

[NAME OF SCHOOL]

Parent-managed head lice program

HEAD LICE SCHOOL POLICY

Note: This policy is a sample only that incorporates recommended practices. Please read it to ensure it is appropriate to your needs and make any amendments and additions as required. Delete this paragraph from your customised version.

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.

Whilst parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice our school community will work in a cooperative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

This school policy draws on information obtained from the Information Pamphlet and Management Guidelines 'Scratching for Answers?'.¹

It is the expectation of parents/carers and families attending this school that:

- Children's hair will be checked for head lice on a weekly basis, at home, using the recommended conditioner/combing detection method
- That your child does not attend school with untreated head lice (in accordance with Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 2001)
- Regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary
- Parents/carers will notify the school if their child is found to have live lice and advise when appropriate treatment was commenced (in accordance with Health Infectious Disease Regulations 2001)
- Children with long hair will attend school with hair tied back
- Use only safe and recommended practices to treat head lice
- Notify the parents or carers of your child's friends so they have an early opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary
- Maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of head lice
- Sign an agreement accepting the terms of the School Head Lice Policy.

To support parents/carers and the broader school community to achieve a consistent, collaborative approach to head lice management the school will undertake to:

- Distribute up to date and accurate information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents and staff at the beginning of the year or more frequently if required

¹ www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice

- Include information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff attending the school;
- Include information and updates in school newsletters
- Include annual head lice updates for staff in-service programs
- Provide practical advice and maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising/blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures
- Access community educational resources and support, such as primary school nurses, community health centres and local government
- Abide by the recommendations of the School Exclusion Policy of the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001 in that the responsibility to exclude a child from the school rests with the principal or person in charge, and
- Only exclude children from school with live insects
- Accept the advice of parents that appropriate treatment has commenced;
- Encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or 'bullying' associated with the issue
- Request that all families attending this school sign an 'agreement' to accept the conditions of the school's head lice policy
- Be aware of real difficulties some parents may encounter and seek extra support if required
- Participate in a Head Lice Local Area Network to work with other schools, childcare centres, health services and pharmacists in our Local Government Area to achieve consistent management and policy across sectors
- Review the head lice policy annually and seek endorsement from the School Council/community
- Act responsibly and respectfully when dealing with members of the school and broader community especially around issues of Head lice
- Continue to seek opportunities to increase our collective understanding of and response to managing head lice.

There is no requirement for any school to undertake 'head-lice inspection' programs however those that do, need to consider the following as additions to a school head lice policy:

- Ensure that any person employed by the school, or volunteering, to undertake 'head lice inspections' will adhere to the school policy and latest Department of Human Services information and Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001
- Only inspect the heads of children whose parents have given prior consent
- Develop a generic/blanket consent form which parents sign at commencement of school year
- Respect the wishes of parents/families who elect not to participate in a school head lice check
- To help reduce the stigma and maintain confidentiality when conducting head lice inspections a letter should be given to all the children involved;
- Include teachers and school staff in inspection.