

Dear Parent/Guardian

HEAD LICE

It has been reported that a pupil in your child's class at school has been found to have head lice.

In order to prevent this infestation from spreading and to clear up any other cases as soon as possible, would you please inspect your child's head. This can be done by brushing the hair while it is damp with a detection comb or a fine tooth comb over a piece of white paper. Any live lice in the hair should drop out and be easily visible on the paper. If you find live lice, please treat your child. It is also very important to check the rest of the family and others who may have been in close contact with your child over the past four weeks. This is because we know that half of all head lice cases are caught outside of school.

Treatment is only necessary if live lice are seen. The preferred method of treatment now is the wet combing method. This involves the following:

1. Wash the hair in the normal way with an ordinary shampoo.
2. Using lots of hair conditioner and while the hair is still wet comb through the hair from the roots with a fine tooth comb. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with every stroke, and do this over a pale surface, such as a paper towel or the bath.
3. Clear the comb of lice between each stroke.
4. Wet lice find it difficult to escape, and hair which is slippery from the conditioner makes it hard for them to keep a grip – so removal with the comb is easier.
5. Repeat this routine every 3-4 days for 2 weeks, so that any lice emerging from the eggs are removed before they can spread and lay further eggs.

There are also lotions available which can be used to treat head lice. These lotions can be obtained from your chemist or in some cases you may be able to obtain a prescription from your doctor. If a lotion is being used, treatment must be repeated after seven days. However, we are increasingly recognising that the lotions have only been of limited success in controlling head lice. Therefore it is important that regular and thorough brushing and combing is encouraged at least twice a day since this represents the best means of preventing further cases of head lice.