



BITING POLICY

Rationale:

Children bite for many reasons. They bite to gain a reaction and/or because they lack language and social skills required for a particular situation. It is an indication of their developmental age, and not in any way a reflection of child rearing practices.

Aim:

- To have consistent guidelines in place to manage biting, ensuring all staff are consistent enabling children to gain control over their behaviour more quickly.
- For the staff to notify the incident to the parents of children involved being compassionate, empathetic and understanding.
- To ensure the safety of other children in the Centre at all times.

Strategies/Practices/Procedures:

All staff work towards finding a cause underlying the biting behaviour by using the guide below, and once this has been determined an Action Plan will be developed:

The Experimental Biter:

Bites and mouths objects in the process of discovering the world around themselves. These children need to be shown that some things can be bitten/mouthed like toys and food BUT some things cannot like people and animals.

The Teething Biter:

Children experience a lot of discomfort when they are teething. A natural response to this discomfort is to apply pressure to their gums by biting on things and relieving the teething pain. These children need to be provided with suitable objects to bite such as teething rings or teething biscuits, or medication such as Bonjela.

The Social Biter:

Many children will bite when they are trying to interact with another child. These children have not yet developed their social skills. These children need close supervision and assistance with positive interactions, encouraging them to use their language.

The Frustrated Biter:

Young children lack the social, emotional and language skills to cope with frustration in an acceptable way. Staff need to be aware when a child is becoming frustrated and must provide words for the child to help them express themselves.

The Threatened Biter:

For some children biting is a way to gain a sense of control over their lives, especially when they are feeling overwhelmed by their environment or events. These children need nurturing support to show them that they are safe.

The Attention Seeker Biter:

Some children learn that they can receive a lot of attention when they bite. These children need to have lots of positive reinforcement provided to them when they display appropriate behaviour and provide less attention when they bite.

The Power Biter:

Children can have a strong need for independence and control. Often the response children get from biting helps to satisfy this need. These children need opportunities provided to them where they can make simple choices throughout the day and they need all attempts at positive social behaviour reinforced.

Strategies:

- The staff will attend to the teething needs of toddlers through the use of teething rings and other safe, soothing things to bite on.
- The staff will provide many ways for the children to express their feelings and frustrations by providing toys to pound, clay or playdough to mould, sand and water play to experiment with. Staff will also provide ample time and space for gross motor play outdoors.
- The staff will record the date, time and other child involved of all bites and once the parents are informed of their child's behaviour the parents will be asked to sign the document. This information is kept confidential and the biter is to remain anonymous.
- If a child is a known biter, staff will shadow him/her to try to prevent future bites from occurring.

If biting is a reoccurring behaviour and the staff have implemented and recorded all of the above strategies, the child may be asked to reduce his/her days or in severe cases the child may be asked to be removed from the programme for a period of time until the child has passed the 'biting phase'.

Reasons for biting and ways for dealing with it differ with children under three years of age and children over. Over 3's usually have more understanding of how hurtful and unacceptable biting is, and they should be able to control their urges to bite. Under 3's may bite because:

- they are teething
- they might bite impulsively
- they have been bitten by older children and are passing on the same behaviour
- they may bite because something happened
- frustration may be expressed through biting

A good way to stop biting is to be there to prevent it as much as possible. This can be done through distraction, and by setting up an appropriate environment that encourages both the sharing of toys as well as individual experiences. Also consistent reactions of disapproval to biting are important. Manner and tone of voice should convey the severity of what has been done.

WHAT HAPPENS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BEHAVIOUR

1. Get child's attention (biter) to stop behaviour e.g. "Charlie - stop"
2. Attend to child (bitee) - administer first aid if necessary, cuddles, reassurance, encourage child to use words to express how they feel e.g. "I feel sad", "I'm hurting", "Please be gentle", and "My turn".
3. Deal with the negative behaviour at the child's level and with positive communication e.g. "biting hurts, it makes Wendy Sad".
4. Re-direct children if necessary to another activity.
5. Give both children the attention they might need.

Toddlers find it difficult to take turns and don't understand the importance, so they need an adult's encouragement in developing these skills. Children under two years of age do not yet understand that they are hurting by biting, pushing etc. and cannot be scolded for doing so. Obviously preventing the situation from occurring is most desirable, but toddlers and babies can be quick in their actions even if a caregiver is nearby. It is inevitable that these accidents will occur in a childcare setting, but staff are constantly working towards minimising biting behaviour.

Measuring Tools:

Biting Record

Sources & Further Reading:

Practical solutions to practically every problem Steffen Saifer 1996
Kidspot.com.au
Biting at the Centre - Exchange Everyday - 11th June 2006
Early Childhood Australia Inc (2007)
Code of ethics
NCAC
Porter L (2003) Young Children's Behaviour
Harrison Jeantee Beyond time out
Stone house Anne 92204) Making links : A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early
Childhood services
Tansey S (2006) Equity for children and families
UNICEF
<http://www.ncac.gov.au/factsheets/biting.pdf>
National Quality Standard
Early Years Learning Framework
Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline
www.earlylife.com.au
www.walkerlearning.com.au

Links to Other Policies:

Interactions with Children Policy