

Biting Policy

**Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements**

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**Statement of Intent**

Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup is committed to ensuring that all children attending the setting are safe and looked after at all times. Inevitably, when you have a high volume of young children within a group situation, children may hurt each other but it is our intent to provide a duty of care to all children.

Biting is a common behaviour that some young children experience, and it occurs more often in children under the age of five and in group situations such as playgroups and nurseries. Young children may resort to hair pulling, hitting and biting which is upsetting for us, but at the same time, developmentally normal.

The need or motivation for one child to bite another is just part of some children’s development journey. Children bite for many reasons, such as lack of communication skills, inability to understand emotion, for sensory exploration or even out of frustration. A biting incident is not a negative reflection on the child who bites, or the staff or the setting. At Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup we have very clear behavioural expectations and children are expected and encouraged to share, wait their turn, be respectful and play happily together.

As every child is different, at Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup we will deal with each biting incident on a case by case basis making sure that parents/carers involved are kept up to date with what is happening, but at the same time respecting the confidentiality of the children involved. This ultimately means that we are not able to divulge the identity of any child involved in a biting incident.

We understand that this is a difficult situation for parents whether it is your child that has been bitten or your child that has been responsible for biting others.

**Addressing a biting incident**

If a biting incident occurs, first and foremost Playgroup staff will work with the child, the parent/carer, and the staff team to discover why a child is biting and to comfort and reassure the child who has been bitten. This may have been an isolated incident, but we will record the incident, taking photographic evidence if necessary and using the information to examine what happened just before the incident or if there were any behavioural trends.

Once we have identified the possible trigger for the biting incident, we will then make changes to prevent subsequent biting. If no trigger is apparent, in exceptional circumstances and for a brief period a member of staff may be appointed to provide a one to one care for the child who bites to help with their behavioural needs, and to encourage them to find different ways to express themselves. We may encourage a child who bites to take part in activities which help release frustration such as outdoor play or other physical activities. Chewellery may be used to give the child who bites a resource to bite on, but this will depend on the child and circumstances surrounding the biting.

**Procedure in the event of a biting incident**

The child who has been bitten will be comforted and reassured and where needed first aid will be administered. The bite wound will be washed thoroughly and cleaned with a sterile wipe. A cold compress will be applied if appropriate to prevent any bruising.

If the wound is bleeding, it will be allowed to bleed further, before a sterile dressing is applied. If the bite has broken or bruised the skin, parents/carers will then be contacted as close to the incident as safely possible so that they are aware that their child has been bitten. The incident will be recorded in the accident book and if warranted a photograph of the bite will be taken.

The child that has bitten will also be examined to ensure their own health and safety. A staff member will talk to the child who has bitten, age appropriately, and try to help the child understand that there are other ways to express themselves and deal with a situation.

We will ensure that the child who has bitten understands that such action (the behaviour and not the child) is unkind, and makes staff and the child who has been bitten upset.

**When a pattern of biting occurs**

If a pattern of consistent biting occurs, a STAR (Settings, Triggers, Actions and Results) chart will be introduced to try and identify any triggers that lead to an incident, in the hope that future incidents can be prevented. The chart will help staff by giving a clear picture of how the behaviour occurred and then the most effective approach to managing the behaviour can be implemented.

If necessary, the setting SENCo with parental consent, will introduce a Behaviour Change Plan that is specific to the needs of the child who bites. This plan will document the way in which staff are to deal with the child’s behaviour. The advice of other professionals within the Early Years Advisory Team will be sought to assist in dealing with incidents to provide the best possible outcome for all involved.

**Working together**

The key to addressing any challenging behaviour is a partnership approach. We encourage parents and carers to work with the Playgroup staff to support any behaviour management techniques and use them at home as well as at Playgroup.

Please remember that staff cannot give any information about any other children in the setting, and cannot disclose who has bitten your child or who your child has bitten. Young children do not bite maliciously, they bite because they do not know how else to act or react.

Although biting is developmentally ‘normal’, as a parent/carer of a child who has been bitten you naturally want to protect your child and can feel angry about the incident. Conversely, the parent/carer of a child who bites can feel very upset and often guilty about the situation. Revealing identities in these emotionally charged circumstances would be unfair and serve no real purpose.

We would like to emphasise that although biting is quite common and normal amongst young children, as a setting we work very 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 resources that distract from certain behaviours.

If a child’s re-occurring behaviour, such as biting, is having a negative impact on their experience at Playgroup, we will work closely with all involved to attempt to resolve these issues. The Setting Manager, Julie Morris and the staff team as a whole are well trained and resourced in the areas of behaviour management and special needs, and we can also draw upon external expertise to also inform our options.

It is paramount that all parties involved work closely together. Each case will be different, as will the resolution.

If you feel you want to discuss anything within this policy, you are welcome to speak to your child’s keyperson or Julie Morris, Setting Manager at any time.

This Policy was adopted at a meeting of Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup

Held on January 2020

Signed on behalf of Bishopthorpe Preschool Playgroup \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Role of Signatory Chairperson

Date of next substantive review August 2020