

Evidence suggests that up to a quarter of all children will bite others at some stage. At Little 1's we understand that this is a difficult situation for parents whether it is your child that has been bitten or your child biting others.

Young children may bite for different reasons, and not all will respond to the same types of intervention. Identifying the kind of biter you are dealing with will help you to develop an appropriate discipline technique.

The Experimental Biter

An infant or young child may take an experimental bite out of a caregiver's shoulder. When this occurs, adults should use prompt, clear signals to communicate that children must not bite people. "No, that's biting, that hurts" said in a serious manner and removing the child from the scenario would be an appropriate response.

These experimental biters may simply want to touch, smell and taste other people in order to learn more about their world. Their muscles are developing, and they need to experiment. Provide them with a variety of surfaces to play on and a colourful selection of toys to stimulate them during this stage of exploration.

This type of biter may also be motivated by teething pain. **Offer children appropriate things to chew on for relief: frozen bagels, very cold large carrots, teething biscuits or a safe teething ring.**

The Frustrated Biter

Some biters lack the skills to cope with situations such as the desire for an adult's attention or another child's toy. Even though the child may not have intended to harm another person, adults must react with disapproval. First, tend to the bitten child immediately. Then explain to the biter that biting hurts others and is not allowed...the caregiver's job is to keep all children safe.

You may help frustrated biters by teaching them appropriate language to show their feelings or to get what they need. Give positive reinforcement when children communicate effectively. Also, watch for signs of rising frustration. Spotting potential conflict may help you intercept a potentially harmful incident.

The Threatened Biter

Some children, feeling that they are endangered, bite in self-defence. They may be overwhelmed by their surroundings, and bite as a means of regaining control. In this case, **use the intervention techniques already mentioned, and assure the child that his rights and possessions are safe.**

Children may become threatened by situations such as newly separated parents, the death of a grandparent, or mother returning to the work. The threatened biter may require additional nurturing. **In any case, the bond between child and caregiver should be as warm and reassuring as possible.**

The Power Biter

Some children experience a strong need for independence and control. As soon as they see the response they get from biting, the behaviour is strongly reinforced. Give the biter choices throughout the day and reinforce positive social behaviour (like sharing and saying 'thank you'). If the biter gets attention when they are not biting, they will not have to resort to aggressive behaviour to feel a sense of personal power.

Never hit or "bite back" a child for biting. This communicates that violence is an appropriate way to handle emotion. The approach should be calm and educational. A child should not experience any reward for biting...not even the "reward" of negative attention.

Parents and nursery must work together to prevent children from biting. If children are permitted to demonstrate such behaviour at home there will be no chance of eliminating it in the setting. Working as a team, educators and parents may identify possible reasons for a child's biting and respond accordingly. While early childhood professionals may be more familiar with positive discipline techniques, parents are experts on their own children's behaviour.

What will we do about biting?

Our named Behaviour Management Officer in the nursery will work with you, the child and the staff team to discover why your child is biting. This may have been an isolated incident, but we will always document all bites or attempted bites to look at what happened just before the incident.

If the form identifies a possible trigger for the biting incident we will then make changes to reduce or remove the cause. For example - we may buy duplicates of favourite toys to stop disputes.

We may increase the supervision of a child that is biting so that we can support them to find different ways to express themselves. We may encourage your child to take part in activities which help release frustration such as play dough or other physical activities.

The key to putting a stop to any challenging behaviour is a partnership approach. Working together as a team and support any behaviour management techniques using them at home as well as at nursery. We may ask with your permission that we contact outside agency support such as your child Health visitor, Doctor or our Area Inclusion Coordinator (Area Inco) who supports us with our behaviour management and special educational needs.

If a child's reoccurring behaviour is having a negative impact on your child/ren's experience at nursery, we will work closely with all involved to reduce and eliminate these issues. If all procedures are exhausted then we may have no choice but to re evaluate if the nursery is able to meet this child's needs.

What can you do about biting?

We appreciate that if your child has been bitten or has bitten someone, this can be distressing but please speak to staff about any concerns you may have in a calm manner. \

Please remember that staff cannot give you any information about any other children in the nursery, and will not disclose who has bitten your child or who your child has bitten.