



Rostrata Primary School

HEAD LICE POLICY

Rostrata Primary School has developed the following head lice policy in consultation with the parent body, Community (School) Nurse and the Department of Health. The aim of this policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to head lice management for the school community.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The parent's responsibility is:

- To learn about head lice infestation and management by reading the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet.
- 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 contacts) if their child has a head lice infestation and to confirm that treatment has commenced.
- To understand and to follow the school's head lice policy.
- To check their child's hair for head lice infestation regularly.

To 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 assistance for families experiencing persistent head lice infestation.
- To provide additional education about head lice management to volunteer 'Resource Parents' as requested.

The School's role is:

- To develop, implement and maintain a current head lice management policy.
- To ensure that all parents and staff are aware of the school's head lice policy and that they are provided with a copy of the Department of Health Head Lice Fact Sheet at enrolment and on request.

HOW HEAD LICE INFORMATION WILL BE DISSEMINATED

The school will undertake the following steps to ensure dissemination of accurate up-to-date head lice treatment advice within the school community.

The Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet will be:

- Included in the enrolment package.
- Displayed in the notice board in the School Office waiting area, with copies provided for parents to take.
- Sent home to parents of a child with head lice and to the parents of children in the same class.
- Promoted in a permanent 'box' advertisement in the fortnightly school newsletter and by other advertising means as available.

Other head lice education strategies:

- Head lice information will be included in class activities where appropriate e.g, personal development (identify head lice and how to comb out), science (life cycle of the head lice) and drama (short humorous playlet).
- Head lice management education sessions will be provided at least annually by the Community (School) Nurse for staff, parents and P&C members, to ensure the school community are well-informed and can provide consistent, accurate up-to-date information to parents.

Parents who need further advice or who experience difficulty with treatment may be referred to the Community (School) Nurse for assistance.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE

The school will undertake the following steps to ensure a clearly defined process is followed when a child is found to have head lice:

Day 1:

- Where a student at school is found to have head lice the student will be given a brief age-appropriate explanation about the head lice.
- A 'Letter to Parents' will be sent home with the child *at the end of the day*. The letter will inform the parents that their child has head lice and advise that the child must commence head lice treatment before returning to school. A copy of the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact sheet will be enclosed with the parent letter.
- Foreign language translations of the Head Lice Fact sheet will be provided where necessary and if available. Alternatively, where appropriate, parents will be advised by telephone. Interpreter services such as a telephone interpreter service will be used if required. *Clarify who is responsible for any interpreter costs incurred.*
- Parents of other students in the class will receive a letter on the same day asking them to check their child's hair for head lice and advising how to do this more effectively using the hair conditioner method for detection of lice.

Day 2:

- Once treatment has commenced, the parent should send the child back to school with the completed 'Confirmation of Treatment' tear-off section of the letter.
- If the tear-off section of the *Letter to Parents*, or similar note, is not returned and the child is not able to confirm that treatment has commenced, the Principal or delegate will contact the parent to check that they have received the *Letter and the Head Lice Fact Sheet*.
- If the parent has no particular difficulty, a clear reminder will be given to the parent regarding their responsibility to the child and the school community. The parent will be advised that the child should not return to school until treatment has begun and a note is returned with the child to confirm this.

Day 3:

- Where a child again returns to school without treatment commenced, the Principal or delegate may ask the Community (School) Nurse, who represents the Department of Health in the school, to undertake phone contact or a home visit. The purpose of this is to help identify any undisclosed difficulty and to assist and advise the parents with the head lice treatment. *For example, the Nurse may be able to further explain the treatments, or assist the family in identifying an extended family member who can help with the Nurse any issues they may not wish of may feel embarrassed to discuss with the School staff, such as literacy difficulty or financial problems.*

Day 4:

- Where a child yet again returns to school without evidence of treatment, the Principal or delegate will contact the parent and advise that the child is excluded from school until treatment has commenced. The parents will again be offered assistance from the Community (School) Nurse.
- Homework will be provided for the child, with teacher phone support where appropriate.

Day 5 - ongoing:

- Where a child 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. Once treatment has commenced, it 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 Community Development, 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.

NOTE: **The school must establish and here describe clear criteria for referral to DCD (Department of Community Development).**

ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:

- Under the Education Act 2000, students found to have head lice may be excluded from school at the discretion of the Principal 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.
- The school advises that parents should use the Department of Health's recommended treatment as described in the Head Lice Fact Sheet.
- Students found to have head lice will normally be excluded **at the end of the school day**, and not earlier, except in circumstances described above in Steps 1 – 6.

- The school staff or Community (School) Nurse do not undertake class head checks for head lice, as this is not an efficient or effective strategy for head lice control. Head lice 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. Also, checking their child's hair for head lice is primarily the responsibility of each parent. Screening for head lice is most effectively undertaken by parents combing their child's hair using hair conditioner and a metal 'nit' comb, as described in the Department of health's Head Lice Fact Sheet.
- The School Principal will nominate 2-3 school staff members who may examine a student's hair **only where there is reason to believe the child 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.** To ensure competency, the nominated staff members will receive education and training in identifying active head lice infestation from the Community (School) Nurse. *(The Principal should approach the Community (School) Nurse to request and education session.)*