

# HEAD LICE POLICY

## Rationale:

Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. At any given time most schools will have some students with head lice. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are the most common cause of head itch and scratching which may lead to infection and swollen lymph glands; therefore they need to be eradicated. While parents/guardians have primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, schools also have a role in the management of head lice infections and in providing support for parents/guardians and students.

## Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that procedures are in place to support parents/guardians, students and staff in the management of head lice infections, and that the school responds to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.

## Implementation:

- St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School is committed to distributing up-to-date information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians and staff at the beginning of every year and more frequently as required (available from website <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/>).
- St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School will nominate a head lice resource/support person (staff member) who parents/guardians can contact at the school at nominated times for support, advice and assistance.
- It is a requirement that parents/guardians refrain from sending their children to school with untreated head lice.
- St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School wishes to actively encourage parents/guardians to report any incidents of head lice in their family so that the families of other students in their class can be notified of an outbreak of head lice.
- When a family contacts the school with this information, all children in that class will be given a copy of a letter to their parents advising of an occurrence of head lice, asking them to check their child's hair and giving them details of treatment of head lice and where they can get further information. In addition, the class teacher will be given a sign to display where parents are likely to see it advising them of an occurrence of head lice.
- When it is obvious that there are many cases in the school an active information program will be launched through the school newsletter and staff bulletin. The school is committed to providing parents/guardians with comprehensive advice about the use of safe treatment practices which do not place students' health at risk.
- It is important that all staff members are committed to helping reduce stigma associated with head lice and to maintain confidentiality.

- As part of the curriculum teachers will make provision for classroom activities to give students an understanding of the habits and life-cycle of head lice in order to minimise the incidence of stigmatisation of particular students and families.
- Staff members do not have the legal right to check any child's head for head lice. Classroom teachers are authorised by the school principal to visually check each child's hair for the presence of head lice, when it is suspected that head lice may be present. No physical contact with the student must occur during visual checks. Visual checks do not require parental consent.
- Consistent with Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, the principal will ensure that the parents of any child found to have live lice are informed that their child is to be excluded from school until appropriate treatment has commenced. A student with head lice can be treated one day and return to school the next day. Staff must be aware that exclusion only refers to those children who have live head lice and does not refer to head lice eggs. The presence of eggs in the hair is not cause for exclusion. There is no requirement for a clearance certificate to be issued either by a general practitioner or a local council.
- St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School will provide the parents of any children found to have live lice with information about head lice treatment and prevention.
- Through regular items in the school newsletter parents/guardians will be notified of the following good practices that can reduce the impact of head lice on the school community:
  - regular (preferably once per week) inspection of their
  - child/children's hair for lice or lice eggs (using conditioner and
  - a head lice comb is the most effective method)
  - regular inspection of all household members followed by
  - treatment if head lice are detected
  - upon detection of head lice, notify the school and advise when
  - treatment has commenced.

### Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's five-year review cycle or as required.

*Ratified by B. Marrinon, August, 2013.*