



## **Biting Policy**

Biting is a common behaviour that some young children experience and it occurs more often amongst children under the age of five and in group situations such as school, nursery, playgroup or other social situations. The need or motivation for one child to bite another is just part of some children's developmental journey, where they do not yet have the words to sufficiently communicate common emotions such as anger, frustration or need.

Evidence suggests that up to a quarter of all very young children will bite others at some stage. We understand that is a difficult situation for parents whether it is your child that has been bitten or your child who has been responsible for biting others.

Children bite for many reasons and we aim to handle any biting incidents with respect and sensitivity for all involved. It is Little School's policy to deal with each biting incident on a case by case basis making sure that parents involved are kept up to date with what is happening, but at the same time respecting the confidentiality of the child/ren involved. This ultimately means that we are not able to divulge the identity of any child involved in a biting incident.

This policy has been created to help prepare staff and parents for the possibility of experiencing a biting incident and to help put this into perspective and give some proportion to what can be an upsetting experience for all concerned.

### **Why does biting happen?**

Whilst biting is more common at nursery than at home, a biting incident is not a negative reflection on the biter, the staff or the nursery. We have very clear behavioural expectations at Little School and the children are expected and encouraged to share, wait their turn, be respectful and play happily together.

However, very young children often do not have the coping mechanisms, nor the self-regulation skills which adults and older children have, that helps us to diffuse and express our emotions in socially acceptable ways. Young children may resort to hair pulling, hitting and biting which is upsetting for us, but at the same time, developmentally normal. The most common reasons for biting are:

- **Teething and painful gums** – swelling gums can be painful and cause discomfort; this can be relieved by biting or chewing.
- **Physical exploration** – babies and young children explore the world around them using their senses and young children do not always know the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.
- **Seeking attention** -when young children are in situations where they feel that they are not receiving enough attention, biting is a quick way of becoming the centre of attention.
- **Expressions of frustration** – children can be frustrated by a number of things, such as wanting to be independent. Unfortunately, they do not have the vocabulary to express themselves clearly and this can sometimes lead to biting as a way of dealing with frustration.

## What is our procedure following a biting incident?

In the event of a biting incident:

- The child who has been bitten will be comforted and reassured and where needed first aid will be administered.
- The bite wound will be washed thoroughly and cleaned with an antiseptic wipe. If the wound is bleeding, it will be allowed to bleed further, before a waterproof dressing is applied.
- If the bite has broken or bruised the skin, parents will be contacted so that they are aware that their child has been bitten and appropriate action can be taken, involving perhaps a visit to the GP, or in serious cases, a visit to A&E.
- The child that has bitten will also be examined to ensure their own health and safety.
- We will talk to the child who has bitten, age appropriately, and try to help the child to understand that there are other ways to express themselves and deal with the situation.
- We will ensure that the biting child understands that such action (the behaviour not the child) is unkind and makes the staff and the child who has been bitten upset. No child will be forced to say 'sorry', but it may be suggested that they give the other child a hug to comfort them or draw them a picture to 'make things ok'.
- Incident forms will be completed for both children's files. The parent of the child who was bitten will be asked to read, and confirm that have read, the form.
- Incident records will be reviewed by the Nursery Manager and the SENDCo to determine if there is a pattern of constant biting. When biting has become a pattern of behaviour, we will shadow the child and observe, looking for any 'triggers'.
- In certain situations, we may seek professional advice from local behavioural experts. This will always be initiated in partnership with the permission of parents and carers.

Little School management will work with parents, the child and the staff to discover why a child is biting. This may be an isolated incident, but we will always record the incident to examine what happened just before the incident or if there were any behavioural trends.

Once we have identified a possible trigger for the biting incident, we will then make changes to reduce or remove the cause.

If a child's recurring behaviour, such as biting, is having a negative impact on their experience at Little School, we will work closely with all involved to attempt to resolve these issues.

Overall, it is important that all parties involved work closely together. Each case will be different, as will the resolution.

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Reviewed by: Head of Pre-Prep and Nursery Manager.