

Debate Pack

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Pupils with allergies in schools

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Summary

There will be a Westminster Hall debate on Thursday 30 November at 3pm on pupils with allergies in schools. The debate is sponsored by Jim Shannon MP and will last 90 minutes.

1 Background

1.1 England

Under [section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#), schools have a duty to support pupils at their school with medical conditions.

The [Food Information Regulations 2014](#) require all food businesses including school caterers to show the allergen ingredients' information for the food they serve. This makes it easier for schools to identify the food that pupils with allergies can and cannot eat.

The Department for Education has published [allergy guidance for schools](#) which makes clear that supporting pupils with any medical conditions in school could include ensuring that a child with an allergy is able to eat a school lunch. The guidance tells schools:

If you're making changes to your menus, or substituting food products due to supply changes or for religious and cultural reasons, you must make sure you can continue to meet any special dietary needs. This includes pupils who cannot eat certain ingredients due to an allergy or other medical condition. If you need to adapt your menus at short notice, you must make sure that the needs of these pupils are still met.

1.2 Scotland

The Scottish Government website is clear that where a child has a [special dietary need](#), such as an allergy, the school should cater for it.

For schools, the Scottish Government has published [guidance on how they should support pupils with health conditions](#), including those with allergies.

The guidance states that awareness raising training about common conditions, such as allergies, should be provided to ensure that staff in schools have a basic understanding of the conditions, can recognise symptoms, and seek appropriate support – particularly in the case of anaphylaxis.

1.3 Wales

The Welsh Government has published statutory guidance on [Supporting learners with healthcare needs](#). The guidance is issued under Section 175 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which places a duty on local authorities and

governing bodies to make arrangements to ensure their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in school or another place of learning, including supporting children's healthcare needs.

The guidance states that where food is provided by or through the education setting, consideration must be given to dietary needs of learners – such as those who have allergies and food intolerances.

The Welsh Government has also published guidance on [The use of emergency adrenaline auto-injectors in schools](#).

1.4

Northern Ireland

The Education Authority in Northern Ireland has [published Guidance for the provision of Special Diets in schools](#), which states that:

The provision of special diets is a shared responsibility and requires a joint approach and close communication between the School Principal, Parent/Guardian and School Catering Service to minimise risk and provide a safe educational environment for pupils with special dietary requirements.

The guidance includes information on recommended procedures and forms to outline best practice in dealing with special diets.

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland has also published guidance on [Support for pupils with medication needs](#), to support schools in managing related protocols.

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Parliamentary material

2.1

Parliamentary Questions

Food: Allergies

06 September 2023 | UIN 196982

Asked by: Daisy Cooper

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Food Standards Agency on introducing allergen guidance for schools to help protect children with food allergies.

Answering member: Nick Gibb | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department works closely with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on all matters relating to school food.

Given the complexity and individual nature of allergies, the Department believes that head teachers, school governors, and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their allergy handling policies, which consider individual circumstances.

The Department already has statutory guidance for schools to support pupils with medical conditions, which makes clear that schools should ensure they are aware of any pupils with allergies and have processes in place to ensure these can be well managed. Parents should be fully consulted and engaged in any discussions in relation to their child's allergies. This guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

While the Department keeps these policies under review, and welcomes feedback on how to better support schools' implementation of them, the Department feels that the existing mix of national requirements and local flexibility is appropriate for this complex issue.

School Milk

23 September 2022 | UIN 49667

Asked by: Dan Jarvis

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the school milk subsidy scheme includes milk alternatives in the event that children have dairy allergies.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | **Department:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The school milk subsidy is limited to milk and specific eligible dairy products and there are no plans to change this. The School Food Standards regulate

the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. While these require milk to be available, we also expect schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, to reflect for example dietary or cultural needs. Schools are enabled by the guidance to provide a variety of other drinks including plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium and combination and flavoured variations of these drinks. Further information is available on gov.uk at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/allergy-guidance-for-schools>.

A joint Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)/Committee on Toxicity (COT) Working Group was established in Autumn 2021 to conduct a benefit/risk assessment considering both nutritional and toxicological aspects associated with consumption of plant-based drinks by the UK population. The work of the Working Group is ongoing. The outcome of this assessment will provide integrated advice to the Department of Health and Social Care and other government departments on policy in this area. More information is available at the following link.

[Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition \(SACN\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/committees/scientific-advisory-committee-on-nutrition)

2.2

Parliamentary Debates

[Food Labelling and Allergies](#)

15 May 2023 | Westminster Hall | 732 cc283-306WH

[Allergy Awareness Week](#)

11 May 2023 | Westminster Hall | 732 cc282-265WH

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Press material

[Find out what school dinners are made of](#)

The Solihull Observer
21 November 2023

[‘It’s one of the great mysteries of our time’: why extreme food allergies are on the rise – and what we can do about them](#)

The Guardian
15 July 2023

[Waltham Forest schools trial children’s allergy-free meal days](#)

ITV News
13 July 2023

[Allergies: School meals inadequate, say Powys family](#)

BBC News
4 June 2023

[London hospital rolls out life-saving allergy bags in schools](#)

The Evening Standard
29 November 2022

[Allergies in schools: why more action is needed](#) [subscription required]

TES
30 September 2022

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Press releases

[UK schools launch pioneering allergy code](#)

Education Executive

23 November 2023

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Further information

[Allergy information for schools](#)

Anaphylaxis UK

[Allergies at School](#)

Allergy UK

[Safe Schools](#)

The Benedict Blythe Foundation

[Schools Allergy Code](#)

The Allergy Team

23 November 2023

[Allergy guidance for schools](#)

Department for Education

7 February 2023

[Supporting children and young people with healthcare needs in schools: guidance](#)

Learning Directorate

Scottish Government

20 December 2017

[Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#)

Department for Education

16 August 2017

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