



Harvard Park Policies and Procedures:

Safer Sleep and Rest

22. Safer Sleep and Rest

Policy Statement

At Harvard Park, we recognise the critical role of sleep in supporting children's emotional wellbeing, cognitive development and physical growth. Quality and consistent rest is essential to a child's overall health, well-being and development.

We are committed to creating a nurturing, safe and responsive sleep environment, in partnership with parents and/or carers and in line with guidance from:

- The Lullaby Trust
- NHS Safer Sleeping Advice
- EFYS Statutory Framework (revised March 2026 and September 2026)
- Local safeguarding procedures.

The safety of every child is paramount during sleep and periods of rest.

Safer Sleep Practice

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related risks, we adhere to the following evidence-based practices recommended by the Lullaby Trust and NHS Safer sleep guidance:

Before sleep/rest-

Staff ensure that:

- The child has had a fresh nappy and is clean and comfortable.
- Outer clothing such as thick coats, cardigans, hoods etc. is removed to avoid overheating.
- The child has had a drink or feed, as appropriate.
- The child's mouth is free from any food, liquids or objects prior to being encouraged to lay down or moved from where they have been situated to be fed.
- Bibs and hoods are removed prior to sleep.
- The room temperature is appropriate and ideally 16-20 °C. Thermometers are used to monitor this.
- The room is well ventilated with good air flow.
- Soft lighting, white noise or gentle lullabies may be used to create a calm, restful environment.

During sleep/rest:

Sleep Environment and Equipment

- Children are provided with individual, clean bedding consisting of a fitted sheet and a blanket in which its size is suitable for the child's height.

- Sleep mats or approved cots are used; bouncy chairs, car seats and pushchairs are never used for sleep.
- Sleep spaces must contain only a firm, flat surface with a waterproof mattress and lightweight bedding, tucked in securely under the child's shoulders.
- Alternatively, a well-fitted baby sleep bag may be used in line with manufacturer guidance. In cases where this may be provided by parents/carers, they are asked to provide the relevant information such as the tog and the manufacturer, so we are able to check the guidance. If this information cannot be provided – we will not accept the sleep bag.
- Cots must not contain additional items such as toys, pillows, extra blankets, bumpers, wedges or straps – they must always be clear.
- The use of pillows is strictly forbidden for any child under the age of 2 years or for those children who are unable to roll themselves from back to front and back again, for example a child with mobility needs who may be above their age of 2 years.
- We do not provide pillows for children over the age of 2 unless requested by a parent/carer. Parents are informed of this prior to starting at Harvard Park and asked to provide their signed consent, requesting a pillow to be provided for their child. We encourage safe sleep practices throughout our setting.
- Children's heads must not be covered; all hats and hoods are removed before sleep.
- Staff ensure that no blankets, muslins or items cover a child's head or face at any time.

Safe Sleep Positioning

- Children aged 2 years and under are always placed on their backs to sleep on a firm, flat surface in their own separate sleep space.
- Babies aged 12 months and under must only be placed to sleep in a cot.
- Children sleeping in cots are placed in the "feet to foot" position, with feet touching the end of the cot.
- Once a child can roll from their back to their front and back again, they may find their own sleep position but will always be initially placed on their back.
- Any baby who only sleeps on their front will be closely supervised and, once in a deep sleep, gently repositioned onto their back in line with current government guidance.

Comfort and Settling

- Children are not left to cry alone; staff respond promptly to soothe and comfort.
- Comforters (e.g. dummies or soft toys) may be used with parental/carer agreement to help settle children and are removed once the child is asleep.
- Comforters (other than dummies) are only used for children over 12 months, with parental/carer consent.

Supervision and Monitoring

- Children are always within sight and hearing of staff while sleeping; no child is left to sleep alone.
- Children under 6 months must always have an adult present in the same room during sleep times, with no exceptions.
- All sleeping children are checked frequently, including observing the rise and fall of the chest.
- Visual checks are carried out every 5–10 minutes (or more frequently if needed) and recorded.
- Monitoring includes breathing, colour, position, temperature and overall wellbeing.
- Baby monitors may be used for children over 6 months, provided they allow children to be both seen and heard at all times.

Sleep During Travel and Transitions

- For children aged 12 months and under who fall asleep while travelling, they must be transferred to a cot upon return to the setting. Hats and extra clothing must be removed, even if this wakes the child (NHS guidance).
- For children over 12 months, they should be transferred to their own safe sleep space on return, ensuring clothing and coverings are adjusted to prevent overheating.
- Lie-flat prams or pushchairs must not be used as a main sleep space. If used to support sleep, the child must be transferred to a designated sleep space once asleep.
- If a child falls asleep in a car seat, they must be transferred to their designated sleep space upon return. At present, Harvard Park does not use the use of vehicles or car seats to transport children in the setting on while on outings.

Staff Responsibilities

- All staff must read and follow NHS guidance on SIDS and safer sleep practices.
- Staff must ensure all safe sleep procedures outlined in this policy are consistently followed.

Parental/Carer Preferences and Sleep Restrictions

We value working in partnership with parents/carers and will always discuss sleep routines during settling-in sessions and ongoing key person meetings.

- If parents/carers request no sleep, we will distract and gently discourage a child from sleeping but will never physically prevent sleep, for example by waking or keeping the child upright.
- If a child falls asleep despite our efforts, we will allow a minimum of 45 minutes rest, supporting this child's natural rhythm.

- Children who do not wish to sleep will never be forced to. Instead they will be offered quiet and calm activities during rest time.

Waking children gently

If parents/carers request a maximum sleep time, we will attempt to wake the children gradually and respectfully.

- Lights may be gently brightened.
- Blankets may be lightly removed.
- Soft verbal prompts or the child's name may be used.
- Children are never physically woken by lifting or shaking.

We aim to allow the children to wake naturally, where possible, to prevent distress and ensure emotional security.

Additional Safeguarding measures

- Staff are trained in safe sleep practice during inductions and updated as part of regular safeguarding and health and safety training.
- Sleep areas are regularly clean and inspected for hazards.
- All sleep equipment is BSEN (British Standards) and re in good condition.
- A Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Is notified of any incidents, injuries or concerns during sleep.
- Children are never accepted into the setting whilst they are sleeping. Parents/Carers are either asked to wake their child before arrival to the setting or asked to delay their starting time until the child is awake. We exercise our right to refuse a sleeping child into the setting as it is not clear of the child's immediate well-being and responsibility for the child becomes blurred.

Monitoring and reviewing

The Policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if:

- There is a change in national guidance.
- A serious sleep-related incident occurs.
- Parent/carer/staff feedback indicates the need for a review.

This policy was adjusted by Harvard Park.

Date meeting was held on 30/04/2026

Signed on behalf of the Directors and Proprietors

Nicki Saunders and Tracey Milstead