



Baringa Special School
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Head Lice Policy

Executive Summary

- Primary responsibility for the control of head lice lies with individuals, families and public health experts. However, Baringa can assist with controlling and preventing head lice.
- When a student is identified with live head lice, Baringa will inform parents/carers via a phone call or a note that their child has head lice and will be excluded from school until one day after treatment has commenced.
- Senior leadership at Baringa must alert parents or carers of an infestation and use discretion to avoid identifying individuals when informing the school community.
- Baringa is not required to conduct visual head lice checks but in the event that a decision is made to, parental consent is required if the student is physically examined.

Control of head lice in schools

Baringa will control the spread of head lice in 2 ways:

1. exclusion from school
2. visual head lice checks in schools

Exclusion from school

When a student is identified with live head lice Baringa must:

- At the end of the school day, the student's pastoral teacher must inform the parent/carer that their child may have head lice either through direct contact or with a written note sent home. The parent/carer must also be made aware that their student will be excluded from school until *one day after treatment has begun*.
- Exclude the student from school until the day after treatment has commenced, as set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, School Exclusion Table — refer to the [health.vic](http://health.vic.gov.au) website: School Exclusion Table.
- The student's pastoral teacher is required to write up the situation as a welfare note on the Sentral platform.

Note 1: the principal has the overall responsibility to exclude a student from school

Note 2: the presence of eggs in the hair is not a cause for exclusion (only live head lice)

Note 3: there is no requirement for a general practitioner or local council to issue a clearance certificate in order for the child to return to school

The Principal or senior leadership must:

- alert parents or carers of an infestation, particularly the parents of other students in the same class as the affected child or children
- use discretion to avoid identifying individuals when informing the school community about an infestation

Note: the Department of Health and Human Services indicates there are likely to be cases of head lice in most schools at any given time, so it is not advocated that the principal informs the whole school community each time head lice are detected.

Visual head lice checks in Baringa

There is no requirement for Baringa to undertake head lice inspection programs. However, when we choose to do so, we will conduct checks via visual checks only without physical contact which:

- do not require parent or carer consent
- are made by people authorised by the principal, for example, classroom teachers

Head lice inspections involving the physical examination of a student:

- are made by people authorised by the principal for example, teacher or suitably experienced educational support staff
- require written parental consent, usually obtained at enrolment

Parent or carer consent:

- should be obtained prior to commencing any physical examination of a student
- should be provided to parents/carers for completion as part of enrolment
- must be updated when guardianship or custody arrangements change for the student
- must be updated if parents/carers no longer wish to consent to inspections

Prevention of head lice in schools

Although the responsibility for detecting and treating head lice rests with parents, it is important that practical advice and support be available.

Baringa commits to working collaboratively with parents and the broader school community to implement practices and procedures to prevent and minimise the impact of head lice outbreaks.

Strategies that Baringa uses to implement to prevent the transmission of head lice are:

Leadership and commitment

Baringa considers it best practice to:

- take a whole school approach to prevention of head lice, based on evidence-based information from the Department of Health and Human Services, refer to the Resources tab
- ensure the whole school community is aware of and understands this policy

Healthy physical environment

Head lice do not live or breed on furniture, carpets, clothes or soft toys and cannot be spread through sharing items of clothing, for example, hats.

However, Baringa considers it best practice to:

- encourage parents to tie their child's hair back if it is long; and
- implement learning activities that minimise head-to-head contact during head lice outbreaks

Healthy culture

Baringa will:

- exercise sensitivity towards this issue, maintain student confidentiality and help reduce stigma (for example, provide a letter to all students involved in inspections, not just those found to have head lice)
- maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatising or blaming families who are finding it hard to control head lice

Student teaching and learning

Baringa will:

- incorporate learning activities focused on prevention of head lice into the curriculum
- encourage children to learn about head lice so as to help remove any stigma or bullying associated with the issue

Support staff and educators

It is best practice to:

- consider families, students and staff as key partners in developing and supporting lice prevention initiatives
- provide general information regarding head lice in the school prospectus, school newsletter or on the school website for parent reference

Community partnerships

Baringa will:

- work with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase their capacity to deliver and promote head lice prevention initiatives
- access community educational resources and support such as community health centres or local government

Parent or carer detection and treatment responsibilities

Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice.

Responsibilities include:

- not sending their children to school with untreated head lice
- using safe treatment practices which do not place their child's health at risk
- regularly checking for lice or eggs in the hair of their child and other household members
- notifying the school if their child is affected and when treatment commenced

Definitions

Head lice

Pediculosis or 'head lice' are small, wingless insects that live, breed and feed on the human scalp. They cannot transmit any infectious diseases. Direct contact is required for transmission from person to person, where head lice crawl from head to head.

This policy was last approved by School Council on 17th August and is scheduled for review in July 2024.