



Cornerstone Nurseries Biting Policy

Biting is a very upsetting but normal stage of early childhood development.

Parents, who face a biting situation, whether as the parent of the biter or the “bitee”, have many questions and concerns. Children bite for many reasons, it is a nursery’s job to handle any biting incident with respect for all involved. It is Cornerstone’s policy to deal with each biting incident individually.

It is possible that your child’s room will have a biter. Whilst biting is more common at nursery than at home, a biting incident is not a negative reflection on the biter, the staff, or the nursery.

Children in the childcare environment are expected to learn to share, wait their turn, to take turns and to work and play in the community. These experiences are difficult for grown ups, however we have the language and skills that help us out of tough situations. Young children do not have the coping mechanisms, self-regulation skills and communication skills, which adults and older children have that help us to diffuse and express our emotions in socially acceptable ways.

This can result in hair pulling, hitting and biting which are upsetting for us, but at the same time, developmentally normal. Biting with nursery aged children is not a malicious act of intent and more a reaction to being unaware of how to deal with a situation.

What happens when a biting incident occurs?

Firstly;

- We comfort the child who was bitten and administer first aid including washing the area of the bite with warm soapy water.
- If the bite has broken the skin, we will call the parents to inform them and suggest that the child is checked over by a medical practitioner as per guidance from NHS direct <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/animal-and-human-bites/>
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- Staff will use their discretion as to whether to call the parents after a bite. For example a child who has been bitten in an unusual place or has left a particularly bad mark, parents will be called.

Secondly;

- If appropriate, we ask the child who bit to help comfort the hurt child with a hug or a gentle touch.
- When a child bites, the key worker will discuss this with the parents of the biter.
- Talking to the parents will help to explain our biting policy, work out a plan for future incidents, answer any questions or concerns the parents may have and to ask if the biting is occurring at home as well.

- We talk to the child who has bitten, age appropriately, explaining that we don't bite. We try to help them understand that there are other ways to express themselves and deal with the situation. We help them find something nice to do for their friend that they have bitten.
- Sometimes babies do start to bite as often it feels nice to teething babies. Although we sympathise with the parents of the child who has been bitten, we do explain this is part of their development and accept the child will grow out of biting. Extra supervision is put into place while the biting phase is happening.
- Incident and accident reports are filled out for both children and parents are asked to read and sign them. The deputy manager reviews the reports each month and tracks what is found. If needed, strategies will be out in place.
- We do not talk with the parent about who was involved in the incident. **Children do not bite maliciously; they bite because they don't know how else to act.** While most parents understand this, there are cases in which parents may be upset about the incident and may even make a complaint.
- When biting has become a pattern of behaviour, we will shadow and observe the individual child looking for triggers. ABCC charts can be completed and reviewed to see what the child is doing before the incident, what they do and what the adult thinks the child is trying to express.
- We encourage the child who bit to use words to express their feelings. We explain out loud how we think the child is feeling. For example 'I can see that you feel angry that someone took your toy. Let's go over and tell them you were playing with it.'
- All staff will be able to discuss any concerns they have about a child biting with the nursery SENCo for advice and support. Other agencies can be involved if needed and the SENCo can organise this.
- In extreme cases, we will seek professional advice from the Inclusion Setting Support Officers. In very rare and extreme cases where biting incidents are ongoing and the continued help is no longer working, we may advise some reduced time at nursery or a break from nursery.

We would like to emphasise that although biting and aggressive behavior is common and normal among toddlers, we do take it seriously. We work hard not only at dealing with bites when they happen, but also at finding methods of prevention. Keeping the children active, working in smaller groups, observing and shadowing a child and offering soothing activities are all designed to lessen aggression. It is an ongoing problem and tends to follow a pattern of periods of calm and very little aggression followed by periods of higher aggression and more bites. Please remember that periods of calm will always follow.

It is important that all parties involved work closely together. Each case will be different. Please feel free to talk with your child's key worker or the manager whenever you have any questions or issues.

Reviewed 22/03/2024 CJS Review annually