

Three Counties Academy Trust



Supporting Menstruating Pupils Policy

#SG46

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Subject to periodic review. To be reviewed no later than 19th March 2029

Version history

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Common abbreviations and acronyms

AA	Admissions Authority	GPA	Government Procurement Arrangement
AAI	Adrenaline Auto-Injector (Epi Pen)	HASH	Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials	HBV	Honour Based Violence
AFH	Academies Financial Handbook	HR	Human Resources
AHT	Assistant Headteacher	H&S	Health and Safety
AIR	Attendance Intervention Reviews	HoS	Head of School
APIs	Application Programme Interfaces	HSE	Health and Safety Executive
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds	ICO	Information Commissioners Office
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
BFR	Budget Forecast Return	IRMS	Information and Records Management Society
CYPMHS	Children and Young People's Mental Health Services	IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	KS1/2/3/4	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
CIF	Condition Improvement Fund	LAC	Looked After Child
CIN	Child in Need	LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
CLA	Children Looked After	LGB	Local Governing Body
CMIE	Child Missing in Education	LLC	Low-Level Concerns

COO	Chief Operating Officer	LSA	Learning Support Assistants
COSHH	Control and Substances Hazardous to Health	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CP	Child Protection	MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	MFA	Multi-Factor Authentication
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services	MFL	Modern Foreign Language
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	NCSC's	National Cyber Security Centres
CTIRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit	NPQEL	National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership
CWD	Children with Disabilities	PA	Persistent Absence
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	PAN	Published Admission Number
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	PECR	Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations
DfE	Department for Education	PEP	Personal Education Plan
DHT	Deputy Headteacher	PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
DSE	Display Screen Equipment	PEx	Permanent Exclusion
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	PLAC	Previously Looked After Child
DPO	Data Protection Officer	PP	Pupil Premium
EAL	English as an Additional Language	PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher	PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty

EHA	Early Help Assessment	PTFA	Parent, Teacher and Friends Association
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan	RHE	Relationships and Health Education
EHE	Elective Home Education	RSHE	Relationships, Sex and Health Education
ELSA	Emotional, Literacy and Support Assistant	SALT	Speech and Language Therapist
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
EVC	Educational Visit Coordinator	SBM	School Business Manager
EWO	Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer	SCCs	Standard Contractual Clauses
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
FBV	Fundamental British Values	SEMH	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
FOI	Freedom of Information	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
FSM	Free School Meals	SLA's	Service Level Agreements
FTS	Find a Tender Service	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
GAG	General Annual Grant	TA	Teaching Assistant
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust
GIAS	Get Information about Schools	VSH	Virtual School Headteacher

Statement of intent

It is a known fact that, as a collective, pupils who menstruate are more likely to take days off school during their period in order to manage their symptoms or to manage them privately. This may be due to adverse symptoms experienced before, during and after a period, the perceived stigma attached to asking for help with managing their symptoms, the risk of bullying or harassment from peers, or the inability to access period products while in school.

At Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT), we are compassionate and understanding to the needs of pupils who menstruate and how it affects their comfort and attendance at our schools. We want to ensure that pupils who are menstruating have the same access to education, comfort, safety and security at school as pupils who are not, or are not yet, menstruating.

In addition, we aim to raise awareness of the issues faced in school by pupils who are menstruating and ensure that staff can effectively support and provide for them, as necessary.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Create an environment in which pupils can openly and comfortably discuss menstruation and their individual needs
- Ensure every staff member understands what menstruation is, who it affects, and the common symptoms pupils may be experiencing
- Ensure senior staff are aware of any reasonable adjustments that should be put in place to support menstruating pupils, especially pupils who are young, have additional needs and/or or experience uncommon or severe symptoms
- Reduce absenteeism due to managing menstrual symptoms at home, or feeling targeted by their peers
- Increase access to period products in school for pupils who menstruate and ensure these products are not misused or withheld

NB. Where the term “parent” or “parents” is used this includes those who act as carers or have parental responsibility.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- DfE 'Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs'
- DfE 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions'
- DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'

Where legislation has been passed or updated during the shelf life of this policy, we will always apply the latest version available irrespective of the version quoted here.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Bodily Fluids Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety Policy (HS1)
- First Aid Policy (HS2)
- Intimate Care Policy (SD4)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (SG1)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (SG4)
- Anti-Bullying Policy (SG19)
- Administering Medication Policy (SG20)
- Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy (SG22)

- Attendance Policy (Primary) (SG29(B))
- Attendance Policy (Secondary) (SG29(A))
- Toilet, Washroom and Medical Facilities Policy (ST7)

Central TCAT policies have the policy number identified, e.g. "SG1". Where no policy number is identified this indicates the policy is a school specific policy available from an individual TCAT school's website

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, we have used the term "**pupils who menstruate**" to include pupils of any gender identity who experience menstruation. This includes pupils who have variations to sexual development (VSD) who may also experience menstruation or menstruation-like symptoms.

"Premenstrual syndrome" (PMS) is a collective term for the symptoms people who menstruate may experience before their period starts each month. This can range from very mild to severe symptoms and affects each person differently. Symptoms can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Mood swings
- Low moods and feeling anxious or irritable
- Tiredness or insomnia
- Abdominal discomfort or pain
- Breast tenderness
- Headaches and migraines
- Changes in appetite
- Problems with concentration

"Toxic shock syndrome" (TSS) is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by bacterial toxins that enter the bloodstream. It is often associated with tampon use. The risk of TSS increases the longer a tampon is in place. It is recommended that tampons are changed every few hours and left in place no longer than eight hours. The symptoms of TSS include:

- A high temperature
- Flu-like symptoms
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- A sunburn-like rash
- Red discolouration of the lips, tongue and eyes
- Dizziness and fainting
- Difficulty breathing
- Confusion

3. Roles and responsibility

The Trust Board and where delegated, Local Governing Bodies will be responsible for:

- Ensuring arrangements for pupils who cannot attend school while they are managing their period are in place and are effectively implemented
- Ensuring the regular review of the arrangements made for pupils who cannot attend school while managing their period
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the arrangements to support the needs of pupils who menstruate are clear and understood by all
- Ensuring robust systems are in place for managing the safety, security and wellbeing of pupils who experience menstruation while in school
- Ensuring staff with responsibility for supporting pupils with their periods are appropriately trained
- Approving and reviewing this policy

Headteacher's/Heads of School will be responsible for:

- Working with the Executive Leadership and their Local Governing Body to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory duties when supporting and protecting pupils who experience menstruation during school

- Working collaboratively with parents and other professionals to develop arrangements to meet the best interests of pupils who experience menstruation
- Ensuring any arrangements put in place to meet individual pupils' needs are fully understood by all those involved and acted upon
- Ensuring any support put in place focusses on and meets the needs of individual pupils
- Arranging appropriate training for staff to allow them to effectively support and protect pupils who experience menstruation
- Ensuring that there is fair, consistent, and reliable access to period products for pupils who are menstruating during the school day

All staff will be responsible for:

- Understanding confidentiality in respect of pupils' health and privacy needs
- Ensuring all pupils have equal access to education and balancing this with their individual needs regarding managing their period while in school
- Understanding their role in supporting pupils who experience menstruation and ensuring they attend the required staff training
- Ensuring they are aware of the needs of pupils through the appropriate and lawful sharing of individual pupils' needs
- Ensuring they are aware of the signs and symptoms that pupils who menstruate need support, assistance, or are struggling with their symptoms

Parents will be expected to:

- Ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at their school where possible
- Work in partnership with their school to ensure the best possible outcomes for their child
- Notify their school of the reason for any of their child's absences without delay
- Provide their school with sufficient and up-to-date information about their child's health and support needs

4. Informing the school

Parents will be encouraged to inform their school if their child has had their first period and of any support needs or arrangements they deem appropriate.

Parents will also be encouraged to inform the school if there any changes to their child's needs with regards to them managing their period or any symptoms during the school day.

Where required, the Headteacher/Head of School will arrange a meeting with the pupil's parents to discuss their child's support needs. An individual risk assessment will be produced and completed where necessary, and the outcome of this used to inform the introduction of any further actions or measures.

The Headteacher/Head of School will ensure that any reasonable adjustments discussed or identified are recorded.

