



St Francis Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Policy ratified by Governors

Date April 2018

Version No	Date	Change/Review
V1.0	November 2016	Policy Adopted
V1.1	January 2017	Ratified
V1.2	September 2017	Review due
V1.3	September 2018	Review due

1. Context

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and made it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal. The maximum sentence for carrying out FGM or for helping to have FGM performed is 14 years.

The 'Every Child Matters Agenda' requires all agencies, including schools, to promote the welfare of every child/young person so that they can be healthy and stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.

All staff, adult visitors and volunteers at St Francis have a statutory duty to safeguard girls/young women from being abused through FGM, and this duty falls within the parameters of safeguarding and the statutory guidance for schools 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' from April 2014.

2. Definition

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that female genital mutilation (FGM) 'comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons' (WHO, 2008). FGM is also known as female circumcision. The United Nations recognise FGM is a violation of human rights. It is very harmful and can cause long-term mental and physical suffering, menstrual and sexual problems, difficulty in giving birth, infertility and even death. It is most frequently carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15. Over 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of undergoing FGM in England and Wales and the summer holidays is a prime time for it to be carried out (source: Metropolitan Police). It is estimated that around 400 women and girls have undergone FGM in Swindon (Swindon LSCB).

3. Rationale for FGM

The issue of FGM is very complex. It is not a requirement of any religion.

It is a cultural practice founded on custom and tradition based on the incorrect belief that it protects a girl's virginity, protects family honour, and enhances a girl's prospect of marriage.

The procedure is usually carried out by an older woman in the community, who may see conducting FGM as a prestigious act as well as a source of income.

It is most often carried out without medical expertise, attention to hygiene or an anaesthetic. The girl/young woman may undergo the procedure unexpectedly or it may be planned in advance.

4. The role of staff, volunteers and visitors to St Francis Primary School

All adults working within our school have a responsibility to be alert to the possibility of FGM and be trained in identifying the signs that FGM may be about to happen or has already been carried out.

The safety and welfare of the girl/young woman is paramount. All staff, visitors and volunteers will act in the interest of the rights of the girl/young woman, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and all decisions or plans for the girl/young woman should be based on thorough assessments which are sensitive to the issues of age, race, culture, gender, religion. Stigmatisation of the girl/young woman or their specific community should be avoided.

5. Procedures in place at St Francis School

St Francis has robust and rigorous safeguarding procedures and takes its' responsibilities of child protection very seriously. Proactive action will be taken to protect and prevent female pupils being forced to undertake FGM.

The Head Teacher and the Governors do this in four ways:

- a. by implementing a strict Attendance Policy that does not authorise holidays, extended or otherwise
- b. by providing FGM training for Child Protection Lead Officers and disseminated training for all staff at the front line dealing with children
- c. by supporting the Child Protection Lead Officers in entering into FGM discussions with parents of children from practising communities who may be at risk
- d. by providing comprehensive PSHE and Sex and Relationship education to KS2 children including a discussion about FGM with Year 6 girls.

In order to protect our children, it is important that key information about FGM is known by all of the school community.

6. Signs and Indicators

Some indications that **FGM may have taken place** include:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM, especially if there are elderly women present in the extended family
- A girl/young woman may spend time out of the classroom or from other activities, with bladder or menstrual problems
- A long absence from school could be an indication that a girl/young woman has recently undergone an FGM procedure, particularly if there are behavioural changes on her return (this can also be due to a forced marriage)
- A girl/young woman requiring to be excused from physical exercise or swimming lessons without the support of her GP
- A girl/young woman has difficulty sitting still and seems to be experiencing discomfort or pain
- A girl/young woman may ask for help, either directly or indirectly
- A girl/young woman who is suffering emotional and/or psychological effects of undergoing FGM, for example withdrawal or depression

Support for a girl or young woman who may have undergone FGM can be obtained from the Agency for Culture and Change Management (Tel: 0114 272 8780).

Some indications that **FGM may be about to take place** include:

- A conversation with a girl/young woman where they may refer to FGM, either in relation to themselves or another female family member or friend
- A girl/young woman requesting help to prevent it happening
- A girl/young woman expressing anxiety about a 'special procedure' or 'special occasion' which may include discussion of a holiday to their country of origin
- A boy may also indicate some concern about his sister or other female relative.

7. Acting on information

School staff play a key role in protecting girls from FGM. Any information or concern that a girl or young woman has already undergone FGM or is at risk of undergoing the procedure should be immediately referred to the school Safeguarding Lead (Head Teacher Mrs Joy Farrell) or the Deputy Safeguarding Lead, who must then contact Wiltshire Police and Swindon Borough Council Safeguarding Teams.

If you are concerned that a child is at risk of or has undergone FGM, contact the Swindon Family Contact/Swindon MASH on 01793 466903.

The NSPCC has a 24-hour helpline to provide support and advice to victims of FGM, or to anyone who may be concerned that a child is at risk:

Helpline 0800 028 3550

Website www.nspcc.org.uk/.../female-genital-mutilation-fgm

In an emergency, do not delay and call 999.

The child's parents must not be contacted before the referral is made.

If a girl/young woman is thought to be at risk of FGM, **workers should be aware of the need to act quickly** - before she is abused by undergoing FGM in the UK, or taken abroad to undergo the procedure.

An interpreter must be used in all interviews with the family if their preferred language is not English. The interpreter must be female.

A girl/young woman who has undergone FGM should be considered a Child in Need and offered services as appropriate.

ASK → **RECORD** → **REFER**

Staff/adults should:

ASK

- Ask children about their holiday
- Sensitively and informally ask a family about the circumstances of an extended holiday for example: who is going on the holiday?; how long are they going for?; is there a special celebration planned?; where are they going?; are the family aware that a school cannot keep a child on roll if they are absent for an extended period of time?; are the family aware that FGM, including Sunna, is illegal in the UK even if performed abroad?
- If you suspect that a child has been a victim of FGM the following could be asked of that child:
 - If your family is from a country where girls or women are circumcised, do you think that you have experienced this?
 - Has anything been done to you 'down there' or 'on your bottom'?
 - Would you prefer to talk to someone who will understand you better?
 - Would you like support in contacting other agencies for advice?

These questions are for guidance and each case should be dealt with sensitively and be considered individually and independently.

RECORD

All intervention should be logged accurately and include persons present, circumstances of the discussion/concern, dates, times and those informed, plus the outcome.

REFER

FGM is child abuse.

Child protection is the responsibility of every adult working in or visiting the school and any concerns must be raised.

References

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

NSPCC website

NSPCC FGM helpline 0800 028 3550

[www. Pshe-association.org.uk](http://www.Pshe-association.org.uk)

FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research Development) 0208 960 4000 or email [support@ forwarduk.org.uk](mailto:support@forwarduk.org.uk)

Agency for Culture and Change Management 0114 272 8780