



# CHATHAM & CLARENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

## Menopause at Work Policy

Agreed by Governors: 16 May 2023

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### 1. Introduction

This policy does not form any part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. The school reserves the right to amend the policy at any time.

- 1.1 Menopause is a normal part of every woman's\* life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.
- 1.2 CCGS has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse.
- 1.3 The school is committed to ensuring that women\* feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely in the organisation. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for men as well as women.

### 2. Legislation

This policy takes account of:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010

### 3. Definitions and symptoms of the menopause

The menopause is a stage of life when a woman\* stops having periods. It typically affects those aged between 45 and 55, when oestrogen (female sex hormones) levels begin to fall. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51.

**Perimenopause** is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms.

**Post-menopause** is the time beyond menopause.

**Early menopause** is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

Women\* suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work. For some women, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as: hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.

Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for women experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.

Other symptoms might include, feeling tired and lack of energy, anxiety and or depression, panic attacks, headaches including migraines, recurrent urinary tract infections, palpitations and muscle and joint stiffness.

We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some women\* may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. We will adapt our response to women affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

\*We acknowledge that while the majority of people affected by the menopause will be women, those who are trans or non-binary may also experience the menopause or menopause-type symptoms. The support outlined in this policy is designed to meet the above aims for all affected colleagues.

#### **Male Menopause**

When men reach their late 40's or 50's, some may develop certain physical and psychological symptoms that can cause a significant impact on a man's everyday activities. The term male menopause suggests that these symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to females. However this is not true. Although testosterone levels do decline from 30 to 40, the decline itself is unlikely to cause any problems. A 'midlife crisis' can be responsible for these symptoms; this can happen when men think they have reached life's halfway stage. Alternatively, it can be lifestyle factors or psychological issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.

Men are equally encouraged to raise any concerns they have with their line manager, HR manager or Headteacher and discuss ways in which the school can offer support, which may include a referral to occupational health.

Symptoms of the 'Male Menopause'

Common symptoms experienced by men around the stated age include but are not limited to:

- Mood swings and irritability
- Anxiety and or depressions, panic attacks
- Loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
- Difficulty sleeping at night or increased tiredness

- Poor concentration and short-term memory
- Lowered self-esteem.

#### 4. Aims

4.1 To create an environment where women staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.

4.2 To ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

4.3 To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

#### 5. What steps will we take as an employer?

5.1 This Policy will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause can affect working women, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women experiencing them.

5.2 Where women members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, e.g. because he is a man, or someone much younger, or both, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

5.3 The School will complete risk assessments to ensure a woman's symptoms are not being exacerbated by their job and will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened
- where possible (with the ancient school heating system) ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees Celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants)
- provision of fans
- fitting blinds to window
- access to cold drinking water
- establishing use of the sims alert system to allow cover for women who need to access toilet/washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding)
- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, e.g. temporary part-time working (where suitable staff cover can be found) and flexibility with breaks (for support staff, less easy for teaching staff)
- swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments. This may include providing support services, including occupational health referrals for staff affected by or absent by reason of the menopause.
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes, where practicable, and ensuring such adjustments do not adversely affect the smooth running of the school, to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal women.

5.4 This is not a definitive list of measures. The school will actively listen to women staff and union reps and take on board other suggestions.

5.5 It is recognised that many of these practical and easy to institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal women, will also benefit all staff.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

6.1 It is recognised that everyone who works at CCGS has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including women experiencing the menopause.

6.2 All staff are responsible for:

- taking responsibility for looking after their health
- being open and honest in conversations with HR and occupational health
- contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

### **Line managers**

6.3 The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for adjustments at work.

All line managers will:

- familiarise themselves with this menopause policy
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly
- 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 and allowing adequate time for the discussion
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via an action plan
- ensure ongoing dialogue via a follow-up meeting
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary.

6.4 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:

- discuss with the employee a referral to occupational health for further advice
- review occupational health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- update the action plan and continue the review process.

### **Occupational Health**

6.5 The role of occupational health is to:

- carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms

- discuss with the employee what adjustments would help
- signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

## **7. Further Information**

Further information can be found:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- <http://menopausesupport.co.uk>