

BITING POLICY

BITING

Perspective on Biting

Biting is a very common behavior among children birth to three years of age. Biting is a form of communication and is usually a response to the child's needs not being met or coping with a challenge or stressor. At The Hockessin Montessori School we believe by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can proactively prevent many biting behaviors by the environment that we create for the children.

We understand that children biting other children is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors to deal with in childcare settings. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the caregivers involved.

For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power.

In order to alleviate some of the triggers for biting, HMS has many practices in place that are known to help prevent incidences of biting in small children.

- **Quality Relationships:** Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and gets to know each child individually. Staff is given many opportunities for professional development to help she/he learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- **Environmental influences on child's behaviors:** Children are given opportunities to work in both small and large groups; there is a variety of work and children are taught how to share 'work;' the environment in a Montessori classroom is often quiet and productive which is very soothing to children; and staff are very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.
- **Targeted social-emotional supports:** Children have a daily routine that they follow which consists of circle time, time to pursue own work, and snack time. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Staff talks about emotions/feelings through books and other work and teaches strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves.

No matter what the cause, it is important to be aware of the potential problem before it happens. Therefore, The Hockessin Montessori School has developed the following plan of action to be used when biting occurs in our school.

Response to Biting – Action Plan

Before Biting Occurs:

1. Upon initial enrollment or at the start of each school year, families will be provided information discussing the common nature of biting for children up through three years of age.
2. HMS will distribute the written policy regarding biting upon enrollment.

3. HMS will create an environment that meets the developmental needs of the children. Staff will monitor and supervise all children while working and/or playing, redirect in situations where a potential biting incident may occur, and maintain an environment that elicits calm, thoughtful behavior.

When A Child Is Bitten:

For the Student who has Bitten:

1. The student who has bitten is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as ‘biting is not okay – it hurts.’ We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention the student who bit. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.
2. The student who bit will not be allowed to return to work/play and will be spoken to on a level which he/she can understand. “I can see that you want that truck, but I can’t let you hurt him. We don’t put our teeth on people.”
3. The child will be directed to other work/play.
4. Staff will complete an Incident Report and notify the family of the student who bit when the child is picked up for the day.

For the Student who was Bitten:

1. Staff will separate the child who was bitten from the student who did the biting.
2. Special attention will be given to comfort the child.
3. Staff will administer appropriate first aid as follows:
 - a. Assess the wound and if it is bleeding, apply pressure directly to the wound, using a clean, dry cloth, until the bleeding stops.
 - b. Clean the bit wound with a mild soap and warm running water for approximately 3 – 5 minutes.
 - c. Rinse thoroughly, and pat dry with a clean, dry cloth.
 - d. Cover the wound with a clean, dry dressing.
 - e. Should the wound require immediate medical attention, appropriate action will be taken and parents will be notified immediately.
4. Staff will then complete an Injury report to notify the family of the student who was bitten that the child has been bitten.

When Biting Continues:

1. Classroom staff will meet with the Head of School and Director of Student Services on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning.
2. Staff will chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. Staff will “shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite, to:
 - a. Head off biting situations before they occur.
 - b. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - c. Adapt the program to better fit the individual child’s needs.
 - d. Teach responses to potential biting situations: “Stop” or “That hurts!”
4. Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both children who are biting and children who were bitten to keep all parties informed and to develop a joint strategy for change.
5. Teachers will hold a conference with the parents of the child who is biting to develop a written plan of action and will schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.

6. Prepare the parents of the child who is biting for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from the school and help them to make contingency plans.
7. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, school, and other children, remove the child from HMS for the duration of the biting stage; not to exceed two weeks per biting cycle. Written warning will be given to the family before this action will be taken.

BITING CONFIDENTIALITY

The Hockessin Montessori School will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been bitten or has bit another child.