MOORA PRIMARY SCHOOL
HEAD LICE MANAGEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Moora Primary School has developed the following head lice policy in consultation with the School Board, P&C, teachers, the Community (School) Nurse and the Department of Health. The aim of this Policy is to ensure a consistent, coordinated and cooperative approach to managing head lice in the school community.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents' responsibilities are:

- to learn about head lice infestation and management by reading the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet;
- to regularly check their child's hair for head lice infestation;
- to treat their child's hair immediately if the child has head lice, using the advice in the Head Lice Fact Sheet;
- to inform the school and other close contacts if their child has a head lice infestation, and to confirm that treatment of their child's hair has commenced; and
- to be aware of and follow the school's head lice management policy.

The Community (School) Nurse's role is:

- to provide information, advice and education to parents and the school community about head lice management;
- to provide additional advice for families experiencing persistent head lice infestation; and
- to provide additional education about head lice management to 'Head Lice Resource Parents' as requested.

The School's responsibility is:

- to develop, implement and maintain a head lice management policy;
- to ensure that parents and staff are aware of the school's head lice policy, and that parents are provided with a copy of the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet when their child is enrolled and on request;
- to provide information and support to families; and
- to advise the school community where head lice are detected in classrooms.

HOW HEAD LICE INFORMATION IS DISSEMINATED

The School takes the following steps to ensure that accurate up-to-date head lice treatment advice is provided to the school community:

The Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet:

- is included in the student enrolment package.
- is displayed in the school office waiting area, with extra copies available for parents.
- is sent home to the parents of a child with head lice, and to the parents of the other children in the same class, accompanied by an explanatory letter.
- is regularly promoted in the school newsletter and through other appropriate channels.

Other head lice education and management strategies:

• Head Lice Coordinator
The School has nominated a Head Lice Coordinator, who is the contact person for staff and parents for dealing with head lice issues. S/he is responsible for organising dissemination of head lice information, arranging head lice education and management activities, and following up head lice Letters to Parents. Parents who require information, or who would like to become involved in supporting the school's Head Lice Management Program, should contact the Coordinator via the school office.

• Head lice management information sessions
Head lice information sessions are provided annually for staff and parents by the Community (School) Nurse or Head Lice Resource Parent, to ensure the school community is well informed.

• Whole school or class-by-class 'Synchronised Weekend Head Lice Checks'
Synchronised weekend head lice checks at home by parents are promoted at least twice yearly, and more often if necessary. Information about this promotion is provided well in advance via the newsletter and a note home to parents. A short class head lice education session is also undertaken prior to the promotion weekend.

For parents who have carefully followed the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet advice, but who have persistent difficulty in removing head lice, further advice is available from the Community (School) Nurse. The school office has contact details for the Community (School) Nurse.

If the Community (School) Nurse is unavailable, parents may contact the Department of Health on 9388 4999 for assistance.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND TO HAVE HEAD LICE?
The School undertakes the following steps to ensure that a clearly defined process is followed when a child is found to have head lice:

Day 1:
• The student is given a brief, age-appropriate explanation about the head lice.
• A *Letter to Parents of a Child Found to have Head Lice* is sent home with the student at the end of the day [see sample Letter]. The Letter informs the parents that their child has head lice and advises them that, as required by the *School Education Act 1999*, the child must commence head lice treatment before returning to school. A copy of the Department of Health's *Head Lice Fact Sheet* is on the reverse of this letter.
• Parents of the other students in the class are sent an information letter on the same day, asking them to check their child's hair for head lice and advising them how to do this more effectively, using the Department of Health recommended hair conditioner method.

Day 2:
• Once treatment has commenced, the parents of the child with head lice should send the child back to school with the completed Confirmation of Treatment tear-off section of the Letter to Parents. Parents are reminded that treatment must be completed over the 10-day period, as recommended by the Department of Health.

