



# Head Lice Policy

Review: **July 2022**

## 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 all of our pupils at **Richardson Dees 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.

## 1. Definitions

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. When head lice hatch, small, empty white shells are left behind – these are called ‘nits’. If an individual has these, it does not necessarily mean that *live* head lice are present, but appropriate treatment should still be sought.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

- 2.1. The **headteacher** 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.
  - Collaborating with the appropriate agencies 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.

2.2. 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 pharmacy 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 headteacher.

2.3. 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.
- Carrying out wet combing on a **weekly** basis.
- Treating their child for head lice as soon as they have been diagnosed.

### 3. Identified cases

- 3.1. Parents are primarily responsible for identifying, reporting and treating their child's head lice.
- 3.2. 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 office** of the matter.
- 3.3. If staff members notice head lice in numerous pupils' hair, or a particular group of pupils, they will report the matter to the **school office**, who will then be responsible for notifying the necessary parties.
- 3.4. Where **more than two** pupils have been identified as having head lice at the same time, a letter (as demonstrated in [Appendix 1](#)) 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.
- 3.5. The names of the pupils involved in an outbreak of head lice will not be disclosed.
- 3.6. Parents will be reminded about the importance of early identification and their responsibilities in relation to detection on a termly basis via newsletters, emails and the school website, where appropriate.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. Unacceptable behaviour, such as name calling, towards pupils or families of pupils with head lice will not be tolerated.

### 4. Prevention

- 4.1. 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.

- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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 **headteacher**.
- 4.4. Pupils will be discouraged from sharing personal items such as combs, hats and scarves.
- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. Pupils will be encouraged to tie long hair back, particularly where lice or nits are present.
- 4.7. Parents are expected to ensure that their child maintains a sufficient level of cleanliness and hygiene, including the brushing and grooming of hair.
- 4.8. Staff members **will not** inspect pupils' hair for lice, but will report it to the pupil's parents as soon as practically possible.
- 4.9. It is the responsibility of parents to inspect their child's hair for lice as described in [section six](#) of this policy.
- 4.10. 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. Transmission

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. Regular checks will be carried out following treatment, helping to prevent further infestation and transmission.
- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. The school will provide parents with useful contacts where additional information can be accessed.
- 5.6. Affected families will be reassured that having head lice is nothing to be ashamed of.

## 6. Treatment

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. Parents will be provided with information pertaining to head lice treatment, including insecticide lotions, non-insecticidal lotions and wet combing.
- 6.3. A health professional should be consulted in the following cases:

- Treatment of asthmatics or sufferers of allergies
- Treatment of pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Treatment of children under six months

- 6.4. Where parents have concerns regarding the use of chemicals, **Richardson Dees Primary School** would suggest wet combing instead.
- 6.5. Parents are responsible for sourcing and applying the treatment for their child.
- 6.6. Treatment will not be provided by, or within, the school.
- 6.7. The school will not recommend the use of essential oils and electronic combs to treat head lice.
- 6.8. 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.
- 6.9. 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.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Standard letter to be sent to all parents and carers.**

Date

# **LETTER REGARDING HEAD LICE**

Dear Parents and Carers,

There have been some incidences of head lice in school.

Please help to prevent any further head lice circulating by checking your child's hair thoroughly. If all cases are identified and treated successfully at the time there will be fewer opportunities for lice to circulate amongst children and their families - prevention is better than the cure!

Head lice are well camouflaged and hide when disturbed by combing. They do not always cause itching, particularly when recently arrived on the head. They may also be few in number and quick inspection is unlikely to detect them.

Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but spread by climbing from head to head. Anyone can catch them, but children, who have head to head contact, either at school or during play, are most commonly affected. They are not fussy about hair length or condition. Clean hair is no protection, although regular hair washing and combing sessions offer a good opportunity to detect head lice and arrange treatment if discovered.

Mr W Myers