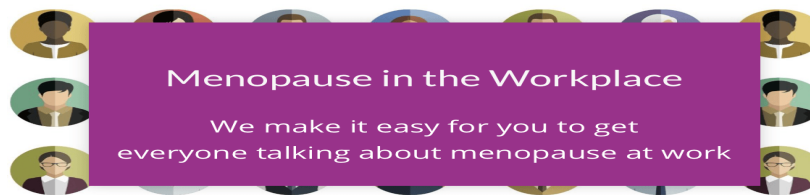




Hindhayes Infant School
Menopause Support Policy
September 2022



Approved on: _____
Signed: _____
Role: _____

Purpose of Policy

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them. It aims to:

- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support colleagues at work.
- Ensure that employees suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Assure employees that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

Who does it apply to?

While this Policy uses the term 'women' to talk about people who may experience menopause transition, it can impact trans or non-binary colleagues who do not identify as women in the same manner. All colleagues experiencing menopause transition should be supported.

Menopause as a health condition

Supporting colleagues experiencing symptoms of menopause transition means understanding that not everyone experiences menopause in the same way. Like any other health condition, colleagues will have different symptoms and need different support at different times.

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each woman's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. Women may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

The legislative context

This policy recognises that the menopause could be both an equality and health and safety issue and that employees may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

3.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal women, see section 5.3.

3.2 The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments

All staff are responsible for health and safety in schools and should:

- take responsibility for looking after their health
- be open and honest in conversations with HR and occupational health
- contribute to a respectful and healthy working environment
- be willing to help and support their colleagues
- accept and support any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Definitions:

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness, or other reasons.

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

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

Confidentiality

Information reported by colleagues who report experiencing symptoms will be kept confidential (unless their express consent is provided, or, if, as an Employer, we have got serious concerns for that colleagues' safety or that of other colleagues). Personal data collected in accordance will be used and retained in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the organisation becomes aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by; and disclosed to individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary greatly and can manifest both physically and psychologically, but they can commonly include:

- psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
 - hot flushes
 - sleep disturbances (including night sweats) that can make you feel tired and irritable
 - heavy bleeding that might cause pain or embarrassment at work
 - muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
 - recurrent urinary tract infections, including cystitis
 - headaches
 - skin changes – dryness, itchiness
- If they affect a colleague's comfort and performance at work, the organisation has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Making reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can be made to help colleagues manage menopausal symptoms. These are likely to be temporary changes whilst going through menopause transition. Risk assessments should be completed by line managers to understand more about how menopausal symptoms are affecting colleagues at work and the adjustments that are needed. Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and whenever appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments will depend on colleagues' specific circumstances (symptoms, job role etc), but the types of changes that might help could be:

- ☑ access to cold water whilst at work
- ☑ easy access to toilet facilities
- ☑ making sure the temperature is comfortable, providing a fan or access to fresh air
- ☑ adjusting uniform requirements, or providing more items of uniform
- ☑ providing somewhere to store extra clothes or change clothes during the day
- ☑ time off to attend medical appointments
- ☑ fitting blinds to windows
- ☑ be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if an employee's performance suddenly dips, consideration could be given as to whether the menopause may be a contributory factor.

Available support

Colleagues are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.

Sickness absences arising from menopausal symptoms will be dealt with via the Managing Attendance at Work policy and appropriate medical advice sought, if applicable.

Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager instead.

Employees will be encouraged to seek advice from medical practitioners regarding appropriate treatment and/ or to investigate suitable ways to manage/ reduce symptoms. A referral to Occupational Health could also be of assistance, to understand what adjustments can be made; so, colleagues are encouraged to give their consent to be referred for advice.

External sources of help and support for employees and managers, is available:

- Menopause matters, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- the Daisy Network charity, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause.
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>.