• If the Confirmation of Treatment slip, or similar note, is not returned and the student is not able to confirm that treatment has commenced, then the class teacher informs the Deputy Principal. They then contact the parents to check that they have received the Letter to Parents and the Head Lice Fact Sheet.
• If the Letter to Parents and the Head Lice Fact Sheet have been received but no treatment has started, then the parents are asked if they are experiencing any difficulty. Appropriate assistance is offered if parents are experiencing difficulty, e.g. serious financial hardship, or literacy or language difficulty.
• If the parents have no particular difficulty, then they are reminded of their responsibility to the child and to the school community. The parents are advised that the child must not return to school until treatment has begun. Parents must return a note to school with the child, or phone the Head Lice Coordinator, to confirm this.

Day 3:
• Where a student again returns to school without treatment having commenced, the Deputy Principal may ask the Community (School) Nurse, who represents the Department of Health in the school, to undertake phone contact or arrange a home visit with the parent. The purpose of this is to help identify any undisclosed difficulty, and to assist and advise the parents with the head lice treatment.

Day 4:
• Where a student yet again returns to school without evidence of treatment, the Principal or delegate will contact the parents and advise that the student is immediately excluded from school, until treatment has commenced and the school notified. The parents will again be offered assistance by the Community (School) Nurse.
• Home work will be provided for the student, with teacher telephone support where appropriate.

Day 5 – ongoing:
• Where a student continues to be absent from school without due reason, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Absenteeism Policy. Head Lice infestation is easily treated and is not a disease. Where all parent support and information has been provided, and there is no remaining barrier to treatment, failure to treat is not a valid reason for absence from school.

In the last resort only – where considered appropriate by the Principal and Community (School) Nurse, the family may be referred to the Department of Child Protection, e.g. where a child is experiencing ongoing psychological distress, or if infected sores result from untreated head lice infestation and the sores remain untreated. Informing parents of this decision prior to referral is at the discretion of the Principal.

ADDITIONAL KEY POINTS:
Hairstyles
- Students with long hair must wear it tied back, braided and/or pinned as per the School Dress Code.
- The use of hair spray, leave in conditioner or hair gel is also helpful.

Recommended treatments
• The School advises parents to read the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet, available free from the school office. The 10-Day Hair Conditioner Treatment is the Department's preferred treatment. However, parents who wish to use insecticide

treatment should do so according to the Department's instructions in the Head Lice Fact Sheet, as labelling on some head lice products may be unclear or even inaccurate.

Checking hair for head lice

• Class or whole school 'head checks'

School staff, and the Community (School) Nurse do not routinely undertake class head checks for head lice:

- Most children do not have head lice, so valuable class time is wasted checking such children unnecessarily.
- In addition, it is the responsibility of individual parents to check their own child's hair for head lice. Screening for head lice is most effectively undertaken by parents combing their child's hair using hair conditioner to slow down the head lice, together with a metal 'nit' comb, as described in the Department of Health's Head Lice Fact Sheet.

• Checking a student who is believed to have head lice:

In the case of an individual student, the School Principal has nominated school staff members who may examine a student's hair where there is reason to believe a student may have head lice, i.e. where eggs (nits) or crawling head lice have been sighted or where a child is scratching the head excessively. The School Education Act 1999 authorises the school principal or a delegate to do this. To ensure competency, the nominated staff members have received education in identifying active head lice infestation from the Department of Health or the Community (School) Nurse.

Exclusion of a student from school

• Under the *School Education Act 1999*, students found to have head lice may be excluded from school at the discretion of the Principal or delegate until treatment has begun and all live head lice have been removed, in accordance with the Department of Health treatment advice. In practice, this means students can return to school the morning after treatment has commenced, provided that effective treatment is completed consistently over the following 10 days. A few remaining eggs are not a reason for exclusion.

• Students found to have head lice will normally be excluded at the end of the school day, and not earlier, except in circumstances described above for Day 4 and thereafter, or at the discretion of the Principal or delegate.

Thank you for taking the time to read the school's Head Lice Management Policy. We hope you will find it informative and helpful. Compliance with the Policy helps the whole school community to keep head lice infestation under control and so minimise inconvenience, expense and distress for parents and students.