

## Scoil Bhréanainn

### Head Lice Prevention and Treatment Advisory Policy



#### **Purpose of the policy**

To reduce the spread of head lice within the school community and ensure prompt, effective treatment while minimizing disruption to learning. Like the common cold, anyone can catch head lice. Recurrent problems with head lice create particular concerns for school, parents and the children. Head lice is an infection not just restricted to children. Adults also can be affected.

It is unlikely that problems with head lice will ever be completely eradicated, *but an approach which involves the cooperation of both school, parents and the community will, in the long term, help in controlling and limiting head lice infections.*

The school will support families in their efforts to eradicate the problem. Head lice spread very easily and can cause a lot of stress and upset for children and families. One of the major frustrations with head lice is that once an infection has been successfully treated, there is no guarantee against re-infection soon after.

## Understanding the Head Lice Lifecycle

- Head lice live close to the scalp and cannot jump or fly; they spread through direct head-to-head contact.
- **Eggs (nits):** Tiny, oval, and usually yellow-white. They are firmly attached to the hair shaft and hatch in about a week.
- **Nymphs:** Newly hatched lice that mature over roughly 7–10 days.
- **Adult lice:** About the size of a sesame seed. They live for around 30 days on a human head and need blood to survive.
- Because eggs hatch days after treatment, **repeat treatment or ongoing combing is important** to break the cycle.

## Prevention

- Families are encouraged to check their child's hair regularly (fortnightly).
- Students should avoid sharing hats, hairbrushes, combs, or hair accessories.
- We strongly recommend that long hair should be tied back to reduce the chance of contact between heads.
- The school will periodically remind families about prevention and monitoring.

## Identification

- If staff suspect a student may have head lice, they will notify the school office to send out a text. The class teacher will also inform the parents directly.
- All parents/carers will be contacted the same day so they can check and, if necessary, treat their child.

## Treatment

- Children with confirmed head lice may remain at school for the rest of the day.
- Treatment should begin before the child returns the next day. Families may use either:
  - An approved head-lice treatment product, **or**
  - The wet-combing method using conditioner and a fine-tooth comb.
- A second treatment or continued combing is recommended 7 days after the first to address any newly hatched lice.

The wet-combing method is described below.

- Wash the hair using ordinary shampoo and apply ample conditioner, before using a wide-toothed comb to straighten and untangle the hair.
- Once the comb moves freely through the hair without dragging, switch to the louse detection comb. Make sure that the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with the bevel-edge of the teeth lightly touching the scalp.
- Draw the comb down to the ends of the hair with every stroke and check the comb for lice.

- Remove lice by wiping or rinsing the comb.
- Work methodically through the hair section by section so that the whole head of hair is combed through.
- Rinse out the conditioner and repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair.
- Repeat the procedure on day five, nine and 13 in order to clear the young lice as they hatch, before they have time to reach maturity.

### **Return to School**

- Children may return to school once treatment has started.
- We would ask that parents/carers should confirm to their class teacher that treatment has been applied.

### **Confidentiality**

- The school will maintain confidentiality and respect student privacy.
- Notifications to families will be general and will not identify individuals.

### **Education**

- The school will provide age-appropriate education on personal hygiene and preventing the spread of head lice in the Social, Personal & Health Education.

### **Communication**

This policy was shared with representatives of the Parents Association and the staff before being ratified by the Board of Management.

### **Ratification and Review**

This policy was originally ratified in February 2026. All staff members and the Parent Association were consulted before ratification. The policy will be re-examined on a regular basis and published on the school website.

Signed:

*Myra Hulme*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date:

10 February 2026