Little Crickets at Park School Biting Policy

At Little Crickets at Park School, we recognise that 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 Park Nursery, we follow our positive behaviour policy to promote positive behaviour at all times.

In a nursery environment, there are many potential triggers for biting, such as the busy and stimulating atmosphere that may lead to over-excitement. This policy has been developed to:

- Safeguard all children in the nursery.
- Encourage the development of socially acceptable behaviour.
- Provide clear procedures for staff to follow when biting incidents occur.
- Ensure a consistent and supportive approach to biting.
- Offer strategies to minimise the occurrence of biting.

Procedure in the Event of a Biting Incident

1. The child who has been bitten will be the priority and should be comforted and given reassurance.

2. Once the child is calm, staff should check for any visual injury and a cold compress will be given to reduce any potential swelling.

3. If the skin is broken:

a. If the wound is bleeding it should be allowed to bleed as covering the wound can increase the risk of infection.

b. In cases where the bite has broken the child's skin, a senior member of staff must 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. You will need to advise the parents/carers to contact the child's GP.

4. If the skin is not broken:

a. A member of staff should contact the parents of the child to inform them of the incident.

5. The staff member who witnessed the incident should complete a first aid for the injured child and an Isams report for the perpetrator. Both sets of parents would be spoken to at collection regarding the incident.

6. The Nursery Manager must be informed of all biting incidents.

7. Wherever possible, the child who has bitten should have their behaviour managed by their key person and should be supported to understand that biting hurts others and staff should help them learn more appropriate ways of communicating their needs and feelings.

If a child continues to bite, observations will be carried out to try to distinguish a cause, e.g. tiredness or frustration. Meetings will be held with the child's parents to develop strategies 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. Following repeated biting incidents, the Nursery Manager and SENCO will complete a risk assessment and behaviour support plan. This will identify triggers, preventative measures, staff responsibilities and review dates.

8. The parents/carers of the child who has bitten another person should be informed at collection time; 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 bitten. Staff must explain that they cannot disclose this information as confidentiality must be maintained.

9. 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. Where biting becomes persistent, staff will work with parents, the SENCO and, where appropriate, external professionals to identify underlying causes and develop an individual support plan.

Arrangements to Support this Policy

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 there are a range of triggers which can cause children to bite and should work as a team to identify these and reduce them.

Potential Trigger for Biting

· Exploration – young children explore the world through sensory experiences and may not yet understand the difference between mouthing objects and biting others

· 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 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. 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

Strategies for the Management of Incidents

a) 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.
b) Staff should make sure a child who is biting receives significant encouragement when displaying positive behaviour and avoids receiving excessive attention following an incident.
c) 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.
d) Staff should plan activities which help release frustration such as physical outdoor play and malleable experiences like play dough, gloop etc.
e) 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.

Infection control

Staff dealing with a biting incident must wear appropriate PPE where required and follow the nursery's Infection Control Policy. Any blood-contaminated materials must be disposed of safely in accordance with hygiene procedures.

The Nursery Manager will monitor biting incidents to identify trends, potential triggers and any children who may require additional support. Incident records will be reviewed regularly as part of the nursery's safeguarding and behaviour monitoring processes.

Policy Owner: LH/RM
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