



EASTBURY FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL
Head Lice & Nits Policy

Autumn 2025

Statement of intent

Head lice are a common problem among school-aged children and can be very distressing to experience.

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils at Eastbury Farm Primary School. For this reason, all staff members, pupils and parents are required to act in accordance with this policy in relation to the identification, treatment and prevention of head lice, in order to reduce the risk of potential infestations spreading.

This policy aims to minimise the social stigma associated with head lice infestations, whilst ensuring staff members and parents are aware of the actions to take when head lice are present within the school.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- UK Health Security Agency 'Health protection in education and childcare facilities'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy

2. Definitions

Head lice – small, six-legged and wingless insects which live on, and close to, the scalp at the base of hair, often causing itching two to three weeks after coming into contact with someone who has head lice. They are spread by head-to-head contact.

Nits – small, empty white shells are left behind when head lice hatch, found further along the hair shaft. If an individual has nits, it does not necessarily mean that live head lice are present, but appropriate treatment should still be sought.

Head lice and nits are not harmful, but can be an extremely distressing experience for both pupil and parent, as well as for school employees.

For the purpose of this policy, the term '**outbreak**' is used to describe where there are **more than two** cases of head lice present in one class at the same time.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Making parents and staff members aware of this policy.
- Implementing this policy throughout the school.
- Ensuring that all parents and staff members understand their responsibilities in relation to individuals' privacy.
- Appointing an appropriate designated person to address head lice queries (Welfare Officer).

- Collaborating with the Welfare Officer when providing pupils and parents with advice regarding the identification and treatment of head lice.
- Ensuring that pupils with head lice are not excluded from activities or made to feel victimised.

The Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- Acting as the designated person to address head lice queries and concerns.
- Being aware of head lice signs, symptoms, causes and incubation periods.
- Remaining informed and up-to-date regarding the identification, treatment and prevention of head lice.
- Providing pupils and parents with advice regarding head lice.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of pupils and families involved in cases of head lice infestation.

All staff members are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this policy.
- Being aware of head lice signs and symptoms.
- Providing parents with advice on the prevention and detection of head lice, or directing them to the Welfare Officer or GP, as necessary.
- Creating an inclusive environment at all times in which pupils with head lice are not subject to prejudice or discriminated against.
- Maintaining a visual check of pupils for head lice.
- Reporting concerns and directing queries about head lice to the Welfare Officer.

Parents are responsible for:

- Being aware of head lice signs and symptoms.
- Ensuring that their child maintains a sufficient level of hygiene, grooming and hair care.
- Identifying cases of head lice and notifying the school of these immediately.
- Responding to and actively addressing concerns about their child pertaining to the presence, or potential presence, of head lice.
- Undertaking all preventative measures advised by the school.
- Carrying out wet combing on a **weekly** basis during an outbreak.
- Treating their child for head lice as soon as they have been diagnosed.

4. Identified cases

Parents are primarily responsible for identifying, reporting and treating their child's head lice. If parents find head lice in their child/rens hair, they should report this to the school, rather than sharing on the class WhatsApp groups.

If staff members notice head lice in an individual pupil's hair, they will privately inform the parent **in person or over the phone**, advising them to treat their child's hair, and will notify the Welfare Officer of the matter. If it is noticed that the headlice have not been treated or the lice still persist, a letter from the school will be sent home, making clear expectations around treatment (appendix 1).

If staff members notice head lice in numerous pupils' hair, or a particular group of pupils, they will report the matter to the Welfare Officer, who will then be responsible for notifying the necessary parties.

Where **more than two** pupils have been identified as having head lice at the same time, a letter will be sent home to all parents in the class notifying them that an outbreak of head lice has been reported and asking all parents to check their child's hair.

The names of the pupils involved in an outbreak of head lice will not be disclosed.

Parents will be reminded about the importance of early identification and their responsibilities in relation to detection via **information letters from HCC** (Appendix 2) **newsletters** and **emails**.

Pupils with head lice are expected to still attend school and will not be excluded for medical reasons. Where a pupil does not attend school due to head lice, they will be registered as having an unauthorised absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

Unacceptable behaviour, such as name calling, towards pupils or families of pupils with head lice will not be tolerated. Where exclusive behaviour is present, pupils will receive consequences in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

5. Prevention

The school recognises that, whilst head lice cannot be prevented, measures can be taken in order to aid early detection and reduce the risk of lice spreading, such as daily hair brushing and grooming.

Pupils and parents will be provided with information regarding the prevention of head lice, explaining what they can do at home to reduce the risk of an outbreak.

All staff members will be aware of the risk posed by head lice and will be capable of providing advice to parents regarding the identification and treatment of head lice. Where staff members experience difficulty answering a parent's query, they should consult the Welfare Officer.

Contact precautions will be used to control the spread of head lice, e.g. pupils will be discouraged from sharing personal items such as combs, hats and scarves.

Pupils must always tie long hair back, especially when lice or nits are present.

Parents are expected to ensure that their child maintains a sufficient level of cleanliness and hygiene, including the brushing and grooming of hair.

Staff members, including the Welfare Officer, will not inspect pupils' hair for lice, but will report it to the pupil's parents as soon as practically possible when lice have been seen.

It is the responsibility of parents to inspect their child's hair for lice as described in the **Transmission** section of this policy.

Parents will be discouraged from using treatments, such as those containing insecticides, as a **preventative** measure, advising parents that this will hinder treating lice in the future. Instead, parents will be encouraged to 'wet comb', also known as 'detection comb', their child's hair on a **weekly** basis.

6. Transmission

It is recognised that head lice are contagious and can be contracted by direct head-to-head contact, and thus are a higher risk amongst younger pupils due to their increased bodily contact; therefore, all possible precautions, as outlined in the **Prevention** section of this policy, to help reduce the risk of transmission of head lice within the school will be taken.

