

Biting

Evidence suggests that up to a quarter of all children will bite others at some stage. We understand that this is a difficult situation for parents whether, it is your child that has been bitten or your child biting others. This information will give you more information about why biting may occur, how biting incidents are managed and what steps we take to protect your child's health and safety while in the nursery. This policy is to be used in conjunction with our wellbeing and behaviour management policy.

Potential triggers for biting

Staff should be aware that there is a range of triggers which can cause children to bite and should work as a team to identify these and reduce incidents. All triggers should be considered when completing an incident form.

Exploration – babies and young children explore the world around them using their senses, young children do not always know the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.

Teething – swelling gums can be painful and cause discomfort; this can be relieved by biting or chewing on something.

Cause and effect – at around one year old, children become interested in what happens when they do something; for example they may bang a spoon on a table and discover it makes a noise. This behaviour may be repeated again and again to support their learning and development. This may be the case with biting as the child explores the reaction to biting someone.

Attention – when children are in a situation where they feel they are not receiving enough attention biting is a quick way of becoming the centre of attention.

Independence – toddlers are trying very hard to be independent using phrases such as "me do it" and "mine". If a child wants a toy, or wants another child to do something this could lead to a biting incident.

Frustration – children can be frustrated by a number of things, such as long waiting times before or after transition times. Wanting to do something independently, but not quite being able to manage the task. Also not having the vocabulary to express themselves clearly. This can lead to biting as a way of dealing with this frustration.

Environment – an environment that does not provide challenge, or allows children to become uninterested can lead to displays of negative behaviour such as biting.

Not having their needs met – children who are tired, hungry, or uncomfortable may bite others as a way of expressing their emotions.

Strategies to support the management of biting incidents

- Staff may need to increase the supervision of a child who is biting; this does not necessarily need to be one to one. It could be during particular times of the day, or by simply reducing the number of large group activities provided.
- Staff should make sure a child who is biting receives significant encouragement when displaying positive behaviour, and avoid excessive attention following an incident.
- Staff should evaluate the routine, and judge whether it is meeting the needs of the child. A good quality routine should provide experiences and activities both indoors and outdoors that have no waiting times; whilst group activities should be for the benefit of the children and not as a holding exercise.
- Staff should plan activities which help release frustration such as physical outdoor play, and malleable experiences like play dough, gloop etc.
- Staff should provide cosy areas for children to relax in and activities which release tension such as splashing in water, digging in sand, and using sensory equipment.

In the event of a biting incident

- The child who has been bitten will be comforted and checked for any visual injury. The area will be cleaned with a sterile wipe. If the skin is broken the wound will need to be washed with soap and water.
- An accident form will be completed and the parents may be informed via telephone if deemed appropriate. This phone call should be sensitive and give reassurance to the parent/carer and offer an explanation of the procedure which has been followed. As we do not want to worry parents/carers unnecessarily, an initial bite mark may fade following treatment, staff should wait 45 minutes to an hour and then check if there is bruising or a bite mark still present. If there is no obvious mark or bruising, this can then be discussed with the parents/carers at collection time. If after 45 minutes to an hour, the bite has left the child with a bite mark or bruising then the parents should be contacted.
- The child who has caused the bite will be told in terms that they understand that biting (the behaviour and not the child) hurts, and that it makes staff and the child who has been bitten sad. The child will be asked to say sorry if developmentally appropriate or show they are sorry, e.g. through hugging or a kind action such as offering a toy.
- Following recurring biting incidents, observations will be carried out to try to distinguish a cause, e.g. tiredness or frustration. Advice and support will be sought from the Well-being Lead. Discussions will be held with the child's parents to develop strategies in partnership to prevent the biting behaviour. Parents will be reassured that it is part of a child's development and not made to feel that it is their fault. A behaviour monitoring form will be completed and shared with the parents.
- It may be necessary to complete a Behaviour Management Strategy form if a child repeatedly bites and/or if they have a particular special educational need or disability.
- Due to confidentiality, names of any children who have been involved in a biting incident will not be disclosed to the parents of either child.

Further information

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/temper-tantrums.aspx>

Manager's signature

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