



**Forced Marriage (FM) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)  
2019**

*This policy has been written with reference to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019*

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## ***Aims and Principles***

York Steiner School strives to create an environment where learning, truth, justice, respect, spirituality and community are promoted.

The overall aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care and ensure staff are fully engaged in being vigilant about FM and FGM (in situations where child abuse is suspected our paramount responsibility is to the child).

This school holds that all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse

The objectives are that:

1. All trustees, teachers and non-teaching staff will have an understanding of what FM and FGM is and why we need to be vigilant in school.
2. All trustees, teachers and non-teaching staff will know what the school policy is on FM and FGM and will follow the policy when issues arise.
3. Ensure all teachers have an understanding of their legal duty to report concerns regarding FGM.
4. Take an '**it could happen here approach**'

## ***Forced Marriage***

Forcing a person into marriage in England and Wales is a crime and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic violence. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical, emotional or psychological. It is important to recognise that this is entirely separate from arranged marriage.

## ***What Is FGM?***

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long lasting harmful consequences.

## Procedures For Referrals

It is important for us to be constantly vigilant and remain fully informed about the issues which affect the region in which we teach. Staff are reminded to take a 'it could happen here' approach.

Whilst all staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about FGM there is a specific **legal duty on teachers**. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to police (Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Action 2003).

Teachers must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the teacher has good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the school's designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and involve children's social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures.

Complying with the duty does not breach any confidentiality requirement or other restriction on disclosure which might otherwise apply.

The duty is a personal duty which requires the individual professional who becomes aware of the case to make a report; the responsibility cannot be transferred. The only exception to this is if you know that another individual from your profession has already made a report; there is no requirement to make a second.

Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils or students, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.

Reports under the duty should be made as soon as possible after a case is discovered, and best practice is for reports to be made by the close of the next working day, unless any of the factors described below are present. You should act with at least the same urgency as is required by your local safeguarding processes.

Throughout the process, you should ensure that you keep a comprehensive record of any discussions held and subsequent decisions made, in line with standard safeguarding practice. This will include the circumstances surrounding the initial identification or disclosure of FGM, details of any safeguarding actions which were taken, and when and how you reported the case to the police (including the case reference number). You should also ensure that your organisation's designated safeguarding lead is kept updated as appropriate.

### ***Why Is It Carried Out?***

Belief that:

- FGM brings status/respect to the girl – social acceptance for marriage
- Preserves a girl's virginity
- Part of being a woman / rite of passage
- Upholds family honour
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Gives a sense of belonging to the community
- Fulfils a religious requirement
- Perpetuates a custom/tradition
- Helps girls be clean / hygienic
- Is cosmetically desirable
- Mistakenly believed to make childbirth easier

### ***Is FGM Legal?***

FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of human rights of girls and women. It is **illegal** in most countries including the UK. Circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM happening:

- Child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- Family taking a long trip abroad

- Child's family being from one of the 'at risk' communities for FGM (Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdistan, Indonesia and Pakistan)
- Knowledge that the child's sibling has undergone FGM
- Child talks about going abroad to be 'cut' or to prepare for marriage

It is essential that staff are aware of FGM practices and the need to look for signs, symptoms and other indicators of FGM.

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- Prolonged absence from school and other activities
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between the legs
- Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinal tract infection
- Disclosure

### ***The 'One Chance' Rule***

The One Chance Rule. The idea behind the One Chance Rule is that you might only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and, therefore, have one chance to save a life. If the situation seems urgent, the **One Chance rule should always be applied.**

If staff would like more information it can be obtained from here:

Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation,

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/380125/MultiAgencyPracticeGuidelinesNov14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380125/MultiAgencyPracticeGuidelinesNov14.pdf)

### ***Links to Other Policies***

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Anti-radicalisation Policy
- British Values Statement

### ***Approval & Review***

This policy has been approved by the Board of Trustees on November 2019

Policy review date: November 2020