

Working together!

At nursery, we will need to care for anyone who is injured and explain the situation with their parents. Your child will never be named (or shamed). It is very important that both parents are well informed.

We will explain what the circumstances were and consider the triggers. This shared understanding will help both parents and nursery carers recognise the triggers and agree on diverting/distraction methods.

We have activities that allow the child to use the action in a positive way: free-flow snack, throwing activities, playdough for squeezing, body rolls and balls for kicking or pushing, lycra squares for pushing & pulling etc. This allows the child to release the energy and use the action in acceptable ways. We can then celebrate what and where they have used the behaviour.

If a child has behaved in this way before all staff are 'on alert' and vigilant. Strategies to deal with the behaviour are shared at team briefings. A facilitator is ALWAYS on duty and observes the activity and whereabouts of all children in their room/outdoor spaces.

If linked with communication and language delay, we may suggest additional support.

And finally... do consider limiting when your child uses a dummy or soother as there is much evidence that extensive use of dummies can delay children's language development.

Books you can read with your child

Hands are not for hitting by Martine Agassi

Feet are not for kicking by Elizabeth Verdick

Teeth are not for biting by Elizabeth Verdick

Websites

www.teachingexpertise.com – Creative solutions to early year's behaviour by

Annie McTavish

www.nhs.uk – 'Hitting, biting, kicking and fighting'

www.gurgle.com

www.zerotothree.org



Working Together

Hitting, Pinching, Kicking and Biting



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Hitting, kicking or biting are quite common behaviours in toddlers. Young children can use these actions to express themselves before they have the language skills needed. It can be worrying or embarrassing for parents and carers, and for this reason we would like to share some useful strategies to manage these behaviours.

Why do children hit, kick or bite?

When a child is aged between 14 months and 3 years, children often use physical actions to communicate their needs and choices. This is a time of rapid development when the child is learning about boundaries, turn taking and gaining independence. They do not yet have words to communicate and they may resort to actions such as hitting, kicking or biting to express themselves. Often, the behaviour can be predictable.

Some triggers of hitting, kicking or biting

- Being hungry or thirsty – a child may react negatively before snack times or meal times
- Being tired – a child may use these behaviours just before nap time or bed time
- Teething – this can make toddlers more irritable than usual and they may feel like biting to make their teeth feel better
- Being bored – some children require a lot of stimulation and they may react negatively to express frustration
- Transition times – a child may not like the times of change in the day (e.g. finishing playing because it's time to leave).
- Life changes – a major change in a child's life, such as a new baby sibling, moving house, changing rooms within nursery, can make them feel unsettled – but without the words to describe how they feel they might bite or hit instead.
- A developmental need to move in a particular way (a schema) – some children *need* to move their bodies in an 'in and out' way (hitting or kicking) or squeezing (pinching, biting). This is normal and helps us to identify the way in which they learn.
- Sometimes it may be evidence of development delay. This is common where there is delay in a child's communication and language.
- Strangely, it can even be a sign of affection, such as a game of chase turning into a push (& tumble) or a cuddle that turns into a bite!

Strategies for parents

Most parents or carers find it upsetting and stressful if their child begins to hit or bite. It is important to remember that your child is using these actions to express themselves, and that although we want to address the behaviour (which is unacceptable), finding the right strategy is very important.

First, try to identify which is the trigger for the behaviour. Understanding this enables us to adopt the correct strategy to best help your child.

- Be consistent – children respond well to clear boundaries, so it is important to show them when behaviour is not acceptable, and stick to this each time they display this behaviour. Speak calmly.
- Put your child's feeling into words – "You are sad because...", or "You feel cross because...". This lets your child know that you understand how they feel, and helps them put words to their strong emotions.
- Recognise any triggers – does your child tend to bite at a time when they are probably hungry, or just before nap time when they are tired, or at a time of transition in the day? If so try to be a step ahead – have some snacks and a water bottle with you all the time, or keep a close eye on them if they are due a nap, or give some warning just before it is time to leave the play park.
- Find a distraction – it could be a book to look at or a toy to play with, anything that will distract your child and help refocus them.
- Give choices – this is a kind of distraction. It may be that you give them the choice between the seesaw and the swings before you leave the park or between the red bucket and the blue bucket if there has been a dispute with another child. Giving choices can also help your child to gain control of the situation, and of their feelings.
- Time out – if your child is frustrated, you may need to find a place away from the problem area. This should not be a punishment but a safe and cosy place. Sit with them and speak calmly (using the phrases above).
- Give yourself time out – especially if you feel you need to calm down too. Try not to respond out of anger or embarrassment. Do NOT resort to doing the same action to them – this only makes the behaviour acceptable! It is better to take a moment before you tackle a hitting or biting incident.
- Use positive language - when your child handles a situation well like: "Peter, thank you for playing nicely with your friend."
- Please tell staff at nursery so that we can find ways to manage the behaviour together!