

# What can you do about biting?

We acknowledge that if your child has been bitten this can be distressing.

Working in partnership with your child's keyperson in ensuring your child feels valued, safe and can learn without fear of being hurt is essential.

We recognise that if your child is biting you may be embarrassed or frustrated.

Working in partnership with your child's keyperson is essential. They will work alongside you to :

**Share solutions and strategies** for you to use at home that can successfully support a child's communication and emotional needs to prevent further incidents of biting

**Share language used with children** saying "biting somebody hurts... you use teeth to bite food"

**Help identify the reason your child is biting** such as teething, exploration, stress or expressing feelings

**Offer advice about how to address biting** giving praise and attention to the behaviours you want to encourage, such as sharing or turn taking

**Please NEVER bite your child back. This is frightening and can teach them that biting is ok.**



# Understanding Biting

We understand biting as a way of communicating

– what is the child trying to tell us?



Biting is a common behaviour that some young children experience. It occurs more often amongst children under 5.

Emotions such as anger, frustration, need or even excitement can lead to biting.

Children may not have the words to express themselves or the ability to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviour.

As children mature, gain self-control, and develop language and problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behaviour.

While not uncommon, biting can be an upsetting and potentially harmful behaviour.



# Why do 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 and they do not always know the difference between sensory exploration with their mouth and biting others

**Excitement** Biting can occur if a child is expressing excitement but doesn't yet know how to regulate their emotions or control their behaviour

**Stress** Biting can be a strategy used to relieve stress, tension or anxiety. Particular events or parts of a child's day may cause feelings of stress or anxiety, such as changes in routine or caregiver, saying goodbye or significant transitions, or events such as moving house or a new sibling

**Frustration** A child's innate drive to be increasingly independent and do things for themselves can lead to frustration if they get stuck or aren't able to achieve what they want. Biting can be a way of dealing with this frustration.

**Attention** Biting can be a way for children to say they are not feeling heard or seen, needing connection or comfort

**Anger** Children may not yet have the language to express their feelings or get their needs met. Sometimes 'big' emotions can be difficult to understand, process and express. Biting can be a way of showing anger or hurt, particularly in situations that demand sharing, turn-taking, conflict resolution or problem-solving.

# What we do about biting?

**Ensure safety and well-being** offering comfort and reassurance

**Follow our Positive Behaviour Policy** Approach calmly, acknowledge feelings, support solutions and provide further support

**Use clear consistent boundaries** about the behaviour that is unacceptable

**Create environments and spaces that minimise conflict** ensuring sufficient resources and calm spaces

**Provide opportunities for children to express feelings** with trusted, sensitive adults

**Monitor incidents of biting**, looking for patterns that can help identify underlying causes for the biting

**Work in partnership with parents/carers** to share solutions and strategies

## What do we do if your child has been bitten?

Offer comfort and reassurance

Wash the bite with warm soapy water, clean it with an antiseptic wipe, apply a cold compress if the bite has bruised the skin

Further First Aid given if the wound is bleeding, covering with a waterproof dressing

Complete an accident form and contact parents/carers to inform them of the incident

Advise further medical attention if appropriate, i.e. if the skin has been broken