Where a child is identified as having head lice, the parent is responsible for ensuring that all members of the family are checked and, if necessary, treated.

Regular checks should be carried out following treatment, helping to prevent further infestation and transmission.

To help parents identify cases of head lice, the school will provide information about what to look out for, as well as dispelling any myths regarding transmission, such as that they can fly or that only unhygienic people get them.

The school will provide parents with useful contacts where additional information can be accessed. Affected families will be reassured that having head lice is nothing to be ashamed of.

7. Treatment

When asked for advice regarding treatment, staff members will not endorse one particular brand of treatment and will instead direct the individual to their GP or pharmacist.

Parents will be provided with information pertaining to head lice treatment, including insecticide lotions, non-insecticidal lotions and wet combing.

Where parents have concerns regarding the use of chemicals, the Welfare Officer will suggest wet combing instead. Parents are responsible for sourcing and applying the treatment for their child. Treatment will not be provided by, or within, the school. The school will not recommend the use of essential oils and electronic combs to treat head lice.

Where treatment has been unsuccessful and live lice are still present, parents must seek medical advice about further treatment, ensuring that wet combing is still effectively undertaken every **three** days. Re-infestation of head lice will be indicated if full-sized adult lice are found whilst wet combing up to seven days after treatment. Where this is the case, parents must seek medical advice regarding the necessary treatment.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed every **two years** by the Welfare Officer.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

The next scheduled review for this policy is - Autumn 2027

Appendix 1:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Head Lice Notification – Urgent Action Required

We wish to inform you that your child, **[Child's Name]**, has been found to have a repeat occurrence of head lice. It is essential that you take prompt and comprehensive action to eradicate the infestation and prevent spread to others.

Please treat your child's hair **immediately** using an effective method. You may wish to seek advice from your pharmacist, your GP, or reliable online sources. In particular, the NHS offers up-to-date guidance on how to detect and treat head lice on their website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-lice-and-nits/ nhs.uk

A few important points to note:

- Headlice **can become resistant** to some treatments over time. If you use a product but still find live lice after following the instructions, you may need to switch to a different type of treatment or combine mechanical removal (e.g. wet combing) with medicated lotions or sprays.
- It is best practice to check all household members' hair and treat anyone found to have lice on the **same day**.
- Continue to check your child's hair regularly in the following days to catch any newly hatched lice early.

We appreciate your cooperation in dealing with this matter swiftly. Prompt and proper treatment helps safeguard not only your child but also the wider school community.

Should you require any further advice or support, please contact the school office or speak to your GP or local pharmacy.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Workman
Headteacher

Appendix 2:

HEAD LICE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Head lice occur commonly in children and their presence does not mean that those affected are in any way dirty. However, head lice can cause distress and discomfort. They represent a community rather than a school problem but are seen at school because the age group most affected is 7-12 years old. Apart from distributing information, school staff can do little to control head lice. The responsibility lies with parents. The 'nit inspections' which were carried out in schools many years ago achieved little and the problem was no less common than it is today.

Head lice can only be caught from head to head contact. They live close to the scalp and are quick moving insects, slightly smaller than a match head. They lay eggs which are small, skin coloured and well camouflaged, glued to the hair close to the scalp. After the egg hatches, the empty egg shell, or 'nit' stays glued to the hair and moves away from the scalp as the hair grows. The 'nits' are white and shiny and easier to see. They are harmless and can persist for weeks after the lice have been treated successfully. Lice are difficult to see on the hair as they are grey or brown. Only about one third of children with lice complain of itching which develops some weeks after the hair becomes affected. Lice can leave a deposit like black powder on pillows or collars.

DETECTION

It is a good idea to get into the habit of "wet-combing" children's hair twice a week, even when you do not suspect the presence of lice. After shampooing with an ordinary shampoo, apply ordinary conditioner to wet hair. Use a fine-toothed comb and comb from the roots of the hair in sections over a white surface such as a sink or piece of paper. If you think your child has lice you can buy a special detection-comb from the pharmacist. If you comb out wriggling insects you should treat the child's hair. By themselves, nits do not indicate an active problem. If you are not sure about what you have combed out, using a piece of sticky tape, catch a combing and seek the advice of your school or health visitor.

It is important to check the hair of all other members of the household if lice are found, and to let friends and relatives who have close contact with your child know, so that they can check too. Remember head lice are common, their presence does not mean that your child is in any way dirty, and is nothing to be ashamed about.

TREATMENT

You should only treat people who are found to have head lice.

Consult your doctor before treating babies below the age of six months or if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

The recommended treatments are prepared in the form of lotions (one is in mousse form) and are available from your pharmacist. The water-based products can be used safely by people with skin problems and asthma.

Shampoos and lice repellents are not effective in treating head lice.

Apply the liquid to partings of the DRY hair made at close (1-2 cm) intervals and work drops of liquid into the scalp. You will need a whole bottle of lotion for each head. More than one bottle may be needed if the hair is long. Let the lotion dry naturally overnight (for mousse follow directions on the label) and shampoo the next day. Your child should return to school after you have carried out the treatment once. After one week repeat the treatment once more.

Remember to:

- Check all contacts
- Treat all contacts who have head lice
- Use enough lotion on *dry* hair and leave it on overnight (for mousse leave on as directed on label).

Even after successful treatment itching can persist for several weeks.

After you have used the treatment twice, continue to wet comb the hair with conditioner at least twice a week. If you comb out **lice** (nits can persist for weeks and do not mean that the treatment has not worked) ask your pharmacist for advice before using another lotion.

After the problem has cleared up continue to wet-comb twice weekly.

Hertfordshire Health Authority