
Westgarth Primary School is a community of students, staff, friends and family working together to create a diverse, engaging and respectful learning environment.

Rationale

- Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. Probably between 2-3% of primary school children are infested at any one time. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are a cause of head itch and scratching, which may lead to infection and swollen lymph glands; therefore, they need to be controlled.
- Anyone can catch head lice. Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact. Research indicates they do not spread through sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and hats.

Aims

- To minimise outbreaks of head lice
- To create and maintain well-informed communities confident in their ability to manage head lice.
- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively with a systematic community approach
- To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known, documented and consistently followed
- Procedures involving head lice incidents will be conducted in a sensitive manner with respect for the privacy and emotional wellbeing of students and their families

Implementation

Evidence shows that we cannot eradicate head lice but we can reduce the number of cases if all school community members work together in a coordinated manner. In this school community there is a commitment to do this in the following ways:

Parents/Carers:

- Will ensure their child/ren do not/does not attend school with untreated head lice
- Will commence immediately appropriate treatment (conditioner and combing or a recommended head lice product/service) when eggs or live lice are found
- Regularly inspect their child's hair to look for lice or lice eggs. (Using conditioner and head lice comb is the easiest and most effective way to do this). See Department of Health pamphlet attached

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- Regularly inspect all members of the family and then treat them if necessary
 - Advise the school if their child is affected, and when the treatment was commenced.

Westgarth P.S. will be responsible for:

- The distribution of policies and accurate, up-to-date 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 through the school newsletter.

Providing support for parents through:

- Practical advice and a sensitive manner in respect to the family's privacy and supporting families who may be experiencing difficulty with the control measures
- Encouraging parents to continue to regularly check their child for head lice
- Include information about head lice management in orientation and transition programs for new families/staff attending the school
- Educating all staff/students at the school about head lice management so as to help remove any stigma associated with the issue
- Treating all families with respect and dignity and accept parents assurances that treatment has commenced.

Communicating with parents:

- The parent/carer will be informed if their child has live lice.
- The parent/carer will be encouraged to pick up the child so that treatment can start immediately.
- If the parents/carers choose not to or are unable to pick up their child from school then the child remains in the class and the teacher implements classroom organisation and teaching programs that minimise head to head contact.
- An individual letter will be sent home with the child with live head lice to inform the parents/carers that the child will be excluded from attending school until treatment has commenced. See attached letter.
- It is important to note that at all times the child is dealt with sensitively and not discriminated against in any way.
- Being aware that the exclusion of children from school with head lice refers only to those children who have live lice and does not refer to head lice eggs.

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- If a child continues to have outbreaks of head lice, the parents will be contacted and the school will provide as much assistance as possible to help the family treat the head lice effectively.
 - The principal will also provide parents of children found to have live lice with information about head lice treatment and prevention.
 - The responsibility to exclude a student with live head lice rest with the principal.
 - According to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, children with head lice can be readmitted to school or children’s service centres after treatment has commenced. The department recommends a child with head lice can be treated one evening and return to school or children’s service centres the next day, even if there are still some eggs present. There is no need to miss school or child care because of head lice

Treatment: Refer to supporting document – Department of Health – Treating and controlling head lice

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four-year review cycle.

Related Documents: Head Lice – Individual Notice
Head Lice – Grade Notice

References: Treating and controlling head lice Victorian Department of Health.
Head Lice Management Guidelines Department of Health.

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