"Together, with Jesus, we can LOVE, LEARN and SUCCEED"

Ribchester St. Wilfrid's Church of England Primary School
LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
MENOPAUSE POLICY

Headteacher	Miss Katie Isherwood
Person Responsible for Policy	Miss Katie Isherwood
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LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MENOPAUSE POLICY FOR SCHOOLS WITH DELEGATED BUDGETS

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to promote a greater understanding of the menopause and its symptoms, and to support an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably hold conversations about the menopause.

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.

Supporting and creating a positive and open environment between the School and an employer affected by menopause can help prevent the person from:

- losing confidence in their skills and abilities
- feeling like they need to take time off work and hide the reasons for it
- having increased mental health problems e.g. stress, anxiety and depression
- leaving their job

Employees are encouraged to inform their Headteacher 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 to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.

This policy is also applicable for 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 Governors.

2. Data protection statement

The School 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 school's data protection policy. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence.

3. Definitions

Menopause

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. The transition to menopause is referred to as perimenopause.

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.

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.

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")

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.

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

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

Symptom	Potential Impact
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

A good starting point is to know what the menopause is, when it happens and how it can affect people. Headteachers must remember that employee experiences of the menopause may differ.

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.

Headteachers 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 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.

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.

Headteachers 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. Risk assessment

A risk assessment may be completed for an employee who expresses concerns about the impact of menopausal symptoms on their work, performance or attendance. The risk assessment template for this is the same for any health/ medical condition or disability, and can be found on the Schools Portal Health & Safety site under 'Risk Assessment'.

The risk 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.

The risk 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 risk assessment is no longer required.

Examples of workplace adjustments

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.

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 Unit). 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 that 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;
- 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 materials like cotton if an employee is experiencing hot flushes and sweating).
- Flexible working (see flexible working policy)

Headteachers may wish to contact a member of the Schools HR Team for further support and advice. In addition, the employee could be referred to the Occupational Health Unit for further advice.

7. How employees can help themselves

Some employees may not realise that the 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 (Apps are available to do this - see below)
- Avoiding hot flush triggers (e.g. hot food and drink)
- Considering layering their clothing
- Seeking medical advice from their GP
- Speaking to their 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

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 related to a protected characteristic, for example:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- sex

9. Useful links for further information and advice

- 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 – available on the School Portal

- Balance - Homepage – includes lots of resources and an App that people can use to track their symptoms