

## > Background:

- Steiner Academy Bristol is a co-educational free school, one of four such academy's in the UK and part of the wider Steiner education movement.
- 280 pupils, aged 3-16, across kindergarten (on a separate site), lower, middle and upper schools.
- Steiner Academy Bristol is a vegetarian school that offers one freshly prepared main meal in house at lunchtime, although does cater for specific dietary requirements eg vegan or a gluten free option for those with medically diagnosed gluten intolerance.
- Steiner Academy Bristol catering manager approached the collaboration to help develop their allergy policy after seeing an article about it in a school food newsletter and are now a pilot school.
- Whilst there are no secondary school aged pupils with a food allergy, Steiner Academy Bristol wants to be fully prepared for the ever changing school population and for a time when they do have a child with a serious food allergy. 2 primary school pupils have a nut allergy, although neither child has been issued with an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI).
- Some pupils have lessons in the school kitchen where they learn about food and help to prepare the school lunches

## > Priorities:

- Steiner Academy Bristol would like to be prepared for all situations, and for when they do have a child with a serious food allergy, so an allergy policy is important.
- Allergy information dissemination and consistency of messages.
- Allergy awareness training of pupils and staff.
- Standardise allergen labelling of menu.
- Have systems in place to develop personal care plans when needed.

## > Difficulties:

- Pupils share the school site and the canteen, therefore there is a risk of cross contamination of allergens between primary and secondary school aged pupils e.g. by touching stair bannisters.
- No current food allergy policy.
- Caterer receiving a number of requests for specialist diets, without medical referral and are seeking guidance on how to address this.

## > Key findings for the first SAAG meeting March 2017:

- The school does not have a nut ban or a food allergy policy.
- No SAAG member or secondary school aged pupil has a food allergy. 2 primary school pupils have a nut allergy, although neither child has been issued with an adrenaline auto-injector (AAI).
- There are pockets of knowledge around allergy, policy and practice – this information is not disseminated across the school and knowledge is sometimes inconsistent.

- There are currently no systems in place if a child has a food allergy – this needs to be formalised and be part of the admissions process; a care plan could be part of the pupils 'school passport'; and should also consider how AAIs are managed including making a plan to support older pupils to carry their own AAI's if required.
- Staff and pupils have not had any allergy awareness training, and this is needed – pupils could have training in PSHE or assembly; and staff would need separate training. It was felt that if there was a child in school with an allergy that required an AAI that training would have occurred. There is also a general lack of knowledge around if they have AAIs, where they are stored and who is trained to administer them.
- The menu is starting to highlight allergens (via a notice/chalk board near the food item being served), but this needs to be more consistent.
- It is unknown if allergies are considered during lesson planning, although there was a general consensus that the school curriculum does not currently address allergy education and awareness.
- It was felt that pupils would not be stigmatised if they had an allergy, and would not be excluded from school trips.
- Food based treats are not common practice in school.

All School Allergy Action Group (SAAG) meeting dates were confirmed. Various surveys are to be carried out to explore allergy awareness and focus.

### > Key findings for the SAAG 2 meeting May 2017:

SAAG 2 was chaired by the catering manager without HET or Food To Fit staff present, due to last minute change of meeting date.

Using the *Party Food Challenge game*, the group discussed the realities and complexities of navigating the world when you have food allergies, and what we can do to make things simpler.

**Allergy awareness surveys for parents and pupil were completed following SAAG 1, the results of these surveys were discussed:**

#### 1) Pupils survey

- Discussed producing a photo list to help staff identify all pupils with allergies.
- Highlighted the need to communicate to pupils, procedures which the school already have in place to help them understand what the school is doing, where the risks are and where the school need to do more work regarding allergy.
- Most pupils understood AAI's must be carried by children who need them at all times, though some pupils felt the teacher should hold the medication.
- Two pupils said they have a diagnosed food allergy. Care plans are to be sent out to these families to understand their health needs - Care plan template to be put onto school web page.
- Most children share food at school - on further investigation this statement referred to the primary school age group, a discussion followed as to how food rules could be developed and managed in the school to avoid mishap through sharing food.

#### 2) Parents survey

- 25% of parents were worried about a child with a food allergy coming to their home.
- 51% agreed that it would be unfair for a nut ban in the older classes.
- In the primary school parents were mostly supportive of a nut ban in classes where children have a nut allergy.
- School to investigate CPD for anaphylaxis training for staff and what we could offer to parents.

A menu board is now on display in the dining hall showing allergens of each day's menu, made more specific with colour coding to identify allergens to help younger children.

## > Key findings for the SAAG 3 meeting June 2017:

- The SAAG discussed current practice in relation to labelling and communications about the 14 major food allergens.
- Most dishes are prepared using fresh ingredients rather than purchasing composite food products.
- All packets of an allergen free product once opened are stored in a sealed container and labelled, then stored on the separate shelf.
- Catering staff to regularly audit that new or substituted products are allergen free.
- All allergen free dishes are prepared on a separate surface or on a thoroughly cleaned area.
- As some food preparation is carried out within Kindergarten, it was decided they need to identify ways to ensure a controlled environment is created and risk to any children with allergies being exposed to the food allergen is managed/reduced.
- It was highlighted that food allergens are not restricted to nuts and peanuts - there are 14 major food allergens which also include milk, eggs, fish, sesame seeds and cereals containing gluten. Due to the menu at Steiner Academy Bristol being vegetarian some of these allergens are not included.
- Emphasised the aim of making people allergy aware and not anxious, the aim of creating a controlled environment where allergy information is managed and communicated in an appropriate way; and where it reflects the realities of the 'real world' outside of school.

Some suggestions to help increase allergy awareness and management amongst:

### 1) Pupils:

- Catering for food allergies as part of kitchen modules currently being created.
- Explore with PHSE co coordinator how PHSE, can increase awareness of allergies and management (upper and lower school).
- Pupils with allergies could prepare a presentation to educate others of their experience.
- Develop a peer support session for pupils with allergy and their immediate friendship group.
- Host an Allergy awareness week of events.

### 2) Parents:

- Include a section on allergies in the school handbook.
- Include a section on allergies as part of admissions/new entrants procedures.
- Registration form to be followed by a care plan and then 1 to 1 with class teacher and caterer.
- Parents evening to include catering team to impart information.

The senior management team member had to leave the meeting early, and as they have such a pivotal role in the process it was agreed that a second member of the SMT would be available to deputise in this situation as subsequent meetings.

## > Key findings for the SAAG 4 meeting July 2017:

- Steiner Academy Bristol now includes a question about food allergies as part of the admissions procedure.
- Discussed the implications of having a nut ban in classrooms of pupils with nut allergies and if applied consistently to all 14 allergens, could result in a number of foods that are healthy for others being banned from class and making it very difficult for others to eat healthily.
- Clarified that individuals are allergic to proteins in food ie peanut protein, and it is NOT (peanut) oil that causes a reaction; one food allergy is not more serious than another; and physical contact is the primary form of contamination.
- Following a role play exercise to explore the best place to store Auto Adrenaline Injectors (AAI) for people who were at risk of anaphylaxis. Everyone agreed that if at all possible an AAI should be kept by the person who may need the medication.
- New allergy policy should also cover trainee teachers.
- Steiner Academy Bristol needs to review its insurance cover and make sure it provides appropriate cover for administration of medication, particularly in emergency situations.
- Suggested developing a flow chart to show how information about children with allergies is disseminated.

## > Next steps:

As the senior management team was not fully engaged in the SAAG process due to other commitments, resulting in their partial or total absence from meetings, and this being a prerequisite for the SAAG project, Steiner Academy Bristol deferred their progress as a case study until SMT were available to take a fully active role in the SAAG meetings. They are now continuing the process at their own pace using the online toolkit route.

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