



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM

**Sacred Heart Catholic
Primary School**



'To grow in Wisdom and in Grace'

HEADLICE POLICY

Although headlice have been around for at least as long as humans, we at Sacred Heart Primary School acknowledge the unpleasantness, potential expense and inconvenience associated with headlice infestation and are sympathetic to the circumstances families find themselves in when infestation occurs.

We are aware that headlice infest people of all ages and not only children.

It is our policy to react to infestation within the school in such a way as to:

- minimise the embarrassment, discomfort and potential stigmatisation of the infested person
- minimise the risk of infection to other members of the school community.

To this end we remain vigilant and aware of the potential presence of headlice. We do not check children's heads for infestation but where infestation is noted we always:

- Send a letter home to all parents in the affected class alerting them to presence of infestation and advising on the need to check their child and what to do should they find headlice present (appendix 1)
- Send a letter home to the affected child's parents informing of the need to act and to check the whole family's hair as well as to keep their child at home until their hair is clear. This should not be necessary if immediate action is taken (appendix 2).

In addition:

- At regular intervals, at least annually, the school will inform parents with regard to avoiding headlice, treatment and current thinking on the subject. We make all reasonable efforts to be available to speak to parents who are distressed or confused by this matter or by our actions, but always maintain the position that "The prime responsibility for the identification, treatment and prevention of headlice in a family has to lie with the parents".

There is uncertainty with regard to the effectiveness of specific preparations beyond conditioning and combing but we do recommend that where infestation persists, parents should contact their GP. Headlice shampoos are not proven to be 100% effective.

Appendix 1

INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR PARENT/CARERS FACTS ABOUT HEADLICE

- Headlice are small insects which are usually found close to the scalp where there is warmth, food and shelter from detection.
- They cannot fly, jump or hop and are spread where heads touch each other.
- Headlice are very common and affect most children some time in their life.
- Most headlice infections are not caught in school.

HOW CAN I PREVENT/DETECT/TREAT HEADLICE?

1. PREVENTION

Children should have their own comb and be taught how to use it. Combing hair at least twice a day and regular shampooing and conditioning will help to prevent any headlice infection becoming established.

2. DETECTION

- Shampoo hair and apply plenty of conditioner to make the hair wet and slippery.
- Comb the hair from the scalp outwards, section by section, with a fine plastic tooth comb, a detector comb (available from chemists), for at least 10 minutes over a sink, bath tub or disposable towel. If lice are present they will fall out or stick to the comb. Please note that medical advice suggests that if there are no moving headlice, the child is not considered to have headlice.
- The comb should be washed with water or wiped clean with a paper napkin between each stroke.
- Repeat this method as often as required, e.g. at routine hair washing sessions.

3. TREATMENT

Wet-combing method

It is recommended that this is a safe and effective way of treating headlice and should be used first before considering the use of insecticide lotions.

- This method of treatment should be carried out every 3-4 days over a 2 week period (a total of 4 sessions over 2 weeks).
- The principles of this method (sometimes called the “bug-busting” method) are: WASH, RINSE, CONDITION AND COMB.

The method is as follows:

1. Wash the hair with ordinary shampoo.
2. Put ordinary conditioner on the hair
3. Then either sitting upright or bowed over a sink, whichever is most comfortable, comb the hair with a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
4. Untangle the hair using a close toothed comb or lice detector comb purchased from the local pharmacies.
5. Slot teeth into a section of hair, right at the roots, touching the scalp gently.
6. Check the comb for lice between each stroke. Remove lice by wiping the comb on kitchen paper. The lice caught between the teeth should be removed with a cocktail stick or nailbrush.
7. Work all over the head, section by section, combing and cleaning until the comb comes through louse free.
8. Rinse the hair, leave hair dripping wet. Use a wide toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair again.
9. Keeping the hair wet, use the lice detector comb to comb the rinsed hair. Work all over the head until the comb comes through louse free. Once it is known that one member of the family has lice, the whole family should use this method to see if they have headlice.

Treatment with Insecticide Lotions/Rinses

- Insecticides are used when the wet combing method is not thought to be effective.
- Insecticides should only be used if live lice have been found in the hair – it should not be used to prevent headlice, only to treat the condition.
- The table below lists the advantages and disadvantages of using insecticide lotions.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>A quick and easy method of treatment.</p> <p>Evidence indicates that the use of insecticide LOTIONS as treatment are successful. However, insecticide SHAMPOOS are considered to be ineffective in the treatment of headlice.</p>	<p>Alcoholic preparations may induce an allergic reaction.</p> <p>A more expensive method than wet combing.</p> <p>Inappropriate repetitive use can lead to resistance to further headlice infections.</p> <p>A dislike of using a pesticide to treat headlice.</p> <p>Insecticides need to be used with caution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In pregnant women and nursing mothers; ○ In infants under 6 months old; on a repetitive basis. <p>Can cause skin irritation if used repeatedly.</p> <p>Can affect coloured, permed or bleached hair.</p>

- Insecticides are available from a pharmacy, without a prescription. It is important that instructions on use are followed carefully. After treatment, the wet-combing method should be used to check for headlice and to remove dead eggs.
- A second application is recommended some time after the first one, but if the lice appear to be unaffected by the product (some lice may have developed resistance to be a particular insecticide) or if the problem persists, you should seek advice from your GP, who can advise you on further treatments which may be only available on prescription.
- It should be noted that chlorine may lessen the effect of some insecticides and it is recommended that if the child has been swimming in a chlorinated pool in the 72 hours before treatment the hair should be washed and dried before lotion is applied. Swimming should not be banned after treatment.
- Headlice shampoos are considered to be ineffective in the treatment of headlice.

