

Dear Parent/Carer,

Your child may have come into contact with head lice. We would be grateful if you could take the time to check your child's hair today. Below is some information to help with treating the problem. If you need any further assistance please contact school.

ADVICE ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head lice is a problem that can affect everyone. It is estimated that one in every ten children are affected by head lice every year, with a peak in the autumn. Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim, but can climb from head to head. Any adult or children who have their heads close together can allow head lice to be carried. This is obviously something that happens more often at home with young children or at school during play.

Head lice like clean hair, as well as dirty and are not worried about the length or the condition. Head lice are small insects, roughly the size of a match head and are usually grey or brown. They are difficult to detect, even under close examination and do not always cause itching.

Head lice feed by sucking blood through the scalp of their host. They then lay eggs in sacks (nits) glued to the hair where the warmth of the scalp will hatch them. The eggs are very small and brown in colour, they take seven to ten days to hatch. Empty egg sacks are white and shiny and may be found further along the hair shaft as the hair grows out. Head lice take seven to fourteen days to become fully grown and able to lay more eggs.

Detection and Prevention Lice are mostly easily detected by fine tooth combing really wet hair. If no lice can be found by carefully combing shampooed hair from the roots, there is no need to consider applying head lice treatments, lotions or rinses, even if there have been cases reported.

If head lice are discovered there are two options to deal with the problem:

1. Wet combing method (Bug Busting) – Head lice may be cleared over a two week period by the following method:
 - Wash the hair in the normal way with an ordinary shampoo.
 - Using lots of hair conditioner and whilst the hair is very wet, comb through the hair from the roots with a fine tooth comb. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with every stroke and do this over a pale surface, such as a paper towel or the bath.
 - Clear the comb of lice between each stroke.
 - Wet lice find it difficult to escape and hair which is slippery from conditioner is easier to comb through. If you find any lice, then repeat this routine every three to four days for two weeks, so that any lice emerging from the eggs are removed before they can spread.

2. Using Lotions Your Health Centre, GP or local pharmacist will be able to recommend lotions and rinses which are made to kill lice and their eggs quickly. The particular lotion suggested, may change from time to time, because the local health authority will change the recommended product to another. The aim is to prevent head lice becoming resistant to the active ingredient in one particular product. Your pharmacist will be able to explain the correct way to use the product. If the problem persists, then you should discuss this with your GP. Once again, please do not hesitate to contact the school and we will gladly try and offer you some advice.