



## BITING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### Introduction

Evidence suggests that up to a quarter of all children will bite others at some stage. Stepping Stones Nursery understands that this is a difficult situation for parents whether it is your child that has been bitten or your child biting others.

This information will give you more information about why biting may occur, how biting incidents are managed and what steps we take to protect your child's health and safety while in the nursery.

### **Why do some children bite?**

- **Teething** – swelling gums can be painful and cause discomfort; this can be relieved by biting or chewing on something
- **Exploration** – babies and 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
- **Attention** – when children are in situations where they feel they are not receiving enough attention biting is a quick way of becoming the centre of attention
- **Frustration** – children can be frustrated by a number of things, such as; wanting to be independent and do things for themselves and not having the vocabulary to express themselves clearly. This can lead to biting as a way of dealing with this frustration

Biting is a very upsetting but normal part of early childhood. We aim to handle any biting incident with respect for all involved. It is our aim to deal with each biting incident individually.

This policy is to help prepare you for the possibility of experiencing the 'bite'. Generally biting occurs at the toddler age. 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 at Stepping Stones are encouraged to share, wait their turn, to take turns and to play together. Young children do not have the coping mechanisms, nor the self-regulation skills which adults and older children have that help us to diffuse and express our emotions in socially acceptable ways. Young children often result to hair pulling, hitting and biting which are upsetting for us, but at the same time, developmentally normal.

### PROCEDURE

#### What happens when a biting incident occurs?

- ✓ We comfort the child who was bitten and administer first aid if required.
- ✓ Once the situation has calmed down 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 talk about what we use our mouths for. We help them to find something nice to do for the friend that they have bitten. We have books about biting which we read to the children and we also use the 'reflection area'
- ✓ Incident and accident forms are filled out for both children by the member of staff who witnessed or was present at the time as soon after the incident has occurred. This is to ensure first-hand information is recorded – all records must be truthful and as detailed as possible.
- ✓ A photograph of the bite will be taken as soon as possible after occurrence and attached to the accident form.
- ✓ The parents of both parties are contacted to be notified of the incident as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.
- ✓ We do not talk with the parent/carer about who was involved in the incident. Children do not bite maliciously, they bite because they don't know how else to act or react. Whilst most parents/carers understand this, there are cases in which parents/carers are very angry about the incident. Parents/carers of a child who bites feel terrible about the situation. Giving their names to an angry



## BITING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

parent/carer would be unfair and serve no purpose. If possible, the staff who witnessed the act should speak to the parents, if this is not possible it should be passed on to the most senior staff in the unit.

- ✓ Parents or who-ever collects the child must be informed THE SAME DAY and in private. If there are other parents present, simply ask them to wait a moment as you need to chat to them or take them into a private area/room while another member of staff deals with the other parents. **A “parent biting information” hand-out is given.**
- ✓ Incident records will be reviewed by Management regularly and if one child is showing a pattern of consistent biting then the parents/carers will be informed and an action plan put in place.
- ✓ When biting has become a pattern of behaviour, we will shadow and observe the individual child looking for ‘triggers’ Management will work with the staff and parent to help manage the situation appropriately.

We would like to emphasize that although biting and aggressive behaviour is common and normal amongst toddlers, we do take it seriously. We work hard not only in dealing with bites when they happen, but also at finding methods of prevention: keeping children active, working in smaller groups, observing and shadowing a child and offering soothing activities are all designed to lessen aggression.

It is important that all parties involved work closely together. Each case will be different but all should be treated individually and professionally.

### Continual Biting:

- ✓ Inform Management of the situation as soon as possible
- ✓ Speak to the parents and state that the child will be put on a behavioural report, make sure the parent has received a biting handout and has seen and is aware of our policy.
- ✓ Show them the report and explain the process
- ✓ Put together a plan of action with management
- ✓ Monitor the situation closely
- ✓ In extreme cases management may decide that this setting is not suitable for the needs of the child at this moment in time.

### What staff can do:

- ✓ Monitor the child closely.
- ✓ Observe the child and try to identify “triggers”
- ✓ Provide a wide range of stimulating activities to keep the child engaged
- ✓ Teach the child about biting using books, role-play use kind words etc.
- ✓ Provide one-to-one where possible and shadow the child – students are permitted to be involved in this process.
- ✓ Handle the situation professionally at all times.



## BITING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

**It is important that all staff are aware of how we as a setting, handle children who bite regularly.**

If a particular child has been bitten on several occasions, the parent may ask how we deal with the situation. You should inform them of the following steps.

- ✓ Senior staff carry out monthly reviews of the accident and incident books.
- ✓ Management must be informed if a particular child is biting continuously.
- ✓ If one particular child is biting/hitting etc. regularly, we put them on a behavior monitoring form for the next month.
- ✓ We will look for common reasons as to why or when they have bitten etc.
- ✓ Inform the child's parents that we are monitoring the situation closely
- ✓ Give the child one-to-one, provide activities to keep them occupied etc.
- ✓ If the situation does not improve, management will have a meeting with the parent to discuss the next steps to be taken.
- ✓ However in cases of continuous biting we may suggest alternative care for the child, we do not take this decision lightly and will depend on each individual case.