



Biting – Promoting positive behaviour

Biting is a common behaviour among children and can be a concern for parents and staff. Biting can often be painful and frightening for the child who has been bitten and also frightening for the child who bites. Biting happens for different reasons with different children and under different circumstances. This is part of some children's development and can be triggered when they do not yet have the words to communicate their anger, frustration or need. At Clare House we follow our positive behaviour policy to promote positive behaviour at all times.

Aim

We aim to act quickly and efficiently when dealing with any case of biting. The setting uses the following strategies to prevent biting:

- Sensory activities,
- Biting rings,
- Adequate resources and staff who recognise when children need more stimulation or quiet times.

We will treat each incident with care and patience, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.

Procedure

In the event of a biting incident:-

- Two members of staff will be required to deal with this incident one to comfort the child who has been bitten one to look after the child who has bitten
- The child who has been bitten should be comforted and given reassurance.
- Once the child is calm staff should check for any visual injury. If there is a bite mark, this should then be washed with warm water and wiped with an antiseptic wipe. Staff will explain to the child what is happening and support the child

If the skin is broken:-

- If the wound is bleeding it should be allowed to bleed as covering the wound can increase the risk of infection.
- Staff should wear gloves and aprons when dealing with bodily fluids
- The staff member who witnessed the incident should complete an Incident Form for all children involved.
- The key person will contact the parent/carer of the child immediately. This phone call should be sensitive and give reassurance to the parent/carer and offer an explanation of the procedure which has been followed. The parents/carers will be advised to seek medical advice.

If the skin is not broken:

- The staff member who witnessed the incident should complete an Incident Form for all children involved.
- The Nursery Manager will take into account all factors of the incident and decide whether to call the parents at the time or to discuss the incident with them at normal collection time

- Wherever possible the child who has bitten should have their behaviour supported by their key person and the consequence of this behaviour should be explained in a way which is appropriate to the child's age and stage of development.
- The child who has caused the bite will be spoken too in a way that they understand. Staff will support the child to the other child's feelings
- that biting
- If a child continues to bite, observations will be carried out to try to distinguish a cause, e.g. Tiredness, developmental concern/delay. Meetings will be held with the child's parents to develop strategies to support the child. Parents will be reassured that it is part of a child's development and not made to feel that it is their fault, where appropriate an EHA may be filled out seeking alternative professional support.
- The parents/carers of the child who has bitten another person will normally be informed at On the phone or at collection time depending on the circumstances; This must be handled in a sensitive and confidential manner and not discussed openly in front of other parents/carers and children.
- Parents/carers may ask you the name of the child who has bitten or been bit. Staff must explain that they cannot disclose this information as confidentiality must be maintained.
- Where a child may repeatedly bite and/or if they have a particular special educational need or disability that lends itself to increased biting, e.g. in some cases of autism where a child doesn't have the communication skills, the nursery will carry out a risk assessment and consult with appropriate professionals.

Key messages

- Staff should acknowledge that biting incidents can cause parents a great deal of distress and worry, and staff need to be sensitive and supportive at all times.
- Working in partnership with parents/carers is a key factor of any successful Behaviour Management Strategy. Staff should involve parents/carers every step of the way and explain that this should be implemented in the home as well as in the nursery.
- Staff should be aware that these are a range of triggers which can cause children to bite and should work as a team to identify these and reduce them.

Potential triggers for biting

- 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 could 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 transitions times. Wanting to do something independently, but not quite

being able to manage the task or 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.
- Satisfy a need for oral-motor stimulation(sensory).
- Imitate actions that they may have seen from others around them.
- Act in self-defense.
- Communicate or express difficult feelings, such as frustration, anger, confusion, or fear (“There are too many people here and I feel cramped”).
- All these triggers should be considered – it could be one of these factors or a combination of them.

Potential 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. This 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 received significant encouragement when displaying positive behaviour and avoid excessive attention following an incident.
- Staff should evaluate the routines/activities 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 limited 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, movement, 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.