

St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Norlane



Advice regarding head lice

Head lice and nits are an unwelcome but common occurrence in schools. At St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, we follow the protocol outlined by the Victorian Department of Education and Training. That advice is as follows.

Control of head lice in schools

The following outlines the actions schools are required to implement to control the transmission of head lice.

Exclusion from school

When a student is identified with live head lice schools must:

- at the end of the school day, provide the student with a note to take home to inform their parent/carer that their child may have head lice. The student can return to school once treatment has commenced (i.e. most likely the next day).
- exclude the student from school until after treatment has commenced, as set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009, School Exclusion Table, see: School Exclusion Table

Note 1: Principal has the overall responsibility to exclude a student from school.

Note 2: The presence of eggs in the hair is not a cause for exclusion (only live head lice).

Note 3: There is no requirement for a general practitioner or local council to issue a clearance certificate in order for the child to return to school.

Principals must:

- alert parents/carers of an infestation, particularly the parents of other students in the same class as the affected child/children
- use discretion to avoid identifying individuals when informing the school community about an infestation.

Note: The Department of Health and Human Services indicates at any one time there are likely to be cases of head lice in most schools, so it is not advocated that the principal informs the whole school community each time head lice are detected.

Visual head lice checks in schools

There is no requirement for schools to undertake head lice inspection programs. However, if schools wish to do so, they can conduct checks via:

- visual checks only without physical contact, which:
 - do not require parent/guardian consent
 - are made by people authorised by the principal, e.g. classroom teachers.

- head lice inspections involving the physical examination of a student are made by people authorised by the principal council e.g. teacher and require written parental consent, usually obtained at enrolment.

Parent consent:

- should be obtained prior to commencing any physical examination of a student
- should be provided to parents/carers for completion as part of enrolment
- must be updated when guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student
- must be updated parents/carers no longer wish to consent to inspections.

Prevention of head lice in schools

Although responsibility for detecting and treating head lice rests with parents, it is important that practical advice and support be available.

Schools are encouraged to work collaboratively with parents and the broader school community to implement practices and procedures to prevent and minimise the impact of head lice outbreaks.

Advice updated: 2019

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