

# Head Lice Policy

North Melbourne Primary School

Issue Date: June 2020

Review Date: June 2024



# HEAD LICE POLICY

## PURPOSE

To ensure that North Melbourne Primary School provides appropriate support to students in the control, prevention and treatment of head lice through:

- excluding infected students from school until the day after treatment has commenced
- providing support to families who have a child suspected of having head lice and ensuring they have the correct information and resources to treat the problem

Note: Primary responsibility for the control of infectious diseases, including head lice, lies with individuals, families and public health experts. While parents have the main responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, schools can assist with controlling and preventing the spread of head lice in a consistent and coordinated manner.

## OBJECTIVE

To explain to parents, carers, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to support students who have head lice. The following advice is provided to help prevent the spread and control transmission of head lice in schools.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all staff, including casual relief staff and volunteers
- all students, including their parents/carers

## POLICY

This policy should be read with North Melbourne Primary School's *Infectious Diseases* and *Health Care Needs* policies.

### Control of Head Lice in schools

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.

The following outlines the actions schools are required to implement to control the transmission of head lice.

### Exclusion from school

When a student is identified with live head lice, North Melbourne Primary School will:

- phone parents/carers immediately to inform them of the potential discovery of head lice in their child's hair - depending on the case, the child may need to be collected from school to begin treatment
- If the child does remain at school, at the end of the school day North Melbourne Primary School will provide the student with a note to take home to inform their parent/carer that their child may have head lice. The student can return to school once treatment has commenced (i.e. most likely the next day).

- exclude the student from school until after treatment has commenced, as set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, School Exclusion Table, see: [School Exclusion Table](#)

Note 1: 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.

Principals must:

- alert parents/carers of an infestation, particularly the parents of other students in the same class as the affected child/children
- use discretion to avoid identifying individuals when informing the school community about an infestation.

Note: The Department of Health and Human Services indicates at any one time there are likely to be cases of head lice in most schools, 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/guardian consent
  - are made by people authorised by the principal, e.g. classroom teachers.
- head lice inspections involving the physical examination of a student:
  - are made by people authorised by the principal council e.g. school nurse, teacher
  - require written parental consent, usually obtained at enrolment

Parent consent:

- should be obtained prior to commencing any physical examination of a student
- should be provided to parents/carers for completion as part of enrolment
- must be updated when guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student
- must be updated parents/carers no longer wish to consent to inspections

### **Prevention of head lice in schools**

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

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

### **Parent/carer detection and treatment responsibilities**

Parents and 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
  - when treatment commenced

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

All specific head lice questions and information should be directed to our school nurse.

- Related North Melbourne Primary School Policies (available on the school website):
  - Infectious Diseases
  - Health Care Needs
- Resources:
  - Department of Health and Human Services: [Scratching for Answers](#)
  - Better Health Channel: [Head Lice \(nits\)](#)

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

This policy was last updated in June 2020 and is scheduled for review in June 2024.