

Date ratified at
Directors Full Board
25 March 2024



Review Resources
Committee

MENOPAUSE AND WORK POLICY

THE TRUST MISSION STATEMENT

*Inspired by the life of Christ we provide an exceptional education in our Catholic schools
which enables our children:*

- to fully embrace all possibilities
 - to flourish
 - to develop their faith

and therefore to choose a path that enables them to be a positive influence upon our world.

'Prepare the Way' The Gospel of St Mark 1:3

St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust
Company No: 7913261
Registered Office: Surrey Street, Norwich NR1 3PB



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the Company Secretary on 01603 611431 and we will do our best to help.

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 Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

DEFINITIONS

In this Policy and Procedure, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

- i. 'Academy' means each academy / school within the Trust named at the beginning of this Policy and Procedure and includes all sites upon which the academy undertaking is, from time to time, being carried out.
- ii. 'Academy Trust Company' means the company responsible for the management of the Academy and, for all purposes, means the employer of staff at the Academy.
- iii. 'Board' means the board of Directors of the Academy Trust Company.
- iv. 'Chair' means the Chair of the Board or the Chair of the Local Governing Body of the Academy appointed from time to time, as appropriate.
- v. 'Clerk' means the Clerk to the Board or the Clerk to the Local Governing Body of the Academy appointed from time to time, as appropriate.
- vi. 'Companion' means a willing work colleague not involved in the substance of the employee's performance issues under review by this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, or an accredited trade union representative or other professional association of which the employee is a member, who should be available for the periods of time necessary to meet timescales under this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
- vii. 'Diocesan Schools Commission' means the education service provided by the diocese, which may also be known, or referred to, as the Diocesan Education Service.
- viii. 'Directors' means directors appointed to the Board of the Academy Trust Company. ix. 'Governing Board' means the body carrying out the employment functions of the Academy Trust Company and such term may include the Board of Directors and a Local Governing Body of the Academy.
- x. 'Governors' means the governors appointed and elected to the Local Governing Body of the Academy, from time to time.
- xi. 'Local Governing Body' means the group of governors appointed and elected to carry out specified functions in relation to the Academy as delegated by the Academy Trust Company.
- xii. 'Principal/Headteacher' means the teacher employed within each academy or across several academies in the role of CEO, Principal, Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School, as appropriate.
- xiii. 'Vice-Chair' means the Vice-Chair of the Board or the Vice-Chair of the Local Governing Body of the Academy elected from time to time, as appropriate.
- xiv. 'Working Day' means any day on which you would ordinarily work if you were a full-time employee. In other words, 'Working Day' may apply differently to teaching and nonteaching staff. However, part-time and full-time staff will not be treated differently for the purposes of implementing this Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
- xv. 'Working Week' means any week during which you would ordinarily work.

1. Introduction

The menopause affects most women. On average this happens between the ages of 45 and 55. When a woman begins the menopause before the age of 40 it is classed as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). There are more women in the workforce aged over 50 than ever before and the trend is for upward levels of labour force participation amongst this group. The majority of women experience symptoms that can affect their lives, including their work. Some women will experience debilitating symptoms and symptoms usually last 4-8 years. Therefore, it is very important that all women feel encouraged to speak with their Headteacher, or line manager, if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms, which require support. Action can then be taken to enable them to undertake their role with confidence and assurance.

It is very important that support is offered to women where it is communicated or recognised that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms. This will help to reduce absenteeism and increase retention of highly skilled and experienced employees. It will also reduce risk of tribunal claims for sex and disability discrimination.

2. Scope

This policy is part of the Trust's overall commitment to safety, wellbeing and duty of care to its employees. This Trust is committed to being inclusive and supportive of all its staff. This policy applies to all employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms. It also provides a framework for managers to support employees throughout their menopause to enable them to improve their experience at work, ultimately helping them to remain at work.

Through the implementation of this policy, the Trust will be mindful of the employer obligation to seek to maintain and protect the mental health and wellbeing of all staff as far as is reasonably practicable.

3. Policy aims

- To offer help and support to any employee who is experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause, which is affecting their work.
- To maintain a safe, healthy and productive workplace.
- Encourage an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing the effects of the menopause.
- To educate all employees on what the menopause is and how it can affect women.
- To provide Headteachers and managers with advice on how to help and support employee's experiencing the menopause.
- To provide support to ensure the employee remains at work and absence is kept to a minimum because the correct support is provided.

4. Relevant legislation

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** - places a duty on the employer to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees
- **Equality Act 2010**- sex and disability discrimination

5. Definition

The **menopause** is defined as a biological state in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Once the woman has not had a period for a year, this is classed as being menopausal.

The time leading up to the menopause, when a woman may experience menopausal symptoms is known as the **perimenopause**. This can last for years before the menopause. In this policy the phrase 'menopausal symptoms' includes the perimenopause.

