RATIONALE

Wollongong West Public School, like all schools, from time to time has infestations of head lice amongst the student population. These procedures provide some information to staff and parents about head lice, what the school will do, and what parents are asked to do in the case of an infestation of head lice. If all members of our community follow the guidelines and recommended procedures it will assist in reducing the occurrence of head lice at Wollongong West Public School.

Results of research show that:

Head lice infestations are a common occurrence, particularly in primary schools

• About 23% of primary students have head lice at any one time
• Anyone can catch head lice regardless of their age, sex, or how clean their hair is
• Head lice move from one person’s head to another via hair
• Head lice do not survive long when they are off a human head
• Head lice do not live on furniture, hats, bedding or carpet
• Head lice have built up some resistance to head lice treatments
• Daily combing of white hair conditioner through the hair using a fine tooth comb is effective in getting rid of head lice and eggs (nits)
• School communities may need to hold ‘check and treat’ or Nitbuster days where everyone learns about and starts treatment on the same day.

Information on effective treatment is essential to break the cycle of head lice infestation.

What you can expect from your school:

Advice from NSW Health indicates that there is no need for students to be sent home or excluded from school because of head lice.

Observing students scratching their heads is not a reliable or efficient means of assessing head lice prevalence in the school.

Where one student has head lice this serves as a warning light that there is likely to be an infestation in either specific classes or across the whole school population, including staff.

The school will send a letter home to parents when infestations of head lice occur and request that parents examine their child’s hair and undertake treatment where eggs or lice are identified.

Schools also provide:

A venue for parents to get together and work out and where relevant, implement, local strategies

Ways of communicating information about head lice infestations and treatment for parents (eg through school newsletters)

They will also encourage students to avoid head to head contact, in group activities as far as possible.

In rare cases where students are experiencing a chronic head lice infestation the school, parents and the local community may need to work together to treat the infestation. Nitbusters has been found to be an effective whole school approach.

Tips for parents in reducing the spread of head lice:

• Regularly check your children’s hair
• Teach older children to check their own hair
• Tie back and braid long hair
• Keep a fine tooth head lice comb in the bathroom and encourage all family members to use it when they wash their hair.

As infestations are particularly common in primary schools, it is best to choose a treatment that can be used over time. There is no single solution to eradication, only persistence.

Procedures
If a teacher or other staff member at school notices a child scratching their head more than usual or sees movement of lice or live eggs in a child’s hair the following will occur:
• Staff member will send the child to the office with a note explaining the reason.
• Child will return to the classroom.
• Child is to wear a hat at all times including in the classroom.
• Child will be positioned in the classroom away from the other students.
• Child will stay in the office area at recess and lunch time.

Office staff will:
• Ring the parent of the child to inform them that their child may have head lice.
• Ask the parent if they would like to come up to school to check their child’s head and/or take them home.
• Explain to the parent what will happen if the child remains at school.
• Provide a general head lice notification note for the whole class to take home.
• Provide a specific head lice notification note for the child to take home.

Parents will:
• Check their child’s hair for head lice and/or nits.
• Treat the child’s hair with a suitable treatment if head lice and/or nits are found.
• Return the child to school as soon as possible after treatment.
• Recheck the child’s hair every few days and treat again if required.