Overview:

Once the school office is made aware of a case of head lice either from a parent report or observations by a teacher, the student is examined by a designated staff member trained through the “Head Lice Screening Procedures” as written in the Michigan Head Lice Manual (Michigan Department of Community Health, 2004).

Direct, physical, head-to-head contact is the usual method of transmission. Lice do not jump, fly, or swim. They are, however, good crawlers. Mature lice, which are no bigger than a sesame seed, avoid light and are hard to see. Lice eggs or “nits” are usually found close to the scalp – usually within ¼ inch. They appear as tiny whitish ovals that are “glued” to the hair shaft. They cannot easily be flicked away as dandruff can. Head Lice do not transmit disease and are not a serious medical condition. They cannot survive on pets.

Office Procedures:

1. The student’s parent is notified by phone and requested to provide treatment and remove nits. If a parent is unfamiliar with what lice look like, they are welcome to learn from designated school staff members. The parent is to treat the lice at home with lice removal treatment and remove the nits (eggs) from the hair, paying special attention to the nits that are closest to the student’s scalp. Parents will receive a letter and educational packet.

2. The student may return to school when they:
   - Have no live lice and no nits (eggs).
   - Have had their head checked in the school office and been approved to return to class.

3. The office informs parents through a letter or listserv of students in that classroom (or classrooms if it is a case of team teaching) of the infestation and are asked to check their student’s heads.

4. The principal may request a designated staff member to check the affected student’s siblings and close friends.

5. The observation date of lice or nits is noted on the calendar and the designated staff member also provides a re-check of the student after 10 days. If nits or lice are observed, parents are informed and asked to treat and remove nits.
6. The district nurse and the designated staff member assigned in every school are available for consultation with parents.

7. Due to the disruption of class and the embarrassment associated with head checks of all students, a classroom check is not done unless there are several cases noted by the principal and/or district nurse.

**Classroom/Building Procedures:**

1. The custodial staff is requested by the principal to conduct a thorough cleaning of the room per district guidelines.

2. Upholstered furniture, stuffed animals or dress-up clothes are cleaned (washed, vacuumed or cleaned with a sticky lint roller). Items may also be put in plastic bags for two weeks, or in very cold weather, outside for 24 hours.

3. Headphones used in the classroom(s) are wiped per district guidelines.

4. Students are advised to keep their hats and coats separate from others as much as possible. This may involve putting coats into backpacks, turning hoods inside coats, putting hats inside the sleeve of the coats or providing individual bags for the student's belongings.

5. Students are advised not to share brushes, combs, hats, helmets, or hair accessories. Girls with long hair may choose to wear their hair up in a ponytail or braid.

**Head Lice Screening Procedures:**

**Suggested Equipment and Supplies:**

- Applicator stick or tongue depressor
- Strong source of natural light, high intensity lamp, or strong flashlight
- Magnifying glass with a light source if possible
- Disposable gloves (optional)

**Methods:**

Head lice are best identified by inspecting the hair and scalp for live lice or nits (eggs attached to the hair shaft). The standard for identifying head lice is finding a live louse on the head. Lice and nits are most often found at the nape of the neck, and above and behind the ears. Carefully part the hair using the applicator stick or tongue depressor and examine the hair and scalp for nits or crawling lice. Begin by inspecting the nape of the neck and the area behind the ears. If nothing
is seen in these areas, continue to inspect the rest of the head to ensure the absence of lice and nits.

Adults and nymphs are difficult to see because they are small and often appear to be nearly the same color as the host’s hair. Most recently laid nits will be opaque, white, shiny, and located on a hair shaft within one-quarter inch of the scalp, and generally develop a dark eyespot within 48 hours of being laid. Dandruff, hair casts, globules of hair spray, and scalp conditions such as psoriasis or eczema may easily be mistaken for nits. Hair debris is easily detached or loosened from the hair shaft. Nits are firmly attached to the hair and are not easily removed. Empty nit cases are more visible and are dull yellow in color. Nits are usually found one-quarter inch or more from the scalp due to hair growth following the initial attachment.

References:
1. Michigan Head Lice Manual; Michigan Department of Education and Michigan Department of Community Health; 2004
2. The No Nit Policy; National Pediculosis Association; 2004