

Cotham School - FGM - Female Genital Mutilation Policy.

Guiding principles

The NSPCC considers that the practice of FGM is an imposed violation of a child's physical integrity and as such is categorised as child abuse.

The World Health Organisation considers FGM to be a major public health problem, which causes irreparable damage to the physical and mental health of girls and women subjected to it; in some cases it results in death.

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women has stated that FGM is a traditional practice which should be construed as a definite form of violence that cannot be overlooked nor justified on the grounds of tradition, culture or social conformity, in accordance with Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

FGM is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

- It is illegal for anyone to circumcise a woman or child for cultural or non-medical grounds
- The act makes it an offence to take a UK national or resident overseas for the purpose of or to aid and abet, procure, carry out FGM.
- FGM carries a maximum penalty of 14 years

FGM will be dealt with, therefore, as part of Cotham's existing child protection structures, policies and procedures (which are based on SWCPP guidelines).

Any member of staff who has concerns that a student is at risk or has been a victim of Female Genital Mutilation must discuss the issue immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or any of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs).

Understanding FGM - Definition:

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) COMPRISES OF ALL PROCEDURES INVOLVING PARTIAL OR TOTAL REMOVAL OF THE EXTERNAL FEMALE GENITALIA OR OTHER INJURY TO THE FEMALE GENITAL ORGANS WHETHER FOR CULTURAL OR OTHER NON-THERAPEUTIC REASONS

(World Health Organisation-1997).

Some indicators that FGM has taken place.

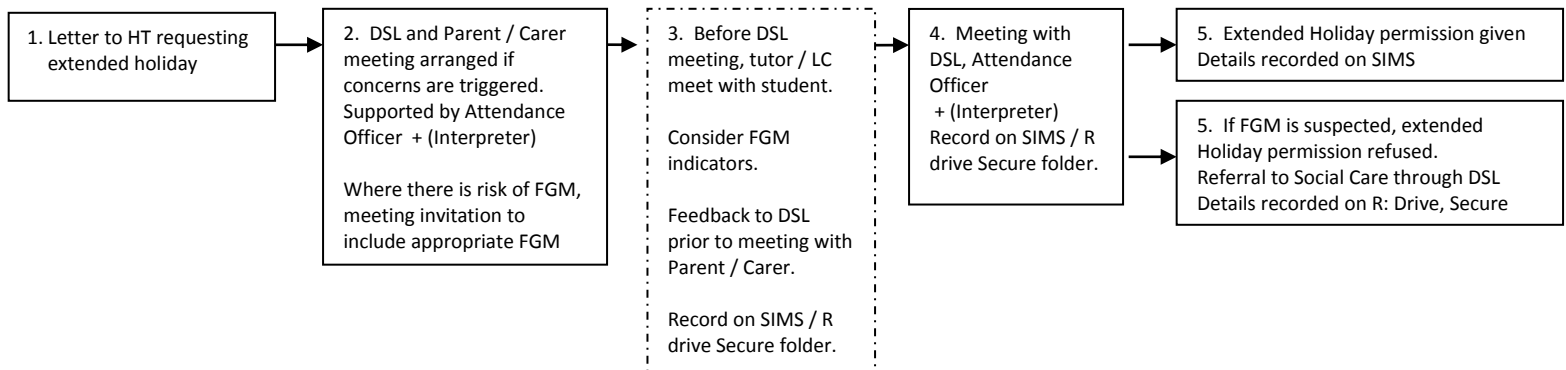
- Prolonged absence from school with noticeable behaviour change – especially after a return from holiday.
- Spend long periods of time away from the class during the day.
- A student who has undergone FGM should be seen as a child protection issue. Medical assessment and therapeutic services to be considered
- Medical issues arise including:

➤ Headaches	➤ Back pain
➤ Problems with sitting or walking	➤ Vaginal infections or abscess
➤ Heavy painful periods	➤ Urinary tract infections
➤ Pain in the lower abdomen	➤ Spend a lot of time in the toilet

Some indicators that a student is at risk of FGM.

- The family comes from a community that is known to practice FGM - especially if there are elderly women present.
- In conversation a student may talk about FGM.
- A student may express anxiety about a special ceremony.
- A student may talk or have anxieties about forthcoming holidays to their country of origin.
- Parent/Guardian requests permission for authorised absence for overseas travel or the school becomes aware that absence is required for vaccinations.
- If a student has already undergone FGM – and it comes to the attention of a member of staff, consideration needs to be given to any Child Protection implications e.g. for younger siblings, extended family members and a referral made to Social Care or the Police if appropriate.

Procedures for managing FGM Extended Holiday Request.



1. In line with Cotham's attendance policy, all parents / carers of students seeking an extended holiday are expected to write in to school giving reasons for the extended holiday request.
2. If the reasons for the extended holiday triggers concerns, a meeting will be arranged with the DSL and Attendance Officer. (Where necessary, it is important to seek the support of an Interpreter but it is also important to gauge the views of the interpreter towards FGM beforehand).
3. Prior to the meeting, the tutor / Learning Co-ordinator should try to find out sensitively and informally about the holiday (and feedback information on this to the DSL prior to meeting). The tutor / LC may ask the student questions like:
 - Who is going on the holiday with the student?
 - How long does the family plan to go for and is there a special celebration planned?
 - Where are they going?
 - Are they aware that the school cannot keep their child on roll if they are away for a long period?
 - Are they aware that FGM including Sunna is illegal in the U.K even if performed abroad?

In addition, if you suspect that a student is a victim of FGM you may ask the student;

- Your family is originally from a country where girls or women are circumcised – Do you think you have gone through this?
- Has anything been done to you / cut down there?
- Do you want to talk to someone who will understand you better?
- Would you like support in contacting other agencies for support, help or advice?

Each case should be dealt with and considered individually and independently.

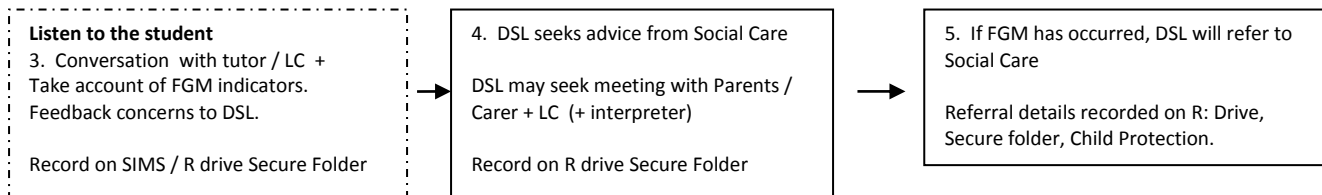
4. Meeting with DSL & Parents / Carers + Attendance Officer (+ Interpreter).

Similar questions to those suggested above may be used.

5. Permission given / Record / Permission refused and Refer

- All interventions should be accurately recorded, either on SIMS or Secure R drive, depending on sensitive nature of information.
- DSL or Head teacher may seek advice from Social Care about making a referral and involving CAIT (Child Abuse Investigation Team)

Where a student may have been a victim of FGM.



3. The tutor / Learning Co-ordinator should try to find out sensitively and informally about the holiday (and feedback info to DPO prior to meeting). The tutor / LC may ask the student questions suggested above.

4. DCPO (+ LC) may seek advice from Social Care prior to arranging a meeting with Parents

5. If FGM has taken place, DCPO will refer to Social Care.

Raising awareness of FGM.

- General staff awareness – a 3-year programme of Safeguarding Professional Development for all staff which includes signs of safety for FGM.
- Pastoral staff awareness – bespoke Professional Development on dealing with FGM concerns.
- Governors’ awareness – bespoke training by DSL to the two Safeguarding governors through the regular monthly meetings.
- Student awareness – assembly and follow-up tutorial programme from Integrate Bristol or other external provider delivered to all year groups every 3 years.

Reviewed by DL – October 2016