

623

Policy Document  
Asthma

September 2016

# 623 Asthma Policy

## Introduction

This policy has been written with advice given to Curbar Primary School from the Department for Education & Employment, Asthma UK, the local education authority, local healthcare professionals, the school health service, parents, the governing body and pupils.

623 recognises that asthma is a widespread, serious but controllable condition affecting many children. 623 positively welcomes all children with asthma and encourages children with asthma to achieve their potential in all aspects by having a clear policy. Supply staff and new staff are also made aware of the policy.

## Asthma medicines

Immediate access to reliever medicines is essential. Children with asthma are encouraged to carry their reliever inhaler as soon as the parent, doctor or nurse and class teacher agree they are mature enough. The reliever inhalers of some younger children are kept in the classroom in an accessible place (e.g. Low cupboard) which is known to pupils and all staff.

Parents are asked to ensure that the 623 is provided with a labelled spare reliever inhaler.

Sally Christian will hold this separately in case the pupil's own inhaler runs out, or is lost or forgotten. All inhalers must be labelled with the child's name by the parent. The first aider on duty will have received asthma training.

623 staff are not required to administer asthma medicines to pupils (except in an emergency), however 623 staff will seek training from the school nurse on doing this in case of emergencies... . **All 623 staff will let pupils take their own asthma medicines when they need to.**

## Record keeping

- At the beginning of each school year or when a child joins 623, parents are asked if their child has any medical conditions including asthma on their enrolment form.
- All parents of children and with asthma are consequently sent an Asthma UK school asthma card to give to their child's doctor or nurse to complete. Parents are asked to return them to 623. From this information 623 keeps its asthma register, which is available to all 623 staff. 623 asthma cards are then sent to parents of children and young people with asthma on an annual basis to update. Parents are also asked to update or exchange the card for a new one if their child's medicines or how much they take, changes during the year.

## Physical activities

- Children with asthma are encouraged to participate fully in all physical activities. 623 staff and sports coaches will remind pupils whose asthma is triggered by exercise, to take their reliever inhaler before engaging in energetic physical activity and to thoroughly warm up and down before and after the lesson. If a pupil needs to use their inhaler during a session he or she will be encouraged to do so.

## **The school environment**

- The school does all that it can to ensure the school environment is favourable to pupils with asthma. The school does not keep furry or feathery animals and has a definite no-smoking policy.
- When activities are organised which involve furry or feathery animals or other known triggers for a specific child's asthma, 623 staff will make it clear to the parents that such activities are planned so that alternative arrangements can be made for the child on those days. Careful clearing up will follow such activities.

## **Asthma attacks**

- All staff who come into contact with pupils with asthma know what to do in the event of an asthma attack.
- In the event of an asthma attack the school follows the procedure outlined by Asthma UK in its school policy guide. This procedure is visibly displayed.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Committee**

The Committee has a responsibility to:

- Ensure the health and safety of their employees (all staff) and anyone else on the premises or taking part in school activities (this includes pupils). This responsibility extends to those staff and others leading activities taking place off site, such as visits, outings or field trips. Employers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that an appropriate asthma policy is in place;
- Make sure the asthma policy is effectively monitored and regularly updated;
- Report to parents, pupils, school staff and local health authorities about the successes and failures of the policy;
- Provide indemnity for teachers who volunteer to administer medicine to pupils with asthma who need help.
- Plan the school's asthma policy in line with devolved national guidance;
- Ensure the plan is put into action, with good communication of the policy to everyone;
- Ensure every aspect of the policy is maintained;
- Assess the training and development needs of staff and arrange for them to be met;
- Ensure all supply staff and new staff know the school asthma policy;
- Regularly monitor the policy and how well it is working;
- Delegate a staff member to check the expiry date of spare reliever inhalers and maintain the school asthma register;

### **623 staff**

All school staff have a responsibility to:

- Understand the school asthma policy
- Know which pupils they come into contact with have asthma
- Know what to do in an asthma attack
- Allow pupils with asthma immediate access to their reliever inhaler
- Tell parents if their child has had an asthma attack and if they used their reliever medicines
- Ensure pupils have their asthma medicines with them when they go on a trip or out of the classroom

**Parents/carers** have a responsibility to:

- Tell 623 if their child has asthma
- Ensure 623 has a completed and up-to-date school asthma card for their child
- Inform 623 about the medicines their child requires during school hours
- Inform 623 of any medicines the child requires while taking part in visits
- Tell 623 about any changes to their child's medicines. What they take and how much
- Inform 623 of any changes to their child's asthma (for example, if their symptoms are getting worse or they are sleeping badly due to their asthma)
- Provide 623 with a spare reliever inhaler (and spacer where relevant) labelled with their child's name
- Ensure their child's reliever inhaler that they take to school with them is labelled with his/her name
- Ensure that their child's reliever inhaler and the spare is within its expiry date Keep their child at home if he/she is not well enough to attend school

**Pupils** have a responsibility to:

- Treat other pupils with and without asthma equally
- Let any pupil having an asthma attack take their blue inhaler and ensure a member of staff is called
- Tell a member of 623 staff when they are not feeling well
- Treat asthma medicines with respect
- Know how to gain access to their medicine in an emergency
- Know how to take their own asthma medicines

## ***Appendices***

### **LETTER TO PARENTS AND CARERS**

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: The School Asthma Card

Thank you for informing us of your child's asthma on his/her registration form. As part of accepted good practice and with advice from the Department for Education & Skills, Asthma UK and the school's governing bodies, 623 has recently established a new School Asthma Policy for use by all staff.

