

Subject: Biting

The Nursery recognises that small children, for a variety of reasons, and from time to time, attempt to bite other children. Children bite other children for many different reasons. A child might be teething or overly tired and frustrated. He or she might be experimenting or trying to get the attention of the staff or his peers. Toddlers have limited verbal skills and are sometimes impulsive without a measured degree of self-control. Sometimes biting occurs for no apparent reason.

Due to the speed and randomness with which biting incidents occur, it is not always possible to prevent these from happening.

While the motivation or attempt to bite is not seen as particularly worrying within a child's development, their success in doing so brings health concerns.

The Nursery recognises that a human bite that breaks the skin brings risks of possible infection including Tetanus and Hepatitis to the victims. Therefore parents are requested to make sure their child's tetanus, and other immunisations, are up to date.

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 that is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. This means that it is a particular concern for the staff in the Toddler Room.

Biting is not "abnormal" for infants and toddlers since one in ten toddlers' bite. 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 nursery staff and parents.

The Nursery will encourage the children to use alternative methods to biting if they become angry or frustrated. The staff members will maintain a close and constant supervision of the children at all times.

Unfortunately identification of a child usually means they have already bitten at least once. The good news is that all the children usually stop this action quickly although it can take a little more time with others.

The safety of the children at the Nursery is our primary concern. The Nurseries biting policy addresses the actions the staff will take if a biting incident occurs.

Under no circumstances will we use, or agree to use, physical punishment or the threat of physical punishment on the child who bites.

The following steps will be taken if a biting incident occurs at the Nursery:

- The biting will be interrupted with a firm "No...we don't bite people!"
- The bitten child will be comforted immediately
- Staff will remove the biter from the situation. The biter will be dealt with age appropriately which may involve either a time out or a distraction
- The wound of the bitten child will be assessed and appropriate first aid action will be taken. If it is determined that there was a blood exposure further steps may need to be taken as determined by a Senior Nursery Officer or the Officer in Charge
- The parents of both children will be notified of the biting incident. An appropriate form will be filled out. If a bite requires medical treatment, a copy of the incident report may be given to the parent of the bitten child to pass on to their GP if requested
- Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained
- The bitten area should continue to be observed by parents and staff for signs of infection

Although we have not yet had a child who did not respond to our behavioural methods, we must reserve the right to ultimately exclude a child if we feel this is the best course of action for all concerned.

This exclusion may be a temporary one whilst a procedure is developed to assist the staff in future controlling of situations where biting cannot be dissuaded. However in more serious cases, or where additional measures have been unsuccessful, the nursery may regretfully make the exclusion a permanent one for the safety of staff and other children. This decision will only be taken in consultation with a Director.