

H

HEADLICE POLICY

St. Agnes' Primary School



RATIONALE:

St. Agnes' Primary School shows concern for the health of all school members and in relation to Head Lice treats every member equally. It is recognised that Head Lice are an ongoing problem in schools due, in the main, to the closeness of children being together. St. Agnes' makes every effort to minimise this problem through identification and parental notification. At all times, privacy laws are adhered to and individuals suspected of having Head Lice infestation are treated with sensitivity and discreetly, always respecting the individual's human dignity.

Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are a cause of head itch and scratching, which may lead to infection and swollen lymph glands; therefore, they need to be controlled.

AIMS:

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.
- To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known and consistently followed.
- To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice treatment.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Anyone can catch head lice. Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact, and may also be spread by the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and hats.
- While it is parents who have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children, the school will alert parents of lice when detected.
- Consistent with Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, the Principal will ensure that the parents of any child found to have live lice are informed that their child is to be excluded from attending school until appropriate treatment has commenced.
- When an outbreak of head lice occurs the school will notify other families in the class of the outbreak and ask for all parents to check their child's hair. (See Attachment 1)
- The Principal will ensure that information relating to the prevention and eradication of head lice appears throughout the year in the school newsletter, particularly at times of heavy outbreaks.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Principal will:

- Ensure that parents/guardians are contacted by a school representative (Principal/Assistant Principal/Classroom Teacher/Secretary) if a child is suspected of having head lice.
- Inform the class of outbreaks by letter and through the newsletter. (Attachment 1)
- Manage a process for head lice outbreaks, guided by the procedures stated in this policy.

Teachers will:

- Be alert to possible outbreaks in their classrooms.
- Inform Principal/Assistant Principal if a child is suspected of having live head lice and arrange for the parent/guardian to be contacted.
- Be mindful to maintain the privacy and dignity of the child and family at all times.

Parents will:

- Check their children's hair for head lice on a regular basis.
- Collect their child from school and commence immediate treatment if head lice are found or arrange to have their child collected from school.
- Support schools in their efforts to minimise and manage outbreaks of head lice.

Children will:

- Keep long hair tied back.
- Not borrow or swap hats, combs and brushes

PROCEDURES:

When a member of staff suspects a child is infested with head lice, the following procedures should be followed:

- The principal must be notified, and the parents contacted immediately and requested to collect their child from school as soon as possible. The *Public Health Regulations 2000* require that children be excluded from school until effective treatment against head lice has begun.
- A letter must be sent home within a day notifying parents of other students in the class that infestation is suspected and asking them to check all their children for head lice.
- The principal may also provide parents with a copy of an information sheet on head lice infestation and treatment.
- If a student is not treated for head lice and appears to remain infected; the above procedures should be repeated.

REFLECTIVE MATERIALS:

- Public Health Regulations 2000
- Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001

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Dear Parents/Carers

A case of Pediculosis (Head Lice) has been reported from your child's year and appropriate treatment has been applied by the parents.

You may find the following information regarding treatment helpful:

- 1. CHECK ALL CHILDREN'S HAIR REGULARLY:** We recommend that all parents check their child/children's hair on a regular weekly basis. Perhaps a Sunday evening could be a good time to carry out this process. N.B.: Pediculosis is a common problem and easily transmitted by everyday contact.
- 2. THE LIFE OF A HEAD LOUSE:** The head louse (*pediculus humanus capitis*) is a tiny insect which lives and breeds in human hair. It has a life span of 20 to 30 days. The female louse lays her eggs on the shaft of a hair, close to the scalp. These eggs (nits) can be seen with the naked eye as tiny silvery white specks on the hair. The eggs hatch in approximately 7 – 10 days. The nymph, which emerges, will become a fully grown louse, ready to begin the breeding cycle again, 10 days after hatching.
- 3. HOW ARE LICE SPREAD:** Head lice cannot jump or fly. They are usually transmitted through direct head to head contact or by sharing infected items such as combs, brushes, hats and scarves, etc.
- 4. WHAT TO LOOK FOR:** The first warning sign is a child persistently scratching their head. Examine the hair for small silvery white specks attached to the hair shaft near the scalp. Also look for redness and scratch marks on the scalp, behind the ears and on the nape of the neck.
- 5. HOW TO GET RID OF THEM:** Opinions on the best treatment vary considerably. We suggest you contact your Chemist or the web site with regard to Pyrethrin shampoos (<http://www.headlice.org>). Having chosen the course of treatment **it is essential that every egg is extracted from the child's hair. There only has to be one live egg left in the hair and reinfestation will occur.**

To ensure eradication occurs please check all members of the family, wash all bed linen (including blankets, doonas and pillows) vacuum mattresses and spray hats.

- 6. SCHOOL NOTIFICATION:** Please notify the school if a case of head lice has been detected. We can then inform the parents of your child's class that a case has been reported and they can then check their child's hair.

Thank you for your support

Ginaya Yarnold
Principal