



## Important Information for Parents Regarding Head Lice

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome back to a new school year! This letter is being sent to the parents of all students in grades pre-K through 8 to help you identify and prevent head lice in your child. Any time children come together, such as at the beginning of the school year, at sleepovers, social groupings such as Girl/Cub Scouts, sports activities, camp, etc., head lice cases commonly increase. Most transmissions occur in the home and community settings. **The parent or guardian has the ultimate responsibility to ensure children are free of lice and nits. It is recommended that you check your child's head weekly for lice and/or nits.**

### **What are head lice and nits?**

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp and feed on blood. Generally found around the ears and at the back of the neck, the adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed. The adult female lice lay eggs (nits) that are smaller and silver in color and are usually found within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of the scalp. They may be hard to see and "stick" to the hair shaft. They may be mistaken for dandruff. When the nits hatch, they cause itching and discomfort but do not spread disease.

### **How is head lice spread?**

Lice are most commonly found in young children due to frequent, close contact with each other. Lice are usually spread by direct head-to-head contact when one person has an active case of lice. They do not fly, jump or swim. They do however, crawl. Head lice cannot survive for very long off the head. Therefore, lice are not usually spread by contact with personal items such as hats, brushes or combs. Lice are not a sign of poor hygiene. If someone in your child's class develops head lice, there is no reason to panic and automatically assume that your child will "catch" head lice.

### **How do I know if my child has head lice or nits?**

The signs that a child may have head lice include: an itchy and inflamed scalp; the feeling that something is moving in the hair; visible lice crawling on the scalp or hair. If your child has any of these signs or symptoms, he or she should be examined by a health care provider or the school nurse. Head lice move quickly and can be hard to see.

### **What do I do if my child has lice or nits?**

- Please notify the school and keep your child home until he or she is treated. Talk to your child's health care provider about appropriate care. Resistance to some over-the-counter treatments has been reported. New prescription treatment options are available. Private companies also provide lice treatment and/or removal services. A parent must accompany the child upon return to school after treatment. Staff members will check to be sure there are no live lice. The child may not return if live lice are still present.
- Once a child has been treated for lice or nits, frequent re-checks will be done to ensure that treatment was effective and lice have not recurred.
- Teach your child not to share combs, brushes, barrettes, hats, towels and other personal items.
- Teach your child to avoid head-to-head contact during play and other activities.

For more information regarding head lice or its treatment, please contact your school nurse. Thank you for your help and support.

Sincerely,

Principal