

Coorow Primary School

Head Lice Policy

2023 -2025



At our school, EVERY student counts EVERY day.



INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to managing head lice in the school community.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Parents' responsibilities are:

- to learn about head lice infestation and management by reading the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet*(available on request from the school office)
- to regularly check their child's hair for head lice infestation;
- 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 close contacts if their child has a head lice infestation, and to confirm that treatment of their child's hair has commenced.
- to be aware of and follow the school's head lice management policy

The 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 advice for families experiencing persistent head lice infestation;

The School's responsibility is:

- to develop, implement and maintain a head lice management policy;
- to ensure that parents and staff are aware of the school's head lice policy, and that parents are provided with a copy of the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet*.

HOW HEAD LICE INFORMATION IS DISSEMINATED

The School takes the following steps to ensure that accurate up-to-date head lice treatment advice is provided to the school community:

The Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet*:

- is displayed in the school office waiting area, with extra copies available for parents
- is sent home to the parents of a child with head lice, and to the parents of the other children in the same class, accompanied by an explanatory letter
- is regularly promoted in home-school communications and through other appropriate channels

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE?

The School undertakes the following steps to ensure that a clearly defined process is followed when a child is found to have head lice:

Step 1

- The student is given a brief, age-appropriate explanation about the head lice and asked to wear their hat for the rest of the day.
- Parents are contacted to inform them that their child has head lice and advise them that, as required by the *School Education Act 1999*, the child must commence head lice treatment before returning to school. A copy of the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* is sent home.
- Parents of the other students in the class are also notified and provided with advice regarding checking & treatment

Step 2

- Once treatment has commenced, the parents of the child with head lice should send the child back to school and confirm that the child has been treated.
- If the child returns and the Head Lice have not been treated the Principal will contact the parents and offer assistance and advice regarding treatment.

Step 3

- Where a student again returns to school without treatment having commenced, the Principal will follow up the previous communication with the parents and request immediate treatment or permission to treat immediately. Principal may contact the Community (School) Nurse, who represents the Department of Health in the school, to undertake phone contact or arrange a home visit with the parent. The purpose of this is to help identify any undisclosed difficulty, and to assist and advise the parents with the head lice treatment.

In the last resort only – where considered appropriate by the Principal and Community (School) Nurse, the family may be referred to the Department of Child Protection, 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.

ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:

Hairstyles

- Students with long hair (reaching the bottom of the collar) must wear it tied back.

Recommended Treatments

- The School advises parents to read the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet*, available free from the school office. The 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment is the Department's preferred treatment. However, parents who wish to use insecticide treatment should do so according to the Department's instructions in the *Head Lice Fact Sheet*, as labelling on some head lice products may be unclear or even inaccurate.

Checking Hair for Head Lice

- **Class or whole school 'head checks'**

School staff and Community (School) Nurse **do not routinely** 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. In addition, it is the

responsibility of individual parents to check their own child's hair for head lice. Screening for head lice is most effectively undertaken by parents combing their child's hair using hair conditioner to slow down the head lice, together with a metal 'nit' comb, as described in the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* .

- **Checking a student who is believed to have head lice:**

In the case of an individual student, staff members may examine a student's hair where there is reason to believe a student 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. The *School Education Act 1999* authorizes the school principal or a delegate to do this. Consent should be obtained from the child before checking the hair.

Exclusion of a Student from School

- Under the *School Education Act 1999*, students found to have head lice may be excluded from school at the discretion of the Principal or delegate 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.
- 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 for Step 3 and thereafter, or at the discretion of the Principal or delegate.

For further information about head lice, go to www.health.wa.gov.au/headlice