

Safer Sleep Guidance

Purpose

Children are not routinely expected or planned to sleep during the school day. However, a child may occasionally fall asleep spontaneously because they are tired, unwell, have had a disrupted night, or for another individual reason.

If a child falls asleep spontaneously, staff should respond calmly and ensure the child remains safe while appropriate advice is sought from their parent/carer.

This guidance reflects the principles of the Department for Education's Safer Sleep guidance (2026), which recognises the importance of providing a safe sleep environment for babies and children.

If a child falls asleep spontaneously:

1. Check the child

A member of staff should check that the child is:

- breathing normally;
- in a safe and comfortable position;
- not showing signs of illness or distress;
- not excessively hot or cold;
- not covered by anything that could obstruct their face or airway.

If there are concerns about the child's breathing, responsiveness or health, staff should follow the school's first aid and emergency procedures immediately.

2. Make the sleeping environment safe

Where possible, the child should be allowed to sleep in a safe, suitable and supervised space.

Staff should:

- keep the child within sight and hearing of an adult;
- ensure the child is on a stable, appropriate surface;
- avoid allowing the child to sleep on a sofa, beanbag, pile of cushions or other soft furniture;
- remove unnecessary pillows, cushions, loose blankets or other items from around the child's face;
- ensure the child's head and face remain uncovered;
- remove coats, hats or excess clothing if the child is becoming too warm;
- keep the surrounding area clear of objects that could cause injury or entanglement;
- maintain an appropriate room temperature and ventilation.

Children should not be left sleeping in an isolated area or where they cannot be regularly observed.

3. Contact parents/carers

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable to inform them that their child has fallen asleep and to seek advice about what they would like the school/pre-school to do.

Staff should establish whether:

- the child has been unwell or particularly tired;
- there is anything the setting should be aware of;

- the parent/carer would like the child to be gently woken;
- there is any specific advice regarding the child's sleep.

Where a parent/carer cannot immediately be contacted, the child should continue to be appropriately supervised and kept safe until contact is made.

4. Continue to monitor

A sleeping child must be regularly checked. Checks should confirm that the child:

- is breathing normally;
- remains in a safe position;
- has their face and airway unobstructed;
- is not too hot or cold;
- remains in a safe sleeping environment.

The frequency of checks should reflect the child's age, circumstances, health and any identified risk. Children must remain within sight and hearing of staff while asleep.

5. Record and communicate

Where a child has fallen asleep spontaneously, staff should record the incident on My Concern, including:

- the approximate time the child fell asleep;
- where they were sleeping;
- relevant observations/checks;
- when parents/carers were contacted and any advice given;
- when the child woke or was collected.

If spontaneous sleeping occurs repeatedly, the school/pre-school should consider whether further discussion with parents/carers or other appropriate professionals is required.

Remember

We do not routinely plan for children aged 3–11 to sleep during the school day.

If a child spontaneously falls asleep:

CHECK → MAKE SAFE → CONTACT PARENTS → MONITOR → RECORD

The priority is always to ensure the child is safe, supervised and comfortable while appropriate advice is obtained.

Related guidance:

Department for Education – *Safer sleep: How to provide babies and children with a safer sleep environment in your setting* (updated August 2026).