

Three Counties Academy Trust



Menopause Policy

#D1

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Statement of intent

Member schools of Three Counties Academy Trust are committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all staff members.

We are aware that the menopause is a natural process of every female's life, and the Trust is in an important position to provide the right support to staff members experiencing the menopause.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Create an environment in which staff members can openly and comfortably discuss the menopause
- Ensure every staff member understands what the menopause is and the common signs and symptoms
- Ensure line managers are aware of the reasonable adjustments that should be put in place to support staff members
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms
- Increase access to flexible working systems for staff members experiencing the menopause

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies and procedures:

- Staff Attendance Management Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, “**menopause**” is defined as a biological state in a female’s life that occurs when she has not had a menstrual bleed for a period of 12 months and reaches the end of her natural reproductive cycle. The average age that a female reaches menopause is 51; however, it can be earlier or later than this due to a number of reasons.

For the purpose of this policy “**perimenopause**” is defined as the time leading up to the menopause where a female begins to experience the signs and symptoms of menopause. This can be several years before the menopause actually occurs.

For the purpose of this policy “**postmenopause**” is the time after which the menopause has occurred, starting from the time when a female has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

3. Signs and symptoms

Common symptoms of the menopause include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hot flushes
- Palpitations
- Headaches
- Night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- Skin irritation
- Vaginal dryness
- Low mood or anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Loss of concentration
- Depression
- Reduced sex drive
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Brain fog

- Joint pain
- Urinary symptoms
- Heavy and/or irregular periods

Menopausal symptoms can occur months or even years before a female's periods stop and can last for up to 15 years after they have stopped.

The menopause can have a significant impact on females at work and their relationships with colleagues, e.g., if they are experiencing severe anxiety, this may have negative side effects on their happiness at work.

Not every female will experience the signs and symptoms of the menopause; however, the list provided above is common for most females.

4. Responsibilities

Staff members experiencing menopause are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the procedures in this policy
- Being aware of the common signs and symptoms of the menopause to help with their diagnosis or to support others experiencing the menopause
- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health
- Engaging in open and honest conversations with relevant individuals, e.g., Senior Line Managers, the in-school Menopause Champion, or the Chief Financial Officer
- Seeking help where necessary from relevant professionals, e.g., GPs
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- Having a willingness to help colleagues experiencing the menopause
- Adopting any reasonable adjustments that the Trust implements to support them
- Creating an action plan in conjunction with their line managers
- Engaging in training to ensure they are able to support others

All members of staff are responsible for:

- Creating a respectful and productive working environment
- Ensuring that unlawful conduct towards staff members experiencing menopause is avoided and reported to the Executive Headteacher where incidents occur. The following are examples of unlawful conduct:
 - Discrimination of any kind, whether it be indirect, discreet, or direct
 - Harassment
 - Victimisation
 - Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Ensuring they have a good understanding of the menopause and how this can affect the workplace

Senior Line Managers and the Menopause Champion are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the procedures in this policy
- Organising discussions with staff members experiencing the menopause
- Acting sensitively and emphatically towards staff experiencing the menopause

- Deciding on which reasonable adjustments need to be made to support staff members experiencing the menopause, and ensuring they are implemented
- Implementing an action plan in conjunction with staff members experiencing the menopause
- Recording all reasonable adjustments and reviewing them on a termly basis
- Making changes to action plans and reasonable adjustments, as necessary
- Discussing referrals to Occupational Health, and referring staff to them, where necessary
- Implementing any recommendations by Occupational Health, as required
- Monitoring staff absence in line with the Trust's Staff Attendance Management Policy

The CFO is responsible for:

- Offering guidance to Senior Line Managers or the Menopause Champion to enable them to effectively support staff experiencing the menopause
- Monitoring staff absence in line with the Trust's Staff Attendance Management Policy
- Attending training sessions and developing briefing sessions for staff
- Maintaining effective communication with line managers and staff experiencing the menopause

Occupational Health is responsible for:

- Carrying out holistic assessments of individuals who believe they are experiencing the menopause
- Providing advice to staff members experiencing the menopause
- Providing information as to where staff members can seek further advice
- Making recommendations to Senior Line Managers, the Menopause Champion, or the CFO in relation to reasonable adjustments
- Providing support to Senior Line Managers, the Menopause Champion, and the CFO, as required
- Monitoring all referrals made as a result of the menopause

5. Notification

Where any staff member believes they are experiencing symptoms of menopause which may affect their work, or where they will require reasonable adjustments, they will notify their Senior Line Manager or the Menopause Champion.

The Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion will hold a one-to-one discussion with the employee to discuss the symptoms and which reasonable adjustments are required.

The one-to-one discussion will be held in an appropriate location to maintain confidentiality, e.g., an office.

If necessary, the Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion will discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further support.

The Senior Line Manager in collaboration with the Menopause Champion, will conduct a risk assessment for any staff member experiencing the menopause, and will review working conditions.

The Senior Line Manager in collaboration with the Menopause Champion and employee will devise a written action plan which details the following:

- Their signs and symptoms
- The perceived or actual effects on their work
- Necessary reasonable adjustments
- Time frames for reasonable adjustments to be in place
- Next steps
- Review date

Where a referral has been made to Occupational Health, the Senior Line Manager in collaboration with the Menopause Champion will ensure any recommendations for reasonable adjustments are included in the action plan.

The Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion and employee will discuss whether any other staff members should be notified – if so, who and how the employee would like them to be notified.

The Senior Line Manager will notify the CFO of the action plan.

The Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion will schedule a follow-up meeting no later than one month after the initial discussion to review progress so far. Any changes will be made, as necessary.

The Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion will schedule termly review meetings to review the action plan and make any changes, as necessary.

6. Risk assessments

Menopausal females are identified as workers who may be particularly at risk and, therefore, the school has a duty to make suitable and sufficient risk assessments for such employees.

Where an employee has voiced concerns about their symptoms of the menopause, the Senior Line Manager will conduct a risk assessment of their work practice to identify risks and implement appropriate control measures.

A separate risk assessment will be conducted for each member of staff experiencing the menopause.

The risk assessment will consider the specific needs of staff members experiencing the menopause. Specific information that will be considered includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Temperature and ventilation
- Current symptoms
- Access to toilet facilities
- Access to fresh drinking water
- Workplace stress

Appropriate reasonable adjustments will be implemented in light of the risk assessment.

The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated by the Senior Line Manager in collaboration with the Menopause Champion when any circumstances change, e.g., symptoms.

7. Reasonable adjustments

In order to support staff members' symptoms of the menopause, the Trust will implement a variety of reasonable adjustments, suitable to staff members' individual needs. While menopause is not classed as a disability, certain symptoms may class as a disability themselves, and therefore the Trust has a duty to ensure reasonable adjustments are made where necessary.

Each case will be treated individually, and the below adjustments are not exhaustive.

Hot flushes – the Trust will:

- Adjust the temperature control of the work area, such as putting a fan on their desk or moving their desk close to a window
- Ensure there is easy access to drinking water
- Make adaptations to dress code, where appropriate, providing that this in accordance with the school's Staff Code of Conduct
- Ensure there is adequate access to toilets
- Provide a quiet area for the staff member if they experience a severe hot flush
- For teaching staff, ensure the staff member has access to an additional member of staff if required at short notice who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break

Heavy and light periods – the Trust will:

- Ensure there is adequate access to toilets
- Ensure that sanitary products are readily available
- Ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing, should the staff member require it
- Allow the staff member to bring extra clothing with them, providing it is in accordance with the school's Staff Code of Conduct

Headaches and lack of sleep – the Trust will:

- Ensure there is access to fresh drinking water at all times
- Offer a quiet space to work, if necessary
- Ensure there is adequate supply of headache medication, e.g., ibuprofen, in the school
- Discuss the effects of a healthy balanced diet on improving symptoms
- Allow staff members time to take a break if they experience a headache
- For teaching staff, ensure the staff member has access to an additional member of staff if required at short notice who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break
- Allow staff members to be considered for flexible working, in line with the Flexible Working Policy

Low mood and loss of confidence – the Trust will:

- Allow staff members time to take a break whenever required, without needing to ask for permission
- Identify a 'time out space' where the staff member may go if they need to take a break, e.g., the staff room
- For teaching staff, ensure the staff member has access to an additional member of staff if required at short notice who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break
- Ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion should they require it
- Ensure there are termly personal development discussions in place with the staff member's Senior Line Manager
- Establish, with the staff member's Senior Line Manager, an agreed time for the staff member to catch up on any missed work as a result of absence

Poor concentration – the Trust will:

- Discuss with the staff member if there are times of the day where concentration is better or worse, and review how working can be managed around this
- Review the staff member's task allocation and workload, distributing tasks to others where possible
- Provide materials to assist with concentration and memory, such as action boards
- Offer quiet spaces to work wherever possible
- Establish, with the staff member's Senior Line Manager, an agreed time for the staff member to catch up on any missed work as a result of absence

Anxiety and panic attacks – the Trust will:

- Provide the staff member with contacts for external support and counselling and discuss referral to Occupational Health
- Ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their Senior Line Manager or Menopause Champion should they require it
- Encourage the staff member to seek help from their GP
- Identify a time out space where the staff member may go if they need to take a break
- For teaching staff, ensure the staff member has access to an additional member of staff if required at short notice who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break
- Discuss relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, and encourage the staff member to practise these when taking a break

8. Staff training

The CFO is responsible for organising training for staff members.

The Trust will ensure that all Senior Line Managers have been trained to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the menopause, how it can affect work, and what adjustments should be made to support staff members.

The Trust will ensure that, as part of a wider Occupational Health awareness campaign, issues of the menopause are highlighted so all staff members understand how it affects staff, and to create a positive attitude towards managing the menopause whilst being employed at the Trust.

The Trust will ensure all female staff members are provided with sufficient information as to where they can access support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause through the creation of a Menopause Champion within each setting.

Training will be refreshed on a bi-annual basis for all staff members.

9. Attendance procedures

Attendance of staff members experiencing the menopause will be managed in line with the Staff Attendance Management Policy.

All menopause-related sickness absences will be recorded as ongoing issues, rather than individual absences.

The Trust will ensure staff members experiencing the menopause are able to request flexible working, in line with the Flexible Working Policy.

Any requests for breaks or flexible working will be outlined in the employee's action plan.

The Trust will ensure that any appraisal, capability, and performance procedures are not applied in a way as to discriminate unlawfully against female staff members experiencing the menopause.

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer and the Menopause Champion in conjunction with the Executive Headteacher on a 3-year cycle unless circumstances require earlier review.

The scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2025.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all staff members.

Signed by:

_____	Executive Headteacher	Date: _____
_____	Chair of Trustees	Date: _____