

## Allergy Policy

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement**

Around 5-8% of children in the UK live with a food allergy, and most school classes will have at least one allergic pupil. Merton Music Foundation is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of our entire learning community during lessons, rehearsals, concerts and other events by ensuring the risk of exposure to allergens is mitigated and through appropriate staff training and emergency access to adrenaline auto-injectors.

#### **Legislation**

Whilst MMF is not a school, and therefore not subject to the same statutory requirements as schools, we seek to mirror best practice in Merton schools and uphold the highest standards of pupil safety.

Schools have a legal duty to support pupils with medical conditions, including allergy. Schools must adhere to legislation and statutory guidance on caring for pupils with medical conditions, including the administration of allergy medication and adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs). MMF seeks to uphold the same standards of care in its provision as Merton schools.

The English Government's [guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#), published in December 2015.

#### **Health & Safety**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Foundation's Health and Safety policy and any associated risk assessments relating to specific individuals and/or activity.

#### **Roles & Responsibilities**

Trustees are responsible for overseeing the Foundation's policies and ensuring suitable provision is in place regarding the safety and wellbeing of staff, pupils, visitors and volunteers.

The Chief Executive is responsible for putting the trustee board's policy into practice and for developing detailed procedures. They should also make sure that parents/guardians are aware of MMF's health and safety policy, including arrangements for managing children with allergies and at risk of anaphylaxis.

Staff and tutors in charge of pupils are expected to always use their best endeavors, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of the pupils at the school in the same way that parents might be expected to act towards their children. They should follow this and other policies of the Foundation at all times.

## **Allergies and Anaphylaxis**

Allergy is the response of the body's immune system to normally harmless substances. These do not cause any problems in most people, but in allergic individuals the immune system identifies them as 'allergens' and produces an inappropriate 'allergic' response. This can be relatively minor, such as localised itching, but it can also be much more serious, causing anaphylaxis which can lead to breathing problems and collapse. Common allergic triggers include nuts, cow's milk and other foods, venom (bee and wasp stings), drugs, latex and hair dye. The most common cause of anaphylaxis in children/young people are foods. Symptoms often appear quickly and the 'first line' emergency treatment for anaphylaxis is adrenaline which is administered with an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI).

### **Pupils with Allergies in MMF Provision**

Parents/guardians need to be confident in our ability to keep their children safe and be reassured that staff are sufficiently trained to act immediately in the event of an allergic reaction. Regular communication with parents/guardians is vital, including clear policies and procedures – as outlined here.

It is important that allergic pupils are not stigmatised or discriminated against in any way at MMF due to their allergy. For example, they should not be separated at mealtimes or excluded from activities (unless this has been specified in the pupil's Allergy Plan). Drawing attention to the allergy in this way could result in allergy bullying by other pupils, so inclusivity and overall awareness amongst pupils is vital.

MMF maintains a record of all pupils' medical, dietary and allergy needs; including a specific resource field on each pupil's data card to indicate if they carry an AAI.

### **Notification & Monitoring**

MMF requests parents/guardians share information about pupils' allergies at registration and are required to confirm this data is up to date via their online account annually. Additionally, medical information forms are sent out to all parents/guardians before MMF concert and events to gather the most up to date information and update our records accordingly.

All pupils at risk of anaphylaxis should have an Allergy Action Plan that describes exactly what to do and who to contact in the event that they have an allergic reaction. MMF encourages parents/guardians of allergic children to share their Allergy Action Plan with us. MMF recommends using the British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) Allergy Action Plans to ensure continuity. This is a national plan that has been agreed by the BSACI, Anaphylaxis UK and Allergy UK.

Details of individual pupil's Allergy Action Plans, where available, will be recorded under the medical and allergy notes of the pupil account on MMF's database and made available to staff / tutors that work directly with these children. This may include adrenaline dosage amount, action to take in mild/moderate reactions, where the child's auto-injector is stored (if not on their person – e.g. 'in the school office') and any other relevant information, including Asthma Action Plans if applicable.

## **EMERGENCY TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT OF ANAPHYLAXIS**

### **Symptoms of Anaphylaxis**

Symptoms of anaphylaxis include one or more of the below:

Airway:

- Swollen tongue
- Difficulty swallowing/speaking
- Throat tightness
- Change in voice (hoarse or croaky sounds)

Breathing:

- Difficult or noisy breathing
- Chest tightness
- Persistent cough
- Wheeze (whistling noise due to a narrowed airway)

Circulation:

- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Collapse
- Babies and young children may suddenly become floppy and pale
- Loss of consciousness (unresponsive)

**Action to be taken: as soon as anaphylaxis is suspected, adrenaline must be administered without delay.**

- Position is important -lie the person flat with legs raised (or sit them up if having breathing problems)
- Give adrenaline – WITHOUT DELAY – if an AAI is available
- Bring the AAI to the person having anaphylaxis, and not the other way round. Avoid standing or moving someone having anaphylaxis
- Call an ambulance (999) and tell the operator it is anaphylaxis
- Stay with the person until medical help arrives
- If symptoms do not improve within five minutes of a first dose of adrenaline, give a second dose using another AAI
- A person who has a serious allergic reaction and/ or is given adrenaline should always be taken to hospital for further observation and treatment
- Sometimes anaphylaxis symptoms can recur after the first episode has been treated. This is called a biphasic reaction.

