



**BENEDICT BLYTHE
FOUNDATION**

Dear Secretary of State for Education,

We write to you with, and on behalf of, the many organisations across the UK that work with children, young people and staff in education. This letter has been co-signed by 40 organisations from across the country, all of whom are part of a collective voice asking for more to be done to increase the safety in schools for allergy sufferers.

Allergies in school aged children have been steadily rising, along with an increase in severe allergic reactions. Our recent research shows that 70% of schools do not have recommended allergy safeguards in place, and children and staff are put at risk as a result. It is estimated that half a million school days are lost to allergies each year, and overstretched teachers and school staff are struggling to know how to manage a child's allergies safely in the classroom with 2 in 5 teachers feeling unprepared to respond to a child experiencing an allergic reaction. The impact on children and families is significant, with reported school-based reactions and fatalities, allergy related bullying, and fear and worry meaning some children leave the school system entirely.

To address this, we are asking for the implementation of a plan to make schools a safer place for pupils and staff. Our plan focusses on three key areas: communication, education and medication. We have set out concrete amendments to legislation we want to see adopted, and areas that require funding in a clearly defined bundle of measures. To date, government has relied on schools having the time and knowledge to identify and adopt vital voluntary measures without giving them the necessary guidance, support, funding, and accountability to do this.

This is not a new problem, but with increasing numbers of pupils with allergies coming into the school system and every classroom now having 1-2 children with an allergy, the education sector's preparedness needs to move up the agenda. We are therefore calling on you and your department to implement the changes outlined below:

- All schools should report all known instances of allergic reactions and near-misses
- All schools should have a specific allergy policy which includes an anaphylaxis plan
- All schools should have an individual healthcare plan in place for every child with an allergy
- All schools should be funded to hold in-date spare auto injector pens (AAIs) with all staff trained in their use
- All school staff should be trained in allergy awareness, allergy management, and emergency response including administration of medication

Being safe at school should be a right for all children and staff. They should not be put at risk or face a postcode lottery that gives some children and staff access to basic safeguards and others not. Now is the time to act, to prevent more children and staff being exposed to risk.

Helen Blythe
Founder and Director, Benedict Blythe Foundation, and Mother of Benedict

