



HEAD LICE POLICY

Policy & Guidance

- Primary responsibility for the control of head lice lies with individuals, families and public health experts. However, schools can assist with controlling and preventing head lice.
- Schools are not required to conduct visual head lice checks but in the event that they decide to, parental consent is required if the student is physically examined.
- Schools control the spread of head lice in two ways:
 - exclusion from school
 - visual head lice checks in schools

Note 1: the Principal has the overall responsibility to exclude a student from school

Note 2: the presence of eggs in the hair is not a cause for exclusion (only live head lice)

Note 3: there is no requirement for a general practitioner or local council to issue a clearance certificate in order for the child to return to school

Note 4: the Department of Health and Human Services indicates there are likely to be cases of head lice in most schools at any given time, so it is not advocated that the Principal informs the whole school community each time head lice are detected.

Visual head lice checks in schools

There is no requirement for schools to undertake head lice inspection programs. However, if schools wish to do so, they can conduct checks via visual checks only without physical contact which:

- do not require parent or carer consent
- are made by people authorised by the Principal, for example, classroom teachers
- Head lice inspections involving the physical examination of a student:
 - are made by people authorised by the Principal for example, teacher
 - require written parental consent, usually obtained at enrolment

Prevention of head lice in schools

Although the responsibility for detecting and treating head lice rests with parents/carers, it is important that practical advice and support be available.

Schools are encouraged to work collaboratively with parents/carers and the broader school community to implement practices and procedures to prevent and minimise the impact of head lice outbreaks.

It is best practice to:

- consider families, students and staff as key partners in developing and supporting lice prevention initiatives
- provide general information regarding head lice in the school prospectus, school newsletter or on the school website for parent reference

Community partnerships

Schools can:

- work with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase their capacity to deliver and promote head lice prevention initiatives
- access community educational resources and support such as community health centres or local government

Parent or carer detection and treatment responsibilities

Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice.

Responsibilities include:

- not sending their children to school with untreated head lice
- using safe treatment practices which do not place their child's health at risk
- regularly checking for lice or eggs in the hair of their child and other household members
- notifying the school if their child is affected and when treatment commenced

Purpose

- This policy sets out the requirements for Footscray North Primary School to prevent and control the transmission of head lice.

Definition

Head lice

Pediculosis or 'head lice' are small, wingless insects that live, breed and feed on the human scalp. They cannot transmit any infectious diseases. Direct contact is required for transmission from person to person, where head lice crawl from head to head.

Implementation

- The school will take a whole school approach to prevention of head lice (based on evidence-based information from the Department of Health and Human Services, refer to the Resources tab below) ensure the whole school community is aware of and understands this policy
- Parent/carer consent will be:
 - obtained prior to commencing any physical examination of a student
 - provided to parents/carers for completion as part of enrolment
 - updated when guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student
 - updated if parents/carers no longer wish to consent to inspections
- When a student is identified with live head lice the school will:
 - at the end of the school day, provide the student with a [note to take home](#) to inform their parent/carer that their child may have head lice.
 - exclude the student from school until the day after treatment has commenced, as set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, School Exclusion Table — refer to the health.vic website: [School Exclusion Table](#).
- The Principal will:
 - alert parents/carers of an infestation, particularly the parents/carers of other students in the same class as the affected child or children
 - use discretion to avoid identifying individuals when informing the school community about an infestation
- The school will:
 - encourage parents/carers to tie their child's hair back if it is long; and
 - implement learning activities that minimise head-to-head contact during head lice outbreaks
- We will also:
 - exercise sensitivity towards this issue, maintain student confidentiality and help reduce stigma (for example, provide a letter to all students involved in inspections, not just those found to have head lice)
 - maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising or blaming families who are finding it hard to control head lice
- The school may:
 - incorporate learning activities focused on prevention of head lice into the curriculum
 - encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or bullying associated with the issue
- Please refer also to the school's *Infectious Diseases Policy* and to other links on the DET website below.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-yearly review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late July 2020).

An operational policy

School Council Approval No Longer Required

The Principal may choose to table this policy with Council for noting

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/school/pal/head-lice>