

Biting Behaviour Management Policy - Guide

**WHAT are we talking about in this document?**

This policy guide is related to managing biting, a common behaviour among children.

**WHO is this for?**

This policy applies to children, families, staff and management of the service.

**WHY do we need this policy?**

This policy guides the implementation of strategies to guide children's behaviour towards more appropriate ways to express their needs and feelings.

THE IMPORTANT STUFF

We aim to create a safe environment for children by implementing consistent guidelines to support the management of biting episodes. These guidelines work in conjunction with our Service philosophy, and procedures for positively guiding children's behaviour. We believe that children can be supported to learn more appropriate ways to express their needs and feelings. We feel the best way to deal with biting is by implementing strategies that prevent it, although this will not always be possible.

Educators play an important role in minimising the likelihood and opportunity for biting to happen and appropriately managing the incidents that do occur. Biting is like any other behaviour that hurts or injures a child, requiring preventive measures and early intervention.

Biting sometimes occurs as a natural part of children's development and, if handled appropriately, will have no lasting effects. It is often hard to identify a specific reason why a child bites and there are often several reasons. Some common triggers for biting include:

- A child teething will often increase their desire to bite, as applying pressure to the gums can provide comfort
- Oral exploration
- Limited self-regulation or self-control
- Excitement and overstimulation
- Frustration
- Children imitating other children
- A child feeling unwell
- A child being unable to communicate what they want, need, or feel
- Boredom

Theorists suggest that a good understanding of early childhood development is an essential tool for responding to biting and other harmful behaviour. For example, educators must understand that young children are not yet able to share or take turns so educators must take this into consideration when planning the routine and activities. Additionally, babies and toddlers are often not developmentally able to feel compassion or empathy for others. While this development is unable to be rushed, educators can support children to develop empathy and pro-social behaviour, by being a good role-model, and providing simple information, such as "biting hurts, we don't bite our friends."

Addressing the matter of biting involves educators and families providing guidance and direction to the child to assist them to take responsibility for their actions. Boundaries and limits are a part of life. Children need boundaries to help keep themselves, others, and the environment safe. Clear guidelines provide children with an understanding about what it is you want them to do.

Centre Coordinator/Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person and Educators will:

- Take steps to know the children and dynamics within the group.
- Become familiar with challenging routine times, including group times, transitions, indoor and outdoor play and ensure that children have something to do while they are 'waiting' if they are required to.
- Observe children known to bite very closely. Document and reflect. Is there an observable pattern, or a trigger to this behaviour that can be eliminated?
- Position themselves so they can quickly intervene and redirect the child.
- Attend to the child that was bitten, applying appropriate first aid, reassurance, and comfort.
- Address the child about their biting, establishing eye contact and being consistent with responding to the incident (and ensuring all educators respond consistently).
- Limit immediate attention to the child who has bitten to minimise encouragement for more biting: Inappropriate attention can often be perceived by the child as condoning the act.
- Document the incident, ensuring to adhere to the Service Privacy and Confidentiality Policy by not disclosing to the parent the identity of the biter.
- Critically reflect on their environment and experiences being provided to reduce risk factors: Is there enough equipment? Is it regularly rotated? Are activities too hard or easy?
- Reflect on the effectiveness of the supervision and educator's engagement and interactions with children. This is to be documented.
 - Update supervision plans as required
- Ensure the curriculum responds to the needs and interests of all children.
- Intentionally teach children alternatives to biting.
- Engage and collaborate with families of the child who bites to discuss an approach to reducing biting.
- Educate children how to protect themselves.
- Provide positive attention to the child when they are behaving in ways that are appropriate.
- Be respectful with families with discussing biting concerns, and reassure them that although inappropriate, biting is normal for many young children.
- Seek professional help and guidance from inclusion support agencies if biting incidents do not reduce over time, or if the child is still biting after his/her third birthday.
- Separating young children into smaller, more manageable groups.

- Continue to observe, monitor, and record the child’s progress, reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies being implemented.

Observing Biting Patterns

It is important to observe the child to attempt to understand why they are biting. Through observations, you may be able to identify patterns, such as what happened before the child bites, is there a certain time of day the biting is occurring, does it happen around certain dynamics of groups of children on certain days, etc. Observations enable you to notice when, where and who the child bites. Does the child bite when crowded in small spaces with other children, when they are hungry or tired, etc.? An effective method to documentation is by using a time or event sample record, or an ABC anecdote.

Once Educators can identify any patterns regarding why and when the child is likely to bite, they can then make changes to the environment or situation to prevent it.

When Biting Continues:

If biting endures, it is important to continue observing, and trying to minimise the biting as much as possible. If the above strategies have been unsuccessful and biting continues, further help will be sought from inclusion and support agencies. If biting persists and becomes uncontrollable, the child’s position at the Service may be terminated to ensure the safety of the other children enrolled.

Please note that the Service and Educators will not bite the child back or use harsh punishment when dealing with a child who bites.

FOOTNOTES

Related regulations and standards

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children		
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships, which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
5.2.2	Self-Regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law	
155	Interactions with Children
156	Relationships in groups

Source

- Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority.
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ECA Code of Ethics
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- <http://raisingchildren.net.au>
- www.kidsmatter.edu.au
- Inclusion – KU Children’s Services
- Young Children’s Behaviour (Second Edition) Louise Porter

- *When children bite*
https://viac.com.au/cms_uploads/docs/when-children-bite-a-resource-for-early-childhood-educators.pdf

Link to Philosophy

Our Community

Our relationships with children and families are strengthened as we explore and develop a deeper understanding of the diversity and culture of families and the broader community. By creating an inclusive environment our curriculum is enriched and each child's sense of belonging and development is enhanced, helping to create a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

The Whole Child

Our highly experienced teams provide beautiful, thoughtful environments where children are invited and encouraged to make their own choices, to explore the arts, enjoy physical play, practice mindfulness and develop meaningful, positive relationships with others.

We believe the emotional needs of every child must be met first to enable them to participate, play and learn. Each child's growing competence and confidence is supported in many ways, from the provision of healthy nutritious meals to flexible play spaces for physical activity.

Links to [Rights of the Child](#)

- Article 3: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.
- Article 16: Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.
- Article 20: Children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly by people who respect their religion, culture and language.
- Article 31: Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.

Links to ECA Code of Ethics

In relation to children, I will:

- Act in the best interests of all children.
- Create and maintain safe, healthy, inclusive environments that support children's agency and enhance their learning.
- Value the relationship between children and their families and enhance these relationships through my practice.
- Safeguard the security of information and documentation about children, particularly when shared on digital platforms.

In relation to families, I will:

- Listen to and learn with families and engage in shared decision making, planning and assessment practices in relations to children's learning, development and wellbeing
- Develop respectful relationships based on open communication with the aim of encouraging families' engagement and to build a strong sense of belonging

In relation to the profession, I will:

- Base my work on research, theories, content knowledge, practice evidence and my understanding of the children and families with whom I work.
- Engage in critical reflection, ongoing professional learning and support research that builds my knowledge and that of the profession.

In relation to community and society, I will:

- Collaborate with people, services and agencies to develop shared understandings and actions that support children and families.
- Advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote the rights and best interests of children and families.

Review & document control

Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
9 th July 2018	Creation	July 2019
June 2019	Updated with Coordinator's feedback, new information added to policy. Updated with Keiki logo	June 2020
June 2020	New template. Minor formatting changes.	June 2021
December 2020	Added link to philosophy, ECA Code of Ethics, UN Rights of the Child.	June 2021