



## Menopause Policy

**Review Period:** Yearly

**Status:** Non Stat

**Next Review:** Summer 2023

### 1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Make sure that our school can support staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments
- Set out how our school will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them
- Minimise menopause-related stigma in our school by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer
- Provide further resources to help staff to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them

### 2. Definitions

The **menopause** is part of the ageing process for women<sup>1</sup> when their natural oestrogen levels fall and where periods have ceased for twelve consecutive months. Some women experience a medical/surgical menopause which can occur suddenly when the ovaries are damaged or removed by specific treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgical hysterectomy.

Menopause that naturally occurs before the age of 40 is known as **premature menopause** and before the age of 45, **early menopause**. It is important to note that the menopause has many phases. **Perimenopause** or menopause transition can begin several years before the menopause and is the phase where the ovaries stop producing eggs and periods can be altered or absent due to a reduction in the hormone, oestrogen. During this phase, many may experience symptoms the same as those that occur during the menopause.

The next phase is **menopause** where periods stop altogether. This can begin between the ages of 45 and 55. Some people will experience it at a younger age as outlined above and some symptoms may be experienced over varying lengths of time.

The phase after the menopause has ended is known as **post-menopause**. Symptoms are likely to continue on average, for four years from the person's last period but may continue for a number of years beyond that. There is potentially an increased risk of certain conditions such as heart disease and osteoporosis during post menopause because of lower levels of certain hormones. These risks are higher for those who have had an early or premature menopause.

#### 2.1 Symptoms

Individuals suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work.

Menopausal symptoms might include, but are not limited to:

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that while the majority of people affected by the menopause will be women, those who are trans or non-binary may also experience the menopause or menopause-type symptoms. The support outlined in this policy is designed to meet the above aims for all affected colleagues.

- Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations
- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue
- Low mood, anxiety and depression
- Headaches and joint and muscle pain
- Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections
- Vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive
- Problems with memory, confidence and concentration
- Fatigue, irritability and/or mood swings
- Heart palpitations

For some individuals, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort sweating and heart palpitations.

Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.

We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. We will adapt our response to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis. Employees may wish to seek advice from their GP if their symptoms are having an impact on their daily lives.

## 2.2 Menopause Symptoms in Other Circumstances

There are other circumstances in which symptoms may be experienced:

- Whilst menopause is usually a process involving gradual change, it can sometimes be sudden and acute following serious illness, medication or surgery. People experiencing sudden menopause tend to experience more severe symptoms and may require treatment and/or post-operative care to manage further problems
- Younger women undergoing treatment for conditions such as the following may experience menopausal symptoms whilst receiving treatment:
  - Endometriosis (estimated to affect around 1 in 10 women of reproductive age)
  - Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) (estimated to affect 1 in 5 women)
  - Infertility (affecting around 1 in 7 couples)
  - Diabetes (affecting over 4 million people in the UK)
  - Surgical and medical treatments as part of an individual's gender transition can result in menopause symptoms

Not everyone will experience these symptoms or need help or support, however staff should contact their GP if any of these symptoms are affecting their daily lives.

## **3. Legislation and Guidance**

Under the [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#), employers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#) require that employers make an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This requires undertaking general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to the health of staff affected by the menopause.

The [Equality Act 2010](#) prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include age, sex and disability. Employers are under a statutory duty to consider whether any 'reasonable adjustments' are required to alleviate any disadvantages staff encounter based on these characteristics.

[Section 6](#) of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment, **and**

- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

Relating specifically to menopause symptoms:

- Many of the aforementioned symptoms would be likely to be classified as a physical and/or mental impairment
- ‘Substantial’ means more than minor or trivial
- ‘Long-term’ means an impairment if it has lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for at least 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected
- ‘Day to day activities’ are those carried out by most people on a regular basis, and includes but is not limited to: walking, driving, carrying or moving things, being able to concentrate, writing, reading, typing, speaking

Ongoing symptoms linked to the menopause may meet the definition of a disability and where they do, employers will be required to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantage.

Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, staff affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

##### 4.1 The local authority

Surrey Local Authority has ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters in the school, but delegates responsibility for the strategic management of such matters to the school’s governing body. The governing body delegates operational matters and day-to-day tasks to the headteacher and staff members.

##### 4.2 The governing body

The governing body has ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters in the school, but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Headteacher and the School Business Manager. The governing body has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that staff are not exposed to risks to their health and safety on the school premises.

The Governing Body, as the employer, also has a duty to:

- Assess the risks to staff and others affected by school activities in order to identify and introduce the health and safety measures necessary to manage those risks
- Inform employees about risks and the measures in place to manage them
- Make sure that adequate health and safety training is provided

##### 4.3 Role of Senior Staff

Sunnydown's menopause ambassador, Andrea Jensen will ensure that Senior staff make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support staff experiencing the menopause, and to make sure the workplace doesn’t make their symptoms worse, by:

- Carrying out individual risk assessments to assess working conditions in line with the specific needs of staff affected by the menopause
- Monitoring the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Providing resources and training opportunities to make sure that all line managers and HR staff are aware of the menopause, its potential impact on work, and what adjustments may be necessary
- Promoting information about and access to external support services
- Ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the school, leaving doors open where appropriate and ensuring windows can be safely opened
- Ensuring regular access to cold drinking water for all staff

- Regulating and monitoring the temperature of the school and collecting feedback from staff, as well as ensuring the temperature can be regulated per room by turning down radiators for example
- Ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for staff, and establishing a system that allows for cover for staff to access these facilities where necessary while they are teaching
- Providing small desk fans to help staff cool down, if needed
- Designating a member of staff such as a wellbeing champion that staff affected by the menopause can speak to about their symptoms in confidence, if they do not feel comfortable doing so with their line manager

Senior staff will work to create a culture in the school where staff can talk openly about the menopause by:

- Providing information on the menopause in the staff room, e.g. posters and leaflets
- Creating a support group so that those who want to can seek support from each other
- Providing training for staff and managers to achieve consistent practice
- Considering the use of an occupational health service or employee assistance programme (EAP)

#### 4.4 Role of Line Managers

Line managers who work with staff who may be affected by the menopause will:

- Provide a non-judgemental, empathetic and confidential support system to staff
- Appreciate the personal nature of any conversations about the menopause and treat them confidentially and sensitively
- Monitor sickness absence with the SBM, and have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge
- Have regular, informal conversations with staff that they line manage who are affected by the menopause to discuss what support they need, and record any reasonable adjustments that are agreed
- Consider flexible working requests in order to accommodate acute symptoms
- Allow staff affected by the menopause to take regular breaks from their work if necessary to help manage symptoms
- Give swift permission for absence to attend medical appointments
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Record menopause-related absences as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence to avoid triggering sickness absence procedures
- Be sensitive to health issues during the performance management/appraisal process
- If necessary, seek advice from HR or occupational health colleagues, or discuss a referral with the staff member to occupational health for further support

#### 4.5 Role of Staff Members Affected by the Menopause

We encourage staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work to:

- Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager, or with our designated menopause ambassador, Andrea Jensen.
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager or another trusted member of staff, such as our menopause ambassador, if the menopause is having an impact on this
- Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services
- Access our employee assistance programme (EAP) for further support

#### 4.6 Role of All Staff

All staff are expected to:

- Promote health and wellbeing for themselves and others at all times
- Treat each other with empathy and respect

- Support other members of staff, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Accept and support any adjustments that staff affected by the menopause may be receiving as a result of their symptoms
- Report honestly about their wellbeing to their line manager or to another trusted member of staff, such as our menopause ambassador.

#### **5. Further Resources**

- [Menopause](#) (NHS)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [Menopause: diagnosis and management](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- The [Daisy Network](#) charity
- [Menopause in the Workplace](#)
- [Menopause resources](#) from the CIPD, particularly for:
  - [Line managers](#)
  - [HR staff](#)