

The Early Years Nursery School Alliance

HELEN GIBSON AND CLERVAUX NURSERY SCHOOL AND KIDS CLUBS

Biting Policy

Jan 26

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At Helen Gibson and Clervaux Nursery and Kids Club we acknowledge that biting is a common behaviour among young children and it evokes a strong emotion in adults, both parents and educators. Biting is often very painful and frightening for the child who is bitten. It can also be very frightening for the child who bites. We recognise that the majority of children will learn not to bite in time and are very clear, firm and calm when a child does bite and offer praise and warmth when they don't.

If an incident of biting does occur, the parents of both children will be informed of the event. This will also be recorded in the accident book. A behaviour record will be used if age appropriate. If your child has bitten another child, you should not bite them as a punishment. It sends a very confused message to your child.

We ask that you make us aware of any incidents of biting that have occurred outside of the setting as this will enable staff to be more prepared and vigilant. Children are expected to have overcome the need to bite by the time they enter main nursery however all children develop at different rates.

Reasons why children might bite

Biting happens for different reasons with different children under different circumstances. The first step in learning to control it is to look at why it may be happening. Not all children bite out of anger or to hurt another child – young toddlers can't really understand how much pain they're causing. Teething aside, children may bite for a number of reasons including:

Curiosity – toddlers may bite to see what their friends arm may taste like or to see the reaction. It's impulsive and they don't mean to hurt. Often, a baby chomps on someone when they're teething. Sometimes toddlers nip when they're over-excited.

Emotions – This can be frustration, stress, feelings of lack of power or as a way of showing love. "Toddlers have really intense feelings but don't know how to show them," says Dirk Flower, chartered psychologist. "Biting can be a way of expressing their feelings."

Defending - Young children learn to bite as a defence, especially if they can't talk and will bite other children whenever they feel anxious or threatened. Sometimes changes or upsets at home can bring on this type of biting.

Seeking attention or control - Some children know biting is a way of getting others to do what they want or to gain attention. They don't always do this consciously. It may happen when a group of children are jostling to be leader or gain power. Biting is a good way of getting others to take notice, even if the attention gained is negative.

Copying – children who see another child or adult biting may think that this is a good idea.

Sensory – to fulfil a sensory need

When a child bites

We show disapproval and very firmly and calmly say something like "No we do not bite!!" We use gesture and facial expression to reinforce the message. We will also use a range of Makaton signs to say stop and how it makes us feel - sad. Children may not always hear words when they are frustrated and biting, so we always use a visual of 'no biting' to support further.

We will remain calm and firmly remove the child who bites away from the person (whether child or adult) whom he/she is biting. We might decide to walk away from the child for a short period to emphasise our disapproval. However, we will always back this up with a social story or the book - Teeth are not for Biting.

We make it clear that it is the biting behaviour that we disapprove of - not the child and to reinforce this, positive behaviour will be encouraged.

If a child persists with biting the setting will make a plan to monitor and support the child. Through monitoring and recording incidents we may identify particular triggers for the behaviour. Understanding why a child bites is key to beating the problem using this information will inform possible intervention strategies.

The environment of the setting will also be evaluated to establish any causes within the provision.

Within this plan we will regularly meet with the parent/carer of the biter to discuss underlying reasons and common strategies to ensure consistency between the home and nursery. Where necessary, permission will be sought from the parent/carer of the child to refer concerns and involve outside agencies and professionals.

If a child has been bitten

Staff are trained to deal with this situation, staff will follow first aid procedures to relieve pain and injury. Biting is always taken seriously and staff do their best to ensure that it is stopped as soon as possible. We will not 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 that they do not complain directly to the other parents. We will always contact parents immediately if the skin is broken and ask for a GP to look at the wound.

Try to remember that all young children are potential biters.

We will always ring the parent of the child whom was bitten to explain what has happened. The child that has bitten parent will be informed at home time. This will be done discretely and will not be done in front of other parents, individuals or children.