### **Spare Auto-Injectors**

MMF holds a spare emergency Adrenaline Auto-Injector (AAI) pen at its main office / South Wimbledon Music Centre, and this is taken to all MMF concerts and events. Additionally, AAI's are held by schools and therefore are available on site at Saturday Music School Wimbledon College and Sherwood School (adjacent to Soundwave Music Centre).

### **Staff Anaphylaxis Training**

MMF delivers regular staff Paediatric First Aid and First Aid at Work training with practical adrenaline auto-injector training, which is updated every two years for selected staff. Trained first aiders are clearly indicated on the Foundation's 'Meet the Team' staff posters and website page.

In light of Benedict's Law, we will additionally provide online allergy awareness training for all employed staff and will signpost our team of self-employed tutors to relevant training and support materials.

Training should include a basic understanding of allergic disease and its risks which include:

- Knowing the common allergens and triggers of allergy
- 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
- Measures to reduce the risk of a child having an allergic reaction e.g. allergen avoidance
- Knowing who is responsible for what
- Associated conditions e.g. asthma
- Managing Allergy Action Plans and ensuring these are up to date

Allergy training should ideally include a practical session (trainer AAIs are available to order through the manufacturer's website).

### **Storage of AAIs**

Allergic students should carry two AAIs with them at all times. If the student is unable to carry AAI's/ medication/inhalers themselves (e.g. primary school-aged pupils) this medication should be given to MMF staff and stored safely and easily accessible in the event of an emergency (not locked away). MMF staff will ensure that these are labelled for identification of the pupil e.g. with their name and photograph and Allergy Action Plan.

Ensure that students know where their medication, AAIs and inhalers are at all times.

If a pupil has anaphylaxis, and their AAI is stored away from them, then the AAI must be brought to them. They must not be told to go to the room where the AAI is stored, in order for it to be administered.

Staff should support students who demonstrate maturity and have had appropriate training to carry their own AAIs, medication and/or inhalers.

### **Expiry dates**

- MMF's auto-injector prescription is managed by St George's hospital and is automatically replaced each year
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that the child's AAIs are within the expiry date, however it is good practice for MMF to schedule their own regular checks of medication
- Parents and schools can register AAIs on the manufacturer's websites to receive text alerts for expiry dates
- MMF will return expired medication for safe disposal
- Any sharp items such as AAIs should be disposed of safely using a sharps disposal box
- When MMF is closed for long periods e.g. school holidays, it is possible that medication could have expired so it is essential that staff check the expiry dates of AAIs as these may need replacing
- Note that the dose of AAI varies according to the child's weight, so as the child grows, the correct dose required may change.

### **Allergy Awareness and Nut Bans**

MMF supports the approach advocated by Anaphylaxis UK towards nut bans/nut free schools/providers. They would not necessarily support a blanket ban on any particular allergen in any establishment. This is because nuts are only one of many allergens that could affect pupils, and no school could guarantee a truly allergen free environment for a child living with food allergy. They advocate instead for schools/providers to adopt a culture of allergy awareness and education. A 'whole organisation awareness of allergies' is a much better approach, as it ensures tutors, pupils and all other staff are aware of what allergies are, the importance of avoiding the 9 pupils' allergens, the signs & symptoms, how to deal with allergic reactions and to ensure policies and procedures are in place to minimise risk.

However, due to a large number of pupils with nut allergies in its provision, MMF is always a strictly nut-free environment and all communications regarding packed lunches to parents/guardians will include a 'strictly no nuts' reminder.

### **Catering & Packed Tea**

MMF does not routinely provide catering, however a tuck shop is available at South Wimbledon Music Centre alongside a parent-run café on Saturdays. In addition, pupils are occasionally required to bring a packed lunch with them for concerts/events. In these circumstances, the specific allergy requirements of the pupils involved are taken into consideration and appropriate risk assessments are put into place, including communication with parents/guardians.

## **Working with parents**

Parents/guardians know their child's allergies best and so it is vital that MMF works with parents/guardians to ensure they have the most up to date knowledge of each child's allergies and medication.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to:

- Provide an Allergy Action Plan signed by a healthcare professional
- Ensure that their child always has two in-date AAIs, which should ideally be kept with the child rather than away from them.

## **Risk Assessment**

MMF maintains risk assessments for all its activities in relation to allergens and these are reviewed ahead of all concerts/events.

Wiltshire Children Trust – Anaphylaxis Risk Assessment Template:

<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/anaphylaxis-risk-assessment-v8/>

## **Managing insect sting allergy**

Insect sting (including bee and wasp) allergy causes a lot of anxiety and needs careful management. Children need to take special care outdoors, wearing shoes at all times and making sure any food or drink is covered.

Adults supervising activities must ensure that suitable medication, including AAIs, is always on hand for the management of anaphylaxis.

## **Other Support / Useful Links**

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

Resources for managing allergies at school - <https://www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/at-school/>

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

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

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

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

Department of Health Guidance on the use of adrenaline auto-injectors in schools - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/645476/Adrenaline auto injectors in schools.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/645476/Adrenaline_auto_injectors_in_schools.pdf)

## **Policy Review**

This policy was last updated on 2 April 2026.