

Allergy Policy

Person Responsible for this Policy and its Implementation: Deputy Head Teacher (Allergy Lead)

Review Frequency: Annually

Date Approved: September 2026

Date of Next Review: July 2027

Policy Status: Statutory

1. Introduction and Core Principles

Hurworth School is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students, staff, governors, contractors, volunteers and visitors who live with allergies. The school recognises that allergic conditions are increasingly common amongst children and young people and that severe allergies can present a life-threatening risk. This policy sets out the arrangements by which Hurworth School will identify, reduce and manage allergy-related risks and establish clear emergency procedures to ensure that allergic reactions are responded to effectively and without delay.

The school adopts a whole-school approach to allergy safety. Effective allergy management cannot be the responsibility of a single member of staff or an individual family. Instead, it requires the active involvement and cooperation of students, parents and carers, governors, school leaders, teaching staff, support staff, catering providers and external agencies. The school is committed to fostering a culture in which allergy awareness is embedded in everyday practice and in which students with allergies can participate fully, confidently and safely in all aspects of school life.

Allergy is a broad term encompassing a range of medical conditions. Reactions occur when a susceptible person encounters an allergen to which they have become sensitised. Common allergic conditions include food allergy, insect sting allergy, medicine allergy, eczema, allergic asthma and allergic rhinitis. Whilst many allergic reactions are mild, some reactions can progress rapidly to anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction which can affect the airway, breathing or circulation and which may be fatal if not treated immediately.

Hurworth School recognises that severe allergies may constitute a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to remove barriers to participation and learning. Students with allergies will not be excluded, isolated or treated less favourably because of their medical condition.

Whilst conditions such as coeliac disease and food intolerances require careful management and dietary support, they do not generally present a risk of anaphylaxis and will therefore be managed through the school's wider arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions.

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2. Governance and Oversight

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard students and staff with allergies and to ensure compliance with statutory guidance. Governors will review allergy safety arrangements regularly and will ensure sufficient resources are made available to support the implementation of this policy.

As a matter of good practice, the Governing Body will nominate a governor with oversight responsibility for allergy safety. The nominated governor will meet periodically with the Allergy Lead to review implementation of the policy, consideration of incidents and near misses, staff training compliance and emerging risks.

The Head Teacher retains overall responsibility for implementation of this policy and will ensure that allergy management remains a priority across all aspects of school life.

3. Emergency Treatment and Management of Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction affecting the airway, breathing and/or circulation. It requires immediate emergency treatment with adrenaline.

Symptoms may include:

- Swelling of the throat, tongue or upper airways.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Hoarseness or changes in voice.
- Wheezing or persistent coughing.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Noisy breathing.
- Dizziness or collapse.
- Pale, clammy skin.
- Confusion or loss of consciousness.

Staff must also recognise that anaphylaxis can occur without a rash or obvious skin symptoms and should be considered whenever a person with a known allergy develops sudden breathing difficulties.

If anaphylaxis is suspected:

1. The individual must not be left unattended.
2. Assistance must be summoned immediately.
3. The individual should be kept where they are and, where possible, laid flat with legs raised.
4. Adrenaline must be administered immediately.

5. Emergency services must be called by dialling 999 and clearly stating that the individual is experiencing anaphylaxis.
6. Parents or carers should be informed as soon as possible.
7. A second adrenaline device should be administered if symptoms do not improve after five minutes.
8. The individual must be transferred to hospital for observation even if symptoms appear to have resolved.

Delays in administering adrenaline have been associated with fatal reactions. Where there is doubt about whether a reaction constitutes anaphylaxis, staff should administer adrenaline and seek emergency medical assistance immediately.

4. Minimising Risk and Exposure to Allergens

Hurworth School recognises that it is impossible to create an entirely allergen-free environment. The school's approach is therefore centred upon risk reduction, awareness and preparedness.

The school adopts an allergy-aware approach. National guidance advises that blanket food bans, particularly around nuts, can create a false sense of security and are not considered the most effective means of reducing risk. Instead, students, staff and visitors are encouraged to remain vigilant, recognise risks and maintain high standards of hygiene and communication.

Allergy considerations will be included within:

- Curriculum planning.
- Practical subjects.
- Science activities.
- Food technology.
- Art and design activities.
- Educational visits.
- Residential visits.
- Sporting events.
- Enrichment activities.
- Wraparound provision.

When planning activities, staff must consider whether exposure to known allergens could occur and what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to enable safe participation.

The school will promote effective handwashing, routine cleaning of eating areas and good hygiene practices before and after food consumption.

