

New and Expectant Mothers Policy



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1 Statement of Intent

Our Lady of Walsingham Trust is fully committed to protecting the health of new or expectant mother as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

This policy outlines the areas of concern, along with solutions to, the risks to new or expectant mothers when undertaking their working duties.

Schools that are part of the Trust are required to assess risks to all their employees and to do what is reasonably practicable to control those risks. They must include any hazards/risks to new and expectant mothers, when conducting this risk assessment.

It is important that female employees inform the school that they are pregnant; the notification should be given in writing, as early as possible.

When the school receive written notification from an employee that she is pregnant, they must conduct a specific risk assessment.

The assessment must take into account any advice provided by the woman's GP or Midwife on her health. If any risks are identified then the school must take action to remove, reduce or control the risk.

The Trust provides a general "New & Expectant Mothers" risk assessment that can be used as a basis to conduct a more specific and personal risk assessment.

2 Legislation

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education on health and safety in schools and the following legislation:

- [The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), which sets out the general duties employers have towards employees and duties relating to lettings
- [The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#), which require employers to carry out risk assessments, make arrangements to implement necessary measures, and arrange for appropriate information and training
- [The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002](#), which require employers to control substances that are hazardous to health
- [Equality Act 2010](#), which requires employers to legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace
- [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#), which require employers to ensure that working conditions meet a certain standard

3 Roles & Responsibilities

Headteacher or delegate:

- Carry out a specific pregnancy risk assessment (taking into account the information supplied by the GP/midwife) and put in place the necessary measure to protect the employee/pregnancy by using as a guide the Trust generic risk assessment

Staff:

- Notifying the Headteacher or delegate of their pregnancy as soon as possible, and complying with appropriate advice and recommendations
- Ensure that the Headteacher or delegate is provided with any medical information given by their own doctor/midwife (e.g.: if the employee has an underlying medical condition that needs to be considered when carrying out the risk assessment)

Premises/Site Manager:

- Assist the Headteacher or delegate in carrying out the specific risk assessments if needed
- Update as necessary the generic risk assessment

4 Introduction

Pregnancy is not an illness and although it is important to realise that there is a natural incidence of problems for the new or expectant mother and for the unborn child, it is known that their health may be affected by external physical or chemical factors.

Such factors include heavy smoking, excessive alcohol intake, drug abuse and virus infections. It is known that some external factors including exposure to biological agents, chemicals, ionising radiations and physical stress may cause problems and this has led to concern that exposure of new or expectant mothers in the workplace may produce adverse effects. There is no totally reliable test for detecting potentially harmful agents and it is not therefore possible to rely entirely upon known harmful effects when formulating a policy for dealing with this problem.

This policy therefore concentrates on minimising the exposure of new or expectant mothers to all chemicals and other potentially harmful agents.

It is also known that excess physical work, fatigue and poor working conditions may cause adverse effects to the new or expectant mother or unborn child, particularly in the later stages of pregnancy. The policy is therefore also concerned with ensuring that expectant mothers are provided with satisfactory working conditions and do not put themselves or the unborn child at risk by carrying out excessive physical work.

5 Procedure

- All practicable measures will be taken both by the school and by the employee to minimise exposure to chemicals and other potentially harmful agents
- Possible adverse effects on the new or expectant mother and the unborn child will be taken into account during any assessment of the risks posed by working conditions or in the setting of any handling standards or exposure limits: these assessments will be made available to the relevant employees
- Employees will be asked to report to the Headteacher, in writing, as soon as pregnancy is suspected so that any necessary advice can be given
- On notification of pregnancy the Headteacher or delegate will see the employee concerned and using the Trust generic "New and expectant Mothers Risk Assessment" determine if a specific pregnancy risk assessment is required. This specific risk assessment will be the responsibility of the Headteacher or delegate and the Premises/Site Manager will assist with this risk assessment where requested
- New or expectant mothers will be given advice on the possible hazards of exposure to harmful agents during pregnancy. They will receive appropriate levels of information, instruction and training on what is required of them, and the particular risks and measures in place
- As required by the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations, appropriate facilities will be made available for expectant mothers to rest e.g. rest room equipped with a comfortable chair and provision for privacy and quiet.
- If in spite of all practicable measures being taken, the Headteacher or delegate considers that there is an unacceptable reproductive risk to a new or expectant mother; the school will take all reasonably practicable steps to find alternative employment for her. If satisfactory alternative employment cannot be found the employee will be medically suspended from employment in accordance with the terms of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 as amended by the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act (1993).
- Where a new or expectant mother is unhappy about continuing her employment because of

fears about the effects on her pregnancy, the school, even though the Trust feels that there is no risk, should sympathetically consider finding suitable alternative employment. No guarantee can be given however that such suitable employment will be available.

