**School head lice policy**

Each school is expected to develop a school based policy on head lice which reinforces an accurate, consistent approach to the management of head lice infections. The policy must be approved by the school council.

Please use the *Suggestions for the Development of a School Head Lice Policy*.

**Suggestions for the development of a school head lice policy**

It is recommended that a school head lice policy include the following:

* An introductory statement acknowledging that, **while parents/guardians have primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice**, schools also have a role in the management of head lice infections and in providing support for parents/guardians and students.
* The minimisation of anxiety by acknowledging that most schools will have some students with head lice at any given time.
* A comprehensive management plan that incorporates the following:
	+ a commitment to distribute up-to-date information on the detection, treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians and staff at the beginning of every year and more frequently if required (available from website <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/headlice/>).
	+ the nomination of a head lice resource/support person (parent/guardian or staff member) who parents/guardians can contact at the school at nominated times
	+ a requirement that parents/guardians refrain from sending their children to school with untreated head lice. (It should be noted that students may be treated one evening and return to school the next day and that the presence of eggs in the hair is not cause for exclusion. Parents/guardians need to be aware that one treatment is not sufficient to manage the problem. If a student re-attends school with live head lice the school may again exclude the student until the live insects have been removed.)
	+ a commitment to provide parents/guardians with comprehensive advice about the use of safe treatment practices which do not place students’ health at risk
	+ provision for a loan system or bulk-buying program for the more effective (and expensive) head lice combs
	+ clear protocols for any inspection program that the school wishes to implement, including a pro forma for obtaining written parental permission for all inspections including those by local government personnel
	+ a pro forma letter of notification to parents/guardians of those students found to have head lice, which could incorporate a detachable slip at the bottom, asking parents/guardians to indicate the treatment used and when it commenced
	+ a commitment to help reduce stigma and maintain confidentiality following head lice inspections, e.g. it is recommended that a letter be given to all students involved in inspections, not just those found to have head lice
	+ provision of classroom activities to give students an understanding of the habits and life-cycle of head lice in order to minimise the incidence of stigmatisation of particular students and families
	+ training of appropriate school personnel in detection and management of head lice at the school level.
		- In addition schools may wish to incorporate suggestions for parent/guardian action in their school head lice policy. Advice to parents/guardians could include the following procedures:
			* regular (preferably once per week) inspection of their child/children’s hair for lice or lice eggs (using conditioner and a head lice comb is the most effective method)
			* regular inspection of all household members followed by treatment if head lice are detected
			* upon detection of head lice, notify the school and advise when treatment has commenced.