



## **Female Genital Mutilation Policy – to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy**

**Fishburn Primary School**

**Date of Policy: June 2016**

### **FGM**

FGM is a collective term for all procedures involving partial or total removal of external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. Typically it is performed on girls aged between 4 to 15 or on older girls before marriage or pregnancy. It is illegal in the UK and it is also illegal to take a child abroad to undergo FGM. There is a maximum prison sentence of 14 years for anyone found to have aided this procedure in any way. It is considered to be child abuse as it causes physical, psychological and sexual harm.

FGM is more common than many people realise, both across the world and in the UK. It is practised in 28 countries and in parts of the Middle and Far East and increasingly in developed countries amongst the immigrant and refugee communities. In the UK it has been estimated that 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM.

### **Signs and indicators to be aware of**

Some indications that FGM may have taken place include:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM, especially if they are elderly women present in the extended family
- A girl may spend time out of the classroom or from other activities, with bladder or menstrual problems
- A long absence from school or in the school holidays could be an indication that a girl has recently undergone an FGM procedure, particularly if there are behavioural changes on her return – this may also be due to forced marriage.

- A girl requiring to be excused from PE without the support of her GP
- A girl may ask for help, either directly or indirectly
- A girl who is suffering emotional/psychological effects of FGM, for example withdrawal, depression or behaviour changes.

Some indicators that FGM may be about to take place include:

- A conversation with a girl which may refer to FGM, whether in relation to themselves or another female family member or friend
- A girl requesting help to prevent it happening
- A girl 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.

### **Cultural context**

The issue of FGM is very complex. Despite the obvious harm and distress it can cause, many parents from communities who practice FGM believe it important to protect their cultural identity.

FGM is often practiced within a religious context. However, neither the Koran nor the Bible supports the practice of FGM. As well as religious reasons, parents may also say that undergoing FGM is in their daughter's best interests because it:

- Gives her status and respect within the community
- Keeps her virginity/chastity
- Is a rite of passage within the custom and tradition in their culture
- Makes her socially acceptable to others, especially to men for the purposes of marriage
- Ensures the family are seen as honourable
- Helps girls to be clean and hygienic

### **Consequences of FGM**

Many people may not be aware of the relationship between FGM and its health consequences; in particular the complications affecting sexual intercourse and childbirth which may occur many years after the mutilation has taken place.

Short term health implications include:

- Severe pain and shock
- Infections
- Urine retention
- Injury to adjacent tissues
- Fracture or dislocation as a result of restraint
- Damage to other organs
- Death
- Depending on the degree of mutilation, it can cause severe haemorrhaging and result in the death of the girl due to blood loss.

Long term health implications include:

- Excessive damage to the reproductive system
- Uterus, vaginal and pelvic infections
- Infertility
- Cysts
- Complications in pregnancy and childbirth
- Psychological damage
- Difficulties in menstruation
- Difficulties passing urine
- Increased risk of HIV transmission.

**Action to be taken by staff with concerns**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff must report any concerns to a designated Child Protection person and/or to Social Care Direct – 03000 267979.

June 2016

Review date: June 2017