The time after the menopause has occurred (when she has had her last period) is known as the **postmenopause**.

During the perimenopause and menopause the levels of oestrogen and progesterone change significantly and this can cause a whole host of physical and psychological symptoms. Research has found that there is no uniform experience so judgements regarding how an employee should be behaving, should not be based on the employer's personal experience.

6. Symptoms

Symptoms can affect physical and mental health. In some women they will only last a few months, for others it could be years. The average length of time is four years. Some symptoms are listed below but there are many more.

Physical:

- Hot flushes – causing the face, neck and chest to turn red and sweaty. Some women will experience being drenched with sweat, which soaks through the clothing. Hot flushes can also cause dizziness, light-headedness and even heart palpitations.
- Night sweats
- Sleep disruption – as a result of other symptoms
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Joint pain
- Heavy periods

Mental/psychological symptoms:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood changes
- Anxiety
- Depression

- Poor memory
- Reduced confidence
- Panic attacks
- Irritability
- Reduced ability to multi-task

All of the above can lead to time off work and/or a negative effect on a woman's performance at work. A woman experiencing any of these symptoms who is not receiving any support is likely to have little control over how the symptoms impact on her work and life. Additionally, women can find some of the symptoms embarrassing and not feel able to perform their role as they may be expected e.g. sudden hot flushes which cause heavy sweating, or frequent memory loss, could mean a female employee loses confidence or experiences heightened anxiety to stand in front of her class or present at a Trust or Local Governing Board meeting.

Symptoms can have a significant impact on attendance and performance. Where a woman is unaware that her symptoms are a result of the menopause or is reluctant to share her experiences with her employer, the impact on work can be wrongly dealt with as a performance issue.

Being an approachable, open and supportive employer can help to address this and provide support that could help to alleviate the impact the symptoms the woman is experiencing. It is more often the psychological symptoms that affect a woman's ability to work the most. See section 8 for what support can be offered.

7. Employees responsibilities

7.1 Employees undergoing the menopause

It is expected that employees will:

- Find out about the menopause from available sources. See section 10.1.
- Seek medical advice from their GP where necessary.
- Be honest in conversations with Headteachers/managers/occupational health and HR, especially where an employee feels that their symptoms are affecting their performance and/or attendance.
- Be willing to discuss and/or implement practical needs to improve their experience at work. See section 10 for suggested support.
- Look after their own health e.g. getting enough rest, eating well and regular exercise.

7.2 Work colleagues

It is expected that employees will:

- Look out for the health and wellbeing of colleagues, be sensitive in any approaches made to enquire about issues or raise issues sensitively with the Headteacher/management.
- Respect adjustments put in place for others.
- Be considerate, understanding and respectful.

8. Headteacher responsibilities

8.1 *It is expected that Headteachers will:*

- Encourage an approachable, supportive environment, which encourages employees to be confident about raising any issues they may be experiencing.
Manage all disclosures with professionalism, sensitivity and confidentiality – the employee will need to agree to other colleagues being made aware.
Decide on and implement reasonable adjustments to support the employee.
- Be mindful that all employees and their experiences are different, so a one size fits all approach is unlikely to be successful.
- Be mindful that not all employees will want to discuss their menopause symptoms or even be open about going through the menopause. In these cases, the school will respect that decision and consider what support could be offered generally (see section 10).
- Monitor employee absence in line with the Trust's absence management policy and procedure. Employees experiencing menopausal (including perimenopausal) symptoms will be considered as if the symptoms were related to a disability, for absence procedure purposes. Menopause related absence will be recorded separately, where it is known to be menopause related.
- Ensure that performance and capability procedures do not discriminate against female staff members experiencing the menopause

9. Procedure

9.1 Where an employee has approached the Headteacher (or their manager) to discuss the impact their menopausal symptoms are having, or a situation has arisen where it is clear a conversation is required with an employee the Headteacher (or manager) should:

- Read this policy in preparation
- Consider whether the severity and duration of the employee's menopause symptoms are such that they could constitute a disability. In such circumstances, it should be considered whether any reasonable adjustments are necessary. *See Equality and Diversity Policy*
- Arrange an informal meeting to discuss the employee's situation and decide what action can be taken, taking into account section 8 and any suggestions from the employee. The meeting should be held in an appropriate location to maintain confidentiality. At the meeting the employee and headteacher (or Line Manager) should:
 - Agree together what action can be taken and how the employee can be best supported. This is most easily recorded by using an action plan template (*A Menopause and work action plan is included as Appendix 1*).
 - Record any adjustments and actions on the action plan. Ensure completion or review dates are assigned to any actions. Subsequently, where completion or review dates cannot be met ensure the employee is informed of this and kept up to date on progress.
 - Conduct a risk assessment to identify risks and implement appropriate control measures. The risk assessment will need to consider the specific needs of the individual in question and include (but not limited to) assessing;
 - Existing symptoms
 - Temperature and ventilation
 - Access to a quiet space

- Access to toilet facilities
- Access to drinking water
- Level of workplace stress
- Review of workload and work activity
- Consideration of flexible working adjustments
- Record and implement any reasonable adjustments identified on the risk assessment. These can be recorded on the action plan so that the actions are all in one place.
- Ensure the action plan and risk assessment are reviewed every term or more frequently where required (e.g. if new symptoms arise).
- Schedule a follow up meeting one month after the initial meeting takes place to ensure the employee is being supported successfully.
- Schedule future meetings to ensure agreed reviews take place.

