

## > Background

- Highgate is an independent day school with more than 1500 pupils, aged 3 – 18, in three schools; Pre-Prep, Junior School and Senior School.
- Highgate has been coeducational throughout the school for over 12 years after over four hundred years of being a boys school.
- The School is quite advanced when it comes to allergy management.
- Highgate approached HET after experiencing an incident which gave them the warning needed to make some rigorous changes in their allergy management practices and, just as importantly, in the approach of the whole school community towards allergy management.
- Highgate hosted and took part in the workshop in February 2015 and have been a valued affiliate of the project throughout.

## > Priorities

- Training (for staff, pupils and, where possible, parents).
- Making allergy awareness firmly embedded within the school culture.

## > Difficulties

- Since the divorce of the state schools and local authority, schools have been left to their own devices, yet their primary aim is to get children through their exams successfully.
- Currently no way to test how effective their training and allergy policy is to therefore rectify any shortfalls.
- Peers need to be on board and vigilant, knowing how to get help and what to do in the event of an incident. Peer led interventions can be very effective among children e.g. setting children challenges such as comic strips solving scenario based situations, peers presentations in assembly.
- Communication to parents has been a main challenge e.g. mum went away, dad/grandparents left in charge and gave the child some nuts for break time, resulting in him eating them next to a boy with allergies. It is important to establish a risk reduction system for each and every situation such as this one part of this is to educate the child so he can be aware of the risks and help to educate the parent. Currently HG hold pastoral care presentation evenings for parents (including drug/alcohol awareness, internet safety, mental health) so could consider an allergy awareness theme.

## > Key points from Highgate School meeting Jan/feb & telephone surveys and audits in April/May 2015:

- On-going and regular staff training has been a really important part of the process Highgate has been through to address their allergy management practices so the SAAG meeting agenda needs to fully reflect this.

- An audit of current knowledge and awareness was conducted during the summer term, to assess training effectiveness and the school are assessing the results with a view to developing the agenda for their Autumn SAAG meeting.
- They need a school friendly version of EAACI guidelines to work from within their SAAG group.
- A definite institutional and cultural improvement was seen in the repeat telephone surveys but more clarity among all groups surveyed regarding, for instance, nut bans, adrenaline auto injectors, allergy policy and awareness of allergic pupils was still required.

### > *Key findings and action points from the SAAG meeting September 2015:*

- Highgate have a system in place to train “mainstream” academic and support staff but a concern remains that good practice is not as securely understood by part time staff, visiting staff, volunteers and coaches as well as it should be.
- The school is reliant on parents providing accurate Information about pupil allergies, so any breakdown in communication means the duty of care and policy falls down.
- A Parent of an allergic pupil feels confident about her child eating in the dining hall for reasons such as the pictures of allergic pupils and close liaison with the catering manager. She is also appreciative of care on school trips, as a consent letter is sent out and communication with trip leaders is good. However she does not know if a child were to consume an allergen at lunch and then have a reaction in a lesson if the necessary procedures are in place. Staff confirmed that class registers indicate pupils with medical needs so yes they have procedures in place to make staff aware and feel supported.
- Although appropriate allergy and medical information is available via SIMs and a central list, it was suggested that all sports coaches (including part time) should have more dedicated time with nurse so that they have the necessary knowledge; a broader staff INSET on allergies could be scheduled.
- To ensure staff are following procedures the school shall consider a system where they answer simple questions and sign to say they have read and understood the allergy and medical requirements on the register. Highgate already use a similar successful system for pupil safeguarding and welfare.
- On trips or fixtures there is sometimes no food suitable for pupils with allergies so they take their own, but bags can be left in the bus or changing room leaving the child without food. Highgate will train staff to be mindful of this potential issue, making advance contact with schools to be visited as routine best practice.
- Highgate train all staff, including receptionist and admin, on allergy awareness. While at present coaches and visiting music teachers may not be included on the main staff training days, they are offered meetings a couple times per year to take part in allergy training, and other INSET themes, which has so far been greatly received.
- Pupil (with allergy) does not think his friends would know what to recognise in the event of an allergic reaction.
- Pupil (without allergy) feels a regular repeat of an assembly or class training sessions would be a good opportunity to include signs and symptoms of allergies.
- Parent highlighted her child will only have the same food every day out of fear, due to his experience of having reactions even when reassured there's no allergens and catering agreed they have many pupils like that.
- Parent suggested increased support from year 7 would be beneficial - pupils coming from a smaller primary school may be daunted by the large and busy Dining Hall. Agreed it is more of a confidence thing; a nurture and buddy group was suggested for pupils with allergies and a friend could come along.
- When asked if pupils with an allergy feel confident to tell their friends about it without being stigmatised a pupil replied saying the allergy itself was not an issue but more the kit (AIPs) that is carried around. The strong consensus of the group was that pupils with allergies don't want to be different. Staff should be aware of this sensitivity.

- Sport and exercise staff stated that they will not take pupils on a fixture if they do not have their necessary medication, they are rigorous. Staff confirmed that this applies to all off-site school trips. The policy is well-known and consistently applied.
- Parent said her child has only missed out on one trip in 7 years and that was because, despite efforts with the trip leader and the organising company, the risk assessment couldn't guarantee the food and surroundings at all times in a foreign country.
- Pupil feels it is more a personal responsibility to carry their AAI as they get older and no staff asks on a daily basis if he has his but he doesn't feel it necessary.
- Staff need to be more aware about pupils who may carry their AAI in their bag and therefore that those pupils should not leave their bag behind when they go for lunch.
- The School policy is for pupils to carry AAIs in blazer or shirt pockets but more effort needs to be made to ensure that this is consistently adhered to.
- Highgate does not encourage the giving of food items as treats and rewards in lessons but the Junior School struggle more with this as parents bring in donuts or cakes to hand out for birthday celebrations. Parents and pupils are asked not to do so or to consume such items off school property but staff still worry it is still their responsibility to monitor and control.
- In the Senior School the need for changing the food treat culture in lessons for health reasons as well as the risk of allergies was also mentioned
- Highgate will work with pupils on the SAAG and the pupils' School Council to consider what reward items they could replace cakes and sweets with.
- Following SAAG meeting proposed for November 30th 2015.

### > *Key findings and action points from the SAAG meeting November 2015:*

- Staff felt Highgate had a very supportive pupil body surrounding allergy, so was surprised when a pupil said he felt self-conscious to broadcast his allergy. Staff were able to point out the flipside to this - that other pupils need to know in order to aide a pupil if they did have a severe reaction. Discussed with Pastoral team - how to address the situation both sensitively and diplomatically, so not to make people feel awkward but also to make others aware.
- Risk assessment: Trip leaders now have briefing with the coordinator/school nurse prior to event.
- Highgate acknowledges they need a different approach to policy for their primary school.
- A member of staff reported that he was on a trip with 460 primary aged pupils where a number of children needed to take medication with them for various reasons. At all times they knew who had medical needs, where their bags where and what to do. This reinforces the whole school awareness approach is already useful at primary school level, albeit some additional measures may be required.
- Ask children who suffer with allergies if they would like to share their issues with others to get different ideas from other pupils.
- Pupils in School Council still considering suggestions for non-food rewards.
- "Classrooms for academic learning and study, not food, sweets and cakes"
- Replace informal classroom celebrations with more risk-assessed and planned events where food is brought in, ie House Parties at Christmas and summer
- Parents liked the 'Take The Kit' video because it shows the pressure pupils with allergies are under to fit in. Staff keen to use the video in appropriate assemblies and tutorials.
- Parent highlighted that the school seem to be doing a lot more than people realise and suggested the school informs parents about what it is doing and publishing regular analysis/telephone survey results to increase awareness throughout the whole school community of the level of training the staff receive.
- Parent felt it would be good to train other children how to administer adrenalin, as children and adults might be daunted in a real life situation. In the 'Take The Kit' video, the panic among the other teenagers is very realistic.

