

The Hazeley Academy: Ending period poverty

The Hazeley Academy is attempting to remove the stigma and reduce period poverty for their community.

What is Period Poverty?

Action Aid provide us with a clear understanding of what period poverty is and the rights that we have regarding menstruation:

“Period poverty affects women, girls and people who menstruate all over the world. Access to menstrual products, safe, hygienic spaces in which to use them, and the right to manage menstruation without shame or stigma, is essential for anyone who menstruates.”

For more information, visit: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/womens-rights/period-poverty>

However, period poverty is more than just being able to afford sanitary products. It can also include:

- Embarrassment
- Family structure
- Cultural and religious beliefs
- Forgotten products
- Starting your period unexpectedly and without products
- Using products longer than recommended
- Lack of education

Stigma surrounding periods

Statistics surrounding period poverty and its stigma are worryingly high. A survey conducted by Plan International UK, found that, out of 1000 girls aged 14 to 21, 1 in 7 did not know what was happening when they started their period, and more than a quarter did not know what to do when their period started. In addition, those surveyed, only 22% feel comfortable discussing this with their teacher, 82% admitted they had hidden or concealed their sanitary products, and 71% admitted they felt embarrassed buying sanitary products.

Similarly, Action Aid commissioned a poll what found that 37% of young women in the UK had a negative experience and stigmatising behaviour surrounding periods, which included bullying, isolation, and jokes. Staggeringly, 77% of these women said this behaviour happened in school.

How are we at Hazeley trying to tackle this?

1. Talking about periods openly – Having honest conversations about periods is one of the fastest ways to breakdown the stigma placed on it. By discussing our bodies, how we feel during periods, and challenges that are faced, we can create a sense of solidarity among our school community.
2. Education – Menstrual education is part of the national curriculum, however, according to the Department of Education in England, 15% report not being taught anything about it in the classroom. Even if some education is being provided, it varies between schools and teachers.
3. Training – Both staff and student ambassadors, will receive training so they know how to approach this topic. Too many young people have said they found menstrual education awkward and embarrassing. In addition to the 60% that said they felt it was old-fashioned and unrelatable.
4. Including all students – no matter who they students are, they will be included. If we want to reduce the stigma surrounding periods, we need to make sure that everyone is included. This will help all students to be supported.

5. Period packs - All new year 7s will be provided with a pack containing a variety of products so they have access to products, helping to remove their embarrassment about asking.

Why are we doing this?

Students often struggle with accessing products outside of school hours. This includes evenings, weekends, and school holidays. We, therefore, want to provide a service for all students to access these products when they need them.

What's next?

We are fortunate that the Government are paying attention to the data surrounding period poverty and offering schools a budget to purchase sanitary products.

Throughout the school, there are points that students can pick up products. This includes the Workrooms, the Library, Student Services, Matron, and R2L. This will hopefully be extended to having products in the toilets, so students can help themselves.

There will be posters around the academy, signposting where students can find sanitary items and who they can collect them from. In addition, we will have ambassadors allowing students to freely talk about their period or issues accessing products.

What can you do?

If you know your child will need products, please get in contact with Miss Hall at shall@thehazeleyacademy.com.