

OWLCOTES MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Menopause Policy and Guidance



March 2023

About Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust (OMAT)

OMAT is committed to the development of inclusive schools, sharing a common purpose to provide excellent education and improved outcomes for pupils.

OMAT strives to provide high-quality education for all children within our local communities by inspiring innovation, creativity and aspiration through an enriched curriculum.

OMAT is committed to the principles of co-operation, collaboration and sharing best practice with a strong focus on staff development.

OMAT is also committed to the preservation of the unique identity of all schools within the trust: each school will have a Local Governing Board (LGB) which is involved in decision making at school level, with autonomy to make decisions for its own school in line with the scheme of delegation.

All trustees and any schools joining must agree to share and uphold all of these principles now and in the future.

Menopause Policy and Guidance

1. Aims of the Policy

Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust is committed to the wellbeing of its employees and aims to support Headteachers and line managers to create an environment where those who are experiencing the menopause feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support at work.

We want to support our schools to create an environment where employees can talk openly and without embarrassment. The menopause needs to be normalised where people feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and feel able to request reasonable adjustments at work.

2. Terminology

Although the majority of people who experience the menopause will identify as women, other people - for example trans, non-binary and intersex people – may also experience the menopause. We have used the terms ‘women’ and ‘people who experience the menopause’ throughout the guidance but this guidance is inclusive of all people who experience the menopause and applies to everyone.

2.1. *Menopause*: the point at which an individual’s oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it’s best described as a ‘transition’ rather than a one-off event.

2.2. *Perimenopause*: this is the phase leading up to the menopause when a person’s hormone balance starts to change, and when they may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some, this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

3. Policy Rationale

Women and people who experience the menopause are aged usually between the ages of 45 to 55, though some people can experience it at other times, due to 'premature menopause', transitioning or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically different for everyone; and for a quarter of women and people who experience the menopause they are severely debilitating. Symptoms can have a huge effect on comfort and performance when working.

Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time.

4. Owlcotes' Commitment to Wellbeing

We recognise that staff may, at any time, have health issues which may impact on, or be made worse by, work. As an inclusive employer we have a commitment to supporting a culture whereby staff feel able to bring their whole self to work; this is achieved through encouraging open discussion and a management style which recognises that it's okay not to be okay.

It is important that Headteachers and line managers engage in regular wellbeing conversations with members of their staff team, putting in additional support where necessary.

5. What Staff May Need to be Aware Of

Each person experiencing the menopause will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families, and colleagues as well.

Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or marital or civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. It is particularly important that no assumptions are made by managers about who or how the menopause may impact.

The school recognises that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Symptoms vary greatly and commonly include, but are not limited to:

- Night sweats;
- Anxiety;
- Dizziness;
- Fatigue;
- Memory loss;
- Depression;
- Headaches;
- Recurrent urinary tract infections;
- Joint stiffness, aches, and pains;

- Reduced concentration;
- Hot flushes;
- Heavy periods.

6. How The Guidance can be put into Practice

The menopause is a very individual experience, and people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. Minor adjustments to an employee's working environment can make a huge difference.

If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms, the options in the following sections are available.

6.1. Flexible Working

It is important to recognise that flexibility is key to anyone suffering because of transitioning through the menopause and employers should aim to facilities flexible working wherever possible.

Should an employee require a more temporary or flexible change to their working arrangements examples to consider could include:

- Flexible working hours;
- Reduced hours;
- Time off for medical appointments;
- Agree for them to sit near a window or in a ventilated area or provide a desk-based fan if they become too hot;
- Agree temporary adjustment to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge.

These should be discussed and agreed with the employee's Headteacher and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure these adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee.

6.2. Clothing

- Use of natural fibres wherever possible;
- Flexibility within the staff dress code should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating;
- Changing and washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day.

6.3. Risk Assessments and Reasonable Adjustments

Someone with menopausal symptoms should be supported in the same way as an employee with any ongoing health conditions. Small adjustments to someone's job or working pattern can help people manage their symptoms and continue to perform well in their role. The individual is usually best placed to recognise what might help them, so Headteachers/line managers are encouraged to have open conversations with members of staff.

