



Menopause Policy

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Good Practice

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Definitions

In this **Menopause** Policy, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions shall have the following meanings:

- i **'The Romero Catholic Academy'** means the Company named at the beginning of this **Staff Handbook** and includes all sites upon which the Company is undertaking. The Romero Catholic Academy includes; **Corpus Christi, Good Shepherd, Sacred Heart, Blue Sky, SS Peter and Paul, St Gregory, St John Fisher, St Patrick, Cardinal Wiseman, Shared Services Team.**
- ii **'Romero Catholic Academy'** means the Company responsible for the management of the Academy and, for all purposes, means the employer of staff at the Company.
- iii **'Board'** means the Board of Directors of the Romero Catholic Academy.
- iv **'Local Governing Body'** means the Governing Body of the Academy.
- v **'Principal'** means the substantive Principal, who is the person with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the Academy.
- vi **'Academy'** means the Academy or college within The Romero Catholic Academy and includes all sites upon which the Academy undertaking is, from time to time, being carried out.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Romero Catholic Academy has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time.
- 1.2. The Romero Catholic Academy is committed to the health and wellbeing of its workforce, and it recognises that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during this transitional time before, during and after the menopause
- 1.3. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

2. Policy Aims

- 2.1. To offer help and support to any employee who is experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause, which is affecting their work.
- 2.2. To maintain a safe, healthy and productive workplace.
- 2.3. Encourage an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing the effects of the menopause.
- 2.4. To educate all employees on what the menopause is and the impact that it has.
- 2.5. To provide Principals and line managers with advice on how to help and support employee's experiencing the menopause.
- 2.6. To provide support to ensure the employee remains at work and absence is kept to a minimum because the correct support is provided.

3. Legislation

- 3.1. The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all workers. Under the Act, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal employees.
- 3.2. The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age, and disability. Note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

4. Menopause Definition

- 4.1. The **menopause** is defined as a biological state in life that occurs when an individual stops menstruating and reaches the end of their natural reproductive life. Once a period has ceased for a year, this is classed as being menopausal.
- 4.2. The time leading up to the menopause, when symptoms may be experienced is known as the **perimenopause**. This can last for years before the menopause.
- 4.3. The time after the menopause has occurred (post a last period) is known as the **postmenopause**.
- 4.4. During the perimenopause and menopause, the levels of oestrogen and progesterone change significantly, and this can cause a whole host of physical and psychological symptoms. Research has found that there is no uniform experience so judgements regarding how an employee should be behaving, should not be based on the employer's personal experience.

5. Symptoms

- 5.1. Symptoms can affect physical and mental health. These symptoms can vary in time that they impact for. The average length of time is four years. Some symptoms are listed below but there are many more.
- 5.2. Physical:
 - Hot flushes
 - Night sweats
 - Sleep disruption
 - Fatigue
 - Headaches
 - Joint pain
 - Heavy periods
- 5.3. Mental/psychological symptoms:
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Mood changes
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Poor memory
 - Reduced confidence
 - Panic attacks
 - Irritability
 - Reduced ability to multi-task
- 5.4. All of the above can lead to time off work and/or a negative effect on performance at work. A menopausal employee experiencing any of these symptoms who is not receiving any support is likely to have little

control over how the symptoms impact on their work and life.

- 5.5. Symptoms may make a menopausal employee feel that they are unable to perform their role as they may be expected e.g. sudden hot flushes which cause heavy sweating, or frequent memory loss, could mean a menopausal employee loses confidence or experiences heightened anxiety to stand in front of a class or present at a Local Governing Board meeting.
- 5.6. Symptoms can have a significant impact on attendance and performance.
- 5.7. Being an approachable, open, and supportive employer can help to address this and provide support that could help to alleviate the impact the symptoms being experienced. It is more often the psychological symptoms that affect the ability to work the most.

6. Employee Responsibilities

Employees have the following responsibilities: Taking responsibility for looking after their health.

- 6.1. Being open and honest in conversations with HR and occupational health.
- 6.2. Contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment.
- 6.3. Being willing to help and support their colleagues.
- 6.4. Accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

7. Employer Responsibilities

- 7.1. The Academy will educate and inform managers and employees to be aware of how the menopause can affect individuals, taking account of the circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those experiencing them.
- 7.2. The risk assessments which we undertake will consider the specific needs of menopausal employees, and, in doing so, we will consult with union representatives and employees and share with all managers and new managers, requesting signatures to confirm that measures are understood and will be acted upon. Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues, such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times.
- 7.3. All schools across the Academy will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. It is important to note that adjustments need to be considered on an individual basis and within the school environment in which they are working. These could include simple measures such as:
 - Leaving doors open where appropriate
 - 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

- Provision of fans
- Fitting blinds to windows
- Establishing a system that allows cover for a menopausal employee who needs 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
- Swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments
- Adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal employees.

This is not a definitive list of measures. All schools across the Academy will actively listen to employees and union representatives and consider adjustments in light of the school context and the safety of students and staff members.

7.4. 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 employees will benefit all staff.

8. Line Manager Responsibilities

8.1. Line managers who work with staff who may be affected by the menopause should:

- Familiarise themselves with this menopause policy.
- 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.
- Any specific needs identified (including reasonable adjustments that are agreed) should be recorded and reviewed regularly.
- To be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance. If someone's performance suddenly dips, it is worth considering whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- Will seek advice from the Romero HR team as well as the GP and/or occupational health practitioner if necessary.
- Staff should not experience any detriment because they may need time off during this time. Any absences will be managed in line with the Employee Absence and Attendance Policy and discretion will be applied by the line manager in line with this.

8.2. 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.

9. Supporting Employees

9.1. Where an employee has approached the Principal (or their manager) to discuss the impact their menopausal symptoms are having, or a situation has arisen where it is clear a conversation is required with an employee the Principal (or manager) should:

- Read this policy in preparation.
- Arrange an informal meeting to discuss the employee's situation and decide what action can be taken; the meeting should be held in an appropriate location to maintain confidentiality. At the meeting the employee and Principal (or Line Manager) should:
 - Agree together what action can be taken and how the employee can be best supported.
 - Record any adjustments and actions. Ensure completion or review dates are assigned to any actions. Subsequently, where completion or review dates cannot be met ensure, the employee is informed of this and kept up to date on progress.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify risks and implement appropriate control measures. The risk assessment will need to consider the specific needs of the individual in question and include (but not limited to) assessing:
 - Existing symptoms
 - Temperature and ventilation
 - Access to a quiet space
 - Access to toilet facilities
 - Access to drinking water
 - Level of workplace stress
 - Review of workload and work activity
 - Consideration of flexible working adjustments
- Record and implement any reasonable adjustments identified on the risk assessment. These can be recorded on the action plan so that the actions are all in one place.
- Ensure the action plan and risk assessment are reviewed every term or more frequently where required (e.g. if new symptoms arise).
- Schedule a follow up meeting one month after the initial meeting takes place to ensure the employee is being supported successfully.
- Schedule future meetings to ensure agreed reviews take place.

9.2. Where adjustments are not successful or if symptoms develop/change and require other adjustments the Principal (or Line Manager) can:

- Make a referral to occupational health, having already discussed this with the employee and implement any recommendations where reasonably practicable.
- Keep the action plan up to date and under review.

10. External Support

10.1. The following external websites provide support and guidance external to the Academy:

- Menopause matters - www.menopausematters.co.uk
- The British Menopause Society – www.thebms.org.uk
- NHS menopause pages - www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms