



Saffron Walden County High School

Allergy Policy

September 2026

Approved by: This draft version will go to the LGB for approval

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Next Review: September 2027

Key Contacts

SLT Allergy Lead: Polly Lankester

Governor Lead: TBC in September 2026

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Paul Singh (psingh@swchs.net)

Medical Room: Rebecca Doe (rdoe@swchs.net)

Catering Manager: Emma Bowles (ebowles@swchs.net)

Introduction

Food allergies are increasing, affecting approximately **5-8% of UK children**. Severe reactions (anaphylaxis) can be life-threatening and may occur in school, sometimes in students with no previous diagnosis.

- Around **20% of severe allergic reactions happen in school settings**
- Rapid recognition and response are critical to saving lives

An allergy is a reaction of the body's immune system to substances that are usually harmless. The reaction can cause minor symptoms such as itching, sneezing or rashes but sometimes causes a much more severe reaction called anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction. The whole body is affected often within minutes of exposure to the allergen, but sometimes it can be hours later. Causes can include foods, insect stings, and drugs.

Most healthcare professionals consider an allergic reaction to be anaphylaxis when it involves difficulty breathing or affects the heart rhythm or blood pressure. Anaphylaxis symptoms are often referred to as the ABC symptoms (Airway, Breathing, Circulation).

It is possible to be allergic to anything which contains a protein; however, most people will react to a small group of potent allergens.

Common UK Allergens include (but are not limited to): -

Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Sesame, Milk, Egg, Fish, Latex, Insect Venom, Pollen, and Animal Dander.

1. Aims and Ethos

Saffron Walden County High School is committed to promoting a whole school approach to healthcare, welfare and wellbeing, and to the safe management of all members of our community living with allergies.

We believe all allergies should be taken seriously and managed professionally. We aim to:

- Provide **robust systems to prevent and respond to allergic reactions**, including emergencies with all staff being trained to recognise symptoms and act immediately, including being trained to administer an AAI.
- Promote **independence and self-management** for life beyond school.
- Ensure **full inclusion** of all students in school life.
- Maintain a **culture of awareness and safety** across the whole school community.

We recognise our legal duty to support students with medical conditions and will make **reasonable adjustments** to enable full participation in all aspects of school life.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects:

- DfE guidance: *Supporting students with medical conditions*
- Department of Health guidance on **adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs)**
- Best practice guidance from **Anaphylaxis UK, BSACI, and Allergy UK**

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Allergy Lead (Polly Lankester)

Responsible for:

- Leading whole-school allergy awareness
- Ensuring annual staff training which includes:
 - Knowing the common allergens and triggers of allergies
 - Spotting the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis. Early recognition of symptoms is key, including knowing when to call for emergency services
 - Administering emergency treatment (including AAIs) in the event of anaphylaxis – knowing how and when to administer the medication/device
 - Ensuring trainer devices have been shown
- Overseeing AAI provision and policy review

3.2 Medical Room (Rebecca Doe)

- Maintaining up-to-date allergy records and action plans
- Informing the canteen team of any allergen causing an anaphylactic response in a SWCHS student (once parents have informed us of this)
- Ensuring parents are aware that students with a history of more minor reactions to an allergen outside of the main 14, are clear that their child will need to ask to confirm if their allergen is present as it will not necessarily be listed on the allergen boards
- Coordinating medical information and medication
- Maintaining the allergy register
- Checking medication expiry and liaising with parents

- Ensuring that any reaction or near miss is recorded and reported internally (to SAT Health and Safety team) and, if required, in accordance with RIDDOR

3.3 All Staff

- Know students with allergies in their care and check key information for classes they cover (on Arbor)
- Recognise symptoms of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis
- Complete annual training
- Staff leading school trips will ensure they carry all relevant emergency supplies. Trip leaders will check that all students with medical conditions, including allergies, carry their medication. Students unable to produce the required medication will not be able to attend the excursion
- Promote allergy awareness and ensure inclusion