Alternative Therapies

The following advice has been provided by Birmingham Health Authority's Consultant in Communicable Disease Control:

- Over recent years there has been an increase in interest in using naturally occurring substances to treat headlice, e.g. tea tree oil, other essential oils and herbal remedies.
- There is no evidence to suggest the efficacy of these treatments and no standards exist to regulate their use.
- Over-use of essential oils in unskilled hands can be hazardous, and some substances are potentially dangerous.
- Head coverings, e.g. baseball caps and scarves do not prevent the transmission of lice.
- A spray intended for use as headlice prevention is available from chemists. The technique is rather difficult and does not have a long lasting effect. This product can prove to be very costly and is not available on prescription.
- An electric detector comb is also very expensive and no evidence is available as to how effective it is as a treatment.

Remember to let your child's school or nursery know that you have found headlice and have undertaken the appropriate treatment.

Remember, regular shampooing, conditioning and daily combing of hair will reduce the chances of headlice being found in the child's head.

Appendix 2

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN Year: x

I am writing to inform you that at least one member of your child's class has been found to have headlice present in their hair.

Please check your child tonight for any signs of infection.

Here is some advice from our NHS Trust.

“Diagnosis of headlice infection can only be made by identifying a living moving louse. Detection combing is the only reliable method of diagnosing active infection.”

If you require further advice or information, please download our Headlice Policy, which is available on line at: <http://www.sacredheartprimary.org/contact.htm>

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Appendix 3

Dear (Parent)

I am writing to inform you that your child (Name) has been found today to have headlice present in their hair.

Please ensure that the living, moving lice, are out of the hair before returning your child to school. There is no reason why this should involve your child in missing any school time. If you thoroughly comb the hair with a fine toothed “nit” comb the adult lice should be removed. However, any eggs present may continue to hatch out and constant vigilance and repeated combing or treatment is necessary.

We cannot prevent headlice ever appearing at school but we can, with your co-operation, prevent mass infestation - together we can keep the misery of headlice to a minimum.

If you require further advice or information, please download our Headlice Policy, which is available on line at: <http://www.sacredheartprimary.org/contact.htm>

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Appendix 4

General information for parents and guardians about headlice

What are they?

Headlice are tiny insects, no bigger than the size of a pinhead. They live on the hair and feed from the human scalp by sucking blood from the skin. They lay eggs which are stuck firmly to the surface of hair strands.

Headlice are common and affect people from all walks of life. They live on clean and dirty hair.

They do not only affect schoolchildren – half the people with headlice are adults of preschool children. They may cause an itching scalp-but some people do not itch.

Headlice are passed from one person to another by head to head contact. They cannot be picked up from towels, bedding or clothing.

How can I check for them?

Wash the hair. Then work through some conditioner. Comb through with a fine toothed comb (if possible a metal nit comb). If headlice are present they will become attached to the comb. Pay particular attention to the areas above the ears, the nape of the neck and under the fringe. *Combing regularly with a nit comb can reduce the chance of infection. It is very important for everyone to check their own and their children's hair every week.*

What should I do if I find headlice?

There are two possible ways to treat headlice:

Non-chemical treatment (bug busting)

The hair is washed, conditioned and combed as in the section on looking for headlice. This must be repeated every 3 days for 2 weeks and about every 5 days after this. There is some evidence that bug-busting can work where every family in a community takes part.

Chemical treatment

Products containing Malathion should be used from 1.9.98. These include:

Suleo M, Derbac M, Prioderm.

Only Durbac M should be used in children under 3 and people with asthma or eczema. Please follow the manufacturer's instructions. These products must be left on the scalp for 12 hours. Comb through the hair with a nit comb after treatment and repeat the treatment a week later.

There is some evidence that Suleo M is the most effective of these products.

If after one course of treatment (2 applications 7 days apart) the headlice have not completely disappeared, it is important to change the treatment at that stage. Other lotions include Lyclear (available over the counter) and Carbaryl (only available on prescription).

If one person in the family has headlice it is important to check everyone else's scalp.

DO NOT TREAT OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS UNLESS YOU FIND HEADLICE, AS OVERTREATMENT CAN LEAD TO PROBLEMS OF RESISTANCE.

There is not enough evidence about the safety or cure-rates of herbal remedies for us to recommend their use.

Please tell your child's school if you find any headlice. Also tell any friends and family members your child has been in contact with. If you need any more information and help, please ask to speak to the school nurse.

