If your child uses a dummy a lot it may affect speech and language development

It can do this by:
- Stopping babies from babbling and making sounds - which are important in learning to talk.
- Changing the pattern of tongue movements, making speech sounds unclear.
- Creating a gap between the upper and lower teeth, causing a lisp.
- Discouraging your toddler from chatting with you, which she needs to do to develop her language skills.
- Breastfeeding mums are advised not to use a dummy as it can cause confusion when the baby is learning to suck.
- Dummies may make your child become more 'dribbly' as it can affect normal breathing and swallowing patterns.
- Overuse of a dummy is linked to an increased risk of ear infections, which can also affect speech and language development.
- If you do use a dummy, use it as little as possible. Keep it for set times, like when you need to settle your baby down to sleep.
- For soothing your baby, try cuddles and a calm touch first. Only use the dummy as a last resort.

What can you do if your child uses a dummy?
- Aim to get rid of the dummy/bottle around 12 months or sooner.
- Use a flat teat rather than a cherry teat as this has less affect on teeth.
- Try cuddling or reading to your child before bedtime instead of giving the dummy/bottle.
- Remove the dummy/bottle when your child is trying to talk.
- Praise your child if s/he will give up the dummy/bottle.
- Choose the right time to give up - not when you are under pressure.
- Once you have decided to give up the dummy/bottle, don't be tempted to give it back and make sure there are none left around.

How do we get rid of the dummy?
- Wean them off - gradually decrease its use.
- Only give the dummy at certain times - bedtime or when they are not well.
- Tell them that big boys/girls put their dummies on the dummy tree.
- Persuade them to give their dummies to their nursery teacher.
- Give rewards (but not sweets).