



# **Roebuck Academy**

## **Early Years Biting Policy**

**Reviewed June 2024**

**To be annually updated.**

Roebuck Academy is committed to ensuring that all children under our care remain safe and healthy at all times, and are supported to exhibit kind, positive behaviour towards their peers. While we believe that biting is unacceptable behaviour and will do all we can to prevent biting incidents from occurring, we also recognise that biting is a developmentally normal behaviour for children in the Early Years age group we educate.

We recognise that biting can occur for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to, the following:

- An attempt to ease the pain of teething
- An attempt at sensory exploration with limited perception of harm caused to others
- Perceived self-defence
- In imitation of another child
- An inability to communicate overwhelming emotions due to limits in expressive language
- An inability to regulate emotions or control aggressive impulses, e.g. due to particularly young age, developmental delays, SEND and emotional turbulence in their home life
- An attempt to get attention from an adult or another child

In recognition of this, we will always aim to focus primarily on addressing the motivations and reasons behind biting behaviour as a long-term strategy for reducing this behaviour. We will work with parents of children who exhibit biting behaviour to ensure there is a consistent response both at home and at the setting. We will also aim to secure further support for children to overcome this behaviour.

### **Biting incidents**

When a child bites another child, or a staff member, the following procedure will be adhered to:

- Staff members will remain calm
- The child exhibiting the biting behaviour will be told off quickly and sternly, e.g. “No, we do not bite people. Thank you!” (Will be addressed in line with Therapeutic approach to behaviour TAB. The adult is to use direct minimal language, in a firm clear tone, supported by visuals and Makaton ‘No, no biting’).
- Where the child exhibiting the biting behaviour continues to be aggressive and pose a risk of harm to others after biting a child, they will be separated from the rest of the children to ensure their safety
- The child who has been bitten will be comforted and any wounds will be tended to in line with the First Aid Policy
- A staff member will make a record of the incident, including the names of all children involved, the context in which the incident occurred, how the incident was handled by staff, the extent of any injury caused by the bite and what further action will be taken
- A member of ELT will inform the parents of all children involved about the biting incident as soon as possible – the identity of the child exhibiting biting behaviour will not be disclosed to the parents of the child who has been bitten
- When informing parents, the member of ELT will clarify whether this has been a one-off incident, how the incident was handled, and how the setting will proceed to reduce the chances of biting reoccurring

Where the biting incident is the first incident of biting behaviour a child has displayed, a staff member will explain to the child, at an appropriate time, why biting is wrong and what they should do instead if they are upset. This will be followed up with a social story read to the child.

Where the biting incident is part of a pattern of sporadic biting, i.e. the child has bitten other children more than once but this has not occurred more than three times in one term, staff will:

- Remain consistent in sternly telling the child that it is wrong to bite others. Staff will remain constant in addressing the child using TAB principles.
- Show minimal attention to the child following biting behaviour. The adult will support the child that has bitten, to regulate safely, while still ensuring they are safe and adequately supervised, and focus attention on the child who has been bitten instead.
- Discipline the child in line with the Behaviour & relationships Policy in a manner proportionate to the circumstances and severity of the bite.
- Contact the child's parents to inform them of this behaviour.
- Talk to parents about whether biting behaviour occurs at home, and whether there are any noticeable patterns or triggers for the behaviour at home. The social story can be sent home to develop understanding further and parents will be encouraged use consistent approach.
- Analyse the setting's records of each biting incident to ascertain whether there are any noticeable patterns or triggers for the behaviour in the setting.
- Work with the child to help them to communicate their needs or emotions more effectively.
- School may decide to provide the child with sensory chews.

### **Persistent biting**

Persistent biting is considered, for the purposes of this policy, to be biting behaviour exhibited by a child which occurs more than three times in one term.

When a pattern of persistent biting is identified, a member of the SLT will call the child's parents to the setting for a formal meeting to discuss methods of reducing biting behaviour.

While the methods used to reduce persistent biting behaviour will be tailored to the individual child in direct response to the motivations for their behaviour, the following measures will be considered in the event of persistent biting behaviour:

- Changing the child's routines or environment where these are distressing to the child, e.g. providing them with a quiet area to play on their own where their biting occurs when they are overstimulated in a noisy environment
- Working with the child on learning how to label their emotions and use these labels to communicate how they are feeling, where this is age appropriate
- Having daily catch-ups with the child to talk to them about how they are feeling, where this is age appropriate
- Providing consistent support for the child and intervening where the child is exhibiting warning signs that they may engage in biting behaviour
- Weekly meetings with the child's parents to address improvements
- Praising the child when they show prosocial behaviour and behave nicely and non-aggressively with others
- Increasing staff: child supervision ratios in areas where the child is playing

Where necessary, a child's persistent biting behaviour will be factored into relevant risk assessments conducted in the setting to ensure the safety of staff and other children.

## **SEND**

The setting will always be mindful that biting can often be a response to unmet needs of children with SEND. Where a child has SEND, the Early years SENCO will work with the pupil and their parents to develop a plan for addressing the child's behaviour that is consistent with their EHC plan.

Staff will be mindful that many children with SEND may not yet be diagnosed or formally identified as such at this stage of their education; therefore, staff will work with the SENCO to ensure that any biting behaviour, that is consistent with SEND when viewed in conjunction with a child's other traits, is acknowledged and handled in line with the SEND Policy. A sensory checklist would be completed and the SENCO will seek advice from Sensory/OT or SAS team if needed.

## **Suspension**

In rare occasions, e.g. where biting has become very persistent or another child has been seriously injured, the headteacher has the power to exclude a child exhibiting biting behaviour from the setting. This decision will only be taken where the headteacher reasonably believes that suspension is the best course of action to reduce the risk of harm to other children in the setting.

Decisions to exclude a child from the setting following an incident of biting will be taken in line with the Behaviour & relationships Policy and Exclusion Policy, and the setting will observe all statutory duties, including formally notifying the child's parents, the LA and the governing board.

The headteacher will ensure that a child's individual circumstances, including any SEND and any safeguarding considerations arising from potential suspension, are adequately considered before making the decision to exclude them. Where a child has SEND, the decision to exclude them for biting behaviour will only be taken as a last resort and in collaboration with parents, the SENCO and any external individuals, e.g. the child's GP, where necessary.

## **Contacting the school**

Where parents have concerns about this policy, or about the biting behaviour of either their child or another child in the setting, they should contact a member of the SLT via [admin@roebuck.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@roebuck.herts.sch.uk)

## **Monitoring and review**

This policy statement will be reviewed annually by a member of the SLT, and any and all changes will be communicated to all staff and stakeholders.