5. Food Provision and Catering

Hurworth School works closely with its catering provider to ensure full compliance with food allergen legislation and to provide safe access to school meals for students with allergies.

The catering provider will maintain systems which clearly identify allergens contained within food products and recipes. Information regarding allergens will be available to students, parents and carers and will be updated whenever menus change.

The school will ensure that students with known food allergies are identified through robust catering systems. At least two methods of identification will be used to reduce the risk of error. These may include allergy records, catering system alerts, student photographs, allergy notices within staff-only catering areas and verbal confirmation procedures.

Students with food allergies will not routinely be segregated from their peers during mealtimes. Appropriate safeguards will instead be implemented to allow safe and inclusive participation in school dining arrangements.

All food used within curriculum activities and educational experiences should be appropriately labelled. Staff providing food within lessons or activities must be aware of allergen information and take steps to avoid cross-contamination wherever practicable.

Students will be regularly reminded not to share food, drinks, bottles, cutlery or food containers.

6. Identification of Students, Staff and Visitors with Allergies

The school will actively seek information regarding allergies through admissions procedures, annual data collection exercises, healthcare reviews and transition arrangements.

A central allergy register will be maintained by the Allergy Lead and will include:

- Name and photograph.
- Known allergens.
- Prescribed medication.
- Individual Healthcare Plan status.
- Allergy Action Plan status.
- Emergency contacts.
- Location of medication.

Where appropriate, allergy information will be shared with those members of staff who require it to fulfil their duties safely and effectively.

The school also recognises its responsibility towards staff, volunteers and visitors who may have allergies. Employees will be given opportunities to disclose relevant medical information so that reasonable adjustments may be considered. Visitors attending school activities may also be asked to notify the school of significant allergies where this information may be relevant to their safety.

7. Information Sharing and GDPR

Hurworth School recognises that allergy information constitutes special category personal data under UK GDPR. The school nevertheless has a lawful basis for processing and sharing this information where necessary to safeguard health, safety and educational access.

Allergy information will be stored securely on the school's Management Information System. Access will be restricted to staff who require the information in order to fulfil their professional responsibilities.

Relevant information may be shared with:

- Teaching and support staff.
- First aiders.
- Educational visits leaders.
- Catering staff.
- Senior leaders.
- External professionals supporting the student.

All information sharing will be proportionate, necessary and undertaken with due regard for confidentiality.

8. Transition Arrangements

The school recognises the importance of effective transition planning for students with allergies.

Allergy information will be obtained as part of Year 6 to Year 7 transition arrangements and for in-year admissions. The school will request copies of existing healthcare plans, Allergy Action Plans and relevant medical information from previous settings.

Wherever possible, Individual Healthcare Plans will be agreed before a student starts at Hurworth School. For students admitted during the academic year, appropriate arrangements will normally be established within two weeks of admission.

The school will also ensure that appropriate information is shared whenever students transfer to another educational setting.

9. Medication and Adrenaline Devices

Students prescribed adrenaline devices are expected to have access to them at all times whilst in school and participating in school-related activities.

Where appropriate, students will be encouraged to carry their own medication. This supports both independence and rapid access in an emergency. Where students are unable to carry medication, arrangements will be established to ensure that medication remains accessible within five minutes from any location on site.

Medication will never be locked away in a manner that could delay emergency treatment.

The school will maintain records of prescribed medication and monitor expiry dates. Parents and carers remain responsible for ensuring that replacement medication is provided promptly.

10. Spare Adrenaline Auto-Injectors

Hurworth School will maintain spare adrenaline auto-injectors in line with current legislation and statutory guidance. These devices provide an additional safeguard where a student's own prescribed medication is unavailable, inaccessible or has malfunctioned.

The school will maintain clearly labelled Emergency Anaphylaxis Kits containing:

- Spare adrenaline auto-injectors.
- Emergency instructions.
- Appropriate supporting documentation.

Spare devices will be stored in accessible locations and checked regularly to ensure they remain within expiry dates.

11. Storage, Monitoring and Disposal of Medication

All adrenaline devices will be stored in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.

The Allergy Lead will oversee monthly checks of emergency medication to verify:

- Expiry dates.
- Storage arrangements.
- Device condition.
- Replacement requirements.

Used auto-injectors will be provided to attending paramedics or disposed of through approved sharps procedures. Expired devices will be returned to a pharmacy or disposed of in accordance with local authority guidance.

12. Individual Healthcare Plans

Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) provide a formal record of the arrangements that Hurworth School will put in place to support students with allergies.

