HEADLICE POLICY

Rationale

- Head lice (pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. Probably between 2-3% of primary school children are infested at any one time*. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are a cause of head itch and scratching, which may lead to infection and swollen lymph glands; therefore, they need to be controlled.
- Anyone can catch head lice.
- Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person by head to head contact, and may also be spread by the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes and hats. The eggs of the louse are called nits.

Aims

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively.
- To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known and consistently followed.
- To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice treatment.
- To act in the interests of other children and members of the school community.

Implementation

- While it is parents who have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice on their children, the school will assist by offering up-to-date information and by alerting parents of lice when detected.
- The principal will also provide parents of children found to have live lice with information about head lice treatment and prevention.
- The principal will ensure that information relating to the prevention and eradication of head lice appears throughout the year in the school newsletter, particularly at times of heavy outbreaks.
- 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 removed from attending school until appropriate treatment has commenced.
- If a child is sent home on three occasions with head lice they will not be re-admitted until a clearance has been obtained from Darebin Council.

This policy was last ratified 01/09/2006.
Parents who are notified that their child has lice must complete a treatment slip when the child returns to school.

HEAD LICE TREATMENT REPLY SLIP

If your child has been detected with live lice, this reply slip must be returned to school at the same time that your child returns.

☐ I have treated my child’s head in a manner that has killed or removed the live lice.

☐ I would like to be shown how the Dept of Human Services recommends removal of eggs and lice using hair conditioner and a fine toothed comb.

Child’s Name__________________________ Grade____________________

Parent Signature_________________________________
FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head lice are common in school-aged children and are the most adaptable of creatures.

- People get head lice from direct hair to hair contact with another person who has head lice. Head lice don’t fly or jump – they crawl very fast from head to head. It is because of the way young children play and interact together that head lice are seen more widely amongst primary school children.
- Female lice can lay hundreds of eggs in their 32-35 day life cycle.
- It is really important that as many eggs (nits) as possible are removed before they hatch and become lice. Lice live their entire lives on human heads and their entire food and water source is supplied from the scalp.
- Head lice eggs (nits) are small (the size of a pinhead) and oval and are firmly attached to the hair. They resemble dandruff, but can’t be brushed off.
- The six legs of a louse end in a claw, allowing them to grip the hair.
- They detect vibration and can hide - (conditioner will help fix this problem)
- Head lice can ‘hold’ their breath for 20 minutes – looking like they are dead.
- The eggs are attached to the hair with a ‘glue’ like substance.

If you follow these steps, once a week, the control of head lice in your home will be greatly improved.

Step 1  Comb inexpensive hair conditioner on to dry, brushed (detangled) hair. This makes it difficult for lice to grip the hair or run around;

Step 2  Wipe the conditioner from the comb onto a paper towel or tissue;

Step 3  Look on the tissue and on the comb for lice and eggs;

Step 4  If lice or eggs are found, the child should be treated;

Parents Responsibilities

Parents and carers have a responsibility to help manage the head lice problem in schools and to achieve this, it is reasonable to expect parents and carers will:

- regularly (preferably once a week) inspect their child’s hair to look for lice or lice eggs (using conditioner and a head lice comb is the easiest and most effective way to do this);
- commence treatment (either chemical or non chemical) immediately if lice or eggs are found;
- ensure their child does not attend school with untreated head lice;
- regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary;
- notify the school if their child is affected and advise the school when the treatment was started;
• notify the parents or carers of the child’s friends so that they too have the opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary.

If you would like more details regarding head lice, the Victorian Government offers an excellent website that provides a lot of information and should answer many questions Website: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/