



**St Mary's Catholic Primary  
School  
Head Lice Policy March 2021/2023**

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**Statement of intent**

Head lice are a common problem among school-aged children and can be very distressing to experience, not only due to the physical implications, but also because of the negative social response associated with head lice.

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils at St Mary’s Catholic Primary School. For this reason, all staff members, pupils and parents should act in accordance with this policy in relation to the identification, treatment and prevention of head lice, in order to reduce the risk of potential infestations spreading.

This policy aims to minimise the social stigma associated with head lice infestations, whilst ensuring staff members and parents are aware of the actions to take when head lice are present within the school.

Signed by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Principal Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Academy Committee Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **1. Legal framework**

- 1.1. This policy has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
  - Public Health England (2017) 'Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities'
- 1.2. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies and documents:
  - Health and Safety Handbook
  - Behaviour Policy
  - Anti-Bullying Policy
  - Attendance Policy

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. Head lice are small, six-legged and wingless insects which live on, and close to, the scalp at the base of hair, often causing itching; however, itching may not always be present.
- 2.2. When head lice hatch, small, empty white shells are left behind – these are called nits. If an individual has nits, it does not necessarily mean that live head lice are present, but appropriate treatment should still be sought.
- 2.3. Head lice and nits are not harmful, but can be an extremely distressing experience for both pupil and parent, as well as for school employees.
- 2.4. For the purpose of this policy, the term 'outbreak' is used to describe where there are more than two cases of head lice present at the school at the same time.

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

- 3.1. The principal is responsible for:
  - Making staff members aware of this policy.
  - Implementing this policy throughout the school.
  - Ensuring that all staff members understand their responsibilities in relation to individuals' privacy.
  - At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, this role is appointed to the school nurse.
  - Collaborating with the school nurse when providing pupils and parents with advice regarding the identification and treatment of head lice.
  - Ensuring that pupils with head lice are not excluded from activities or made to feel victimised.

3.2. The school nurse is responsible for:

- Acting as the designated person to address head lice queries and concerns.
- Being aware of head lice signs, symptoms, causes and incubation periods.
- Remaining informed and up-to-date regarding the identification, treatment and prevention of head lice.
- Providing pupils and parents with advice regarding head lice.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of pupils and families involved in cases of head lice infestation.

3.3. All staff members are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this policy.
- Being aware of head lice signs and symptoms.
- Providing parents with advice on the prevention and detection of head lice, or directing them to the school nurse or GP, as necessary.
- Creating an inclusive environment at all times in which pupils with head lice are not subject to prejudice or discriminated against.
- Maintaining a visual check of pupils for head lice.
- Reporting concerns and directing queries about head lice to the school nurse.

3.4. Parents are responsible for:

- Being aware of head lice signs and symptoms.
- Ensuring that their child maintains a sufficient level of hygiene, grooming and hair care.
- Identifying cases of head lice and notifying the school of these immediately.
- Responding to and actively addressing concerns about their child pertaining to the presence, or potential presence, of head lice.
- Undertaking all preventative measures advised by the school nurse.
- Carrying out wet combing on a weekly basis.
- Treating their child for head lice as soon as they have been diagnosed.

## **4. Identified cases**

4.1. Parents are primarily responsible for identifying, reporting and treating their child's head lice.

4.2. If staff members notice head lice in an individual pupil's hair, they will privately inform the parent, advising them to treat their child's hair, and will notify the school nurse of the matter.

4.3. If staff members notice head lice in numerous pupils' hair, or a particular group of pupils, they will report the matter to the school nurse, who will then liaise with the school to notify the necessary parties.

4.4. Where more than two pupils have been identified as having head lice at the same time, a letter (as demonstrated in the [Appendix](#)) will be sent home to all parents notifying them that an outbreak of head lice has been reported and asking all parents to check their child's hair.

- 4.5. The names of the pupils involved in an outbreak of head lice will not be disclosed.
- 4.6. Pupils with head lice are expected to still attend school. Where a pupil does not attend school due to head lice, they will be registered as having an unauthorised absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy.
- 4.7. Unacceptable behaviour, such as name calling, towards pupils or families of pupils with head lice will not be tolerated. Where exclusive behaviour is present, pupils will be disciplined in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **5. Prevention**

