

Benedict Blythe: the boy behind Benedict's Law

Benedict Blythe was a five-year-old reception pupil at Barnack Primary School in Stamford, Lincolnshire. He had known allergies to milk, eggs and some nuts, alongside asthma, and was cared for at home and school with an established allergy plan.

On 1 December 2021, Benedict became unwell during morning break, vomiting twice before going into cardiac arrest. Staff and his father, Pete, attempted CPR before paramedics took him to Peterborough City Hospital, where he died that afternoon. A postmortem found the cause of death was food induced anaphylaxis.

The inquest, held in July 2025 at Peterborough Town Hall, spent much of its eight days ruling out possible triggers, including a biscuit he'd eaten, before the jury concluded the most likely cause was cow's milk mistakenly poured into his cup instead of his usual oat milk, both kept in the same staffroom fridge. The jury found that staff hadn't been told about symptoms he was showing, that the school's own safety procedures weren't followed, that too many people were involved in preparing his care that day, and that adrenaline was given far too late to save him.

A follow up Prevention of Future Deaths report in December 2025 focused mainly on the police investigation, faulting Cambridgeshire Police for failing to seize and preserve vomit samples from the classroom, evidence that could have identified the allergen sooner. Benedict's family publicly criticised the report for concentrating on what happened after his collapse rather than the school failures beforehand, calling it a missed opportunity to address the errors they believe should have kept him safe.

The campaign

Benedict's parents, Helen and Pete Blythe, turned their grief into sustained campaigning. They founded the Benedict Blythe Foundation and, working with allergy clinicians, charities and the National Allergy Strategy Group, built a campaign that became known as Benedict's Law. Benedict's younger sister, Etta, has also taken part publicly, including delivering a petition and letters to 10 Downing Street.

The campaign pushed for schools to be legally required to have a whole school allergy policy, train all staff to recognise and respond to anaphylaxis, hold spare adrenaline auto injectors, keep individual healthcare plans for allergic pupils, and improve communication and record keeping. Early milestones included a Department for Education backed Schools Allergy Code and growing cross party support, culminating in a Lords amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

In 2026 the government committed to new statutory guidance implementing the principles of Benedict's Law in English schools from September 2026, with campaigning continuing to extend the same protections to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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