- Training AAI's are available from the manufacturers. The School Nurses are aware and will be repeating their AAI and De-fib training for staff at induction and INSET next term.

### > Key findings and action points from the SAAG meeting January 2016:

- Regarding the non-mention of staff liability cover on allergy policy - as this is covered on a separate document - it was felt that a line could be added to the policy to verify what cover exists.
- Highgate is very mindful that no one should feel excluded and is looking at how to deal with this sensitively.
- Catering Manager is happy to meet with parents to discuss their child's needs .
- Highgate would like to create an on-line test for allergy awareness/procedures to ensure staff training is effective. .
- Looked at ways school should check senior pupils are carrying their medication, as it was felt that senior pupils should be responsible for carrying their own medication and be confident to administer. Discrete checks were favoured over spot checks that could draw unwanted attention - a reminder could be placed on the school intranet to prompt pupils when trips are coming up to make sure they have their medication with them.
- On a recent YR6 school trip two students with allergies were asked if they had their AAI's with them, one had forgotten his, so returned to school to collect. Re-emphasised that at this age pupils should start taking some responsibility as next year they will be entering senior school.
- Pupils with allergies to visit school nurse annually for AAI training.
- Two friends per pupil with allergy could receive training in recognising anaphylactic shock and how to administer treatment. Decided it might be more efficient for a group to go to school nurse at a time.
- More general allergy awareness around friends, to recognise symptoms.
- SAAG meetings have helped to develop better communications with parents on allergy matters – parents who have attended have made valuable input into helping the School develop its policies and procedures and have also, on several occasions, been reassured by the measures that the School already has in place.
- Continue to have a SAAG meeting per term. Keeping parents up to date by publishing SAAG agenda, issuing invites, sending out minutes.
- Ingredients in food – cannot be sure of allergy policy when visiting other schools' (Highgate currently contact other schools prior to any visit) Pupils could be advised to take their own food when visiting another school to be on the safe side.
- Sports staff to remind pupils with allergies that AAI's in bags or blazers should not be left at another part of the site. Sports staff to discuss scenarios at regular staff meeting.
- Added to Educational Visits / Trip Leader check list the need to contact third party and specifically ask where the nearest medical facilities are, what facilities they have and when was it last visited. Ensure that facilities are adequate to deal with emergency allergic reaction.

### > Continuation of the SAAG Process:

Highgate continued to have termly SAAG meetings, which has developed allergy awareness further throughout the school community.

Key lessons to share with other schools following four years of Whole School Allergy Awareness:

1. The school community is a dynamic one, with evolving groups of staff, parents and pupils, so schools must never be complacent around awareness of policy and practices - continual and regular reviews

and discussions are required to maintain awareness and vigilance.

2. At the beginning of this journey, Highgate had a 'no nut ban' policy but the caterers operated, and many staff still promoted, a 'nut ban'. This practice has now shifted by 'changing people's vocabulary' to talking about 'whole school allergy awareness', rather than narrow and clichéd communications around exclusions such as nut bans.
3. Highgate have continued with regular SAAG meetings each term, and have extended the invite to parents of the Junior and Pre-prep schools. These meetings have proved to be invaluable, with the School learning from parents, parents learning from each other and everyone gaining more knowledge and confidence in allergy awareness and practices at the school. This has been particularly reassuring to the parents of younger children who are just starting their allergy journey.
4. Our policy and practice continues to encourage pupils with allergies to take control of, and be responsible for, their allergy rather than solely rely on others. We see differences in the independence and confidence of many of our pupils with allergies. They naturally don't want to stand out from their adolescent peers but they are more confident in speaking up and engaging with the community in eating well and staying safe.
5. Highgate's policy for school visits now includes a designated member of staff with additional training and support to look after pupils with allergies. We have also added the requirement to contact and discuss allergies with airlines in advance of international trips. This communication has been very positively received by the airlines and their co-operation to date has been helpful.

For more information on Whole School Allergy Awareness and Management visit <https://www.allergyuk.org/information-and-advice/for-schools>