Allergy Policy

Approved by[1]			
Name:	Jennifer Walker		
Position:	Headteacher		
Signed:			
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Relevant roles held and by whom (correct at the time of publishing)	
Safeguarding Link Governor(s):	Sue Richardson
Health & Safety Govenor	Helen Sharpe

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1. Introduction

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 serious reaction called anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction. It is at the extreme end of the allergic spectrum. 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 fairly 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.

This policy sets out how Lowca Community School will support pupils with allergies, to ensure they are safe and are not disadvantaged in any way whilst taking part in school life.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Parent Responsibilities

- On entry to the school, it is the parent's responsibility to inform reception staff/SENCO/First Aider of any allergies. This information should include all previous serious allergic reactions, history of anaphylaxis and details of all prescribed medication.

- Parents are to supply a copy of their child's Allergy Action Plan (BSACI plans preferred) to school. If they do not currently have an Allergy Action Plan this should be developed as soon as possible in collaboration with a healthcare professional e.g. GP/allergy specialist.
- Parents are responsible for ensuring any required medication is supplied, in date and replaced as necessary.
- Parents are requested to keep the school up to date with any changes in allergy management. The Allergy Action Plan will be kept updated accordingly.

Staff Responsibilities

- All staff will complete anaphylaxis training. Training is provided for all staff on a yearly basis and on an ad-hoc basis for any new members of staff.
- Staff must be aware of the pupils in their care (regular or cover classes) who have known allergies as an allergic reaction could occur at any time and not just at mealtimes. Any food-related activities must be supervised with due caution.
- Staff leading school trips will ensure they carry all relevant emergency supplies. Trip leaders will check that all pupils with medical conditions, including allergies, carry their medication. Pupils unable to produce their required medication will not be able to attend the excursion.
- SENCO/First Aider will ensure that the up-to-date Allergy Action Plan is kept with the pupil's medication.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure all medication is in date however the SENCO/First aider will check medication kept at school on an annual basis and send a reminder to parents if medication is approaching expiry.
- SENCO/First Aider keeps a register of pupils who have been prescribed an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI) and a record of use of any AAI(s) and emergency treatment given.

Pupil Responsibilities

- Pupils are encouraged to have a good awareness of their symptoms and to let an adult know as soon as they suspect they are having an allergic reaction.
- Pupils who are trained and confident to administer their own AAIs will be encouraged to take responsibility for carrying them on their person at all times.

3. Allergy Action Plans

Allergy action plans are designed to function as 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.

Lowca Community School 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.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to complete the allergy action plan with help from a healthcare professional (e.g. GP/Allergy Specialist) and provide this to the school.

4. Emergency Treatment and Management of Anaphylaxis

What to look for:

Symptoms usually come on quickly, within minutes of exposure to the allergen.

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

More serious symptoms (ABC symptoms) include:

- 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 serious 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 pupil 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 a 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 up the airways
- It stops swelling
- It raises the blood pressure

Action:

- Keep the child where they are, call for help and do not leave them unattended
- 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
- USE ADRENALINE AUTO-INJECTOR WITHOUT DELAY and note the time given
- CALL 999 and state ANAPHYLAXIS
- If no improvement after 5 minutes, administer second AAI
- If no signs of life commence CPR
- Call parent/carer as soon as possible

Whilst you are waiting for the ambulance, keep the child where they are. Do not stand them up or sit them in a chair, even if they are feeling better. All pupils must go to hospital for observation after anaphylaxis even if they appear to have recovered.

5. Supply, Storage and Care of Medication

Depending on their level of understanding and competence, pupils will be encouraged to take responsibility for and to carry their own two AAIs on them at all times (in a suitable bag/container).

For younger children or those not ready to take responsibility for their own medication, there should be an anaphylaxis kit which is kept safely, not locked away and accessible to all staff.