5. Reasonable adjustments

Recommendations for reasonable adjustments from the pupil's parents or, where appropriate, the pupil themselves, will be implemented as far as reasonably practicable, e.g. allowing the pupil to use the toilet facilities more regularly during the school day.

Where the pupil's menstrual symptoms are severe, their health needs and attendance will be managed in line with TCAT's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy.

When implementing reasonable adjustments for the pupil to be able to manage their periods at school, the Headteacher/Head of School will balance the requirement to ensure the pupil is provided with a complete education and ensuring their safety, security, comfort and wellbeing.

Where a proposed reasonable adjustment cannot be implemented, the Headteacher/Head of School will provide a reason for this and propose alternatives where possible.

The Headteacher/Head of School will arrange for termly assessments of any reasonable adjustments in place, to establish their effectiveness and whether they are still required by the pupil. The pupil and their parents will be notified of any changes.

To support pupils who menstruate, all TCAT schools will consider implementing the following reasonable adjustments:

- Adaptations to the school uniform to ensure pupils can remain comfortable, confident and able to concentrate properly on their education
- Permitting pupils who menstruate additional access to toilet and changing facilities, as required, including access to toilet and changing facilities that are more private
- Excusing the pupil from PE or other physical activities during their period if they choose to

- Ensuring there are period products readily available for pupils to use
- Allowing the pupil to store a spare change of clothing and underwear, as necessary, and providing space to store any spare or soiled articles of clothing during the school day
- Where necessary, allow pupils to ask for pain-reducing medication to be administered to help them manage any adverse symptoms, e.g. headaches and abdominal pains
- Allow for flexibilities and understanding with regard to behaviour, in the scope of the school's Behaviour Policy and on a case-by-case basis, if the pupil experiences severe mood swings and behavioural changes as a result of their PMS
- Putting in place a named member of staff that the pupil feels comfortable and confident talking to should they need support while on their period at school
- Establishing, with the pupil's parents, an agreed timeframe for the pupil to catch up on any class work and/or homework as a result of absence, where appropriate
- Allow the pupil to retreat to a comfortable, quiet place on the school premises should they be experiencing low moods, anxiety or irritability as a result of PMS

6. Self-management

Pupils who are able to manage their own menstrual needs and any pain medication will be encouraged to take responsibility for self-managing their periods and symptoms while at school.

Where there is uncertainty surrounding whether the pupil will be able to self-manage their own symptoms and/or menstrual hygiene, the Headteacher/Head of School will discuss this with the pupil's parents prior to setting any expectations of self-management.

Where possible and appropriate, pupils will be allowed to carry their own period products. Medication will be stored, controlled, and administered in line with TCAT's Administering Medication Policy.

If a pupil refuses any medication to help manage their symptoms or carry out necessary menstrual hygiene care in school, staff will not force them to do so. Following this, the pupil's parents will be informed of any incidents so that alternative options can be considered in future.

7. Toilet, washroom and changing facilities

TCAT schools will ensure that all pupils have access to appropriate toilet, washing and changing facilities and that these are maintained and safe for use at all times.

The maintenance and provision of toilet, washroom and changing facilities will be carried out in line with TCAT's Toilet, Washroom and Medical Facilities Policy.

Toilet and washing facilities will have:

- Hand washing facilities that are provided within the vicinity of every toilet
- Adequate lighting and ventilation
- Easy access for pupils and allow for supervision by members of staff without compromising the privacy of pupils
- Adequate privacy when using the toilet facilities

Each school will ensure that, wherever possible, individuals are never an unreasonable travel distance away from toilet and washing facilities and that there are adequate toilet facilities on each floor and in each area of the school.

Headteacher's/Heads of School in consultation with the Trust Estate Manager and CFO will ensure any changing rooms are designed to provide dignity, decency and privacy when required for all pupils.

Where possible, the placement of stocks of period products in toilet facilities or alternate locations will be sufficiently private to allow pupils who menstruate to access period products privately and away from their peers should they need to.

Where agreed, pupils who menstruate will have access to toilet and washroom facilities that provide additional privacy during their period, e.g. a disabled toilet or designated staff toilet.

8. Attendance

Unless alternative arrangements have been agreed, the attendance of pupils who menstruate will be managed and monitored in line with TCAT's Attendance Policy (Primary or Secondary).

Where it is established between the Headteacher/Head of School, the pupil's parents and, where appropriate, the pupil, that the pupil's symptoms are severe and can therefore be considered a medical condition, the pupil's attendance is instead managed and monitored in line with the Pupils with Additional Health Needs Attendance Policy.

Parents will be required to contact the school on the first day their child is unable to attend due to menstrual symptoms that cause illness and/or cannot be reasonably managed at school, e.g. migraines.

Absences due to menstrual symptoms that cause illness and/or cannot be reasonably managed at school will be authorised unless the school has genuine cause for concern about the authenticity of the parents' claim.

Where appropriate, the school will provide educational support to pupils who are absent from school because of adverse menstrual symptoms in the form of remote education.

9. Exams and assessment

Where reasonable adjustments are in place for a pupil who menstruates, the Headteacher/Head of School will liaise with the pupil's parents about their child's requirements during examinations and assessments, where appropriate.

TCAT maintains that certain reasonable adjustments that ordinarily apply to day-to-day school life and attendance may need to be amended to account for exam or assessment schedules and the locations for these. Where changes to reasonable adjustments need to be proposed, the Headteacher/Head of School will liaise with the pupil's parents and, where appropriate, the pupil.

10. Access to period products

School staff will avoid making assumptions or rules about what period products the school provides to pupils who menstruate.

The Headteacher/Head of School will ensure that all staff are aware that individual pupils will have their own preferences for which period products they choose to use and varying levels of familiarity. As a result, period products will not be withheld from pupils who menstruate based on assumptions, e.g. withholding tampons based on a pupil's age.

The Headteacher/Head of School will arrange for a check, on a monthly basis, that there is an adequate amount of period products available in school, including the products obtained via the DfE's free period product scheme, for all pupils who menstruate.

Each TCAT school will hold a variety of sizes, types and brands of period products, including both reusable and single-use products, so that pupils who menstruate are afforded the opportunity to use a period product that is comfortable and familiar to them. In addition, the school will take into consideration the needs of pupils with allergies to certain materials, sensory difficulties and cultural or religious requirements.

Where reusable products are provided to a pupil, this will be on the basis that the product is brand new and does not have to be returned, i.e. the product is given to the pupil to keep.

Period products kept on a TCAT school site will always be new, unused, undamaged, available in their original packaging, properly labelled, and will not have passed their expiry date.

Each school will ensure that additional stocks of period products are kept where staff can access them, in the event that communal stocks of period products available to pupils has been depleted, or a pupil cannot access a period product that is comfortable and familiar to them. Pupils who menstruate will be encouraged to ask a member of staff for access to additional stock.

11. Health and wellbeing

TCAT schools will ensure that staff are adequately trained on the signs and symptoms of TSS. Any instances of TSS will be managed immediately and in line with TCAT's First Aid Policy.

While our schools will endeavour to stock a range of period products, high-absorbency tampons are most associated with developing TSS and staff will, therefore, be vigilant when providing this type of tampon to a pupil. If in doubt, the member of staff will contact medical professionals.

Pupils who menstruate will be taught via the delivery of the RHE/RSHE curriculum the safe way to use tampons, how long they can be kept in for, and how to choose which product is right for them. Pupils who menstruate will be made aware that they should notify a member of staff if they feel unwell while using a tampon.

Pupils who experience severe symptoms during their period will have access to additional support and pastoral care, as necessary.

Pupils who have their first period while on the school site will have access to support, advice and will be permitted to choose a period product that is right for them.

Pupils who menstruate and are experiencing particularly distressing, painful or uncomfortable symptoms during their period may be sent home to manage their symptoms, at the discretion of the Headteacher/Head of School. This will not be a behavioural sanction but will protect the medical needs of the pupil whilst also maintaining their dignity.

Where a member of staff is concerned about the severity of a pupil's menstrual symptoms, the method by which they are or are not managing their menstrual hygiene, or the amount of time a pupil is missing school due to managing their symptoms, they will raise this with the Headteacher/Head of School as soon as possible.

12. Confidentiality

Advice and support provided to pupils regarding their periods, the products they use and the symptoms they experience will be kept confidential at all times; however, where safeguarding concerns arise, these will be managed in line with TCAT's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and information may be shared on a need-to-know basis.

13. Intimate care

All instances of intimate care will be undertaken in line with TCAT's Intimate Care Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

TCAT schools will ensure staff are aware that some pupils may experience their first period while on the school site and/or may not have adequate knowledge of, or access to, period products; however, staff will never be permitted to change, apply or insert pupils' period products unless it is specified in a pupil's IHCP (Individual Health Care Plan). Members of staff will instruct the pupil as necessary and perform a demonstration, e.g. on a model, prior to the pupil using the period product for themselves.

Where the changing, application or insertion of a period product is outlined in a pupil's IHCP, this will only be carried out by an authorised member of staff who is suitably trained, has the relevant DBS checks, and it is listed in their job description and/or contract of employment.

14. Ethos and training

TCAT will introduce and maintain an ethos and understanding that menstruation is a natural biological cycle and that pupils who menstruate should not feel ashamed, embarrassed or targeted because they menstruate.

TCAT schools appreciate that not all pupils who menstruate are comfortable talking about their periods and will endeavour to accommodate for them and support them as much as the individual pupil will allow.

The Headteacher/Head of School will ensure that all staff are sufficiently trained to be able to talk to pupils about periods and period products, regardless of the staff member's gender.

All trained staff are expected to support pupils with their menstrual needs – regardless of their personal menstrual status. Each school will not put a disproportionate burden on members of staff who may themselves menstruate to be able to support and talk to pupils who require support for their menstrual needs.

15. Inclusivity

Support, advice and period products will be made available to all pupils who menstruate, and staff will be suitably trained to have conversations about periods with any pupil who requires it.

Specific period product types will not be withheld from pupils who menstruate based on assumptions about their age, gender, culture, religion, or any additional needs. Each school will ensure staff understand that the period products that pupils who menstruate choose is based on individual needs and preferences.

Information used to support pupils who menstruate will be provided in a way that it is accessible to all, including younger pupils, pupils with EAL and pupils with SEND.

Adjustments will be put in place for pupils who menstruate who have difficulties with communication, e.g. high levels of anxiety, to be able to ask for support and period products from a trusted member of staff, e.g. through use of a pre-agreed 'password'.

Information and policies in place to support pupils who menstruate will be written in language that does not isolate younger pupils and reflects the needs of pupils who menstruate but do not identify as female. Where possible, TCAT schools will avoid using gender-specific language with regards to the access of period products offered by the school to avoid discouraging pupils who do not identify as female and pupils with VSD from accessing them.

TCAT schools will ensure that period products and period product disposal bins are made available in locations that are easily and comfortably accessible by pupils who menstruate that do not use toilet facilities designated for female use.

16. Behaviour

Deliberate misuse of period products supplied by TCAT or our schools will be managed in line with the individual school's Behaviour Policy.

Instances of bullying, discrimination and harassment towards any pupil because they menstruate will not be tolerated, and sanctions will be managed in line with the individual school's Behaviour Policy and TCAT's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Each school understands that being on their period while at school can be a distressing and uncomfortable event for some pupils, particularly if their symptoms are severe, and this may lead to some behaviour that is unusual for the pupil. Each school will apply sensitivity and understanding where unusual behaviour is a result of a pupil's menstrual symptoms and will discuss with the pupil and, where necessary, their parents, any behaviour management strategies that may be beneficial, e.g. being able to retreat to a calm, quiet place when their emotions run high.

17. Educational trips and visits

Pupils who menstruate will be supported to participate in school trips, sporting activities and residential visits.

Prior to an activity taking place, the Headteacher/Head of School will consider whether any reasonable adjustments should be put in place to enable pupils who menstruate to participate equally to pupils who do not menstruate. Where required, the school nurse will be asked for recommendations and advice.

Each school will arrange for any adjustments to be made for all pupils to participate in off-site activities.

A variety of pain medications and period products will be made available to pupils on educational trips and visits.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO in collaboration with the Board appointed Trustee, the Trust Board and Executive and Senior Leadership.

Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to Executive Leaders, the TCAT Central Team and to Headteachers/Heads of School, who, in turn, will alert school-based staff.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 19th March 2029.

Signed by:

_____ Executive Headteacher/CEO

Date: _____

_____ Board appointed Trustee

Date: _____