



SANCTA FAMILIA

CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

MENOPAUSE POLICY 2026/27

Policy Owner:	Head of HR and Culture
Review Cycle:	Annually
Date of last review:	May 2026
Date of next review:	September 2027

Contents

A message from our Trust.....	3
What is menopause?.....	3
Our commitment.....	4
Practical support.....	5
Legal framework.....	7
Quick Reference Guide – Supporting a Colleague Through Menopause.....	8

A message from our Trust

At Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust, we serve a family of Catholic schools across South London where everyone is known, loved and adds value to our community. That commitment is not limited to the students we teach — it extends, fully, to the people who work tirelessly alongside us every day.

We recognise that menopause and perimenopause can significantly affect health, wellbeing and the ability to work. We also recognise that these experiences have for too long been under-discussed, under-supported and even a source of stigma in many workplaces. Rooted in our call to serve others and to seek to understand rather than be understood, we want to change that.

This Policy is an expression of our Catholic values — love, service, humility and faith. It reflects our belief, echoing John 13:34, that how we care for one another matters deeply. Every member of our Trust community deserves to be supported through every stage of their life, with dignity, compassion and practical help. We do not simply manage this — we walk alongside people through it.

What is menopause?

Menopause is a natural biological process, typically occurring in women and people with ovaries between the ages of 45 and 55, though it can occur earlier – including as a result of surgery, cancer treatment or other medical conditions. It is defined as the point at which a person has not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months.

Perimenopause refers to the transitional period before menopause, which can last several years, during which hormone levels fluctuate and symptoms begin. Post-menopause refers to the period after menopause has occurred. This Policy applies to all three stages.

This Policy applies to all employees, regardless of gender identity.

Common symptoms and their impact at work

Symptoms of menopause and perimenopause vary widely between individuals and can range from mild to severe. They may be physical, cognitive and / or psychological, and can fluctuate day to day.

Common symptoms include:

Physical symptoms	Cognitive and psychological symptoms
Hot flushes and night sweats	Difficulty concentrating or 'brain fog'
Disrupted sleep and fatigue	Anxiety, low mood or depression
Headaches and migraines	Reduced confidence or self-esteem
Joint pain and muscle aches	Memory difficulties
Heavy or irregular periods	Mood changes or irritability

Heart palpitations	Feeling overwhelmed or emotional
Skin or hair changes	Panic attacks

These symptoms can directly affect attendance, concentration, performance, confidence and the ability to manage a busy working environment such as a school. We ask all managers and colleagues to approach these experiences with empathy and without judgement.

Who is affected?

Menopause and perimenopause affect a significant proportion of the workforce. In a school or academy setting, the majority of teaching and support staff are women, and many will experience menopause during their working lives. Research suggests that up to one in four people experiencing menopause consider leaving their job as a result of their symptoms. We are determined that no member of our Trust community should feel they have to do so.

Our commitment

Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust commits to:

- Creating a culture in which menopause can be discussed openly, without embarrassment or stigma.
- Treating all disclosures and conversations about menopause with sensitivity, dignity and strict confidentiality.
- Supporting staff through reasonable adjustments and flexible working arrangements wherever practicable.
- Training managers and leaders to have informed, compassionate conversations with staff about menopause.
- Ensuring that menopause symptoms are not treated as a performance issue without first considering whether support or adjustments are appropriate.
- Signposting staff to appropriate sources of health and wellbeing support.
- Working towards the publication of a Menopause Action Plan as recommended by the Women's Health Strategy for England (April 2026), ahead of the statutory requirement for large employers from 2027.

The role of the Head of HR and Culture

The Head of HR and Culture is the Trust's designated lead for this Policy. They are responsible for ensuring that this Policy is implemented consistently across all academies, that managers are appropriately trained, and that staff are aware of the support available to them. The Head of HR and Culture will review this Policy annually and will lead on developing the Trust's Menopause Action Plan.

The role of headteachers and line managers

Headteachers and line managers play a crucial role in making this Policy a lived reality rather than a document on a shelf. We ask them to:

- Approach conversations about menopause with warmth, openness and humility.
- Take the initiative to check in with staff where they notice a change in wellbeing or performance, without making assumptions.
- Act promptly on requests for adjustments and involve the Head of HR and Culture where needed.
- Never discuss a staff member's menopause-related health with others without that person's explicit consent.

- Complete the Trust's menopause awareness training.

The responsibility of all staff

Everyone in our Trust community has a responsibility to treat colleagues with respect and compassion. We ask all staff to be mindful of how they speak about menopause and to challenge any language or behaviour that is dismissive, stigmatising or unkind. This reflects our value of love: to love one another as Jesus loves us.

Practical support

Starting a conversation

We know that raising health issues at work can feel daunting. If you are experiencing menopause or perimenopause symptoms that are affecting your work, you are encouraged – but never obliged – to speak to your line manager, the Head of HR and Culture, or any trusted senior colleague. You will be listened to, taken seriously and supported.

If you would prefer to speak to someone outside your immediate team, the Head of HR and Culture is available to all staff across all academies within the Trust.

