



BITING POLICY

At Colourbox we follow a positive behaviour policy to promote positive behaviour at all times. However, we understand that children may use certain behaviours such as biting as part of their development. Biting is a common behaviour that some young children go through and can be triggered when they do not have the words to communicate their anger, frustration or needs.

Our procedures

The nursery uses the following strategies to help prevent biting: sensory activities, biting rings, adequate resources and staff who recognise when children need more stimulation or quiet times. However, in the event of a child being bitten we use the following procedures. The most relevant staff member(s) will:

- Comfort any child who has been bitten and check for any visual injury. Administer any First Aid where necessary. Complete an accident form and inform the parents via telephone if deemed appropriate. Continue to observe the bitten area for signs of infection. For confidentiality purposes and possible conflict, we do not disclose to the parents the name of the child who has caused the bite.
- Tell the child who has caused the bite in terms that they understand that biting (the behaviour and not the child) is unkind and show the child that it makes the child who has been bitten unhappy. The child will be asked to say sorry if developmentally appropriate or helped to develop their empathy skills by giving the child who has been bitten a favourite book or comforter. Complete an incident form to share with the parents at the end of the child's session.
- If a child continues to bite, carry out observations to try to distinguish a cause, e.g. tiredness or frustration.
- Arrange for a meeting 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.
- In the event of a bite breaking the skin and to reduce the risk of infection from bacteria, give prompt treatment to both the child who has bitten and the child who has been bitten.

If a child or member of staff sustains a bite wound where the skin has been severely broken then medical attention should be sought. Parents should be advised to take their child to the doctor.

In cases 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 where a child doesn't have communication skills, the nursery manager will carry out a risk assessment and may recommend immunisation with hepatitis B vaccine for all staff and children.

This Policy will be reviewed in April 2024

Nursery World Magazine: A parent's guide to biting

It's a wonderful moment when you notice that your child has got their first tooth. That glint of white in the gummy mouth is something to treasure. But what should you do if your child starts to use their teeth to bite you or - even worse - other children?

When is a child likely to start biting?

Most children will go through a biting phase at some point in their lives.

The most usual time is in the second year, but some children do bite when they are three or so. Most children settle for a 'one off' biting spree in which they may bite just once or twice and then stop. This is often exploratory and can even be accompanied with a smile! The child is simply finding out what it feels like to bite. They will be very interested in your reaction. This means that it is important to handle this type of biting in a low-key fashion. Avoid laughing, even if it is funny, because otherwise your child will learn that this is something that adults seem to like. In the same way, you should also avoid getting cross because, again, children can learn that biting gives them adult attention. A good strategy is to say 'no' in a firm voice and even move the child away from you slightly. This helps the child to realise that this behaviour is not acceptable and does not pay dividends.

What do I do if my toddler keeps biting other children?

This can be very upsetting for everyone, especially as some toddlers seem to choose the same child to bite and it is not unknown for that child to be their friend! This type of biting is a little more complex to unravel, but can be linked to frustration and the need to gain some control. In the same way that some toddlers have tantrums, others do bite. From the toddler's point of view, biting is a quick way of getting another child to drop something that she wants. It is also a way of helping to relieve tension and express anger. Interestingly, once children have learned to talk well, the amount of biting may decrease sharply. Suddenly, children can try arguing with adults, asking for things and of course, squabbling with their playmates as an alternative to biting.

For some children the arrival of a baby or changes at home are triggers and if your child is biting, nursery staff will want to gain as much information about this as possible. Sometimes spending some extra positive time with your child and looking for ways of helping them to feel grown-up can pay dividends.

If your child is a biter, or being bitten, how should you expect nursery staff to respond?

The commonest approach is to avoid punishment of the biter, but to employ extra supervision and use distraction. Staff should focus their attention on the victim. If your child is on the receiving end of a bite, this can seem like staff are taking a soft option, but big reactions can backfire. Do, however, talk to staff if you feel that your child is beginning to worry about going to nursery. Sometimes children can be discreetly kept apart for a few days.

Having a break in this way can mean that the habit stops.

Finally, if your child is going through a biting phase, you can help everyone by letting your child's nursery know. Biting is a little like head lice or chickenpox. It is a part of childhood and something that many children will grow out of. If staff know that a biting phase is happening, they can keep an extra eye on your child and together you can be consistent in your approach.