
- Observing breathing and chest movement
- Ensuring the child is not too hot or cold
- Practitioners must physically confirm breathing by placing a hand near the child's nose and observing chest rise and fall.

For babies under 6 months, or any child new to the nursery during their first few weeks, checks will be carried out every 5 minutes until staff are familiar with the child's sleeping routines.

All checks will be recorded on Famly App, supported by a timer reminder.

Settling to Sleep

Children will be supported to settle through comforting, rocking, gentle touch, singing, and reading. If a child has difficulty settling, staff will respond sensitively to meet the child's emotional and physical needs. Children are gently accompanied to sleep with a calm, comforting adult presence. Children are never held down, restrained, or physically forced to sleep, and physical restraint is never used when settling a child.

If a child has not settled after approximately 20 minutes, staff will consider offering quiet wakeful time and trying again later.

While parental preferences are respected, the child's needs will always take precedence.

Any changes to agreed sleep routines will be communicated clearly to parents/carers at handover.

For twins and multiples, we follow The Lullaby Trust guidance on safer sleep for twins and multiples, working with parents to maintain their individual routines and wellbeing.

Children who are unable to sleep will be taken to another area to avoid disturbing others.

Staff Training and Policy References

All staff are required to be familiar with current safer sleep guidance as part of their induction and ongoing training, and must read the NHS advice on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Completion of this reading will be recorded for each staff member.

Knowledge of rest and sleep provision is a requirement within Level 2 and Level 3 Early Years qualification criteria.

This policy operates in conjunction with the EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2025), the strengthened EYFS safer sleep requirements announced by the DfE on 18 March 2026 (effective September 2026, with compliance expected immediately), the Lullaby Trust safer sleep guidance, and the DfE safer sleep guidance for early years settings (May 2026).

This policy also operates in conjunction with the Nursery's No Smoking Policy.

Parents are encouraged to visit www.lullabytrust.org.uk for further safer sleep information and resources.