HEAD LICE POLICY

RATIONALE:

- It is acknowledged that while parents/guardians have primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, schools also have a role in the management of head lice infections and in providing support.
- Head Lice (Pediculosis) are tiny insects that live on the human scalp where they feed and breed. Probably between 2-3% of primary school students are infested at any one time. While they do not carry or transmit disease, they are the most common cause of head itch and scratching, which may lead to infection; therefore, they need to be eradicated. Head lice infestations are also seen as a social, educational and health issue.
- Anyone can catch head lice. Head lice cannot fly, hop or jump. They spread from person to person largely by head to head contact.

AIMS:

- To respond to reports of head lice quickly and effectively
- To maintain student confidentiality and avoid stigmatisation
- To ensure that an effective process for treating head lice is well known and consistently followed.
- To ensure that parents and guardians are well informed about head lice treatment
- To ensure that school community members (parents, guardians and teachers) are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the detection, control and treatment of head lice.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Students with long hair will be recommended to tie it back whilst at school. (tying back hair does not prevent head lice but it can assist in preventing infestation from occurring.)
- Management of head lice infestation works best when all children are involved in a screening program and/or individual inspections when necessary.
- Classroom information sessions should be held to give students accurate information and thereby help eliminate any teasing, which may occur.
- Written parental permission must be obtained before a child can be inspected for head lice infestation.
- A data base of permission will be maintained by the school administration.
- Provided that written parental permission is obtained, local council staff, school nurse or a designated staff member may carry out inspections.
- Upon positive identification of head lice, the principal will ensure that the parents of any infected child are contacted as soon as possible and informed that their child is to be excluded from attending school in accordance with the Health (Infectious Diseases) regulations 2001 until the children have been treated. A student with head lice MUST be excluded from school until the day after appropriate treatment has
commenced. The presence of eggs in the hair is not cause for exclusion. (DE&T Circular 010/2003).

• Where parental permission is not obtained and it is suspected that a child has head lice, parents will be contacted and asked to carry out a head lice inspection on their child and advise the school of the results.

• Where the school believes that a child has on-going head lice infestations, a referral to a human service support agency may be considered.

• While other staff members may believe that a child has head lice, they are not permitted to search a child’s hair, inspect for head lice, or diagnose a case of head lice.

• Teachers or staff members suspecting that a child has head lice, are to report their concerns to the designated staff member or principal who will organise the authorised officers (designated staff member/s, medical officer of health, a council health officer or nurse employed by council or DHS) to carry out the necessary inspections.

• Upon return to school, each excluded child will be required to provide to the principal, either a report from a medical officer indicating that no live lice are present or undergo another inspection by an authorised officer and a clearance certificate issued.

• The principal will provide parents of infected children with information about head lice treatment and prevention. (Information may be written and/or a scheduled discussion with the parent)

• The principal will ensure that information relating to the prevention and eradication of head lice appears throughout the year in the school newsletter, particularly at times of heavy outbreaks; information sessions may also be offered to parents.

• The school undertakes to distribute up-to-date information from time to time regarding the treatment and control of head lice to parents/guardians at the beginning of every year and more frequently as required.

EVALUATION:

• This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three year cycle or as necessary.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on: