



AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

Menopause Policy- AST

December 2019

Review date: December 2020

1. SCOPE OF MENOPAUSE POLICY

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to make managers aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how female employees can be affected, by educating and informing managers about potential symptoms and how they can support individuals in the workplace; raise wider awareness and understanding among employees and to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available; and subsequently reduce menopause related sickness by supporting staff to remain in work rather than having to take sick leave (or in some cases resign) meaning that the organisation retains valuable skills and experience.
- 1.2 Given that 8 in 10 of our employees are female, there is a need for AST to ensure it has an appropriate policy in place to support the female employees who are of menopausal age.
- 1.3 Avanti Schools Trust recognises that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during this transitional time before, during and after the menopause and want to ensure that staff are treated according to their circumstances and needs.
- 1.4 The policy seeks to ensure that female employees feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking their manager for support and adjustments in order to continue with their role within the Trust.
- 1.5 AST is committed to ensuring that all female employees that are going through the menopause are treated fairly, with dignity and respect within their working environment. It is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of these employees.
- 1.6 This policy is supported by a set of guidance sections and needs to be read in conjunction with these.

2. Definitions and Background

- 2.1 The **menopause** is part of the natural ageing process for women, although it can be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months. After a woman has not had a period for a year, this is considered to be 'post-menopausal'.
- 2.2 AST recognises that a large and increasing proportion of its workers will be working through and well beyond the menopause. In the UK it is estimated that around 1 in 3 women are either currently going through or have reached the menopause. The menopause affects all women, and it can often indirectly affect their partners, families, colleagues and have an impact on work as well.
- 2.3 The **peri-menopause** is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause and can often last four to five years although for some women it may continue for many more years or for others may last just a few months. It varies

greatly in different individuals. During the time of the peri-menopause individuals may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals. The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. In the UK, the average age is 51, but it can happen much earlier.

- 2.4 Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons; people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.
- 2.5 Some women seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of the peri-menopause (the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms) and menopause (defined biologically as reaching a natural end to reproductive life). A common form of treatment is known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Many women find these treatments helpful for alleviating symptoms, but HRT is not suitable or appropriate for all women. Some people using HRT may experience side effects which may also require adjustments in the workplace.

3. Legislative Requirements

- 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 women** if they are employed.
- 3.2 The **Equality Act (2010)** prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. It is also important to note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

4. Key Principles

- 4.1 AST aims to create an environment where female employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work. We are also committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place.
- 4.2 AST will adopt a positive attitude to the menopause/perimenopause and will work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support female employees experiencing the menopause and ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. It will take a proactive stance and will promote a greater understanding of the menopause/perimenopause and seek to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices.
- 4.3 There is also recognition that the menopause/perimenopause is a very individual experience and that women can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may

be needed.

- 4.4 AST will provide appropriate information and support to female employees and managers. Managers in conjunction with Human Resources will be required to carry out risk assessments which take the specific needs of individuals into consideration (including stress risk assessments).

5. General Data Protection Regulations 2018

- 5.1 All documents generated under this policy that relate to identifiable female employee are to be treated as confidential documents, in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed in three years. Earlier review may be required in response to exceptional circumstances, organisational change or relevant changes in legislation or guidance.