

Vernon Park Primary School: Menopause Policy (March 2024)

At Vernon Park Primary School, we aim to provide all children, parents and the wider school community with a safe, caring and inclusive environment where high-quality learning experiences enable all children to be the best that they can be.

Kindness and Empathy, Friendship and Respect, Honesty and Responsibility, Tolerance and Fairness, Support and Inclusion, Challenge and Resilience.

Introduction:

Menopause is a normal part of life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that colleagues may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

Vernon Park Primary School 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. We are committed to ensuring that staff 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.

Vernon Park Primary School undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

- The **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974)** requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific measures taken to support those experiencing menopause symptoms (see reasonable adjustments listed below).
- The **Equality Act (2010)** prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

This policy sets out procedures for members of staff and Senior Leadership to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

Aims:

1. To create an environment where staff members feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
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.
3. To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

Responsibilities of the school:

1. Vernon Park Primary School will undertake to educate and inform all staff on how the menopause can affect working women, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of the menopause and how school can support those experiencing these symptoms.
2. Where members of staff feel uncomfortable seeking support from their immediate line manager (whether because they are male, a person much younger, or both), the school will ensure that an alternative contact is available to offer support. Confidentiality will always be respected.
3. The risk assessments which we undertake will be co-constructed by and consider the specific needs of those experiencing menopausal symptoms. Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature, ventilation and welfare issues (including but not limited to lavatory facilities and cold water, both during and outside scheduled break times).
4. Vernon Park Primary School will make reasonable adjustments where necessary, to support individuals experiencing symptoms linked to the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not exacerbate these symptoms. These reasonable adjustments could include measures such as (but not limited to):
 - Leaving doors open;
 - Ensuring windows can be opened safely;
 - Ensuring classroom temperatures can be regulated by turning down radiators – within reasonable parameters, not dropping below 18°C;
 - Provision of fans;
 - Use of window blinds;
 - Establishing a system which allows cover for those experiencing symptoms who may need to access bathroom facilities while they are teaching;
 - Consideration of requests to amend working arrangements e.g. temporary reduction of hours;

- Permission for colleagues to attend menopause-related medical appointments;
- Adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid detriment to colleagues experiencing menopause.

We recognise this is not a definitive list and Vernon Park Primary School commits to actively listening to colleagues, taking on board other suggestions.

Further roles and responsibilities:

It is recognised that everyone who works at Vernon Park Primary School has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including those experiencing the menopause.

All staff are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with this menopause policy;
- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health (physical, mental and emotional);
- Being open and honest in conversations with senior leadership, 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 in response to their menopausal symptoms.

Leadership are responsible for:

- Listening and responding (where possible) sympathetically to any requests for reasonable adjustments made for the work place;
- Being aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance. If someone's performance suddenly fluctuates, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- Encourage members of staff to speak openly and honestly;
- Be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about the menopause, respecting and appreciating the personal and confidential nature of the conversation, responding sensitively and allowing adequate time for the discussion to take place during the school day where possible;
- Keep records of meetings, including reasonable adjustments as agreed and the actions to be implemented. Create an action plan with subsequent follow-up meetings to encourage ongoing dialogue as appropriate;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are communicated to line manager / team as necessary, are adhered to and reviewed regularly.

Further steps that may apply:

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the leadership team may:

- Discuss with the employee a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
- Discuss with the employee a referral to counselling services;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any additional recommendations;
- Update the action plan and continue the review process.

Referrals will remain confidential and support meetings will be arranged with discretion.

Occupational Health:

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.

Policy date: March 2024

Review date: March 2025