Where adjustments are not successful or if symptoms develop/change and require other adjustments the Headteacher (or Line Manager) can:

- Make a referral to occupational health, having already discussed this with the employee and implement any recommendations where reasonably practicable.
- Keep the action plan up to date and under review.

10. Support

Often women do not realise that their symptoms are related to the menopause (or perimenopause) and therefore may not talk about it and subsequently do not ask for help. Or they are aware but do not want to talk about it because they feel they will not be supported or understood, due to lack of awareness from colleagues or managers.

Women who frequently experience symptoms are more likely to feel less engaged at work, experience job dissatisfaction and therefore their performance may decrease, or they may appear less committed. It is important that where this is recognised, support is offered as if it is left unchecked it could lead to the woman's attendance dropping or leaving her job, which leads to a negative outcome for the woman and for the school as her employer.

Where the school is aware support is needed:

- Arrange an informal meeting with the employee(s) to establish what support would help them and follow the procedure outlined in section 7 above.
- [Offer the employee the advice which can be found on the Faculty of Occupational Medicine website](#) to help them consider what they can do to reduce the impact of their symptoms.
- Consider improving ventilation in the work environment to alleviate hot flushes.
- Suggest the employee works to understand their hot flush triggers, this could be hot drinks or food - and avoids them, where possible, just before presentations or times of known heightened anxiety.
- Provide access to a rest room and/or a quiet place to work where required, to help with hot flushes or poor concentration.
- Advice on how to access counselling or mindfulness programmes to assist with anxiety or panic attacks.
- Explore using relaxation techniques to help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Where possible, consider work allocation to assist with poor concentration.

- Ensure there is adequate access to toilets.
- Arrange for storage space to be available should the employee need to store a change of clothing.
- Arrange, where viable, for the employee (teaching staff) to be supported by an HLTA who can take over should they need to leave the class.
- Also see general support below.

General support which can be offered regardless of whether or not symptoms are known:

- Consider all flexible working requests sensitively – it may help the employee to start later where they are not sleeping well.
- Referral to the Trust’s Occupational Health provider for further information and ways to support.
- Have a number of desk fans readily available for employees to use should they need them.
- Provide easy access to drinking water.
- Allocate a room as a rest room for employees.
- Access to notebooks/reminder systems (paper or electronic) to aid with memory loss – e.g. a school secretary/receptionist may find it helps to write down what incoming calls they’ve taken and what action is required.
- Raise awareness of symptoms of the menopause through sharing this policy with all line managers.
- Raise awareness of how employee assistance programmes can be accessed e.g. Norfolk Support Line.
- Be aware that whilst this policy is going to apply in the main to female employees, male employees may also be affected. Either by:
 - a partner who is currently going through the menopause. Their sleep may be disturbed if their partner is unable to sleep well at night. This may cause them to be sleep deprived and feel that they are unable to concentrate properly or perform in their role as they were.
 - a colleague who is going through the menopause and they are not sure how to deal with it or how to offer help.

10.1 External support

- Occupational Health via the Trust HR provider
- Trust and LA Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team
- Read the [guidance on menopause and the workplace on the Faculty of Occupational Medicine website](#).
- Read the [guidelines on diagnosis and management of menopause on the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence website](#).
- Where the employee’s menopause experience is linked to symptoms of a mental health condition, [visit the Remploy website](#).
- Visit the [Menopause and me website](#).
- For support with early menopause, [visit the Daisy Network website](#).
- Read [information on the Healthtalk.org website](#).
- [Read information on the Women’s Health Concern website](#).
- [Read information on The Menopause Exchange website](#).

11. Data protection

When an employee informs the Headteacher or their line manager that they need support because they are going through the menopause any data collected in relation to this will be processed in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy. Data collected will be held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of supporting the employee and ensuring the organisation remains a safe place to work in. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 1 -Menopause and work action plan

Action: Employee and Headteacher (Line Manager) to complete and agree this form together.

Employee's symptoms	Effect on employee's work	Specific agreed actions	Timescale for implementation of actions	Reasonable adjustments	Timescales for implementation of reasonable adjustments	Review date

General agreed actions (including agreed next steps):

Employee signature:

Date:

Headteacher/Principal signature:

Date: