



## St Paul's Nursery School and Children's Centre

# Understanding Biting Policy

### Rationale

We believe that everyone at the Centre has a right to feel valued, respected and safe. For this to happen in practice we have a responsibility to behave in ways that enable all of us to feel free to explore and learn without being hindered or hurt. This policy supports this vision in particular reference to 'biting' and recognises that learning self-regulation and socially appropriate behaviour is a developmental process and that through modelling positive behaviour and managing challenging or distressed behaviour appropriately and competently, we can provide for the needs of the individual as well as ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone at the Centre.

### Aims

We aim to understand biting as having "communicative intent", whereby what a child is doing - or the behaviour they are presenting on the outside - has underlying feelings that can represent their inner world.

Biting can be part of a child's developmental journey and is common in young children, particularly children under the age of five and particularly for children who have little spoken language. Emotions such as anger, frustration, need or even excitement can lead to biting, particularly if the child hasn't yet learnt the words to express themselves or the ability to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviour.

We aim to help children understand their emotional world by responding to an incident of biting with respect, sensitivity, safety and trust. We understand that it can be a frightening and confusing, a difficult and frustrating situation for children and parents/carers whether it is your child that have been bitten your child who has been responsible for biting.

This policy and procedure is aimed to support a consistent, coherent and proportionate approach to biting whilst ensuring the respect and recognition, freedom and responsibility and safety and trust for everyone at the Centre.

### Why does biting happen?

**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.

## How do we respond to the children when biting has happened?

- Ensure the safety and well-being of the children, offering comfort and reassurance
- Follow our Positive Behaviour Policy and Conflict Resolution Steps ( Approach calmly, acknowledge feelings, support solutions and provide further support )
- Use clear consistent boundaries and be clear about the behaviour that is unacceptable
- Create environments and spaces that minimise conflict, i.e. ensuring sufficient resources, providing quiet and calming communication or relaxation spaces
- Provide opportunities for children to express, understand and manage feelings with trusted, sensitive adults ( co-regulation )
- Monitor incidents of biting, looking for patterns in behaviour or communication that can help identify underlying causes for the biting

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

- Offer comfort and reassurance
- Wash the bite with warm soapy water and clean it with an antiseptic wipe, applying a cold compress if the bite has bruised the skin
- Further First Aid is 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

## How do we work with parents, carers and families when biting has happened?

- Respond to each biting incident with respect and sensitivity, openness and honesty, supporting parents/carers by acknowledging the potentially difficult feelings for families of the child that has been bitten and the child who is responsible for biting
- Inform and involve parents/carers in the discussion about the biting incident, whilst respecting the confidentiality of the children involved ( please remember we cannot give you any information about any other child at the Centre and will not disclose who has bitten your child or who your child has bitten )
- Record and share with parents/carers the biting incident on accident forms and incident forms, sometimes using monitoring and tracking forms if biting becomes a pattern of behaviour or communication
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to share solutions and strategies ( for home and Centre ) that can successfully support a child's communication and emotional needs to prevent further incidents of biting

Refer to the following policies and guidance :

- [St. Paul's Nursery School and Children's Centre Promoting Positive Learning Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Birth – 5 Matters "Self Regulation" pp.20-21](#)