Allergies and Intolerances - (Updated) on the 05.10.2026

Allergies and intolerances are biologically different, treating medical proof as a requirement across both creates a robust, standardised safety standard for school catering.

Proof for Intolerances

- Safety & Duty of Care: Severe intolerances (or conditions like Coeliac disease, which is often mislabelled as a gluten intolerance) can cause severe, long-term health issues or immediate distress. Having official medical documentation ensures your team has explicit clinical guidelines on what the child can and cannot eat.
- Operational Protection for Kitchen Staff: Catering staff face significant pressure when custom-adapting meals. Requiring medical proof prevents kitchen teams from managing non-medical, parental diet preferences or transient fussiness as "intolerances," allowing resources to be focused on actual medical needs.
- Consistency with Legal & School Frameworks: Under Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014, schools have a statutory duty to support pupils with verified medical conditions. Aligning your catering policy with Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) ensures clarity between parents, the school, and your team.

Key Policy Recommendations

1. Clearly Distinguish Medical Needs from Fussy Eating
    - Medical Needs (Proof Required): IgE-mediated allergies, non-IgE allergies, Coeliac disease, and diagnosed intolerances (e.g., lactose intolerance, severe fructose malabsorption).
    - Lifestyle / Religious Choices (Self-Declared): Vegan, vegetarian, or halal/kosher requirements should be managed through standard meal choice forms rather than medical allergen channels.
    - Dislikes / Preferences: Inform parents that personal food dislikes or mild non-medical preferences cannot be accommodated via bespoke special menus.
2. Define Acceptable Medical Proof

Make the requirements explicit to avoid back-and-forth with parents. Acceptable documentation includes:

- A letter or diagnosis summary from a GP, hospital consultant, or registered dietitian.
- A completed NHS/BSACI (British Society for Allergy & Clinical Immunology) Allergy or Special Diet Action Plan signed by a medical professional.
- Acknowledgment of the health care plan/ allergy plan provided by school with parents' permission.

How to Request the Letter Online

Option A: Via Your NHS GP Practice Online Service (Recommended)

Most NHS GP surgeries allow you to submit digital requests without needing a full face-to-face appointment:

- NHS App or GP Online Portal: Log in to the NHS App or your GP practice website
- Submit an Admin or Consultation Request: Select the option for an Admin Request or Medical Letter / Request Advice.
- Provide Full Details: Explain that your child's school/nursery caterer requires written medical confirmation of a food intolerance/allergy to set up a safe, tailored menu. State clearly what foods cause a reaction and describe any symptoms.

Option B: Online/Telephone GP Appointment

- You can book a telephone or video consultation with an NHS GP.
- The GP can review your child's medical records or symptom history and issue a written summary letter, referral note, or medical diet confirmation.

3. We will provide a Grace / Interim Period

NHS waiting lists for allergy and gastroenterology clinics can be long.

- Allow a temporary provision period (e.g., 2–4 weeks) where a child is catered for safely based on a formal parent request while they obtain documentation or a GP note confirming they are awaiting assessment.
- This protects the child's immediate wellbeing while keeping your compliance standard intact.