

St Bede's School

Head Lice Policy

1 Aim

- 1.1 This policy aims to provide guidance on the detection, treatment and prevention of head lice infestations and to co-ordinate control measures with parents/carers.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 To educate relevant professional staff and parents/carers on the detection, treatment and prevention of head lice infestations.
- 2.2 To encourage parental or self-inspection of hair for early identification of infestation.
- 2.3 To minimise the social stigma associated with infestations.
- 2.3 To provide accurate information on head lice and methods of control to the parents/carers.

3 Infestation

- 3.1 Infestation with head lice affects all sections of the community, is more common among those aged between five and eleven years, but can affect people of any age.
- 3.2 Head lice are a community problem with social rather than health or educational implications - the problem therefore requires community action.
- 3.3 Head lice (*pediculus humanus capitis*) are flesh coloured insects about 3mm long whose bodies darken after feeding.
- 3.4 They can only be passed from one host to another by direct, still and prolonged head to head contact - they cannot fly, jump or swim and are found on all types of hair.
- 3.5 Because of this, spread is likely to occur from contact with other household or close family members rather than by social contact (i.e. school friends or work colleagues).
- 3.6 Head lice feed on human blood by biting into the scalp but no report of any blood borne infection such as Hepatitis B and C or HIV has been recorded by spread of head lice.
- 3.7 Head lice infestations may cause itching (pruritis), redness (erythema) and swelling (oedema) of the scalp - however these signs are also seen in other scalp conditions such as dandruff and eczema.
- 3.8 Head lice stay and lay their eggs close to the scalp providing the warmth which the eggs need to incubate - live eggs are very small, dull and flesh coloured; they are attached to the hair shaft just above the root.
- 3.9 The incubation period is 7-10 days after which the young louse emerges - by the time the hair has grown 1cm the eggs have either hatched or died.
- 3.10 Old egg shells known as "nits" are usually white and shiny and are harmless - The presence of nits does not necessarily mean there is a live infestation on that head.

4 Detection

- 4.1 The diagnosis of infestation can only be made when live lice are identified.
- 4.2 Finding apparent nits is insufficient evidence of infestation.
- 4.3 Wet combing is the preferred method of detection.

5 Treatment

- 5.1 The evidence base for all types of treatment for head lice is weak, with no good quality trials from the developed world being available on which to base policy.
- 5.2 There is no local audit data or routine surveillance of head lice infestation given its low health impact.

6 Management of Contact

- 6.1 If a person is found to be infested then all close contacts should be informed and examined for evidence of infestation by the responsible adult (usually a parent) and treated as described if live lice are found i.e. by the wet combing method.

7 Prevention of Infestation

- 7.1 Good hair care as part of personal hygiene and grooming should be encouraged, although there is no evidence with regard to its effectiveness in prevention.
- 7.2 Insect repellent sprays and electronic combs should not be used as a means of preventing or controlling infestations.
- 7.3 The use of regular school inspection to detect infestations has been discontinued for some years because it has been shown to be ineffective in the control of infestations.
- 7.4 Head lice are a community problem, not an educational problem, and parents should take responsibility for being aware of any problems with their children's hair in the same way as they are over any other health problem.

8 Wet Combing

- 8.1 The hair should be washed in the normal way with ordinary shampoo and, after rinsing; conditioner is applied and combed through.
- 8.2 The hair should then be combed with a wide toothed comb to remove any tangles – the application of conditioner makes the hair more slippery and difficult for the lice to actually hang on to.
- 8.3 The hair should then be combed thoroughly with a fine head lice toothed comb.
- 8.4 If lice are detected then this procedure should be continued every four days over a period of two weeks, ensuring that any new lice that hatch from eggs will be detected and removed before they become mature - the cycle of mature lice being replaced is therefore broken.
- 8.5 Lice, which are not removed, are often fatally damaged by the combing.
- 8.6 If there is something found in the hair but its nature is unclear, then it should be attached to a piece of card and shown to an appropriate healthcare professional for identification.

9 St Bede's School's Actions

- 9.1 We will provide information about head lice via this policy and additionally if appropriate.
- 9.2 We will offer to provide advice about how to use wet combing and /or other treatment.
- 9.3 We will maintain a visual check on children at our School and alert individual parents by letter/ phone call if a persistent case is noted.
- 9.4 We will not carry out physical checks on day pupils for head lice – Matron is in *loco parentis* regarding the full boarders.
- 9.5 We will not send out alert letters to other parents or discuss families with other parents.
- 9.6 We will not tell parents to keep children away or exclude a child from school because of head lice.

Headmaster
April 2016

Director of Studies
April 2016