

**ST. PATRICK'S PRIMARY AND
NURSERY SCHOOL, MAYOBRIDGE**

**Policy for
The Treatment of Head Lice**

February 2017

Rationale:

We in St. Patrick's are committed to the Health and Wellbeing of everyone within our School Community. Furthermore, we have a duty of care to our children and staff to strive to provide a school environment which is safe and conducive to Teaching & Learning. This Policy forms an integral part of the School's overall Pastoral Care Policies document.

Since incidence of Head Lice can be a recurrent issue during the School Year, this Policy has been formulated to give clear guidance on how to deal with the matter where and when appropriate

The Northern Ireland Regional Policy for the control of Head Lice was first introduced on 24th March 1999 and reflects national guidance issued. The Southern Health Trust currently adhere to guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (2008)

Head lice are described in the Regional Policy as a problem within the wider community and not primarily a problem within schools.

St. Patrick's Primary and Nursery School does, however, recognise that as part of this community it can make a contribution by supporting parents in developing and maintaining healthy, thriving children.

Principles:

- Head lice can present as a problem for the whole community and are passed on by close family members and friends in the home and neighbourhood as well as in school
- Head lice are transferred by *direct, prolonged, head-to-head contact among children/adults*
- Head lice infestation is not a serious physical health problem, however persistent head lice which is untreated is regarded as neglect and therefore has the potential to become a Child Protection issue
- Clear diagnosis is important – treatment should only be started if a living, moving louse is discovered
- The main responsibility for the identification of head lice is that of the parents or guardians. They should identify and treat any head lice incidents and seek help from their doctor or health visitor if necessary. Further advice is also available on the NHS website www.nhs.uk search head lice

SCHOOL PROCEDURE

Information to help parents detect and treat suspected cases of head lice will be supplied as part of the school's communication with parents at the beginning of each School Year i.e. at the September Parents Information Evenings.

Parents are urged, as in all health matters, to seek diagnosis from a medical professional and to treat the problem immediately for the benefit of the child, family and community.

If a member of staff sees a living, moving louse in a child's hair, every effort will be made to contact the parent on the day and inform them verbally.

N.B. Similarly, if a parent detects a living, moving louse in their child's hair or indeed is aware of a possible incident within the class/elsewhere in the school, notification should be effected immediately to the class teacher/office staff so that the matter can be addressed immediately.

Should we be unable to inform the parent verbally, a letter will be sent home. The reply slip should be signed and returned within the two days.

If no reply is forthcoming, or if the problem persists, the School Nurse will be contacted and follow up will take place.

The Nurse may then contact the parents to offer advice and support.

Information will remain confidential at all times, in keeping with School Policy/Procedures.

Children who have, or are thought to have, head lice will not be excluded from school.

HOW TO TREAT HEAD LICE

In order to prevent the spread of head lice in school it is important that you check your child's hair regularly, and if necessary, treat thoroughly with any lotion recommended by a pharmacist or doctor. Routine head inspections are no longer carried out in schools but you may find the following information helpful.

How do you catch head lice?

Head Lice cannot jump or fly. They like to live close to the scalp. They are only caught when two people's heads are in contact for some time.

How do you know you have got head lice?

Signs of head lice include; live or dead lice in the hair, nits (empty egg cases), an itchy head, a rash round the neck or ears dark gritty dust on pillows or collars.

A weekly family check for head lice

Wash the hair and using a fine-toothed comb (available from pharmacy), comb the wet hair from the roots over a sheet of paper. If nits or eggs are found, keep combing every other day for a week to ensure there are no live lice. If one is found, tell those in close contact and begin treatment.

Sometimes head lice return because the treatment was not carried out thoroughly and eggs survived.

Hair should not normally be treated more than twice in three weeks. If the problem persists, speak to the doctor.

Conclusion:

We trust that you will support the school in its efforts to deal with possible issues regarding Head Lice in a responsible and sensitive manner. If untreated, the issue can escalate and prove most distressing for the child/children affected, as well as their families.

This policy will be monitored closely, amended as appropriate and reviewed every two years in keeping with the School's Pastoral Care Policies.

The Policy is due for renewal in January 2019. Appendix 1 (Sample Letter to Parents) is attached.

Appendix 1

St. Patrick's Primary and Nursery School, Mayobridge

Date:

Dear Parent

It has been reported to me that a suspected head louse was seen in

_____ 's hair today.

There is no need to be alarmed. We may be wrong, but to avoid embarrassment I would ask you to check your child's hair for yourself using a fine comb and, if required, treat the problem. Your doctor, health visitor or chemist will be able to provide you with further help and support.

We will treat this matter in confidence. There is no need to keep your child off school. I would request that you return the slip below within 2 working days to confirm receipt of this letter.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

Mrs M Ryan (Principal)

St. Patrick's Primary and Nursery School, Mayobridge

I have received you letter dated _____ regarding a possible case of head lice in _____ 's hair. I will check my child's hair and treat any problem.

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)