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BEAT THE BUGS

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TEXTS GIVE PARENTS THE POWER TO FIGHT HEADLICE

Submitted by: Pegasus Public Relations (Worthing)
Thursday, 10 April 2008

TXTS GV PARNTS PWR 2 FITE HED LICE

'Beat the Bugs', the UK's first ever campaign to unite a primary school, its parents and local pharmacy to limit head lice amongst the community, set a national benchmark by pioneering an SMS 'Outbreak Alert' system.

The project, supported by leading head lice treatment Hedrin, was designed to raise awareness amongst parents of the need to check regularly to control head lice outbreaks, and was launched as part of a national educational campaign called 'Once A Week, Take A Peek.'

Head lice affect nearly 1 in 10 primary school children in the UK and are a regular source of frustration for families. Parents at Wootton Primary School, Northampton, which piloted the project, were surveyed at the start of the campaign. Results showed that:

• Parents didn't check and take action regularly enough – less than half were checking their hair once a week
• 82% thought one of the biggest problems was other parents not taking action
• Half were frustrated with tackling head lice
• Over in 1 in 10 NEVER checked their children's hair

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When questioned as to what would give them the winning advantage over these bugs the response was clear:

• 71% wanted more guidance in the form of educational materials
• 53% wanted schools and parents to work together to solve the problem
• 63% trusted treatment advice from their pharmacist more than any other source

As part of the project, all parents were sent new educational material on how to check, treat and manage head lice within their family, and all staff at the local pharmacies involved were trained on how to educate and support enquiries from parents.
Parents were invited to sign up to the school's 'Outbreak Alert' facility, to receive texts from the school and to commit to informing the school if they found lice on their child's hair during a weekly check.

During the campaign, which ran for a term, six cases of head lice were identified. On each occasion all parents in the child's class who had signed up to the system were sent an immediate text asking them to be aware and to check their family's hair for lice.

Parents were surveyed again at the end of the campaign and the results were extremely positive:

• 77% believed outbreaks of lice had been reduced due to this campaign
• 77% were supportive of Outbreak Alert Text Messages
• 74% of parents now checked their children's hair at least once a week
• 88% felt better informed about head lice treatment and prevention

• 67% of parents now felt relaxed about head lice

Gill Nightingale, Administration Manager, Wootton Primary School said: “Although schools no longer have ‘nit nurses’ or do termly checks we do still have an important role in supporting parents in managing this problem. By working closely with parents, our pupils and the local pharmacy, the project has made a huge difference to the way in which head lice outbreaks are managed.”

Caroline Wheeler, Hedrin marketing manager, said: “The Beat the Bugs initiative is the first pro-active campaign of its kind in the UK. Our goal was to raise awareness of the need to check for head lice regularly in order to control its spread, whilst also showing that having lice is nothing to be either embarrassed or ashamed about.”

Sharon White from SAPHNA, the School and Public Health Nurses Association, said: “These results show just what can be achieved when schools and parents work together. We would encourage more schools across the UK to follow this example and be proactive in limiting head lice outbreaks across their own community.”

Further information on the ‘Once a Week, Take a Peek’ campaign, how to identify and deal with head lice, as well as fun and practical tips to get your children involved can all be found online at: www.onceaweektakeapeek.com

-ends-

Notes to editors:

The campaign is supported by Hedrin, the UK’s leading head lice treatment. Hedrin costs £4.99

for 50ml and £11.49 for 150ml.

Please visit www.hedrin.co.uk for further information.

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