

Little Gems Montessori Nursery

Policy and Procedure for Managing a Biting Incident

Introduction:

Biting is a fairly common and natural developmental stage that many young children go through. It is usually only a temporary condition but inevitably evokes strong emotions in adults. Biting is often very painful and frightening for the child who is bitten. It can also be very frightening for the child who bites. Biting happens for different reasons with different children under different circumstances. **Sometimes biting occurs for no apparent reason at all.** The first step in learning to control an episode of biting is to look at possible reasons why it is happening and looking at the child as a whole to see if there is an underlying reason for them to bite. Teething aside, children may bite for a number of reasons:

- **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.
- **Curiosity, cause & effect** – to see the reaction, however, not being aware of actually hurting the other child. 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.
- **Frustration** – inability to express themselves verbally. Children can be frustrated by a number of things, such as waiting, transitioning, wanting to do something by themselves but not being fully able to do so, things are not going their way. Incidents such as these examples may lead to biting as a way of dealing with anger and frustration.
- **Copying** – children who see another child (or adult) biting may think that this is a good idea; therefore, we recommend parents do not play bite or nibble as a sign of affection.
- **Seeking attention** – biting is a good way of getting others to take notice, even if the attention gained is negative.
- **Not having their needs met** – children who are tired, hungry or uncomfortable may bite others as a way of expressing their emotions.

Aim:

At Little Gems Montessori Nursery, we acknowledge that biting is a common behaviour among young children. However, stopping a child from biting is not always easy. Young children have less developed verbal skills and are impulsive without a lot of self-control. We recognise that the majority of children will learn not to bite in time and we are very clear, calm and firm when a child does bite and offer praise and warmth when they don't.

Procedure:

If an incident of biting does occur, the following procedure will be followed:

- The biting will be interrupted with a firm "No...we don't bite people!"
- Staff will stay calm and will not overreact.
- The bitten child will be comforted.

- Staff will remove the biter from the situation. The biter will be given something to do that is satisfying.
- The bite shall be assessed. Should the skin be broken:
 - The wound will be cleansed with soap and water, and ice applied. The wound would not be covered as this may increase the risk for infection. The child's parent/carer will be informed by a senior staff member immediately.
- If the skin is not broken:
 - after having assessed the bite it will be cleansed and ice applied. The parent/carer will be notified when collecting their child.
- The parents of both children will be notified of the biting incident. Appropriate forms will be filled out by the staff member that witnessed the incident for all children involved (Accident / Incident Report).
- Confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.

Biting is always taken seriously and we do our best to ensure that it is stopped as soon as possible. Extra support is given to the biting child who will be shadowed closely until the phase passes. We will NEVER disclose to parents the name of the child who has bitten. It is unnecessary to know their identity, however if a parent finds out who has bitten their child we strongly recommend they do not complain directly to the other parents. Try to remember that all young children are potential biters.

If your child has bitten another child, we strongly recommend that you do not punish them. When a child bites show disapproval and very firmly and calmly say "No we do not bite. It hurts and it is not nice". Use gesture and facial expression to reinforce the message. As parents/carers it is important that you are calm and consistent in your handling of it at home.

Procedure for managing persistent biting incidents:

If biting becomes a persistent behavioural issue the following procedure will be followed:

- Staff to meet with the Principle for advice, support and strategy planning.
- Observations will be carried out to try to understand what may trigger the biting in addition to:
 - Chart every occurrence, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviours, staff present, and circumstances.
- Let the relevant parents know that there is a problem and the procedures that will be followed to deal with it.
- Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behaviour.
- Be mindful of children who have a tendency to be bitten: Head off biting situations.
- Teach responses to potential biting situations: "No" or "" Don't hurt me!"
- Hold a meeting with the parents of the biting child to develop a plan of action.
- Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
- If an occurrence happens more than 3 times in one day, or on 5 occasions over a week, the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the biting child. The child may return the following day.
- In extreme circumstances and if deemed in the best interest of the child, the school and other children, Little Gems Montessori Nursery may suspend the child from the nursery for the duration of the biting stage. Written warning will be given to the parents before this action will be taken.