



Early years biting behaviour policy

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Date reviewed:	1 st September 2026
Next review date:	1 September 2027
Version:	1
This policy is based on an original template produced by The National College. Burscough Village Primary School has reviewed, adapted and amended the content to ensure it reflects the school's own context, practice and statutory responsibilities.	

Biting is a common behavioural issue that early years settings are likely to face amongst their cohorts. While biting is not behaviourally acceptable, and can be dangerous, it is also considered developmentally normal for children under the age of four – therefore, it is important that early years settings lay out how they will handle incidents of biting when they occur.

This policy statement outlines a good practice approach to handling biting in your setting, covering biting incidents and persistent biting.

Burscough Village Primary School 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 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 who has bitten will be spoken to calmly and clearly, using simple language, e.g. "Biting hurts. We use kind hands and gentle mouths."
- Where the child exhibiting the biting behaviour continues to show unacceptable behaviour 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 on Behaviour Smart App, Medical Tracker and CPoms.
- The Nursery staff/ EYFS leader or Senior member of staff 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 Nursery staff/ EYFS leader or Senior member of staff 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 could include the use of a social story.

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 calmly telling the child that it is wrong to bite others.
- Show minimal attention to the child following biting behaviour, 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 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.
- 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.

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, the EYFS leader or headteacher 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 one-to-one 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
- Recognising and praising the child when they play kindly, use gentle hands and interact positively 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 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, and will look into amending this plan to account for other needs the child may have where necessary.

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.

Suspension and permanent exclusion

On rare occasions, for example where biting has become very persistent or another child has been seriously injured, the headteacher may consider a suspension where a short-term removal from the setting is necessary to support safety and allow appropriate next steps to be planned. A permanent exclusion would only be considered as a last resort, where all reasonable strategies and support have been considered and the headteacher reasonably believes that it is necessary to reduce the risk of harm to others.

Any decision to suspend or permanently exclude a child following an incident of biting will be made in line with the Behaviour Policy, the school's Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy, and the

Department for Education statutory guidance on school suspensions and permanent exclusions. The setting will observe all statutory duties, including formally notifying the child's parents, the LA and the governing board as required.

The headteacher will ensure that the child's individual circumstances, including any SEND, safeguarding considerations, age, developmental stage and the context of the behaviour, are carefully taken into account before making any decision to suspend or permanently exclude. Where a child has SEND, suspension or permanent exclusion for biting behaviour will only be considered as a last resort and in collaboration with parents, the SENCO and any external professionals, where appropriate.

Contacting the school

We value open and positive communication with parents and carers, and we will always aim to work together in the best interests of the children. If parents have any questions or concerns about this policy, or about biting behaviour within the setting, they are encouraged to speak to the nursery staff or make an appointment to speak to the EYFS leader or headteacher so that support, guidance and next steps can be discussed together.

Monitoring and review

This policy statement will be reviewed at least annually by the EYFS leader and headteacher, and any and all changes will be communicated to all staff and stakeholders.