



ALLERGY AWARENESS & MANAGEMENT POLICY

RATIONALE

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School is committed to ensuring that all students, staff and volunteers in our care are safe and their well-being is maintained. The frequency of allergies is such that we must be proactive in promoting awareness and in developing practical procedures that address the needs of school community members.

AIMS

This policy is in place to minimise the risk of exposure to allergens and triggers to allergic reactions and ensure that staff are trained to provide appropriate first aid should a child or adult have an allergic reaction. Guided by this policy, we aim:

- To minimise risks to staff and students within St Matthew's School who are identified as having the potential for anaphylaxis.
- To develop an understanding about allergies and their triggers, and promote education about safe practice.
- To be aware of staff, students and volunteers who have allergies and their Health Care Plans.

OBJECTIVES

St Matthew's School is committed to taking 5 key steps to develop an Allergy Aware Environment. These are:

1. To obtain medical information about children at risk and develop a written care support plan devised in conjunction with a health professional and the students family.
2. To educate staff and others in the school community responsible for the care of students, concerning the risk of certain foods and environmental allergens.
3. To implement practical strategies to avoid exposure to known triggers, where possible.
4. With parents/caregivers, provide age appropriate education to students with severe allergies.
5. To regularly review and monitor all health care plans.

PROCEDURES

Identification and Documentation of Medical Information

- Obtain medical information regarding the allergy at the time of enrolment, employment or engagement and an annual update thereafter.
- When a student, staff member or volunteer is diagnosed with an allergy, relevant documentation is to be provided by an authorised adult and medical practitioner in the form of a Health Care Plan. This Health Care Plan and any relevant medication will be held at the School Office. A copy of the Anaphylaxis Action Plan is also to be kept in the class Pink Emergency folder and is to be taken with the relevant medication by the teacher, whenever the person at risk leaves the grounds e.g. for excursions, walks, etc.
- Where a student, staff member or volunteer has an allergy, written consent for information and photograph to be detailed on an "at risk" list which will be displayed in the Staff Room in the appropriate area, Playground Duty bags, in the Sick Bay and in the Teachers' confidential folders.

- Photographs of students with known allergens are to be kept with medication in the office to minimise the possibility of wrongly administering medication.
- Parents will be alerted to the benefits of using a Medical Alert Identification – bracelet or necklace.
- The school will update all health care plans annually.

EDUCATION

- **Whole school community** – to be educated about the dangers of allergies. The school community will be encouraged not to bring foods that may trigger severe allergies to school eg nuts or nut containing products. Education will be provided through newsletters, class notes, the school website, and parent information sessions.
- **Staff** – to undertake Senior First Aid training covering the recognition of the risks of allergies and understanding the steps that can be taken to minimise these risks. Allergy training is to be provided by qualified professionals and reinforced at yearly intervals at the beginning of each year. Important topics to be addressed in training include: understanding of allergies and anaphylaxis; triggers for allergy and anaphylaxis; prevention and recognition of anaphylaxis; actions required in the event of a severe allergic reaction and instruction in EpiPen use. Staff who have contact with students with known allergies need to be aware of risk factors for that student. Staff in contact with a student with a severe allergy will need to adhere to any special requirements put in place for that class.
- **Students with an allergy** – parents/caregivers, in consultation with a medical practitioner, to educate the at risk student in the self-management of their allergy, eg what is safe and unsafe, strategies for avoiding exposure to allergens, symptoms of allergic reactions, how and when to tell an adult they may be having an allergy-related problem, and how to read labels. Where a severe food allergy exists it may be recommended that the “at risk” student only consumes foods which have been prepared at home.
- **Other students** – teachers will teach students about the common triggers and signs of allergic reactions, and to report immediately any suspected symptoms. They will also educate students regarding strategies which could be employed in the event of an attack when an adult is not present. No sharing or trading of food, drinks, containers and utensils to be allowed. Students to be encouraged to wash hands both before and after eating, and after contact with known allergens to minimise the risk of accidental transference.
- **Parents/Caregivers/Volunteers** – A partnership model is proposed where assistance will be required and sought in educating students about allergies and their triggers; the symptoms of an allergy attack and possible responses. Information will be available to parents via a Parent Education Sheet. If volunteering in a class where there is a student with a severe allergy, the volunteer will need to read and adhere to any special requirements put in place for that class and student.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Whole school environment

Our aim is for the whole school to be aware of the potential dangers of allergies in identified students. This includes environmental allergens such as insects, bees, grasses and chemicals.

While food products that may cause allergies will not be banned from the school, it will be school policy to encourage parents and caregivers to consider alternatives for their students’

lunches and snacks. Similarly all adult groups involved in school and parish functions will be reminded of school policy and asked not to bring these products on site due to the risk of transference.

Special attention will be given to nuts and nut products given the severity of reactions at minimal exposure levels. In addition to this, risk assessments will need to be completed on all products and foreign objects, including animals, brought into the school environment which may be triggers, so as to minimise risk of exposure to other allergens such as pollens, pet hair, bee-stings, cleaning agents etc.

Classroom environment

Exposure to Food Substances – where a student in a particular class is identified as having a food allergy, and exposure to that food, even without ingestion will put that student at risk; additional precautions will need to be put in place within that classroom. In such circumstances a note will be sent home to parents notifying them of the situation and requesting that foods which may cause a problem not be sent to school. Should foods containing known allergens be brought to school, the child who has brought them will be directed to move to a designated space, to consume them to minimise risk of transference within the classroom. In some cases it may be necessary to create allergen free tables at which students may eat their lunch and snacks.

The School community will regularly be reminded to assist the school in developing an Allergy Aware community.

Birthday Treats – parents to be encouraged to speak to the classroom teacher regarding appropriate birthday treats and to consider alternate ways of celebrating a birthday that does not require food. If food is to be provided the safest alternative is pre-packaged food.

Shared Lunch- where a shared lunch is organised, classroom teachers are to use a standardised form outlining unsuitable food. Parents/caregivers of “at risk” students will be advised to provide “safe treats” to be given during birthday celebrations and to provide alternatives for shared lunches.

All students will be encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating.

Regarding other allergens, precautions need to be taken to minimise the exposure risk to identified staff, students or volunteers. This is to take the form of risk assessments and monitoring what comes into the classroom, eg pets – if there is a severe allergy to pet hair; flowers – if there is an allergy to pollen; cleaning products - if there is an allergy to certain chemicals.

Classroom teachers should also be aware of risks during science experiments, excursions, school camps and physical education activities.

Tuckshop environment

The tuckshop will not stock or sell nuts, nut products, or items known to contain nuts as an ingredient, as these can cause severe reactions. This ban does not apply to foods labelled “may contain traces of nuts”. Other foods sold may contain products which could trigger allergic reactions, eg gluten and eggs.

Information will be available to enable students and their families to identify those foods which may be triggers for particular children.

(This policy was ratified by the School Board in June 2016)