3.4 Parents/Carers

- Provide up-to-date medical information and allergy action plans; parents **must** provide an annual update to ensure we can safeguard children with allergies
- Supply in-date medication (including **two AAls where prescribed**)
- Inform school of any changes in symptoms and known allergens
- If your child has additional needs that might make it more challenging for them to meet the responsibilities expected of students (below) to liaise with the Learning Support team

3.5 Students with Allergies

- Understand their allergies and triggers and take steps to avoid these, including checking allergen boards, if their allergy is one of the top 14 or one causing a known anaphylactic response to one of our students and asking staff to confirm that their allergen(s) are not present, if choosing an item that is not pre-packaged or if they have any doubts.
- Carry and use medication where appropriate.
- Inform staff immediately if symptoms occur.

4. Allergy Action Plans and Register

Allergy action plans are individual healthcare plans for children with food allergies, providing medical and parental consent for schools to administer medicines in the event of an allergic reaction, including consent to administer a spare adrenaline auto- injector.

British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) Allergy Action Plans are produced by a medical professional and should not be created by school.

All students with significant allergies must have an **Allergy Action Plan** (BSACI model preferred).

- The school maintains a **register of students at risk**, including:
 - Known allergens
 - Medication details
 - AAI consent and location
- This information is accessible to staff in an emergency on ARBOR

Please note that in accordance with Benedict's Law, teachers should take prompt action if anaphylaxis is suspected, even if the student does not have known allergens.

5. Risk Assessment and Prevention

5.1 Risk Assessment

Individual risk assessments are carried out for:

- Practical lessons (food tech, science)
- Trips and off-site visits
- Activities involving food, animals, or environmental risks

5.2 Catering (Emma Bowles)

- All the top 14 allergens are clearly labelled (either on packaging or, for foods produced in school, on the allergen boards at the pods or in the canteen, in line with the Food Information Regulations of 2014. An annual external audit of our catering provision checks that we are fully compliant with this requirement, and the catering runs additional spot checks.
- In addition, we add to our information boards, the allergens known to cause an anaphylactic response to one of our students (where parents have made this known to us).
- Menus and ingredient lists are available in advance (request from ebowles@swchs.net)
- Catering staff are informed and can answer queries from students about allergens
- Catering staff are trained in allergen awareness

- Cross-contamination controls in place, although we cannot guarantee no cross contamination occurs owing to the nature of our busy and small cooking and self-service area.

5.3 Allergens in School

The school is not allergen-free; Anaphylaxis UK does not support bans in schools on any allergen as it can create a false sense of reassurance as no school can guarantee that it is truly allergen free.

A 'whole school awareness of allergies' is considered a much better approach, as it ensures teachers, students and all other staff are aware of what allergies are, the importance of avoiding the students' allergens, the signs & symptoms, how to deal with allergic reactions and to ensure policies and procedures are in place to minimise risk.

however:

- High-risk foods may be discouraged on some trips, in line with their risk assessment
- Lessons involving food are risk assessed

5.4 Animals and Environment

- Handwashing after animal contact is encouraged
- The ASU stock are in clearly demarcated locations, known to our students to help them avoid contact if required.

5.5 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Recognising that allergies can affect wellbeing, the school provides:

- Pastoral support
- Monitoring for bullying or anxiety

6. School Trips and Activities

- Students with allergies will **not be excluded**
- Staff are informed and trained
- Medication and AAls are carried and accessible with students prescribed AAls being required to carry two devices on trips (checked by staff before setting off)
- Activities are risk assessed

7. Recognising and Responding to Allergic Reactions

7.1 Symptoms

What to look for:

Symptoms usually come on quickly, within minutes of exposure to the allergen, but can also occur hours after exposure.

Mild to moderate allergic reaction symptoms may include:

- a red raised rash (known as hives or urticaria) anywhere on the body
- a tingling or itchy feeling in the mouth
- swelling of lips, face, or eyes
- stomach pain or vomiting

Severe (Anaphylaxis – ABC symptoms):

- AIRWAY - swelling in the throat, tongue, or upper airways (tightening of the throat, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing)
- BREATHING - sudden onset wheezing, breathing difficulty, noisy breathing
- CIRCULATION - dizziness, feeling faint, sudden sleepiness, tiredness, confusion, pale clammy skin, loss of consciousness

The term for this more severe reaction is anaphylaxis. In extreme cases there could be a dramatic fall in blood pressure. The person may become weak and floppy and may have a sense of something terrible happening. This may lead to collapse and unconsciousness and, on rare occasions, can be fatal.

