

HEAD LICE POLICY



Rationale

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. 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 parents/guardians have primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, schools also have a role in the management of head lice infections and in providing support for parents/guardians and students. Diamond Creek Primary School believes that the safety and wellbeing of students is a community wide responsibility. It is a joint obligation of the school and parents/guardians.

Head lice continue to cause concern and frustration for some parents, teachers and children. This school policy is intended to outline roles, responsibilities and expectations of the school community to assist with treating and controlling head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner.

Aims

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.
- To ensure that parents/guardians are well informed about head lice and their treatment.
- To ensure effective processes for treating head lice are well known and consistently followed.
- To minimise anxiety by acknowledging that most schools will have some students with head lice at any given time.
- To provide an all-inclusive health approach, to ensure an appropriate and efficient solution to the problem of head lice.

Implementation

The school will:

- Distribute up-to-date information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians and staff at the beginning of every year and more frequently if required throughout the year in the school newsletter, particularly at times of heavy infestations. <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/>).
- Provide parents/guardians with comprehensive advice about the use of safe, recommended treatment practices which do not place students' health at risk
- send a general notification letter out to specific classrooms if infestation occurs in a specific grade a general notification letter will be sent out to that particular class. (It is not advocated that the Principal inform the whole school community each time head lice is detected. This could be onerous and may lead to complacency on behalf of the school community.)
- Provide a pro forma letter of notification to parents/guardians of those students found to have head lice, which incorporates a detachable slip at the bottom, asking parents/guardians to indicate the treatment used and when it commenced

- Request that parents/guardians refrain from sending their children to school with untreated head lice. (It should be noted that students may be treated one evening and return to school the next day and that the presence of eggs in the hair is not cause for exclusion.
- 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.
- There is no requirement in the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001 for a child treated for head lice to obtain a clearance certificate to be issued either by a general practitioner or a municipal council, on return to school.
- Inform parents/guardians that one treatment is not sufficient to manage the problem. If a student re-attends school with live head lice the school may again exclude the student until the live insects have been removed.)
- Only exclude children from school with live insects.
- Accept the advice of parents that appropriate treatment has commenced.
- Be aware of real difficulties some parents may have and seek extra support if required.
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community around issues of head lice.
- The school will provide a sympathetic attitude and practical advice to those parents experiencing difficulty with the control measures
- Suggest the following procedures for parents/guardians to adhere to:
 - Parents/guardians conduct regular (preferably once per week) inspection of their child/children's hair for lice or lice eggs (using conditioner and a head lice comb is the most effective method)
 - Parents/guardians conduct regular inspection of all household members followed by treatment if head lice are detected
 - Upon detection of head lice, notify the school and advise when treatment has commenced.
 - Tie their child's hair back if it is long
 - Treat head lice safely and as recommended.
 - Notify the parents or carers of their child's friends so they can check their children and treat if necessary.
 - Maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising or blaming families who are finding it hard to control head lice.
 - Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community around issues of head lice.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the policy review schedule.

Companion Documents:

Alert Notice for Parents

Action Taken Form

Treating and Controlling Head lice Pamphlet