



## Biting Policy

Biting is part of a normal developmental stage for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition which is most common between 13 and 24 months of age. However, because of the danger this behaviour represents to other children, repeated biting in a group childcare setting cannot be tolerated and requires positive intervention on the part of both the staff and the parents.

Practitioners will always maintain a close and constant supervision of the children, but due to the speed and randomness with which biting incidents often occur, it is not always possible to prevent these from happening. Our biting policy addresses the actions the staff will take if a biting incident occurs.

When a biting incident happens it is very scary, frustrating and stressful for children, parents and practitioners. It is also not something to blame on children, parents or staff. And there are no quick and easy solutions to it. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behaviour that is often hard to stop because it does achieve results: the desired toy, excitement, attention.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is as follows:

1. The biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm - "No, we don't bite people"
2. The bitten child will be comforted immediately, and the bitten area washed with soap and water. Appropriate first aid action will be taken where deemed necessary.
3. The bitten area should continue to be observed by parents and staff for signs of infection.
4. The biter will be spoken to in a manner which he or she can understand and will be redirected to other play.
5. A report of the incident will be made in our accident book and the parents of both children will be notified of the incident. The report needs to highlight the context of biting, what action has been taken etc.
6. Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.
7. The Early Years Managers will look at the context of each biting incident to see if a pattern can be identified, in an effort to prevent further biting behaviour. If this continues the issue will be escalated to the Management Committee.
8. We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
9. We try to adapt the environment and work with parents to reduce any child stress.
10. If a child bites more than once, a member of staff will shadow them for as long as is felt appropriate both to protect potential victims and to try to understand why the biting is happening. The Child will need to be offered a level of supervision to ensure there is not an immediate repeat of this behaviour.

This policy will be reviewed when changes arise. A copy of this policy can be obtained from the Nursery Offices or downloaded via our website.

## More information about biting - Helpful for parents and staff

**Exploration:** Babies and toddlers learn by touching, smelling, hearing and tasting. If you give a baby a toy, one of the first things they will do is put it in their mouth. Tasting or mouthing objects is something that all children do. Young children do not always understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting a person.

**Teething:** Children begin teething around the ages of four to seven months. Swelling gums can be tender and can cause a great deal of discomfort. Babies sometimes find relief from this discomfort by chewing on something and sometimes the object they chew is a person. Children of this age do not understand the difference between chewing on a person or a toy.

**Cause and effect:** Around the age of 12 months, babies become interested in finding out what happens when they do something. When they bang a spoon on the table, they discover that it makes a loud sound. When they drop a toy from their cot, they discover that it falls. They may also discover that when they bite someone, they get a reaction.

**Attention:** Older toddlers may sometimes bite to get attention. When children are in situations where they feel that they are not receiving enough attention they often find a way to make others take notice. Being ignored is not fun and biting is a quick way to become the centre of attention, even if it is negative attention.

**Imitation:** Older toddlers love to imitate others. Watching others and trying to do what they do is a great way to learn things. Some children see others bite and decide to try it out themselves.

**Independence:** Toddlers are trying so hard to be independent, "mine" and "me do it" are favourite words. Learning to do things independently, making choices and needing control over a situation are part of growing up and biting is a powerful way to control others. If you want a toy or want a playmate to leave you alone or move out of your way, it is a quick way to get what you want.

**Frustration:** Young children experience a lot of frustration and growing up is a struggle. Drinking from a cup is great but sucking from a bottle is also wonderful. Sometimes it would be nice to remain a baby. Toddlers do not always have good control over their bodies and cannot always express themselves. A loving pat sometimes turns into a push and they sometimes have trouble in asking for things or for help. They have not yet learned how to interact with others. At times, when they are unable to find the words to express their feelings, they resort to hitting, pushing or biting.

**Stress:** A child's world can be stressful. A lack of interesting things to do or not enough interaction with adults is a stressful situation for children. Children also experience traumatic events in their lives, such as bereavement, moving to a new home or even starting a new nursery. Biting is one way to express feelings and relieve tension. Young children are not always able to fully understand what they are feeling so they just act up.

You could then highlight what you do about biting. Use the who, what, when and where method to pinpoint the problem:

***Who was involved? What happened before or after? How was the situation handled?***

**Try prevention:** If you find out that biting is happening as a result of exploration or teething you may want to provide the child with a teething ring. If the child seems to bite when they are tired or hungry, you may want to look at your daily routine to make sure they are getting enough sleep and food. Try to keep group play to short periods and small groups.