



HEAD LICE POLICY

January 2016

Rationale

Whaley Bridge Primary School is aware of the national problem of head lice and how it can sometimes affect children of a primary school age at home and in school.

This policy attempts to set out the duties and responsibilities of parents, the school and the Health Authorities in dealing with head lice. It sets out what school can and cannot do legally as well as providing some practical advice as to how to tackle head lice.

The Health Protection Agency advises:

Head lice is not primarily a problem of the schools but of the wider community. It cannot be solved by school, the school can help the local community to deal with it. Head lice are only transmitted by direct, prolonged, head-to-head contact. Transmission of lice within the classroom is relatively rare. When it does occur, it is usually from a "best friend". Head lice will not be eradicated in the foreseeable future, but a sensible, informed approach, based on fact not mythology, will help to limit the problem.

At any one time, most schools will have children who have active infection with head lice. This is often between 0% and 5%, rarely more. The perception by parents and staff, however, is often that there is a serious "outbreak" with many of the children infected. This is hardly ever the case. The "outbreak" is often an outbreak of agitation and alarm, not of louse infection; a societal problem not a public health problem.

As with any other health-related problem detecting head lice is the responsibility of parents/carers. Schools are to provide consistent information and advice to parents/carers.

Parent's/Carers/Guardians Duties

As the carer of a child you should;

- Undertake regular weekly and where appropriate daily checks to ensure that your child/family is not affected. This should be done with a detector comb as noted in the advice section. All family members should be checked.
- Inform all contacts of the family / friends who may have come in to head to head contact for a minute or more in the last month
- Seek advice from a medical practitioner (Pharmacist/ Health Visitor/ Doctor about using an approved lotion and treat using this method in the recommended way.

School will undertake to:

- Have a written protocol on the management of the head lice problem, based on advice. (Please refer to "Head lice information sheet for parents and carers.")
- Maintain a visual check on pupils.
- Contact parents/carers if head lice are identified in their child
- Keep individual cases confidential.
- Send out information on an annual basis, preferably as part of a package dealing with other issues.
- Alert parents (class/year group) via a text/ letter/email if an "outbreak" is noted.
- Encourage parents to seek advice from the School Nursing Service if they find Head lice to be a problem.

School cannot:

- Send out an "alert letter" to other parents.

The school by law cannot:

- Carry out physical checks on pupils for head lice.
- Tell parents to keep children away from school because of head lice.
- Exclude a child from school because of head lice.

Advice

So what should I do? The only thing that really gets rid of head lice is good old fashioned elbow grease.

- Buy a nit comb (they are available on prescription too)
- Buy the biggest bottle of the cheapest hair conditioner you can find and use the wet combing method.

What is the Wet Combing Method?

This method is very safe. It is cheap and works well. All you need is your large bottle of hair conditioner, a nit comb and some time and patience.

(It is best to ask someone to help you.)

- Wash the hair with your usual shampoo
- While the hair is wet, apply plenty of hair conditioner
- Comb the hair using a fine nit comb.
- Comb from the roots upwards
- Check the comb for lice and clear them away after each sweep
- Comb all your hair, a little at a time, carefully
- Repeat this every 3 days for 2 weeks to get rid of any newly hatched lice.

With a little time and effort you can get rid of head lice safely, cheaply and without using any chemicals.

For more detailed advice and information you may wish to visit the following website:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Myths:

Myth 1

- Nits prefer clean hair
- They are not bothered. Clean, dirty it's all the same to them! It's the hair and the scalp they go for, not the state it's in.

Myth 2

- Nit nurses would reduce the problem
- They did not make any difference!
- The head lice population was unaffected by the careers of hundreds of Nitty Noras.

Myth 3

- This is the nit season
- There is no nit season. Head lice like the warmth of the human head and there is not much change to scalp temperature between summer and winter. They are a year round phenomenon.

Myth 4

- Adults do not get nits
- There is a bit of a truth behind this one. Head lice are less common in adults than children and more common in primary school than secondary school children but adults do get lice, as many teachers and parents can testify.

Myth 5

- Nits make your head itchy
- Not always! Some people have nits but no itchiness – some children who have a long term nit problem seem to become almost immune to the sensation of itching.

Head lice information sheet for parents and carers.

Only you can stop the spread!

What are Head Lice?

- Head lice are small, six-legged wingless insects that live on the hair close to the scalp where it is warm and easy for them to feed.
- They are pin-head size when they hatch, less than match-head size when fully grown and are difficult to see in the hair.
- The eggs are glued individually to hairs near the scalp. Un-hatched eggs are dull in colour and hard to see, but after the lice have hatched the empty egg sacs – called ‘nits’ – are white and easy to see.
- Many people mistake the empty egg sacs or nits for head lice when they are actually evidence of a previous infection of head lice.
- Head lice are easily missed in dry hair and do not necessarily cause itching.
- There are often only 10 lice or less on a head.
- Head lice can't fly, jump or swim. They spread from person to person by climbing swiftly along hairs during close head to head contact.
- Head lice are not fussy about hair length or condition – clean hair is no protection.
- Head lice are not harmful.
- Head lice infection is common. Anyone with hair can get them, but children, who put their heads together a lot, tend to get them more often.



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Head lice myth buster				
Myth or truth	 State of hair	 Length of hair	 Spread of lice	 Itchy scalp?
Myth	Prefer clean hair	Prefer long hair	Jump and can spread via clothes/towels	Always means itchy scalp
Truth	Infect both clean and dirty hair	Infect all lengths and types of hair	Walk from head to head	Only itches if allergic to bites/faeces

Top tips and other useful information:

- Anti-lice treatments do **not** prevent infestation. Thorough daily hair brushing or combing may help to prevent an infestation becoming established, but early diagnosis and treatment is the only way to prevent the spread of head lice.
- Check pillows and collars for little black specks as they may be lice droppings.
- Check your child's hair at least once a week using a fine toothed detection comb.
- If you do find **live lice** – check the whole household and close family contacts using the detector comb so that those with lice are all treated at the same time.
- **Those who do not have live lice should NOT be treated.**
- If the infected person has been swimming within the last 72 hours, ensure hair has been thoroughly washed and dried before the lotion is applied. Lotions are less effective in the presence of chlorine.
- If you have any concerns, as with any health issue, please contact your child's GP, Pharmacist, Nurse or Health Visitor.