Adjustments could include, but are not limited to:

- Toilet break as needed (if reasonably possible i.e., it would not leave a classroom of children unsupervised);
- Leaving doors open for increased ventilation;
- Ensuring that windows can be safely opened;
- Ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom (or other room) by turning down radiators or the temperature control system;
- Provision of fans;
- Provision of window blinds;
- Swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments.

This is not intended to be a definitive list of adjustments, Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust and its schools will listen to female staff and trade union representatives and take on board additional suggestions if they are possible to implement in the workplace.

Headteachers or line managers should ensure all employees who have expressed their concern regarding menopause symptoms affecting their work undergo a risk assessment to ensure working conditions do not exacerbate a person's symptoms, and to identify any adjustments that could help an employee perform to their full potential. In addition to any risk assessment, it is also advised that Headteachers and managers undertake a Wellbeing Action Support Plan (WASP) with an employee.

6.4. Sickness Absence

Menopausal absence should be supported in line with the Managing Staff Absences Policy and Guidance. Where staff are experiencing absence related to the menopause, adjustments should be offered to resolve any barriers that the employee may be experiencing to support them to remain in work.

6.5. Occupational Health

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out an assessment of the employee to ascertain whether the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms, or their condition or symptoms are impacting on the performance within their job role.
- Discuss with the employee what adjustments would help them.
- Signpost to other appropriate sources of support and advice.

6.6. Performance

The menopause and its symptoms can have a long-term impact and affects everyone differently, therefore performance issues must be handled sensitively, taking into account reasonable adjustments that may be required to support performance at work.

7. Support

This section identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Headteacher and staff.

7.1. Headteachers/Line Managers should:

- Ensure they are aware of the support available and the terms of this guidance
- Signpost staff to their GP to discuss treatment options
- Ensure all members of their team are aware of the referenced policies and where to find information and seek support
- Be responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill or because of their menopausal symptoms, as well as supporting an effective return to work
- Ensure they listen to the needs of each employee individually and are open and willing to have discussions around the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee
- Work together with the employee to ensure that the right support is provided that satisfies both the school and the employee's needs
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make any necessary changes to an employee's working environment or patterns that are required from both the school and the employee's perspective.
- Be aware of the potential impact of menopause symptoms on performance;
- Be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially;
- Once aware of a member of staff's situation, ensure ongoing dialogue with the member of staff;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary.

Staff should:

- Take responsibility for looking after their own health;
- Contact their GP to discuss treatment options;
- Raise awareness of menopause symptoms and become familiar with the terms of this guidance. Understand what information is available. Seek advice and guidance from available support provided and support colleagues;
- Be as open and honest as possible with line managers or the Headteacher – reviewing and working through the available options together to ensure appropriate measures which support their working environment are in place.

Headteachers and line managers should be kept informed to ensure that the right support is being provided. If employees feel uncomfortable discussing personal issues relating to the menopause in the workplace, they can speak to their GP or contact one of the organisations detailed in Section 8.

7.2. General Support

Schools should aim to facilitate an open, understanding working environment and so we encourage employees to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated, and the necessary support made available.

Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their Headteacher or line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with:

- A trusted colleague;
- The Employee Assistance provider, Vivup;

- The Occupational Health team;
- A Mental Health First Aider.

8. Useful Resources

The school is not responsible for the content of external websites so information available through the following links should be used as a guide only:

- Menopause matters, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms, and treatment options.
- The Daisy Network charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
- The external Menopause Café, which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss the menopause.
- Henpicked, an online community that gives people a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts.
- MegsMenopause, an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause
- A guide to managing menopause at work: guidance for line managers (cipd.co.uk), offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively.

9. Legislation

Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust and its schools complies with the following legislation when implementing this policy:

- The Health and Safety Act 1974.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.

This Menopause Policy and Guidance was adopted by Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust on 23/03/2023

Chair of Trustees: Mrs Judith Norfolk		
Signature:		Judith Norfolk
Frequency of review:	3 years	
To be approved by:	OMAT Full Board	
Date of next review:	March 2026	

REVIEW RECORD

Date of review	Reason for review	Date of next review

Name:		Signature:	
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on behalf of OMAT Full Board

Date of review	Reason for review	Date of next review

Name:			
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