# EYFS Biting Policy

# September 2024

*Together we strive for excellence*

## POLICY CONTROL

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| **Headteacher signature** |  |
| **Chair of Governors signature** |  |

## Introduction

Biting is not unexpected behaviour for young children however, we are aware that it can be a concern for both parents and staff. Biting can often be painful and frightening for the child who has been bitten and also a frightening and confusing time for the child who bites. There are many potential reasons and circumstances that could cause a child to bite. This is a part of some children's development and can be triggered when they do not yet have the vocabulary to communicate their emotions or needs. Some children have additional sensory needs and such behaviour is part of their communication. We consistently follow our positive engagement and behaviour policy to promote positive behaviour at all times however, recognise that biting can be harmful to other children and staff.

This biting policy has been developed with both of these ideas in mind.

# Policy aims

As a school, we understand that biting, unfortunately, can be part of the school setting. Our goal is to help identify what is causing the biting and resolve these issues. If the issue cannot be resolved, this policy serves to protect the children and staff that are bitten.
We aim to act quickly and efficiently when dealing with any case of biting. Our school uses a selection of proven strategies to prevent biting: sensory activities, a variety of engaging resources, and staff who can act quickly and can recognise when children require further stimulation or alternatively, quiet time.
We will treat each incident with care and patience, offering comfort to emotions. We work hard to guide children to manage their feelings and talk openly about them to aid the resolution of any issues and promote further understanding. We also aim to be honest and open with parents and carers regarding any incidents of biting.

## Arrangements to support this policy

## 1.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 and carers is a key factor of any successful Engagement and Behaviour Management Strategy. Staff should involve parents and carers every step of the way and explain that this should be implemented in the home as well as in the home.

- Staff should be aware that there are a range of triggers that can cause children to bite and should work as a team to identify these and reduce the chances of them happening.

## 2.Potential triggers for biting

- Exploration –Very 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.
- Cause and effect – Young children are interested in what happens when they do something. 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 – Young children are trying very hard to be independent and resolve conflict for themselves. 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 several 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. This is especially true of children who have additional needs or are non-verbal.

## 3.Potential strategies to support the management of biting incidents

- Staff may need to increase the supervision of a child who is biting; this does not mean that this will be one-to-one, as unfortunately, mainstream schools are not funded in a way to allow this to happen. It could be during particular times of the day, or by simply reducing the number of large group activities provided.
- Staff should make sure a child who is biting receives significant encouragement when displaying positive behaviour, and avoid excessive attention following an incident.
- 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.

- Staff should plan activities that help release frustration such as physical outdoor play and sensory experiences.
- Staff should provide cosy areas for children to relax in and activities that release tension such as splashing in the water, digging in the sand and using sensory equipment.
- Use withdrawal spaces to give children time out from the busy classroom environment.
- Sometimes, the school environment is too overwhelming for some children and the school may talk to parents and carers about putting their child on a part-time timetable to reduce the risk. Part-time timetables are not a permanent thing. School staff will increase the amount of time in school gradually until the child is accessing full-time education again.

## 4. Age of the child and the context

When a biting incident occurs, we understand that it is upsetting, not only for the child who is bitten but for their parents and carers too. Before deciding on any potential consequence for the biting, staff need to consider a few things:

1. The age of the child – a one off incident of biting is not uncommon in very young children however, as children grow up, they quickly understand that biting is not an acceptable behaviour and therefore will have a greater consequence.
2. Whether the child has additional needs – biting for some children is sensory driven and their way of communicating- whilst upsetting, they did not mean to inflict harm.
3. The context in which the bite took place – what happened before, during and after the incident.

It is only when we have all of this information that we can begin to decide how the manage the situation.

# Procedure in the event of a child being bitten – First aid and informing parents and carers

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

2. Once the child is calm, staff should check for any visual injury. If there is a bite mark, this should then be washed with warm soapy water and wiped with an antiseptic wipe. Staff will explain to the child what is happening and support the child as the process may be painful. If the bite has happened to a member of staff, first aid will be given by another trained colleague.

3. If the skin is broken and the wound is bleeding, it should be allowed to bleed as covering the wound can increase the risk of infection. Staff should always wear gloves when dealing with bodily fluids. In cases where the bite has broken the child's skin, a senior member of staff must contact the parent or carer of the child immediately. This phone call should be sensitive and give reassurance to the parent or carer and offer an explanation of the procedure that has been followed. The parent or carer should be advised to contact the child's GP as antibiotics may be required.

