

# Common head lice

## Number of cases at Grace is in question

By Lisa Simon  
staff writer

At least one parent questions the way the report of common head lice at the William Grace Elementary School in Farmington has been handled.

Margaret Perrelly, the mother of three Grace students — a kindergarten, a first grader and a second grader — is following the recommended procedure for ridding her children of head lice.

Perrelly complained that school officials did not report the correct number of infected students and have not conducted thorough head checks.

Grace Principal William Close reported six cases of head lice — pediculosis — Tuesday morning. After a schoolwide head check of more than 300 students Tuesday afternoon, Close reported one more confirmed case.

On Friday, Perrelly conducted head checks in her neighborhood and reported 11 cases. Of 11 children she found with lice, 10 were students at Grace. After the schoolwide check Tuesday afternoon, Perrelly said two students were sent home with lice from her second grader's class.

"WE DON'T have a problem," Close

**'There has always been lice. It's a matter of controlling it. . . It does take a while to get lice under control. We have to be very cautious.'**

— Colleen Hunt  
public health nurse supervisor

stressed. "One mother wanted to know which kids have it (lice). That's privileged information."

"It's (seven cases) the normal amount," Close said. Head lice has afflicted the school every year, he added. "It's nothing unusual."

This week — the second week of the school year — is earlier than normal for head lice, Close acknowledged. November or December are the usual months for lice. Hat wearing and sharing make it easy for lice to spread from one child's head to another.

"There has always been lice. It's a matter of controlling it," said Colleen Hunt, a public health nurse supervisor with the Oakland County Health Department. "In the time of Queen Eliza-

beth, people wore wigs because they had lice."

"It does take a while to get lice under control," Hunt said. "We have to be very cautious."

PARENTS WHO know their children are carrying lice must notify the school immediately. The school must be able to contain the problem quickly.

"If parents don't notify the school, we don't know," Hunt added.

Public health nurses instruct both the school and parents in the proper, most-effective way of ridding an individual of the parasite.

After head checks, students with lice are sent home for a medicated shampoo. Quell and Rid are over-the-counter, lice-killing shampoos and coun-

may also prescribe shampoos. The shampoo is repeated seven days later. After each treatment, students are re-checked on their way into school, Close said.

All clothing and bedding must be washed and carpeting should be vacuumed. "It's quite a job for mothers," Hunt said.

But it's part of the cooperation between schools and parents, she added.

CHILDREN WITH head lice are unfortunately a source of embarrassment to their parents.

"Kids growing up are exposed to this kind of thing," Close said.

Teachers are often the first to notice lice because of an afflicted student's severe itching of the scalp, he said.

Lice are a smooth and grayish white in color. They are more difficult to notice than their eggs, or nits. Lice lay 3-4 eggs a day and it takes 8-9 days for an egg to reach maturity, Hunt explained.

That's why it is important to shampoo a second time, one week after the first shampoo.

Ridding a school of lice takes time, Hunt stressed. As she put it: "It's important to let parents know they can't solve it today or even in a week. It could take as long as six weeks."

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