



## Woodthorpe Community Primary School Procedures for Head Lice

Head lice are a wider societal problem and contrary to popular belief research shows that transmission of lice within the classroom is relatively rare. When it does occur, it is usually from a “best friend”. We know that you can only get head lice through direct head-to-head contact with a person that has them. Head lice can’t jump, hop or swim. There is no evidence that head lice have a preference for either clean or dirty hair. It’s extremely rare to get head lice by sharing hats, combs or pillows. You also don’t need to wash clothing or bedding, because head lice that fall off your head (for example, onto hats or pillows) are likely to die soon after.

Studies of school children indicate that approximately 4% of the population at any one time has head lice. Outbreaks are **very rare** it is usually a perception of an outbreak rather than a reality.

The life span of a head louse is short. The adult will lay 5-6 eggs a day glued to the base of a hair near the scalp. The egg will take 7-10 days to hatch. The empty white egg case is often called a ‘nit’. It takes a further 6-14 days for the louse to mature and begin to reproduce. The whole cycle takes between 2 -3 weeks.

Finding a living, moving louse on a head is the only sure way to diagnose the presence of head lice. There are different ways of treating an infection including, many lotions and the wet combing method. But in order to be effective the treatment needs to be correctly applied and repeated as directed. See the attached NHS leaflet.

What the research says is **not** effective.

- Sending out blanket warning letters.
- Sending children home.
- Introducing routine inspections, the ‘nit nurse’.

What the school will do if we see a live, moving louse in your child’s hair.

- We will inform you either via a telephone call, text or seeing you at the end of the day to inform you that a live louse has been seen. This will allow you time to organise appropriate treatment before your child returns the following day.
- Only if your child is in distress or very uncomfortable will we recommend you pick them up from school early.

If your child is repeatedly suffering from head lice then, with your agreement, we will contact the school nursing service to seek their advice.

Head lice will not be eradicated in the foreseeable future, but a sensible, informed approach, based on fact not mythology, will help to limit the problem. There is no good way of preventing head lice. The best way to prevent them spreading is to check your whole family’s heads for lice regularly. You can do this by detection combing on a weekly basis, or as often as you want. This will help you find any lice before they have a chance to breed and lay nits. You can then treat them quickly to prevent them from spreading to other people.

Useful websites <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Community hygiene concern. <http://www.chc.org/index.cfm>

## Recommended Procedures for treating headlice:

**Lotions or sprays**- these are available from pharmacies and contain chemicals that kill the live lice. They do not kill any eggs in the hair and do need to be used carefully in accordance with the instructions in order to be effective. Your pharmacist can advise.

**Wet Combing Method**- if you do not wish to use a lotion or spray, a cheap and effective alternative method is wet combing. Lotions or sprays don't need to be used for wet combing. However, to be effective, wet combing needs to be carried out regularly and thoroughly. The method you should use is described below.

1. Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply plenty of conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
2. Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots, with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
3. Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke, and check the comb for lice.
4. Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb.
5. Work methodically through the hair, section by section, so that the whole head is combed through.
6. Rinse out conditioner and repeat the combing procedure.
7. Repeat the procedure on days three, six, nine, 12 and 15, so that you clear young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.

### **Oil Method recommended**

Massage baby oil into your child's hair and comb through, this will suffocate the head lice and prevent them from laying eggs. Leave in overnight then comb with a nit comb the next day and wash hair as normal. You will be able to get all the nits and live lice out easily and no chemicals are involved, especially if your child or their scalp is sensitive to chemicals. Again, this will need to be repeated at least weekly until no live lice are detected.

If your child regularly has head lice then we can make a referral to the nursing service to help you. You can see your GP. The combs and some treatments are available on prescription, your GP or practice nurse can advise further.