



# **Roebuck Academy**

## **Early Years Biting Policy**

**Reviewed November 25**

**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.

### **Age of the child and context**

When a biting incident occurs, we understand that it is upsetting, not only for the child who is bitten but for their parents and carers too. Before deciding on any potential consequence for the biting, staff need to consider a few things:

1. The age of the child – a one off incident of biting is not uncommon in very young children however, as children grow up, they quickly understand that biting is not an acceptable behaviour and therefore will have a greater consequence.
2. Whether the child has additional needs – biting for some children is sensory driven and their way of communicating- whilst upsetting, they did not mean to inflict harm.
3. The context in which the bite took place – what happened before, during and after the incident. It is only when we have all of this information that we can begin to decide how to manage the situation.

### **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 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').

- The child or staff member who has been bitten will be the priority and will be comforted and given reassurance.
- 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
- Once the child is calm, staff should check for any visual injury. If there is a bite mark, this should then be washed with warm soapy water and wiped with an antiseptic wipe. Staff will explain to the child what is happening and support the child as the process may be painful. If the bite has happened to a member of staff, first aid will be given by another trained colleague.
- 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
- In cases where the bite has broken the child's skin, a senior member of staff must contact the parent or carer of the child immediately. This phone call should be sensitive and give reassurance to the parent or carer and offer an explanation of the procedure that has been followed. The parent or carer should be advised to contact the child's GP as antibiotics may be required
- When informing parents, the senior member of staff 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
- If the skin is not broken, we consider this an attempt to bite. Staff should wait 45/60 minutes and then check if there is bruising or a bite mark still present. If there is no obvious mark or bruising this can then be discussed with the parents/ or carers at home time.

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.

### **Consequences of a biting incident**

We pride ourselves on our inclusive ethos and approach, however, we also understand our duty to safeguard all children and prevent them from coming to any harm whilst in our care.

- If a child bites another child or staff member but the skin is not bruised or broken, the school's Behaviour and Relationships policy will be followed in a manner proportional to the circumstances and severity of the bite. Parents and carers will be spoken to at the end of the day to discuss the incident and to work together to support the child and prevent it from occurring again. A social story can be sent home to develop understanding further. The incident will be logged on the child's records.
- If a child bites another child or staff member and the skin is broken and bruised the child may receive a suspension from school and the incident will be logged on the child's records. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with the class teacher and SLT to discuss the incident and work out a plan to support the child.
- Staff will then continue to 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 week (5 days) and has broken or bruised the skin. Otherwise, it will be considered a persistent attempt to bite.

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. If the child continues to bite, the same consequences as above will apply; however, the length of the fixed term suspension may increase (up to 5 days).

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:

- The child will have an individual risk assessment.
- External agencies may become involved.
- A child's plan will be written which will identify strategies to support the child. This will be shared with all staff.
- 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

### **SEND**

The setting will always be mindful that biting can often be a response to unmet needs of children with SEND. For any child with additional needs who displays sensory seeking behaviours such as biting, grabbing and pulling, a support plan and risk assessment, will be written and will be shared with parents and carers and all staff members. These documents will detail proactive measures to be taken to prevent biting from occurring, early intervention strategies and reactive strategies if biting still occurs.

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.

### **Parental Engagement and Support**

We believe in partnership with parents and carers and will work with you every step of the way to ensure your child has the best possible education and provision, regardless of need. It is really important that this support is a two-way process because, without it, the measures that the school can put in place are severely hindered.

### **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.