Reasonable adjustments

Where menopause symptoms are affecting a member of staff's ability to work comfortably or effectively, the Trust will work with them to identify and implement reasonable adjustments. These will vary depending on the individual's role, symptoms and preferences, but may include:

Area	Examples of possible adjustments
Temperature and environment	Access to a desk fan; flexibility to move to a cooler room; access to cold water; adjustments to uniform or dress code requirements
Rest and recovery	Access to a private rest area; flexibility in break times; temporary adjustment to duties on particularly difficult days
Working pattern	Temporary amendment to start/end times; flexibility to work from home where the role permits; adjusted timetabling
Attendance and absence	Menopause-related absence managed sensitively and separately from other absence; consideration of underlying health when applying absence triggers
Workload and role	Temporary adjustment to workload or duties; additional time for tasks requiring concentration; reduced covering of additional responsibilities during acute periods
Uniform and facilities	Flexibility in dress code; access to changing or toilet facilities; clean, private spaces

Health Assured	Access to a dedicated helpline to support with the menopause
----------------	--

Adjustments will be discussed, agreed and reviewed regularly. They are not permanent unless that is what the individual prefers. We will always aim to find a solution that works for the individual and the school.

Absence

Absence related to menopause symptoms will be treated with the same care and sensitivity as any other health-related absence. Where absence is recurrent or extended, the Academy Trust Company will:

- Have a supportive conversation with the employee before any formal process is considered.
- Carry out a risk assessment and explore reasonable adjustments as a priority.
- Consider a referral to occupational health where this would be helpful.
- Ensure that menopause-related absence is not used in a way that disadvantages the employee or is treated as a conduct or capability matter without appropriate medical evidence and support.

Managers must not apply absence management procedures to menopause-related absence in a mechanistic way. Each case must be considered individually and compassionately.

Occupational health and GP support

Where a member of staff is struggling with menopause symptoms, the Trust may suggest a referral to occupational health, with the employee's consent. Occupational health can advise on appropriate workplace adjustments and on medical support options. Staff are also encouraged to speak with their GP about available treatments, including Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and other evidence-based options.

The Trust's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to all staff and provides free, confidential support including counselling, mental health support and access to health advice.

Confidentiality

All conversations, disclosures and records relating to an individual's menopause are personal health information and will be treated as strictly confidential. Information will only be shared with the express consent of the individual and on a need-to-know basis. Line managers must not share a colleague's health information without their permission. Any breach of confidentiality will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Performance and capability

The Trust recognises that menopause symptoms can temporarily affect concentration, memory, confidence and performance. Where a manager observes a change in a colleague's performance, their first response must be a supportive conversation, not a formal process. Menopause-related performance concerns must not be escalated to a formal capability process without first:

- Having an open conversation with the employee;
- Considering whether adjustments or support would resolve the concern;
- Obtaining medical advice where appropriate (with the employee's consent);

- Consulting with the Head of HR and Culture.

Legal framework

Legal context

- This Policy has been developed in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:
- The Equality Act 2010 – menopause symptoms may constitute a disability where they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In addition, less favourable treatment related to menopause may constitute sex discrimination, age discrimination or disability discrimination.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 – the duty to assess and manage health and safety risks, including those related to menopause.
- The Employment Rights Act 1996 – including provisions relating to flexible working requests.
- The Renewed Women’s Health Strategy for England (April 2026) – which sets out the Government’s expectation that employers will take active steps to support staff through menopause, including through published Menopause Action Plans.
- The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Act 2023 and the Employment Rights Act 2025 (pending provisions) – which strengthen flexible working rights relevant to menopause support.

Equality Act 2010 – key points for managers

Managers should be aware that:

- Where menopause symptoms are severe and long-lasting, the individual may be protected as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010. The Trust has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.
- Treating someone unfavourably because of menopause-related symptoms, absence or performance may amount to sex discrimination, age discrimination or disability discrimination.
- Comments or behaviour that mock, belittle or stigmatise a colleague because of menopause may amount to harassment under the Equality Act.
- The Trust will not tolerate any such treatment and will address it through the Disciplinary Policy.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of HR and Culture, in consultation with the Trust CEO and staff representatives. It will be updated to reflect any changes in legislation, guidance or best practice. The Trust welcomes feedback from staff on how this Policy is working in practice.

Quick Reference Guide – Supporting a Colleague Through Menopause

This guide is for line managers and headteachers. It is a practical summary – not a replacement for reading the full Policy.

If a colleague tells you they are struggling with menopause...	Do this
They mention hot flushes or temperature difficulties	Ask what would help. Consider a desk fan, cooler workspace, flexible break times.
They seem anxious, low in mood or lacking confidence	Offer a private conversation. Listen without judgement. Signpost to EAP / health assured menopause line if helpful.
They are having difficulty concentrating or with memory	Consider adjustments to workload, planning time or timetable. Do not escalate to capability without speaking to HR.
They have had menopause-related absence	Have a supportive return-to-work conversation. Do not apply absence triggers without consulting HR.
They ask for a change to their working pattern or duties	Treat it as a reasonable adjustment request. Involve HR. Act promptly.
You are unsure what to say or do	Contact the Head of HR and Culture. You will be supported.

What not to do:

- Do not make jokes or dismissive comments about menopause.
- Do not share a colleague's health information with anyone without their consent.
- Do not assume someone's performance issues are a disciplinary matter before exploring health and well-being first.
- Do not ignore the issue and hope it resolves itself – a conversation early is almost always better than a problem later.

Useful contacts:

- HR central team – your first point of contact for advice and support.
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – free, confidential support for all staff.
- Occupational Health – available via referral through the school business manager or HR assistant.
- NHS: www.nhs.uk/menopause – information on symptoms and treatment options including HRT.
- Menopause Friendly UK: www.menopausefriendly.co.uk – workplace best practice resources.



SANCTA FAMILIA

CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Website: www.sanctafamilia.co.uk

Email: info@sanctafamilia.co.uk

Registered in England, Company Number: 15116317

UID: 17728

UKPRN: 10094584

© Copyright 2025