

Menopause Policy

Create Learning Trust



Approved by	Date	Review Schedule	Date of Review
Trust Board	July 2024	2 years	July 2026

Commitment to equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly.

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Promote a greater understanding of the menopause and its symptoms.
- Support an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably hold conversations about the menopause.
- Ensure every staff member understands what the menopause is and the common signs & symptoms.
- Ensure headteachers/line managers are aware of the reasonable adjustments that may be put in place to support staff members.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

1.2 Whilst some individuals go through this natural stage without too many problems, for others it is more difficult. It can pose significant challenges to daily living and can impact on work.

1.3 Employees are encouraged to inform their headteacher/line manager that their menopausal symptoms are impacting on their work at an early stage, to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue. Early notification will also help headteachers/line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.

1.4 This policy is also applicable to transgender, intersex people and non-binary employees, who may also experience menopausal symptoms.

Note:

In situations where the affected employee is the headteacher, any reference to the role of headteacher throughout this policy should be replaced with Chair of the Local Academy Board.

2. Data protection statement

2.1 The Trust processes personal data in accordance with its data protection policy. In particular, data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support as part of this Policy. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence.

3. Definitions

Menopause

3.1 The menopause is a natural stage of life when a female's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods. As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

3.2 It should be recognised that the experience will vary significantly for each individual. The menopause usually occurs between 45 - 55 years of age, with the average age in the UK being 51 years. More information about the menopause, symptoms and treatment can be found on the [NHS website](#).

3.3 Menopause before 40 years of age is known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI). Surgical and medical conditions, such as cancer, hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis and hormone therapy as part of someone's transition to a true gender can also bring about early menopause symptoms.

Perimenopause

3.4 Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Postmenopause

3.5 Postmenopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a person has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

3.6 Anyone with female anatomy can experience menopause regardless of gender or gender identity. While all women experience the menopause, an individual's experience of the menopause may differ greatly. Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status.

Andropause ("male menopause")

3.7 The term 'male menopause' is somewhat misleading because it suggests the symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to hormonal changes in the female menopause. This is not the case. More information about Andropause can be found on the [NHS website](#).

3.8 The symptoms may interfere with home and work life and include mood swings and irritability, loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise, fat redistribution, a general lack of enthusiasm or energy, difficulty sleeping/ increased tiredness and poor concentration/short-term memory.

4 How menopause symptoms may affect work

4.1 Below is a (non-exhaustive) list of symptoms that may affect work ability:

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Potential Impact</u>
Hot flushes	May cause embarrassment and distress, and individuals may isolate themselves from colleagues. Stressful situations might also trigger hot flushes
Sleep disturbance	May lead to tiredness, memory problems and reduced concentration
Heavy and/or erratic periods	May cause embarrassment. Some individuals may need to more frequently change sanitary protection, requiring breaks to use toilet facilities
Headaches	Might cause work impairment, lower productivity and increased sickness absence
Mood change	May lead to increased sickness absence levels (e.g. with anxiety & depression)

Loss of confidence	Especially in severe cases, it may lead to loss of confidence in ability and low self esteem
Cognitive difficulty	Often termed 'Menopause Fog', this can affect short term memory, concentration and attention to detail, leading to worry about performance and loss of confidence in ability.

5 How employees can be supported during the menopause

- 5.1 A good starting point is to know what the menopause is, when it happens and how it can affect people. Headteachers/line managers must remember that employee experiences of the menopause may differ.
- 5.2 Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms should have access to the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue. Effective management of employees with menopausal symptoms that are impacting on their work will help to improve team morale, retain valuable skills and talent, and reduce sickness absence.
- 5.3 Headteachers/line managers are typically the first point of contact if someone needs to discuss their health concerns or needs an adjustment in their role to enable them to perform to their full potential. Headteachers/line managers are also responsible for managing sickness absence, keeping in touch with an employee off work due to their menopausal symptoms and discussing any adjustments at work to support an effective return to work.
- 5.4 If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if an employee wishes to speak about a family member, a meeting should be arranged which ensures:
 - There is adequate time to have the conversation
 - An appropriate room to is available to preserve confidentiality
 - Employees are encouraged to speak openly and honestly;
 - Ways are suggested in which they can be supported
 - Actions are agreed, and how to implement them ensuring that the record is treated as confidential and is stored securely.
 - It is agreed if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
 - Designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting and do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.
- 5.5 It is good practice to include discussions about health and well-being during staff meetings and one-to-one meetings. This may provide the forum for discussion about any changes to health or wellbeing, including the menopause.
- 5.6 Headteachers/line managers must maintain confidentiality in handling health information relating to the menopause. This includes, in line with the Gender Recognition Act 2004, where health information relating to the menopause reveals someone's trans status.

