

FGM Teacher Guide

1. Context of the lesson

'Keeping Safe, including FGM' is an additional lesson that is designed to fit into the CWP Year 6 RSE scheme of work and could be taught after Lesson 1. The content of the lesson builds on prior learning in the RSE curriculum, such as body parts, puberty changes, appropriate and inappropriate touch and positive relationships. The first lesson in the Year 6 scheme – which precedes the FGM lesson – ensures that pupils have a good understanding of body parts, including the female genitalia, and know how these parts are affected by puberty changes i.e. what it is 'normal' or usual to expect. This foundation is necessary to explain FGM and RSE group agreements are needed, as always, to ensure confidentiality and a 'depersonalised' approach.

FGM is a deeply rooted tradition, widely practiced among specific ethnic populations in Africa (in 28 out of 43 African countries), in the Middle East and Asia and in the African diaspora. It is not a religious practice; it is a cultural practice, although some of the communities in which it is practised may be Muslim, Christian or Catholic, they may also be tribal communities.

2. Whole School Approach - an issue of safeguarding

FGM is a sensitive subject and a potentially challenging issue to deal with because of the shocking nature of the practice. CWP strongly recommends that the FGM lesson forms part of a whole school approach to tackling this crucial safeguarding issue, rather than delivering a one-off lesson. This approach could include FGM awareness training for all staff, governor training, specific training for teachers delivering the curriculum and the incorporation of FGM into school safeguarding procedures. FGM can be referenced in policies concerning RSE, safeguarding and attendance. Schools can also consider inviting parents in to discuss FGM and the law – so that rights and responsibilities are understood. This could form part of a health workshop day or a safeguarding event and could link to other work the school is doing with the parent community.

3. Curriculum Guidance for teaching about FGM

The CWP lesson on FGM is supported by guidance in the PSHE Association's Programme of Study 2019. The DfE has funded and endorsed this programme, suggesting schools use it to help plan their PSHE programmes.

The PSHE Association recommends that FGM should be addressed through PSHE as a means of prevention and to empower young people to speak out about it.

At KS2 Pupils should have the opportunity to learn:

'About taking care of their body, understanding that they have autonomy and the right to protect their body from appropriate and unwanted contact; understanding that actions such as female genital mutilation (FGM) constitute abuse, are a crime and how to get support if they fear for themselves or their peers'

PSHE Association Programme of Study Core Theme

Also:

'to understand that everyone has human rights and that children have their own special rights set out in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child'

'to know that there are some cultural practices which are against British law and universal human rights, such as female genital mutilation'. **PSHE Association Programme of Study Core Theme**

Lessons on FGM can therefore fit into an PSHE scheme of work, but also into work on human rights or global citizenship. Lessons can link to other work schools may be doing via classes or assemblies, for example on human rights, body awareness (the NSPCC PANTS campaign), personal space, personal safety and safeguarding.

4. Guidance for Lesson Delivery

To avoid the children thinking FGM can happen to anyone it is important to reinforce that it is not universally practiced and that it only happens in certain countries and communities who have moved to the UK from those countries. However it is inadvisable to list those countries or become involved in discussions about different cultural and religious practices.

When delivering the lesson take a measured, factual approach and avoid alarmist or stigmatising language, consider using words for the practice such as 'harmful' or 'painful' rather than emotional words such as 'barbaric'. A useful rule of thumb is to deliver the lesson as if there were someone in the class who has experienced FGM. At the same time it is important to communicate the severity of FGM so that children understand the risks and that cutting or harming someone's body is not ok and is not legal. For pupils to understand what FGM is, the word *mutilation* needs to be explained and in an age appropriate way. (See lesson plan).

5. Scenarios Activity

The scenarios activity in the FGM lesson are intended to promote discussion and awareness about possible risk factors. Schools are advised to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM and to be aware of the potential indicators or risk factors. While an individual indicator may not signal a risk - two or more indicators could (see Section 6. below).

In the CWP scenarios, where a child is concerned that a friend may be about to undergo or has undergone FGM, teachers can discuss the following options:

- The friend can talk to the girl and listen to her, ask her what's wrong
- Reassure her – tell her she's not alone, there are people who can help, advise and protect her
- Tell her that FGM is illegal and so there is protection against it happening
- Tell her you will need to tell an adult who can help. There are people at school and organisations (e.g. NSPCC & FORWARD) who can help
- Tell a trusted adult - preferably someone at school, who will be able to help protect her
- Ring ChildLine, (0800 1111) which now has a dedicated FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550.

If a teacher thinks there is a significant risk they should follow the school's safeguarding policy immediately.

6. Identifying Risk Factors

The majority of FGM cases are thought to take place between the ages of 5 & 8. A girl may be at risk of FGM if:

- A girl or family talk about a special celebration/procedure/a ritual about becoming a woman
- A girl is taken on a long holiday to a country where FGM is practised
- A girl is from a community whose country of origin practise FGM
- A girl's sister or other relatives have undergone FGM
- An elderly relative is visiting

FGM may have taken place if:

- A girl's behaviour changes – she may become anxious, depressed, emotionally withdrawn, and may be experiencing shock or trauma.
- There may be a decline in academic performance
- A girl may have difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- A girl may spend longer than usual in the toilet because of difficulties with urinating and menstruating
- There are prolonged or repeated absences from school
- A girl confides in a teacher or friend.