**Biting in Nursery**

Children biting at nursery.

Biting can be very upsetting for children, their families and our staff, but it does happen.

It’s important for parents to know why this happens and to understand that here at Nanny Plums Nursery we always deal with it as effectively as possible.

Why do children bite?

For many children, biting can be a normal part of their development. Babies bite objects as a means to exploring the world. When teething, biting into objects can help to relieve the pain and discomfort. There are of course many other reasons children may bite:

\* To express emotions like anger, frustration and fear, when vocabulary hasn't been developed yet

\* To gain attention

\* In self-defence if they feel threatened

\* As an extension of natural curiosity – what happens if I do this to someone?

\* As a satisfying a need for oral stimulation to self-regulate, relieve anxiety or cope with stressful situations.

Unfortunately, biting can be a common occurrence as many children pass through this particular stage of development. Although many babies bite objects as a matter of course, older children can continue biting well into school life. The most typical age range for biting is toddlers, who are struggling to deal with big feelings and don’t have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves verbally. It is therefore important that we all acknowledge this and have clear joint strategies to minimise incidents and ensure that our staff can respond sensitively to incidents of biting in order to reduce the distress for all involved as quickly as possible.

How do we reduce the likelihood of a child biting another in the first place?

With lots of reasons why children may bite, and the speed in which a biting incident can happen, even if we have a range of strategies in place to minimise incidents, it can still be impossible to eliminate it completely.

When an incident takes place, we always ask ourselves: -

\* Does it tend to happen at specific times of the day e.g. lunch time?

\* Are they arguing over a precious object such as a favoured toy?

\* Is the child seeking some oral stimulation?

\* Is the child unable to verbalise their feelings?

We try to gather as much information about each incident so we can plan which strategies to use, to reduce further incidents. For example, by sitting a staff member next to the child at the lunch table or, for a child seeking oral stimulation, providing a crunchy snack or teething toys to provide the stimulation that child may need.

How do we broach the subject with parents?

It’s natural for parents of both the biter and the child who has been bitten to get very upset. Sometimes we may contact the parents before they arrive to pick up their child if they have been injured, so they can be prepared rather than express their shock and upset in front of the children. We will always explain to parents how the nursery deals with these incidents and why and explain the effective strategies in place to reduce the number of incidents.

Please don’t be embarrassed if it’s your child that has bitten.

Biting is a form of communication and although distressing, is a stage of development that many children pass through. We may ask you if there have been incidents of biting outside of nursery and if there have been any changes that may be affecting your child. We will share the strategies we have in place to prevent and minimise biting and agree a joint approach. If they have bitten previously, you must tell us so we can take more time to share methods of dealing with the child in the immediate aftermath. We can then discuss how to support your child to develop empathy with others.

We cannot emphasis enough that parents should never ever physically scold their child or even be tempted to bite them back to see what it feels like. This can only add to the child and family’s distress.

We cannot promise to eradicate these incidents completely as this is not going to be possible. We would also rarely exclude a child due to biting as biting can be a natural part of a child’s development. It’s extremely important that you work closely with us and share information so that strategies can be put in place together to provide a consistent approach.

Incidents of biting can often be part of a phase. With patience and understanding, we will endeavour to work together with children and parents to navigate this phase successfully. Only in extreme circumstances (where a child consistently and purposely tries to harm other children by biting them as part of an attacking set of behaviours) would we consider revoking a child’s place at nursery. Nanny Plums Nursery must consider the health, safety and well-being of all children and staff in the setting when making decisions of this nature. We always reserve the right to terminate a child’s place where we feel their repeated harmful behaviours pose a safety risk to others.