

ECARF Seal of Quality

Criteria for allergy-friendly schools

Background

Twenty-eight million people in Europe, or one third of the population, suffer from allergies. This figure also applies to school-aged children and teens. Schoolchildren with untreated allergic rhinitis demonstrate a 30% reduction in performance. This also means lower examination results of up to one entire grade.

The goal of the ECARF Seal for Allergy-Friendly Boarding Schools is to improve the school environment for students with allergies by ensuring that the needs of allergy sufferers are addressed.

The ECARF Seal of Quality proves that a school has been adapted in a simple and practical way for students with allergies. While it may not be possible for public areas such as an auditorium or dining hall to be completely free from allergens, adherence to the ECARF criteria nevertheless significantly improves the environment and the quality of life for students with allergies.

1. Environment

- The people in charge are aware of allergies and accommodate the needs of students with allergies without isolating them.
- The school's emergency pharmacy is stocked with modern antihistamine tablets (e.g. cetirizine) and an adrenalin pen.
- The staff will be prepared to handle allergy emergencies with the appropriate training materials.
- Teachers, caregivers, kitchen staff and, if applicable, healthcare workers will receive training from ECARF experts on dealing with students with allergies. Training is repeated every two years.

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2. Interiors

Public Areas

- No allergenic plants that release pollen (in general no blossoming grasses, hazel or birch branches, olive plants. In particular, self-pollinating plants release pollen and spread them throughout interiors. However, certain allergenic plants such as violets or ficus benjamina only cause problems when they come into direct contact with the skin and therefore need not necessarily be removed in every circumstance.)
- Ventilation of rooms through open windows or external monitoring of air conditioners and ventilators according to manufacturer guidelines, including regular filter changes
- Non-smoking, pet-free environment

3. Catering

Catering for students and staff must be adapted to the needs of allergy sufferers. To this end, competent allergen management must be established and a sufficient range of food alternatives must be made available.

Allergen Management

■ Purchasing and preparation of meals

Allergens can also end up unintentionally in food, for example, if the raw ingredients contain hidden allergens or the same transport container has been used for allergen-free and allergen-containing raw ingredients. Allergen contamination can also occur when the same machines or utensils (e.g. knives) have been used to prepare allergen-free and allergen-containing meals. Correct allergen management effectively prevents contamination by allergens. It includes:

- Monitoring of raw ingredients
- Monitoring of the food preparation process
- Organised staff training

The kitchen staff should therefore ensure through allergen management that

- Products are always individually packaged and delivered in separate transport containers; this should be specified when ordering the products
- Food items are individually packaged, covered and stored
- Meals containing allergens are prepared in a separate working area
- The kitchen staff changes latex-free gloves or washes hands before entering the separate working area
- In order to prevent cross contamination, kitchen utensils never come into contact with other food items or dishes before or during meal preparation
- Prepared food is portioned out using separate kitchen utensils for each individual meal component
- The kitchen and serving staff are regularly trained in the storage, preparation and distribution of meals and in



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responding to queries from guests

- A list of all allergenic ingredients is accessible to the staff and guests at all times so that they may always be informed about the composition of all dishes

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■ Labelling of Allergenic Meals

Information on allergenic ingredients used in the meals is accessible at all times.

The following major allergens must be labelled for the meals provided:

The 14 allergens subject to mandatory labelling by law (EU regulation no. 1169/2011):

- Cereals containing gluten, specifically wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, kamut or hybrid varieties thereof and products thereof
- Nuts, specifically almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut, macadamia nut, Queensland nut and products thereof
- Eggs and egg products
- Peanuts and peanut products
- Soya and soya products
- Mustard and mustard products
- Crustaceans and crustacean products
- Fish and fish products
- Milk and dairy products (including lactose)
- Celery and celery products
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at a concentration greater than 10 mg/kg or 10mg/l specified as SO₂
- Sesame seeds and sesame seed products
- Lupin and lupin products
- Molluscs and mollusc products

Food alternatives

Upon registration of a child at the boarding school, information on the child's food intolerances is requested.

As needed, meals are agreed based on individual requirements and the ingredients to be avoided. Alternative meal components and foods are made available, e.g.:

- Eggless durum wheat pasta or noodles, semolina, rice, potatoes
- Soya milk
- Lactose-free milk
- Dairy-free, eggless and nut-free desserts
- Gluten-free bread
- Nut-free, peanut-free and almond-free muesli and bread