Policy for Dealing with Headlice

Introduction
Headlice infestations can cause distress and embarrassment to children so it is important that infection is dealt with promptly and with great sensitivity. The main priority in any case of headlice infestation is to maintain the education of the child, therefore the emphasis is placed on health education, prevention and early detection and treatment.

The school works in consultation with the Health Authority and the School Nurse, and has access to various resources which can support parents in understanding headlice. Family workers can often support parents, providing advice and guidance in dealing with an infestation. The school nurse is always happy to discuss the matter with parents who have wider concerns.

Above all, we strongly believe that everyone involved with the child needs to be involved in tackling the problem. Only with mutual co-operation and openness, can we address the issue effectively.

We know and promote...

 That infection can only be spread by head to head contact.
 That the education of the child remains a priority.
 That lotion can be obtained free from the G.P. or purchased over the counter at the local chemist.
 Regular twice daily grooming is essential to disturb lice before they have a chance to breed further.
 The use of a detection comb is recommended on at least a weekly basis.
 The ‘chemical free’ approach which involves conditioning the hair and fine combing.

Procedures
1. If a child is suspected of having lice then parents are telephoned to ask permission to either check their hair or parents to come and carry out the check themselves.
2. We request that parents take their children home to be treated and return them to school as soon as this has been done, either later on the same day or the following morning.
3. If parents cannot or will not come and treat their child, then classroom management may be adjusted to limit the potential for the spread of the infection, as long as the welfare of the child is the prime consideration. Children are entitled to an education and will not be excluded from activities or classes if their parents are unable to remove and treat children immediately.
4. We recommend that parents treat the whole family and wash all bedding and soft furnishings which the child has been in contact with in order to prevent re-infestation.

5. When a case of headlice has been confirmed, a letter informing parents is sent home that day, asking them to check their children’s hair in order to prevent further infestation.

6. When required, the office can contact the school nurse for advice on currently recommended lotions.

7. We do not support the wearing of hats, bandanas or any type of headwear as a prevention or ‘containment’ of a headlice problem. There is no evidence that this helps to address the issue, advice suggests that hats promote the warm environment which encourages headlice.

In extreme circumstances, where recurrent infection is considered to be due to willful neglect, and live lice are obvious, the Family Support Team will contact parents directly to discuss the matter further.