If the student has been exposed to something they are known to be allergic to, then it is more likely to be an anaphylactic reaction.

Anaphylaxis can develop very rapidly, so treatment is needed that works rapidly. **Adrenaline** is the mainstay of treatment, and it starts to work within seconds.

What does adrenaline do?

- It opens the airways
- It stops swelling
- It raises blood pressure

As soon as anaphylaxis is suspected, adrenaline must be administered without delay.

7.2 Emergency Procedure (Anaphylaxis)

1. Keep the child where they are, call for help and do not leave them unattended

2. **LIE CHILD FLAT WITH LEGS RAISED** – they can be propped up if struggling to breathe but this should be for as short a time as possible
3. **USE ADRENALINE AUTO-INJECTOR WITHOUT DELAY** and note the time given. AAls should be given into the muscle in the outer thigh. Specific instructions vary by brand – always follow the instructions on the device.
4. CALL **999** and state **ANAPHYLAXIS (ana-fil-axis)**
5. If there is no improvement after 5 minutes, administer second AAI in the **OPPOSITE THIGH** to the one used for first AAI
6. If no signs of life commence CPR
7. Call parent/carer as soon as possible
8. **The student must go to hospital** for observation

Whilst you are waiting for the ambulance, **keep the student where they are. Do not stand them up, or sit them in a chair, even if they are feeling better.** This could lower their blood pressure drastically, causing their heart to stop.

8. Adrenaline Auto-Injectors (AAls)

8.1 Provision

- Students carry their own AAls where appropriate
- Spare medication is stored in a suitable container and clearly labelled with the student's name. The student's medication storage container should contain:
 - The spare AAls i.e., EpiPen® or Jext®
 - An up-to-date allergy action plan
 - Antihistamine as tablets or syrup (if included on allergy action plan)
 - Spoon if required
 - Asthma inhaler (if included on allergy action plan)
 - It is the responsibility of the child's parents to ensure that the anaphylaxis kit is up-to-date and clearly labelled, however the School First Aider will check medication kept at school on a termly basis and send a reminder to parents if medication is approaching expiry
- SWCHS holds **spare emergency AAls – these are stored in both the medical room (on left wall) and the PE department (on the wall opposite the main office).** They are **identifiable as they are in designated and labelled green first aid boxes.**

8.2 Maintenance

- Our AAI's are checked regularly for expiry and replaced promptly

8.3 Use

- Used if student's own AAI unavailable or fails
- In an emergency, they may be administered to a student or member of staff without an allergy plan/previously known allergy

9. Training

All staff receive **annual allergy and anaphylaxis training**, including:

- Recognising symptoms
- Emergency response procedures
- AAI use
- Risk reduction strategies
- Inclusion and wellbeing considerations

10. Inclusion and Safeguarding

SWCHS is committed to ensuring that students with allergies:

- Are fully included in school life
- Feel safe and supported
- Are protected from bullying or discrimination
- Can achieve their full academic potential

11. Monitoring and Review

- Policy reviewed annually by SLT and governors. As a part of the review the governors will consider incidents and the lessons learned from these to improve our practice.
- Training and procedures will be updated as needed and in line with government recommendations.

Useful Links

Anaphylaxis UK - <https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/>

Safer Schools Programme - <https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/education/safer-schools-programme/>

AllergyWise for Schools online training - <https://www.allergywise.org.uk/p/allergywise-for-schools1>

Allergy UK - <https://www.allergyuk.org>

Whole school allergy and awareness management - <https://www.allergyuk.org/schools/whole-school-allergy-awareness-andmanagement>

BSACI Allergy Action Plans - <https://www.bsaci.org/professional-resources/resources/paediatric-allergy-action-plans/>