



Priory School Guidance on Head Lice 2020-2021

The school has used guidance from the Health Protection Agency to inform this statement.

Early diagnosis and treatment

Head lice are common; particularly in primary school aged children, who tend to put their heads together with other children frequently. Early identification and treatment of head lice will minimise their spread. Children of primary school age should probably have their heads checked for head lice at least weekly, especially if their friends are known to be infected.

Treatments known to be effective

No treatment should be instituted unless a living, moving louse has been identified. The only treatments that were proven to be effective were lotions containing chemicals from the following three main groups: pyrethroids; malathion; and carbaryl. Shampoos are not useful. Lotions must be reapplied 7 days after the first treatment to kill newly hatched lice before they are old enough to lay eggs.

In some situations it may be appropriate to use a different chemical where the initial application has been unsuccessful however failure to apply the product correctly and failure to follow up within 7 days is normally the cause.

Regular communication via the school's newsletter and the website will be used to remind parents of the need to check their children for head lice and to provide advice on how to treat their children.

In the event that a child is identified as having head lice, Priory school will:

1. In the first instance the Pupil Services Administrator (PSA) will contact the parent/carer and request that the child's hair is checked and the appropriate action taken.
2. If the child is still not clear of head lice, the PSA will again contact the parent by telephone or face to face to let them know specifically that their child needs to be treated. If cost is an issue, vouchers may be an option. This will need to be agreed with the Business Manager.
3. If the child is still not clear of head lice then the PSA will inform the School Nurse for intervention. The parents will be informed of this referral in writing.



Head Lice: The Truth and the Myths

The lice

- Head lice are small insects with six legs. They are often said to be “as large as a match head”; in fact, they are often not much bigger than a pin head and rarely bigger than a sesame seed (the seeds on burger buns).
- They live on, or very close to the scalp and don’t wander far down the hair shafts for very long.
- The louse’s mouth is like a very small needle. It sticks this into the scalp and drinks the blood.
- They can only live on human beings; you can’t catch them from animals.
- Nits are not the same thing as lice. Lice are the insects that move around the head. Nits are egg cases laid by lice, which are glued onto hair shafts; they are smaller than a pin head and are pearly white.
- If you have nits it doesn’t always mean that you have head lice. When you have got rid of all the lice, the nits will stay stuck to the hair until it grows out.
- You only have head lice if you can find a living, moving louse (not a nit) on the scalp.

Who and where?

- Anybody can get head lice, but they are much rarer in adults.
- Head louse infection is a problem of the whole community, not just the schools.
- Infection is common during school holidays as well as during term time. Parents start to worry more about lice when children go back to school because they think the lice are being caught there.
- A lot of head louse infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, not from the school.
- It’s not just children who have head lice; adults get them too.
- It’s often said that head lice prefer clean, short hair. In fact, they probably don’t much care whether hair is dirty or clean, short or long.

How you get them

- Head lice can walk from one head to another when the heads are touching for some time.
- You are very unlikely to pick up head lice from brief contact with other people. The longer you have head-to-head contact with someone who has lice, the more likely it is you will get them too.
- They can’t swim, fly, hop or jump. The idea that they can jump may have come from the fact that when dry hair is combed, a head louse caught on the teeth of the comb is sometimes flicked off by static electricity (this is one reason why detection combing should be done with the hair damp).
- You don’t get them from objects such as chair backs. Although it’s just possible that a louse might get from one head to another if a hat is shared, this is very unlikely. It’s not the way infection is usually caught.



Has Your Child Got Head Lice?

Detection combing – how to do it

You will need:

- Plastic detection comb (from the pharmacist)
- Good lighting
- Ordinary Comb

What to do:

- Wash hair well and then dry it with a towel. Hair should be damp.
- Make sure there is good light, daylight is best.
- Comb the hair with an ordinary comb.
- Start with the teeth of the detection comb touching the skin of the scalp at the top of the head. Keeping in contact with the scalp as long as possible, draw the comb carefully towards the edge of the hair.
- Look carefully at the teeth of the comb in good light.
- Do this over and over again from the top of the head to the edge of the hair in all directions, working round the head.
- Do this for several minutes. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to do it properly for each head.
- If there are head lice, you will find one or more lice on the teeth of the comb.
- Head lice are little insects with moving legs. They are often not much bigger than a pin head, but may be as big as a sesame seed (the seeds on a burger bun).
- Clean the comb under the tap. A nail brush helps to do this.
- If you find something and aren't sure what it is, stick it on a piece of paper with clear sticky tape and show it to the Welfare Assistant at school or family doctor. There can be other things in the hair that are not lice.
- Don't treat unless you are sure that you have found a living, moving louse.



How to Treat Head Lice

Notes:

- Do not treat unless you are sure you have found a living, moving louse.
- Never use head louse lotions on your family “just in case”. It’s never a good idea to use chemicals if they aren’t really needed.

If you are sure you have found a living louse:

- Check the heads of all the people in your home.
- Only treat those who have living, moving lice.
- Treat them all at the same time with a head lice lotion (not shampoo).
- Ask your local pharmacist, school nurse, health visitor or family doctor which lotion to use and how long to leave it on.
- Always follow manufacturer’s instructions when applying a lotion.
- Put the lotion on to *dry* hair.
- Use the lotion in a well-ventilated room or in the open air.
- Part the hair near the top of the head, put a few drops on to the scalp and rub it in. Part the hair a bit further down the scalp and do the same again. Do this over and over again until the whole scalp is wet.
- With long hair you don’t need to apply lotion down any further than where you would put a ponytail band (except when applying Dimeticone which should fully cover hair).
- Use enough lotion – at least one small bottle for each head and more if the hair is thick. Use all the lotion up.
- Keep the lotion out of the eyes and off the face. One way is to hold a cloth over the face.
- Let the lotion dry on the hair. Some lotions can catch fire, so keep well away from flames, cigarettes, stoves and other sources of heat. Don’t use a hair dryer.
- Repeat the treatment in seven days’ time for all of those receiving the first treatment.
- Check all heads a day or two after the second treatment. If you still find living, moving lice, ask your local pharmacist, health visitor, school nurse or family doctor for advice.