6 Menopause Assessment

- 6.1 A menopause assessment may be completed for an employee who expresses concerns about the impact of menopausal symptoms on their work, performance or attendance. The menopause assessment template for this is the same for any health concern, medical condition, disability or other impairment affecting their job role or work.

- 6.2 The menopause assessment process enables a discussion to take place with the employee, so that the impact their menopausal symptoms are having, and any workplace adjustments can be identified.
- 6.3 The menopause assessment should be documented and may be reviewed, particularly in the event of any significant changes. Menopausal symptoms are generally age- dependant and over time may deteriorate, improve or diminish completely, at which time it may be jointly agreed that the menopause assessment is no longer required.

Examples of workplace adjustments

- 6.4 Many employees experiencing menopausal symptoms may not need adjustments to be made, but if they are needed, it is a positive way to keep employees in the workplace continuing to deliver in their role.
- 6.5 Workplace adjustments should remove barriers that get in the way of an employee undertaking their role. They should be tailored to address the barriers/issues experienced specifically by that employee, and should be identified through the discussion with the employee (and other relevant experts (where appropriate) e.g. Occupational Health). It is essential to avoid making assumptions as menopause symptoms vary between individuals.

Workplace adjustments are not limited to but may include:

- Access to a desktop fan, good ventilation including windows which open and blinds that can be drawn;
 - Locating a workstation near an opening window or away from a heat source;
 - Where work requires constant standing or prolonged sitting, ability to take breaks to move about and access to a quiet rest room;
 - In public facing roles, access to a quiet room for a short break to manage a severe hot flush;
 - Easy access to toilet/shower facilities; (staff only facilities where possible)
 - Access to cold drinking water;
 - Access to the 'on call' system to deal with any emergencies arising out of the employee's symptoms;
 - Flexibility with any agreed dress code or where uniform is mandatory (e.g. providing additional uniform to enable individuals to change during the day, using pro-natural fibres like cotton if an employee is experiencing hot flushes and sweating. Uniform could also be made of natural materials where available).
 - Flexible working
- 6.6 Failure to make reasonable adjustments could lead to a discrimination claim.
Headteachers/line managers may wish to contact a member of the Trust's Human Resources Team for further support and advice. In addition, the employee could be referred to Occupational Health for further advice.

7 How employees can help themselves

- 7.1 Some employees may not realise that any symptoms that they are experiencing are caused by the Menopause. Therefore, it is important for all staff to learn about the menopause and how it can affect those experiencing it. Other ways that employees may help themselves include:
- Diarising symptoms/effects
 - Avoiding hot flush triggers (e.g. hot food and drink)

- Considering layering their clothing
- Seeking medical advice from their GP
- Speaking to their headteacher/line manager
- Relaxation techniques (e.g. Meditation, Yoga, Pilates)
- Lifestyle changes (e.g. reducing/stopping smoking/drinking alcohol, amending their diet, engaging in exercise)

8 Menopause and the Law

8.1 Although the menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be classed as discrimination if it is related to a protected characteristic, (Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation).

9 Attendance procedures

9.1 Attendance of staff members experiencing the menopause will be managed in line with the Sickness Absence Procedure.

9.2 Any requests for breaks or flexible working will be outlined in the employees Return to Work meeting. Flexible working requests will be dealt with through the Flexible Working Policy.

9.3 The school will ensure that any appraisal, capability and performance procedures are not applied in a way as to discriminate unlawfully against female staff members experiencing the menopause.

10 Review of this policy

10.1 This policy has been consulted on as part of collective bargaining via the CLT JCNC. The policy will be reviewed in accordance with the information detailed at page 1.

11 Useful links

- [Henpicked](#) – website for women's health issues
 - [Menopause in Minutes](#) video (Password - Hormones2021)
 - [Managing your menopause](#) - colleague support pack
- [British Menopause Society](#) (BMS) - find a menopause specialist
- [The Menopause Exchange](#) - offering independent advice about the menopause, midlife and post-menopausal health
- LCC Wellbeing guides –
- [Menopause Matters](#) – independent website providing up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options

- Managing the effects of the menopause: Menopause at work
- Acas – Managing the effects of the menopause: Menopause at work
- [Balance - Homepage](#) – includes lots of resources and an App that people can use to track their symptoms

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