



Policy for

Menopause policy

Prepared by:	Adopted by Schools
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[Updated] Statement of intent

All AET policies are written to support our schools and communities. We do this by ensuring they are always in line with our Colleague Values:



Applying these values to everything we do means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others, being honest, open and transparent and putting the safety of our children first.

The Aspire Educational Trust is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. As a school that is committed to the health and well-being of its workforce, The Aspire Educational Trust recognises that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during this transitional time before, during and after the menopause and aims to ensure that staff are treated according to their circumstances and needs.

Menopausal symptoms can have a huge impact on your work life. A combination of disturbed sleep, hot flushes and low mood can affect your attendance and performance, and research shows that some women reduce their hours or give up their jobs as a result.

The Aspire Educational Trust is committed to ensuring that individuals feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking for support and adjustments in order to continue with their role within the organisation

[Updated] The school recognises that the menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle. This can include trans people and people with 'variations of sex development' (VSD) – some people might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term 'differences in sex development' (DSD). Experiences of the menopause can be many and varied – the school recognises its important position as an employer in ensuring adequate support is provided to staff members.

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 and Absence 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 woman’s life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive cycle. The average age that a woman 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 woman 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 woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

3. **[Updated]** Signs and symptoms

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

- **[Updated]** Hot flushes, i.e. sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest which can cause dizziness
- Palpitations
- Headaches and migraines
- Night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- **[New]** Changed body shape and weight gain
- **[Updated]** Skin changes, e.g. dry and itchy skin
- **[Updated]** Vaginal dryness and pain
- Low mood or anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Loss of concentration
- Depression
- Reduced sex drive

- Problems with memory and concentration

Menopausal symptoms can occur months or even years before a woman's periods stop and can last for several years after they have stopped. Not every woman will experience the signs and symptoms of the menopause; however, the list provided above is common for most women.

[New] The school will encourage all members of staff who are, or who suspect they may be, experiencing the menopause to arrange a meeting with their GP or nurse.

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

4. [Updated] Roles and responsibilities

Staff members experiencing menopause:

If menopause symptoms are affecting your work, the first step is to talk to your line manager. It can be embarrassing to talk about your menopause, but being honest about your symptoms and asking for help is an important first step. Before you meet, it might help to prepare a list of the symptoms you're experiencing and suggest some practical solutions. Try to be as specific as possible as everyone experiences menopause differently.

If your line manager isn't approachable or sympathetic, consider asking for a meeting with HR, or talking to a different manager who makes you feel more comfortable.

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 headteacher/principal/principal 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. There may be other people in your team who are menopausal (or have menopausal partners or family members) and understand what you are going through. It's really helpful to have this kind of support if you're having a challenging day.

[Updated] Line managers 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 as necessary.
- Making changes to action plans and reasonable adjustments, as necessary.
- **[Updated]** Monitoring staff absence in line with the school's Staff Attendance and Absence Policy.

[Updated] The HR manager is responsible for:

- Offering guidance to line managers to enable them to effectively support staff experiencing the menopause.
- **[Updated]** Identifying issues with staff absence and responding in line with the school's Staff Attendance and Absence Policy.
- Attending training sessions and developing briefing sessions for staff.
- Maintaining effective communication with line managers and staff experiencing the menopause.

5. Informing the school

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 line manager.

The line manager 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 on-site to maintain confidentiality, e.g. an office.

The line manager will conduct a risk assessment for any staff member experiencing the menopause, and will review working conditions.

The line manager 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

The line manager will ensure any recommendations for reasonable adjustments from the individual's GP or nurse, or other relevant agency, are included in the action plan.

The line manager 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 line manager will notify the HR manager of the action plan.

The line manager will schedule a follow-up meeting one month after the initial discussion to review progress so far. Any changes will be made as necessary.

The line manager will schedule termly review meetings to review the action plan and make any changes as necessary.

6. Risk assessments

Women experiencing the menopause 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 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 line manager when any circumstances change, e.g. symptoms.

7. Reasonable adjustments

In order to support staff members' symptoms of the menopause, the school 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 school 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 school 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.
- discuss options with the staff member as to where they can go if they experience a severe hot flush.

- For teaching staff, ensure there is a plan of action in place should the staff member need to take a break eg how to notify another adult similar to an emergency situation.

Heavy and light periods – the school 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.

Low mood and loss of confidence – the school will:

- Allow staff members time to take a break whenever required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Discuss options with the staff member as to where they can go if they need to take a break, e.g. the staff room.
- For teaching staff, ensure there is a plan of action in place should the staff member need to take a break eg how to notify another adult similar to an emergency situation.
- Ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their line manager, and another colleague should they require it.
- Ensure there are termly personal development discussions in place with the staff member's line manager.
- Establish, with the staff member's line manager, an agreed time for the staff member to catch up on any missed work as a result of absence.

Poor concentration – the school 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.
- 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 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 school will:

- Provide the staff member with contacts for external support and counselling.
- Ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their line manager, and another colleague should they require it.
- Encourage the staff member to seek help from their GP.
- Discuss options with the staff member as to where they can go if they need to take a break, e.g. the staff room.
- For teaching staff, ensure there is a plan of action in place should the staff member need to take a break eg how to notify another adult similar to an emergency situation.
- Discuss relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, and encourage the staff member to practise these when taking a break.

8. Staff training

The HR manager is responsible for organising training for staff members.

The school will ensure that all 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 school will ensure that 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 school.

The school will ensure all 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.

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