- 5.1. The school recognises that, whilst head lice cannot be prevented, measures can be taken in order to aid early detection and reduce the risk of lice spreading, such as daily hair brushing and grooming.
- 5.2. Pupils and parents will be provided with information regarding the prevention of head lice, explaining what they can do at home to reduce the risk of an outbreak.
- 5.3. All staff members will be aware of the risk posed by head lice and will be capable of providing advice to parents regarding the identification and treatment of head lice. Where staff members experience difficulty answering a parent's query, they should consult the school nurse.
- 5.4. Pupils will be discouraged from sharing personal items such as combs, hats and scarves.
- 5.5. Where lice or nits are present, personal items like hats and scarves will be kept separate to the belongings of pupils where lice and nits are not present.
- 5.6. Pupils will be encouraged to tie long hair back, particularly where lice or nits are present.
- 5.7. Parents are expected to ensure that their child maintains a sufficient level of cleanliness and hygiene, including the brushing and grooming of hair.
- 5.8. Staff members, including the school nurse, will not inspect pupils' hair for lice, but will report it to the pupil's parents as soon as practically possible.
- 5.9. It is the responsibility of parents to inspect their child's hair for lice as described in section six of this policy.
- 5.10. Parents will be discouraged from using treatments, such as those containing insecticides, as a preventative measure, advising parents that this will hinder treating lice in the future. Instead, parents will be encouraged to 'wet comb', also known as 'detection comb', their child's hair on a weekly basis.
- 5.11. The school nurse will organise parents' evenings during which wet combing will be taught and combs provided.

## 6. Transmission

- 6.1. It is recognised that head lice are contagious and can be contracted by direct head-to-head contact, and thus are a higher risk amongst younger pupils due to their increased bodily contact; therefore, all possible precautions, as outlined in section five, to help reduce the risk of transmission of head lice within the school will be taken.
- 6.2. Where a child is identified as having head lice, the parent is responsible for ensuring that all members of the family are checked and, if necessary, treated.
- 6.3. Regular checks will be carried out following treatment, helping to prevent further infestation and transmission.
- 6.4. To help parents identify cases of head lice, the school will provide information about what to look out for, as well as dispelling any myths regarding transmission, such as that they can fly or that only unhygienic people get them.
- 6.5. The school will provide parents with useful contacts where additional information can be accessed.
- 6.6. Affected families will be reassured that having head lice is nothing to be ashamed of.

## 7. Treatment

- 7.1. When asked for advice regarding treatment, staff members will not endorse one particular brand of treatment and will instead direct the individual to their GP or pharmacist.
- 7.2. Parents will be provided with information pertaining to head lice treatment, including insecticide lotions, non-insecticidal lotions and wet combing.
- 7.3. The school nurse will provide advice regarding the correct use of insecticide treatments, such as only using it to treat active infestations, but will advise that a health professional is consulted in the following cases:
  - Treatment of asthmatics or sufferers of allergies
  - Treatment of pregnant or breastfeeding women
  - Treatment of children under six months
- 7.4. Where parents have concerns regarding the use of chemicals, the school nurse will suggest wet combing instead.
- 7.5. Parents are responsible for sourcing and applying the treatment for their child.
- 7.6. Treatment will not be provided by, or within, the school.
- 7.7. The school will not recommend the use of essential oils and electronic combs to treat head lice.

- 7.8. Where treatment has been unsuccessful and live lice are still present, parents will seek medical advice about further treatment, ensuring that wet combing is still effectively undertaken every three days.
- 7.9. Re-infestation of head lice will be indicated if full-sized adult lice are found whilst wet combing up to seven days after treatment. Where this is the case, parents will seek medical advice regarding the necessary treatment.

## **8. Monitoring and review**

- 8.1. This policy is reviewed every two years by the principal and school nurse.
- 8.2. The next scheduled review date for this policy is March 2023.



# Letter to parents about the presence of head lice

## RE: Detection, treatment and prevention of head lice

Dear parents,

It has come to our attention that there are currently more than two cases of head lice at St Mary's Catholic Primary School

We would like to take this opportunity to ensure that all parents are aware of the school's policy and procedures in relation to such an incident, including the responsibilities of parents in relation to the prevention and management of head lice infestations.

Head lice are a common problem in school-aged children and, whilst they can't be prevented, there are steps which can be taken to reduce the likelihood of them spreading.

We urge parents to undertake weekly checks of their children's hair and scalp using the 'wet combing' method. This method involves the following actions:

1. Washing the hair and applying conditioner
2. Combing hair through with a wide toothed comb to remove tangles
3. Taking a section at a time, pulling the detection comb through the hair, making sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots and draw down to the ends of the hair with every stroke
4. Checking the comb for lice after each section of hair is combed
5. Checking all family members at the same time
6. Treating all infected family members (those in whom live lice are found)
7. Repeating the process after completion of treatment to ensure that it has been effective

Where nits or head lice are identified, it is vital that the school is notified straight away and treatment is immediately sought from the GP or local pharmacist. It should be noted that, head lice treatment should not be used as a preventative measure and only where live head lice are present.

Pupils should **not** be absent from school due to head lice and are expected to attend school whilst undergoing treatment for such infestations. More information regarding the expectations of pupils, parents and staff members in relation to head lice, our Head Lice Policy can be viewed on the school website.

To discuss the information provided within this letter, or to raise a concern, please contact **name of staff member**.

Kind regards,