An IHP will normally be required where a student:

- Is at risk of significant harm as a consequence of allergy.
- Has been prescribed adrenaline.
- Requires arrangements beyond those normally available to all students.
- Requires specific support to participate safely in school life.

IHPs will be developed collaboratively with students, parents and carers and, where appropriate, healthcare professionals. They will include references to Allergy Action Plans, Asthma Action Plans and relevant medical advice.

IHPs will be reviewed annually and sooner where circumstances change or where incidents and near misses indicate that revisions may be necessary.

13. Staff Training and Emergency Preparedness

All staff who may have responsibility for students during the school day will receive annual allergy awareness and emergency response training. This includes teaching staff, support staff, lunchtime supervisors, temporary staff and relevant volunteers.

Training will cover:

- Allergy awareness.
- Recognition of allergic reactions.
- Recognition of anaphylaxis.
- Emergency procedures.
- Administration of adrenaline.
- Understanding and accessing healthcare plans.
- Risk reduction strategies.
- Incident reporting procedures.

The school will conduct at least one annual anaphylaxis emergency response exercise to test procedures and improve readiness. Outcomes will be reviewed and inform future training and policy development.

14. School Trips and External Visits

Students with allergies will be fully included in educational visits, sporting fixtures, residential experiences and extracurricular activities.

Trip leaders will ensure that:

- Appropriate risk assessments are completed.
- Medication is available throughout the activity.
- Staff understand emergency procedures.
- Relevant healthcare plans are considered.
- Suitable catering arrangements are explored.

Students will not be excluded from activities solely because they have allergies.

15. Serious Incidents and Near Misses

The school adopts a no-blame approach to incident investigation.

All allergy-related incidents and near misses will be reported, recorded and reviewed. Reviews will consider:

- What happened.
- Why it happened.
- Whether procedures were followed.
- Whether changes are required.
- Lessons learned.

Parents and carers will be informed promptly and involved in any review process.

16. Wellbeing and Anti-Bullying

Hurworth School recognises that allergies can have a significant impact on wellbeing, confidence and participation.

The school will raise awareness through assemblies, tutor activities and PSHE education. Students will be encouraged to understand the seriousness of allergies and to support their peers appropriately.

Any allergy-related bullying, intimidation or deliberate exposure to allergens will be treated as a serious breach of the Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

17. Free School Meals and Reasonable Adjustments

Students who are entitled to Free School Meals must be able to access their entitlement safely regardless of any allergy or dietary requirement.

The school will work collaboratively with families and catering providers to identify reasonable adjustments which enable safe access to school meals and wider school activities. These arrangements will be documented where necessary within Individual Healthcare Plans.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with statutory requirements.
- Monitoring implementation of this policy.
- Supporting continuous improvement in allergy safety.

Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Overall implementation of the policy.
- Ensuring adequate resources and training arrangements.

Allergy Lead (Deputy Headteacher)

The Allergy Lead is responsible for:

- Maintaining the allergy register.
- Coordinating training.
- Reviewing incidents and near misses.
- Maintaining records.
- Overseeing Individual Healthcare Plans.
- Monitoring emergency medication.
- Liaising with families and professionals.
- Reporting to governors.

Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy.
- Understanding their responsibilities.
- Acting appropriately during emergencies.
- Reporting concerns and incidents.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate information.
- Supplying medication.
- Updating the school regarding changes.
- Ensuring medication remains in date.

Students

Students are expected to:

- Follow agreed safety arrangements.
- Carry medication where appropriate.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Take increasing responsibility for allergy management where appropriate.

19. Safeguarding

The school recognises that repeated failure to provide essential medication, failure to share relevant medical information or actions which place a child with allergies at risk may raise safeguarding concerns.

Such concerns will be considered in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and, where necessary, referrals may be made to appropriate agencies.

20. Unacceptable Practice

The following practices are considered unacceptable:

- Preventing access to prescribed medication.
- Ignoring agreed healthcare plans.
- Excluding students without proper justification.
- Requiring parents routinely to attend school to administer medication.
- Penalising students for attendance issues related to allergy management.
- Sending a student experiencing an allergic reaction to seek help unaccompanied.
- Ignoring medical advice or professional guidance.

21. Policy Review and Publication

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body and whenever significant legislative, regulatory or operational changes occur.

The policy will also be reviewed following any serious allergy-related incident where lessons learned indicate that amendments may be required.

A current copy of this policy will be published on the school website and made available to parents, carers, staff and governors on request.