- The school will treat sympathetically requests for special working conditions which are medically required as a result of pregnancy (e.g.: floor changes to avoid stairs, no working outside during hot weather etc)

6 Action in the event of pregnancy

- Member of staff must inform the Headteacher or delegate as soon as possible after receiving confirmation that they are pregnant. The school will require confirmation in writing from the expectant mother, and where necessary revise the generic risk assessment to take account of the individual's pregnancy stages, situation and working conditions
- The Headteacher or delegate will apply the generic Trust risk assessment for the employee's job
- As a result of these risk assessments, the school will supply verbal or written advice to the employee and take action on the recommendations

7 Working conditions and facilities

- Pregnant employees may be particularly susceptible to the effects of such factors as temperature, lighting and noise. Special consideration will be given to the needs of pregnant employees when conditions are outside the comfort zone (normally taken to be between 18 and 24 deg C). Suitable facilities will be provided for pregnant employees to rest, e.g. rest room equipped with a comfortable chair and provision for privacy and quiet
- Overtime and work out of normal hours; reasonable amounts of overtime are acceptable provided that there are no problems with the pregnancy that could be exacerbated by excessive overtime. Exact levels cannot be laid down as it is dependent on the stage of pregnancy, the age of the pregnant mother and her general state of health
- Pregnant employees are advised to avoid any lone working; if lone working is unavoidable, a suitable "checking system" on the employee should be implemented by the Headteacher or delegate to ensure that the pregnant employee is safe at all times
- Pregnant employees to avoid any contact with bodily fluids (e.g. sick children, toilet cleaning etc)
- No work at height should be undertaken by the pregnant employee
- Pregnant employees are advised to avoid any handling of rubbish or undertake rubbish collection duties

8 Ergonomic considerations

Pregnant employees may have restricted ability to perform certain physical tasks. Physical capacity will vary according to stage of pregnancy and general physical capacity; however, a specific risk assessment should be carried out where there is:

- Work which because of problems with posture, reach or clearance could cause ergonomic problems to the pregnant employee.
- Heavy or strenuous work
- Repeated heavy lifting

Strict limits on weights are not laid down, all depends on the stage of the pregnancy, the physique of the person involved, the nature and shape of the materials to be lifted and the nature of the lift. As a general guide at later stage of the pregnancy, any lifting of equipment should be avoided, apart from light items such as laptops, handbags etc.

9 Industrial and Laboratory Chemicals

Most chemicals have not been tested for reproductive effects and therefore all must be handled with extreme care during pregnancy. It should be noted that all toxic chemicals and carcinogenic chemicals are very likely to have serious reproductive effects and great care must be taken in handling these during pregnancy. The guidance under the regulations points out the particular hazard of working with chemicals toxic by skin absorption.

Information is available on the reproductive effects of a limited number of industrial and laboratory chemicals. As a general rule chemicals covered by the label risk phrases set out below pose a specific risk and will require a specific risk assessment:

- Toxic (R23, R24, or R25) or Very toxic ((R26, R27 or R28)
- Danger of cumulative effects (R33)
- Danger of very serious irreversible effects (R39)
- Limited evidence of a carcinogenic effect (R40)
- May cause cancer (R45, R49)
- May cause heritable genetic damage (R46)
- Danger of serious damage to health by prolonged exposure (R48)
- Possible risk of impaired fertility (R60)
- May impair fertility (R62)
- Possible risk of harm to the unborn child (R61)
- May cause harm to the unborn child (R63)
- May cause harm to breast fed babies (R64)
- Possible risk of irreversible effects (R68)

For compounds where an official exposure limit exists, exposure should be controlled to a level similar, or less, to the one indicated in the “manufacturer safety data sheet”.

10 Microbiological hazards

Pregnant women and new mothers must not work with, or be exposed to, those agents which are known to present an especially high risk as listed in the ACDP Infection Risks to new or Expectant Mothers in the Workplace.

The school will advise, by using emails or another suitable medium (e.g. ParentMail), of the presence of any illness/virus (children or staff) at the school, that might pose a risk to the mother or unborn baby.

11 Visual Display Units

The Health & Safety Executive do not feel that there is any risk to pregnant employees from such work except where ergonomic problems occur due to problems with posture, reaches and clearances. However all cases where concern is expressed by an employee should be treated sympathetically.

If deemed necessary, the workstation will be assessed and changes will be implemented; the Premises/Site Manager can assist during this stage if necessary.

12 Implications for not advising of the pregnancy

There may be a number of circumstances where an employee may consider not advising the Headteacher or delegate about her pregnancy. However, by not advising, the employee may risk the following:

- Being asked to carry out work that puts herself and her baby at risk
- Being exposed to illnesses (through coming into contact with students in general and with those who have recently been abroad)

13 Appendix 1

Occupational Health Risk Assessment for The Expectant Mother

Name:

Pregnancy Stage: Weeks

Description of principal work area:

Does the employee's usual work involve:

Sitting

Sitting/Standing

Standing

No lifting

Minimal Lifting

Lifting to guidelines

Does the employee find their workstation comfortable/ uncomfortable?

Details:

Does the Employee work regular overtime? Yes No

If Yes, average weekly hours

Does the employee have an existing medical problem that may affect their health during pregnancy?
(e.g. diabetes, varicose veins)

.....

Does the Employee have any minor discomforts of pregnancy e.g. morning sickness

.....

Family history: Twins, Hypertension, Diabetes, Other, None

.....

Previous Obstetric History:

.....

.....

Does the employee work with?

Chemicals

Pharmaceuticals

Biological agents

If YES give details:

Name and Address of Doctor:

.....

.....

..... Tel:.....

Additional comments, adaptations or restrictions

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14 Appendix 2

Generic “Expectant mothers” Risk Assessment