As part of this new policy, we are asking all parents and carers of children with asthma to help us by completing a school asthma card for their child/children. Please take this card to your child's doctor/asthma nurse to fill in and return it to the school by XXXXX DATE

The completed card will store helpful details about your child's current medicines, triggers, individual symptoms and emergency contact numbers. The card will help school staff to better understand your child's individual condition.

Please make sure the card is regularly checked and updated by your child's doctor or asthma nurse and 623 is kept informed about changes to your child's medicines, including how much they take and when.

I look forward to receiving your child's completed school asthma card. Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely

### **What is asthma?**

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways – the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. Asthma symptoms include coughing, wheezing, a tight chest and feeling short of breath. Each child or young person with asthma may have different symptoms.

Children and young people with asthma have airways that are almost always red and sensitive (inflamed). These airways can react badly when children and young people with asthma come into contact with an asthma trigger.

### **Asthma triggers**

A trigger is anything that irritates the airways and causes asthma symptoms. There are many asthma triggers. Common triggers include colds, viral infections, house-dust mites, pollen, cigarette smoke, furry or feathery animals, exercise, outdoor air pollution, laughter, excitement and stress. Everybody's asthma is different and everyone will have different triggers, most have several. It is important that children and young people with asthma get to know their own triggers and try to stay away from them or take precautions.

### **What happens during an asthma attack?**

When a child or young person with asthma comes into contact with an asthma trigger, the muscles around the walls of the airways tighten so that the airways become narrower. The lining of the airways

becomes inflamed and begins to swell, making it difficult to breathe and leading to symptoms of coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath or feeling tight in the chest. It is at this point that the child or young person with asthma will need to take a dose of their reliever medicine.

### **What does asthma feel like?**

Children and young people who have asthma tell us that:

'It feels like someone is standing on my lungs'

'It feels like I am being squashed'

'When I'm having an attack it feels like a rope is being slowly tightened around my chest'

### **Every child and young person's asthma is different**

Asthma varies in severity from person to person. Some children and young people will experience an occasional cough or wheeze, while for others, the symptoms will be much more severe.

Some pupils with asthma may occasionally need to take time off school if they have come into contact with a trigger (for example a cold). Some pupils with asthma may experience night-time symptoms and disturbed sleep and become tired in class.

Avoiding known triggers where possible and taking the correct medicines can usually control asthma effectively for most children and young people.

For more information about what to do if a staff member is worried about a pupil with asthma, see the later section 'What to do when a child or young person with asthma joins your class'.

To help with asthma control, all children and young people should have regular asthma reviews with their doctor or nurse. They should also have a personal asthma action plan.

### **What to do in an asthma attack**

Common signs of an asthma attack:

Coughing

Shortness of breath

Wheezing

Feeling tight in the chest

Being unusually quiet

Difficulty speaking in full sentences

Tummy ache (sometimes in younger children)

What to do

Keep calm

Encourage the child or young person to sit up and slightly forward – do not hug or lie them down

Make sure the child or young person takes two puffs of reliever (blue) inhaler immediately (preferably through a spacer)

Loosen tight clothing

Reassure the child

If there is no immediate improvement

Continue to make sure the child or young person takes one puff of reliever inhaler every minute for five minutes or until their symptoms improve

Call 999 or a doctor urgently if:

The child or young person's symptoms do not improve in 5-10 minutes The child or young person is too breathless or exhausted to talk

The child or young person's lips are blue

Or if you are in doubt

Continue to give the child one puff of their reliever inhaler every minute until the ambulance or doctor arrives

### **After a minor asthma attack**

Minor attacks should not interrupt the involvement of a pupil with asthma in school. When the pupil feels better they can return to school activities

The parents/carers must always be told if their child has had an asthma attack Important things to remember in an asthma attack

Never leave a pupil having an asthma attack

If the pupil does not have their inhaler and/or spacer with them, send another teacher or pupil to their classroom or assigned room to get their spare inhaler and/or spacer

In an emergency situation school staff are required under common law, duty of care, to act like any reasonably prudent parent

Reliever medicine is very safe. During an asthma attack do not worry about a pupil overdosing

Send another pupil to get another teacher/adult if an ambulance needs to be called

Contact the pupil's parents or carers immediately after calling the ambulance/doctor

A member of staff should always accompany a pupil taken to hospital by ambulance and stay with them until their parent or carer arrives

Generally staff should not take pupils to hospital in their own car. However in some situations it may be the best course of action. Another adult should always accompany anyone driving a pupil having an asthma attack to emergency services

NB: Guidance from devolved education authorities on emergency transport in private vehicles is different in each country. Your school should have a clear emergency procedure policy on if and when this is appropriate.