

# **HEAD LICE POLICY**



## INTRODUCTION

Hampton Park Primary School has developed the following head lice policy in consultation with the parent association, teachers, the Community (School) Nurse and the Department of Health. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to managing head lice in the school community.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### The Parents' responsibilities are:

- to learn about head lice infestation and management by reading the Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#)
- to regularly check their child's hair for head lice infestation;
- to participate in whole school screening (unless making other arrangements)
- to treat their child's hair immediately if the child has head lice, using the advice in the [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#);
- to inform the school and other close contacts if their child has a head lice infestation, and to confirm that treatment of their child's hair has commenced.
- To be aware of and follow the school's head lice management policy

### The Community (School) Nurse's role is:

- to provide information, advice and education to parents and the school community about head lice management;
- to provide additional advice for families experiencing persistent head lice infestation;
- to provide additional education about head lice management to 'Head Lice Resource Parents' as requested.

### The School's responsibility is:

- to develop, implement and maintain a head lice management policy;
- to ensure that parents and staff are aware of the school's head lice policy, and that parents have access to the Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#) when their child is enrolled and on request.

## HOW HEAD LICE INFORMATION IS DISSEMINATED

The School takes the following steps to ensure that accurate up-to-date head lice treatment advice is provided to the school community:

### The Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#):

- is available to student upon enrolment;
- is sent home to the parents of a child with head lice, and to the parents of the other children in the same class, accompanied by an explanatory letter; and
- is regularly promoted in the school newsletter and through other appropriate channels.

## Other head lice education and management strategies:

- **Head Lice Coordinator**

The School has nominated a Head Lice Coordinator/s, [*Deputy Principal-Services, registrar and Nurse*] as the contact person for staff and parents for dealing with head lice issues. S/he is responsible for organising dissemination of head lice information, arranging head lice education and management activities, and following up head lice [Letters to Parents](#). Parents who require information, or who would like to become involved in supporting the school's Head Lice Management Program, should contact the Coordinator via the school office.

- **Head lice management information sessions**

Head lice information sessions are provided for staff and parents by the Community (School) Nurse to ensure the school community is well informed. Generally a presentation will be at a P&C meeting.

**OR:**

[Head Lice Management Information Sessions](#) are held several times each year by the Department of Health and may be attended by any interested parent or member of staff. Information on forthcoming dates is available from the school office or from the Department of Health on 9388 4999.

- **Whole school or class-by-class '[Synchronised Weekend Head Lice Checks](#)'**

Synchronised weekend head lice checks at home by parents are promoted when necessary. Information about this promotion is provided well in advance via the newsletter and a note home to parents. A short class head lice education session is also undertaken prior to the promotion weekend [*the Head Lice Coordinator should negotiate this with the class teacher, Resource Parent or Community (School) Nurse*].

- **Class Head Lice education**

Head lice information is included in class activities where appropriate, for example:

- personal development – how to identify head lice and comb them out;
- science - life cycle of the head louse;
- drama - short, humorous play.

For parents who have carefully followed the Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#) advice, but who have persistent difficulty in removing head lice, further advice is available from the Community (School) Nurse. The school office has contact details for the Community (School) Nurse. If the Community (School) Nurse is unavailable, parents may contact the Department of Health on 9388 4999 for assistance.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE?

The School undertakes the following steps to ensure that a clearly defined process is followed when a child is found to have head lice:

### Day 1:

- The student is given a brief, age-appropriate explanation about the head lice.
- A *Letter to Parents of a Child Found to have Head Lice* is sent home with the student at the end of the day [see [sample Letter](#)]. The *Letter* informs the parents that their child has head lice and advises them that, as required by the *School Education Act 1999*, the child must commence head lice treatment before returning to school. A copy of the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* [or, copy of '[How to check effectively for head lice](#)' is on the reverse of this letter.]
- If available, [translations of the Head Lice Fact Sheet](#) are provided to non-English speaking parents. Alternately, where appropriate, parents are advised by telephone. Interpreter services such as a telephone interpreter service are used if required. [Clarify and state here who is responsible for any interpreter costs incurred.]
- Parents of the other students in the class are sent an information letter on the same day, asking them to check their child's hair for head lice and advising them how to do this more effectively, using the Department of Health recommended hair conditioner method [see [sample 'Letter to Class Parents'](#)].