Medication should be stored in a suitable container and clearly labelled with the pupil's name. The pupil's medication storage container should contain:

* Two AAIs i.e. EpiPen® or Jext® or Emerade®

* 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 Nurse/SENCO/First Aider (delete or substitute as appropriate) will check medication kept at school on a termly basis and send a reminder to parents if medication is approaching expiry.

Parents can subscribe to expiry alerts for the relevant AAIs their child is prescribed, to make sure they can get replacement devices in good time.

Storage

AAIs should be stored at room temperature, protected from direct sunlight and temperature extremes.

Disposal

AAIs are single use only and must be disposed of as sharps. Used AAIs can be given to ambulance paramedics on arrival or can be disposed of in a pre-ordered sharps bin. Sharps bins to be obtained from and disposed of by a clinical waste contractor/specialist collection service/local authority (delete as appropriate). The sharps bin is kept in the staff toilet in the main building.

6. 'Spare' Adrenaline Auto-Injectors in School

If anaphylaxis is suspected in an undiagnosed individual, call the emergency services and state you suspect ANAPHYLAXIS. Follow advice from them as to whether administration of another child's AAI is appropriate. School does not have a spare AII for general purposes.

7. Staff Training

All staff will complete online AllergyWise anaphylaxis training at the start of every new academic year. Training is also available on an ad-hoc basis for any new members of staff.

Training includes:

* Knowing the common allergens and triggers of allergy
* Spotting the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis
* Knowing when to call emergency services
* Administering emergency treatment (including AAIs)
* Measures to reduce risk (e.g. allergen avoidance)
* Managing allergy action plans
* Practical session using trainer devices

8. Inclusion and Safeguarding

Lowca Community School is committed to ensuring that all children with medical conditions, including allergies, in terms of both physical and mental health, are properly supported in school so that they can play a full and active. Reasonable adjustments will be made to offer alternative educational experiences to support the needs of pupils with allergies.

9. Catering

All food businesses (including school caterers) must follow the Food Information Regulations 2014 which states that allergen information relating to the 'Top 14' allergens must be available for all food products.

The school menu is available for parents to view in advance with all ingredients listed and allergens highlighted on the school ordering system.

Parents/carers are encouraged to meet with the Catering Manager/Cook/Chef to discuss their child's needs.

The school adheres to the following Department of Health guidance:

* Clearly labelled lunch boxes and drinks provided by the school for trips
* Parents should check food purchased from school
* Pupils should check with catering staff
* Staff must prevent cross-contamination
* No food given to allergic children without parental permission

10. School Trips

Staff leading school trips will ensure they carry all relevant emergency supplies. Trip leaders will check that all pupils with medical conditions carry their medication. Pupils unable to produce their required medication will not be able to attend the excursion.

All activities will be risk assessed to ensure inclusion.

Overnight Trips

* Careful planning required

* Meeting with parents

* Venue informed in advance

Sporting Excursions

* Visiting school notified

* Trained staff accompany pupils

* Alternative food arranged if needed

11. Allergy Awareness and Nut Bans

Lowca Community School have chosen to be a 'nut free' school. We will send reminders to parents about packed lunches and food coming in to school for fayres, burthdays etc. Food items must be labelled with ingredients and checked by staff members.

In addition, the school promotes a culture of allergy awareness and education, including:

* Awareness of allergens

* Recognising symptoms

* Knowing how to respond

* Implementing risk reduction procedures

12. Risk Assessment

Lowca Community School will conduct a detailed individual risk assessment for all new pupils with allergies and newly diagnosed pupils inline with the Health and Care Plan.

13. Useful Links

* Anaphylaxis UK - https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/

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

* AllergyWise for Schools - https://www.allergywise.org.uk/p/allergywise-for-schools1

* Allergy UK - https://www.allergyuk.org

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

* Spare Pens in Schools - http://www.sparepensinschools.uk

* Department for Education Guidance - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/...

* Department of Health Guidance - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/...

* NICE Guidelines - https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance

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