

April 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

## **Food Allergies**

You will be aware that food allergies are a growing concern in educational establishments throughout the UK and Ireland. Individuals who are affected with a food allergy may suffer a severe or even fatal reaction if they eat, or, in some cases simply come into contact with, a food or ingredient that they are allergic to.

The health and safety of every child and young person in our care is very important to us and I am asking you to help us to provide a secure educational environment.

### **What do I do if my child/young person does have a food allergy?**

If your child/young person does have a food allergy, you will need to provide us with a written medical assessment of their condition from either a doctor or a dietician. This information is essential to ensure that your child/young person is provided with a diet that is suitable for their food allergy and that does not unnecessarily restrict their diet. For example:

- *“I am allergic to eggs”*  
This could be an allergy to raw egg, cooked egg or foods containing egg. A letter from a doctor/dietician will help to clarify the food allergy.
  
- *“I am allergic to nuts”*  
There are different types of nut allergies so it is important to understand the type of nut (for example hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, almonds, pine nuts etc.) your child is allergic to specifically.

We will keep a record of your child/young person's Food Allergy Information Form to use in the event of a medical emergency. We will share details of any food allergy assessments with Sodexo Limited who provide our catering.

Sodexo was established in 1966 and is a global leader in providing high quality catering services. Using their experience and a team of well-respected dieticians, Sodexo have developed robust food allergen management procedures to manage your child's/young person's dietary requirements.

If your child/young person has a food allergy and you do not return the Food Allergy Information Form, together with a doctor/dietician's assessment where necessary, your child/young person will be given a restricted diet, which our catering partner Sodexo believes is unlikely to induce any allergic reaction i.e. a plain jacket potato unless you have indicated your child/young person is allergic to potatoes. When you have been able to provide a doctor/dietician's assessment of your child/young person's condition, we will be able to offer them a wider menu appropriate to their needs.

### **Keeping us up to date**

Please ensure that you inform us if your child/young person develops a food allergy, or if there are any changes to their existing allergy. Before any altered diet can be provided, you will need to provide us with a written medical assessment of their condition from either a doctor or dietician.

You will find on the following pages some '**Frequently Asked Questions**' that you may find useful.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Bradfield, Office Manager on 020 8946 2208 or email [office.manager@ricardslodge.merton.sch.uk](mailto:office.manager@ricardslodge.merton.sch.uk).

Kind regards,

**Mrs A Jerrard**  
**Headteacher**  
**Ricards Lodge High School**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. Q. I think my child/young person has an allergy to certain foods but I am not sure. What should I write on the form?**

*A. If you think your child/young person has a food allergy then we strongly advise you to seek the advice of either a medical or nutritional professional to obtain further information as soon as possible. If you tell us that your child/young person has an allergy, but you do not yet have an assessment of their condition from either a doctor or a dietician, their diet will be restricted to foods which our catering partner Sodexo believes are unlikely to induce any allergic reaction. Once you have been able to provide a doctor or dietician's assessment of your child/young person's condition we will be able to offer them a wider menu appropriate to their needs.*

### **2. Q. Why do you need to receive a doctor/dietician's assessment before you will feed my child/young person?**

*A. Food allergens can cause life-long health issues and in certain circumstances cause death. We do not want to place any child/young person in the position where their health or their life could be at risk. Without a doctor/dietician's assessment we cannot be certain that we are providing a child/young person with a diet that is appropriate for their health needs.*

### **3. Q I have already told you verbally about the food allergy, why do I need to fill in a form?**

*A. We need to keep a written record with details of any food allergies that your child/young person has so that we can share it in an emergency with medical professionals. We also need to ensure that we are sharing accurate information about your child/young person's food allergy with Sodexo who are the company that provide our catering.*

### **4. Q. Can your catering partner Sodexo promise to provide food that is created and served in 'nut free' environments?**

*A. Sodexo is unable to commit to ensuring that any establishment that it provides food to will be completely 'nut free'. Whilst Sodexo does not use whole peanuts or tree nuts as ingredients within its premises (unless specifically requested to do so), some of those ingredients come from manufacturers who have placed a 'may contain traces of peanuts or tree nuts' label on them. This means that food produced using these ingredients cannot be claimed to be 'nut free'.*

### **5. Q. My child/young person has packed lunch. Why do I need to complete the form?**

*A. In certain educational establishments, children/young people who eat meals prepared by our caterers will sit with those who eat packed lunches. Some children/young people with food allergies can suffer a reaction by either coming into contact with or being in close proximity to the particular ingredient that they are allergic to. By understanding which child/young person has a food allergy we are able to limit the potential of an incident occurring.*

### **6. Q, Providing and sharing medical information of my child/young person with the catering partner Sodexo.**

*A. Sodexo must seek parental consent via the School to be provided with the data about children with allergies to provide them with meals tailored to their dietary needs. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidance recommends displaying photos of the pupils who have allergies in kitchens and food preparation areas where a wide range of people will see them.,*

*Data protection laws provide that sensitive personal data may be processed if that data relates to the data subject's physical or mental condition and is essential for the purpose of identifying or reviewing the equality of opportunity or treatment of people with different states of physical or mental health in order to promote such equality.*

*This means that data concerning pupils' allergies can be processed, or disclosed, in order to monitor their treatment as equals in the wider context of the school. Sodexo requires the information about pupils' allergies in order to keep them safe and well and secondly, to minimise or eliminate any differentiation in the treatment of and environment for pupils with allergies. It is within the relevant pupils' best interests for Sodexo to be aware of their needs. Therefore there is no reason for withholding the data. As the withholding of the data would actively result in unequal treatment that singles out the pupils with allergies (by only serving them a plain jacket potato) and the DPO was drafted to prevent such an inequality.*