### Day 2:

- Once treatment has commenced, the parents of the child with head lice should send the child back to school with the completed *Confirmation of Treatment* tear-off section of the [Letter to Parents](#). Parents are reminded that treatment must be completed over the 10-day period, as recommended by the Department of Health.
- If the *Confirmation of Treatment* slip, or similar note, has not been returned then the class teacher informs the Head Lice Coordinator or delegate. The Coordinator contacts the parents to check that they have received the [Letter to Parents](#) and the [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#).
- The parents are reminded of their responsibility to the child and to the school community. The parents are advised that the child must not return to school until treatment has commenced. Parents must return a note to school with the child, or phone the Head Lice Coordinator, to confirm this.
- Where a student returns to school without evidence of treatment, the Principal or delegate will contact the parents and advise that the student is immediately excluded from school, until treatment has commenced and the school notified.

### Ongoing Procedures

- When a student continues attend school without treatment having commenced, the Head Lice Coordinator or delegate may ask the Community (School) Nurse, who represents the Department of Health in the school, to undertake phone contact or arrange a home visit with the parent [the Coordinator should consult with the Community Nurse or Resource Parent to arrange who is best able to do this]. The purpose of this is to help identify any undisclosed difficulty, and to assist and advise the parents with the head lice treatment.
- Home work maybe provided for the student, with teacher support where appropriate.

- Where a student continues to be absent from school without due reason, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Absenteeism Policy. Head Lice infestation is easily treated and is not a disease. Where all parent support and information has been provided, and there is no remaining barrier to treatment, failure to treat is not a valid reason for absence from school

**In the last resort only** – where considered appropriate by the Principal and Community (School) Nurse, the family may be referred to the Department of Child Protection, e.g. where a child is experiencing ongoing psychological distress, or if infected sores result from untreated head lice infestation and the sores remain untreated. Informing parents of this decision prior to referral is at the discretion of the Principal.

## **ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:**

### **Hairstyles**

- Students with long hair must wear it tied back, braided and/or pinned
- Wearing of cotton bandanas/headgear in school colours may be permitted, at the discretion of the school principal and parent, as a short term [*e.g. two weeks*] management measure where there have been several students found to have head lice in the same class.

### **Recommended treatments**

- The School advises parents to read the Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#), available free from the school office. The 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment is the Department's preferred treatment. However, parents who wish to use insecticide treatment should do so according to the instructions in the *Head Lice Fact Sheet*, as labelling on some head lice products may be unclear or even inaccurate.

### **Checking hair for head lice**

- **Class or whole school 'head checks'**

School staff, Head Lice Resource Parents and the Community (School) Nurse **do not routinely** undertake class head checks for head lice, as this is not an efficient or effective strategy for head lice control. Head lice can move at up to 30 cm per minute. They move rapidly away from searching hands and so an infestation can easily be missed. Most children do not have head lice, so valuable class time is wasted checking such children unnecessarily. In addition, it is the responsibility of individual parents to check their own child's hair for head lice. Screening for head lice is most effectively undertaken by parents combing their child's hair using hair conditioner to slow down the head lice, together with a metal 'nit' comb, as described in the Department of Health's [Head Lice Fact Sheet](#) [*or see [How to check hair effectively for head lice](#)*].

- **Checking a student who is believed to have head lice:**

In the case of an individual student, any school staff member may examine a student's hair where there is reason to believe a student may have head lice, i.e. where eggs (nits) or crawling head lice have been sighted or where a child is scratching the head excessively. Staff then send the student to the office for the sightings to be confirmed by Head Lice Co-ordinators. The [School Education Act 1999](#) authorises the school principal or a delegate to do this.

To ensure competency, the staff members have received education in identifying active head lice infestation from the Department of Health or the Community (School) Nurse.

Staff are aware that a 'dry' head check may be unreliable. If, on inspection, no signs of infestation are seen, the parent is nevertheless informed and is asked to check using hair conditioner. A [Letter to Parents](#) is sent home to inform parents.

### **Exclusion of a student from school**

- Under the *School Education Act 1999*, students found to have head lice may be excluded from school at the discretion of the Principal or delegate until treatment has begun and all live head lice are being removed, in accordance with the Department of Health treatment advice. In practice, this means students can return to school the morning after treatment has commenced, **provided that** effective treatment is completed consistently over the following 10 days. A few remaining eggs are not a reason for exclusion..
- Students found to have head lice will normally be excluded **at the end of the school day**, however parents will be contacted immediately where possible, except in circumstances described above, or at the discretion of the Principal or delegate.

*Thank you for taking the time to read the school's Head Lice Management Policy. We hope you will find it informative and helpful. Compliance with the Policy helps the whole school community to keep head lice infestation under control and so minimise inconvenience, expense and distress for parents and students.*

*Thank you*

*Paul Neates*

*Principal*

For further information about head lice, go to

[www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice)

or [www.hamptonparkps.det.wa.edu.au](http://www.hamptonparkps.det.wa.edu.au)