If the bite has happened to a member of staff, they will be relieved from their duties and advised to contact their GP straight away.

4. If the skin is not broken it is important that we do not worry parents and carers unnecessarily. Staff should wait 45/60 minutes and then check if there is bruising or a bite mark still present. If there is no obvious mark or bruising this can then be discussed with the parents/ or carers at home time.

5. All staff who witnessed the incident should complete an accident/incident form for the child/staff member who has been bitten. There should be one in the first aid log and another on our MIS system on the file of the child who has been bitten.

6. If the biting persists, staff members should complete ABC charts to determine any patterns of behaviour and explanations as to why the biting is occurring.

# Consequences of a biting incident

Cubitt Town Primary School is a mainstream school. We pride ourselves on our inclusive ethos and approach, however, we also understand our duty to safeguard all children and prevent them from coming to any harm whilst in our care.

- If a child bites another child or staff member but the skin is not bruised or broken, the school's Engagement and Behaviour policy will be followed. Parents and carers will be spoken to at the end of the day to discuss the incident and to work together to support the child and prevent it from occurring again. The incident will be logged on the child's records.

- If a child bites another child or staff member and the skin is broken and bruised the child may receive a 1-day suspension from school and the incident will be logged on the child's records. Parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with the class teacher and SLT to discuss the incident and work out a plan to support the child.

**If biting continues to occur**

- If the child continues to bite the same consequences as above will apply however, the length of the fixed term suspension may increase (up to 5 days).
- The child will have an individual risk assessment.
- External agencies such as behavior support may become involved.
- A child's plan will be written which will identify strategies to support the child. This will be shared with all staff.
- Parents and carers will be invited to attend regular meetings with the school to work together to support the child.

Some of our children may have a Special Educational Need, such as Autism or sensory needs, which means that they may bite more frequently, regardless of their age. We recognise this and have amended our consequences to reflect this.

For any child with additional needs who displays sensory seeking behaviours such as biting, grabbing and pulling, a support plan and risk assessment, will be written and will be shared with parents and carers and all staff members. These documents will detail proactive measures to be taken to prevent biting from occurring, early intervention strategies and reactive strategies if biting still occurs.

Sometimes for these children, despite the use of strategies and intervention, biting will still occur.

- If a child bites another child or staff member but the skin is not bruised or broken, staff will speak to both children's parents or carers at the end of the day. For the child who has bitten, the support plan and risk assessment will be reviewed in partnership with the SENDCo, class teacher and parents or carers.

- If a child bites another child and the skin is broken and bruised the child may receive a 1-day suspension from school and the incident will be logged on the child's records. Parents and carers will be invited into school and the support plan and or provision will be reviewed. External agencies, such as Autism Outreach, will be contacted to support the school further.

- Staff who work with children with additional needs have to expect that from time to time, they may be hurt or injured due to the nature of the child's needs. However, if staff members are hurt frequently within a school week (5 days), they may not be

able to carry out their duties safely or effectively and a risk assessment will be put in place to support the staff member.

If a child bites a member of staff twice within the school week (5 days) and the skin is broken and bruised the child may receive a 1-day suspension from school and the incident will be logged on the child's records. Parents and carers will be invited into school and the support plan and or provision will be reviewed. External agencies, such as Autism Outreach, will be contacted to support the school further.

Fixed term exclusions cannot be applied retrospectively.

**If the biting is persistent and frequent**

- If a child's additional needs mean that the biting becomes frequent and persistent to the point where other children are being hurt by biting regularly, the school will talk to parents and carers and suggest a part-time timetable for their child. This could be as little as an hour per day.

Schools cannot enforce a part-time timetable as they have to be done on a parental consent basis. Whilst they may be inconvenient, they are a really good way of reducing risk and ensuring that a child can remain in school whilst building their provision up slowly.

# Parental engagement and support

We believe in partnership with parents and carers and will work with you every step of the way to ensure your child has the best possible education and provision, regardless of need.

It is really important that this support is a two-way process because, without it, the measures that the school can put in place are severely hindered.

The school buys into external agencies such as Educational Psychology, Behaviour Support, Autism Outreach, School Nurse Services, etc. All of these services provide the school and the child with valuable support, however, they all require parental consent. Without this consent, the school is unable to access their services.

If biting continues and parents and carers are not engaging or providing consent for work with external agencies, the school will reach a point where there is nothing else that can be put in place and the child may be permanently excluded from the school. This will apply regardless of whether the child has additional needs or not.

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