Painsley Catholic College

Female Genital Mutilation Policy

(To be referenced with the school's safeguarding policy)

INTERNAL POLICY

Approved by:	Directors	**Date:**	September 2026
Last reviewed on:	September 2026		
Next review due by:	September 2027		

This policy should be interpreted in the context of other relevant policies and procedures, particularly the school's Safeguarding Policy.

As a Catholic school, we uphold the Catholic Social Teaching of Human Dignity. Every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported from conception until the end of their natural life on earth. Human Dignity is about ensuring that there is nothing which prevents an individual from growing and flourishing in all aspects of their being and recognising and speaking out and acting when this is not so.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM

Definition

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for procedures which include the removal of part / all external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is not required by any major religion and is medically unnecessary, painful and has serious health consequences at the time it is carried out and in later life.
- The procedure is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, but is also performed on new born infants and on young women before marriage / pregnancy. A number of girls die as a direct result of the procedure, from blood loss or infection.
- Girls may be circumcised or genitally mutilated illegally by doctors or traditional health workers in the UK, or sent abroad for the operation.

FGM is known by several names including "cutting", "female circumcision" or "initiation". The term female circumcision suggests that the practice is similar to male circumcision, but it bears no resemblance to male circumcision, has serious health consequences and no medical benefits.

FGM is also linked to domestic abuse, particularly in relation to "honour-based abuse".

Law

- Female circumcision, excision or infibulation (female genital mutilation) is illegal in this country by the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. FGM mandatory reporting duty for teachers Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases may

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

It is an offence to:

- Undertake the operation
- Assist a girl to mutilate her own genitalia
- Assist a non-UK person to undertake FGM of a UK national outside UK (except in specific physical or mental health grounds)
- Assist a UK national or permanent UK resident to undertake FGM of a UK national outside the UK (except in specific physical or mental health grounds)

Recognition

Painsley Catholic College staff should be aware of the following indicators and report any suspicions to the Safeguarding Team:

1. Any medical provision for a pregnant woman who has herself been the subject of female genital mutilation provides the opportunity for recognition of risk and preventative work with parents.

2. A student may be considered at risk if it is known older girls in the family have been subject to the procedure. Pre-pubescent girls 7 to 10 are at highest risk, though the practice has been reported amongst babies and young adults.

3. Suspicions may arise if a family is known to belong to a community in which FGM is practiced and is making preparations for the student to take a holiday, arranging vaccinations or planning college absence and the student may refer to a 'special procedure' taking place.

Indications that FGM may have already occurred include:

- Prolonged college absence with noticeable behaviour change on return
- Bladder and menstrual problems
- Reluctance to receive medical attention or participate in practical activities

Teachers **must and will** 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 will 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 will follow local safeguarding procedures.

Response Procedure

If any member of staff has any concern that a child may undergo or has undergone an FGM procedure they will follow the schools safeguarding procedures by reporting the concern through the MyConcern portal and speak to a member of the safeguarding team face to face. This will be followed through by the safeguarding team in supporting the member of staff to report the concern through the relevant channels of mandatory reporting to the police and contact first response to ensure all children in the family are safeguarded.
If a student makes a disclosure that the procedure has taken place or is going to take place staff will follow the step by step guide to dealing with a disclosure (see appendix A).

Guidance Document:

Multi Agency Statutory guidance on Female Genital Mutilation

Further guidance to be found on Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation: procedural information

Other honour based abuse

Forced Marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. 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 or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived culture practices as a way to coerce a person into marriage. All schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

There are some significant differences between the referral of a concern about a young person being forced into marriage and other child protection referrals. Professionals must be aware that sharing information with a young person's parents,

extended family or members of their community, could put the young person in a situation of significant risk. Any disclosure that indicates a young person may be facing a forced marriage must be taken seriously by professionals who should also realise that this could be 'one chance to save a life. A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. In cases of vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent to marriage, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced.

If any member of staff has any concern that a child may be being forced into marriage then they will follow the schools safeguarding procedures by reporting the concern through the MyConcern portal and speak to a member of the safeguarding team face to face. This will be followed through by the safeguarding team in collaboration with the first response team.

If a student makes a disclosure that the procedure has taken place or is going to take place staff will follow the step by step guide to dealing with a disclosure (see appendix A).

Guidance Document:

- Forced Marriage

Appendix A

Step by Step Guide to deal with a disclosure

- Talk to the student in a confidential quiet place. If a student starts to disclosure with other students around try to encourage them to come away from the crowd. If they feel more comfortable with a friend and they ask for them to be present then allow this to happen.

- If appropriate have another member of staff present. This may be useful as while you are engaged with the student the other member of staff could be making notes (if possible try not to make this obvious).

- Do not promise confidentiality at any point - as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example with the designated safeguarding lead or deputy safeguarding lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps. Please don't stop a student to say that you will need to pass this information on. All students will be reminded that with any disclosure the safeguarding team may have to be informed.

- Listen closely to the disclosure the student is making. Don't be judgmental. Don't ask leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – Use TED, tell me, explain to me, describe to me.

- Try to persuade the student that it would be a good idea to share the information disclosed with a member of the safeguarding team. If they say they don't want this to happen, then explain to them that you have a duty of care to them and this is something that the safeguarding team needs to be informed of. At this point you could remind them that they were reminded of this at the beginning of the year.

- When making a record of the disclosure wait until the end of the disclosure and immediately write up a thorough summary and log it on My Concern (our child protection recording system) as well as speaking to the DSL or DDSL face to face. This allows you to devote your full attention to the student and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the disclosure (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes during any disclosure be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the student.

- When writing up the disclosure try to complete the write up in the format:
  Teacher: comments
  Student: comments
  Make sure to only record the facts as the student presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. Be aware that notes of such disclosures could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation.

- Only share the disclosure / report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it.

- Inform the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as soon as practically possible.

- Follow up with the designated safeguard lead (or deputy) if they have not feed back to you, as soon as you feel necessary. No later than the end of the following day.

- If the disclosure is for FGM then the DSL will support you in reporting this to the police and social care.

Reporting of disclosures by the safeguarding team.

Important considerations will include:

- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviours
- The ages of the children involved;
- The developmental stages of the children involved; • Are there ongoing risks to the victim or other children,
- Other related issues and wider context.

Safeguarding team options depending on the individual situation (this list is not exhaustive and may feature a more specialised response or organisation).

- Contact the police
- Contact first response
- Complete a risk factor matrix
- Complete a referral to catch 22
- Complete a referral to the school counsellor
- Complete a referral to CAMHS
- Referral to the 0-19 school nurse service
- Referral to the NSPCC