



Milecastle Primary School

FGM Policy

September 2015



MILECASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

FGM POLICY

At Milecastle Primary School we believe that all children should be kept safe from harm.

FGM (Female genital mutilation)

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 4 -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 African countries and in parts of the Middle and Far East and increasingly in developed countries amongst the immigrant and refugee communities (including Egypt, Sudan, Somalia and Sierra Leone).

The procedure often takes place in the summer, as the recovery period after FGM can be 6 to 9 weeks.

In the UK it has been estimated that 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM.

We have a duty to report concerns we have about girls at risk of FGM to the police and Social Care.

Although Milecastle currently has no children from these backgrounds we will continue to review our policy annually and FGM is included in our annual staff Safeguarding Training.

Signs and indicators 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 some time out of the classroom or from other activities with bladder or menstrual problems.

- A long absence from school or just before or after the school holidays could be an indication that a girl/young woman has recently undergone an FGM procedure, particularly if there are behavioural changes on her return.
- A girl requiring to be excused from PE lessons without the support of a medical practitioner.
- A girl may ask for help, either directly or indirectly.
- A girl who is suffering emotional/psychological effects of undergoing FGM, for example withdrawal or depression.
- Difficulty walking, sitting or standing.

Indications that FGM may be about to take place include:

- A conversation with a girl where they may refer to FGM, either in relation to themselves or another female family relative or friend.
- A girl requesting help to prevent it happening.
- A girl expressing anxiety about a 'special procedure' or a '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. 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 is seen as honourable.
- helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic.

Consequences of FGM

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

Short term health implications may include:

- severe pain and shock.
- infections.
- injury to adjacent tissue.
- 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 through loss of blood.

Long term health implications may include:

- excessive damage to the reproductive system.
- uterus, vaginal and pelvic infections.
- infertility.
- cysts.
- complications in pregnancy and childbirth.
- psychological damage.
- sexual dysfunction.
- difficulties in menstruation.
- difficulties in passing urine.
- increased risk of HIV transmission.

Action to take if staff have concerns about FGM

Staff need to act quickly on any concerns to prevent possible FGM taking place in the UK or a child being taken abroad to undergo the procedure. Staff must report any concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Person or Deputy Designated Safeguarding person.

The concern will be immediately passed on to the police and Social Care.

To be reviewed: September 2016