



KIRPAAN POLICY

This policy is applicable to our schools; Khalsa Secondary Academy (KSA), ATAM, The British Sikh School (TBSS) and any further schools we open.

Date Approved: Dec 2016
Next Review: Dec 2020

Purpose

The purpose of this document is set a policy for the Sikh tradition of carrying the Kirpaan, a sword, by pupils/staff in the school.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure religious tolerance and harmony within the school serving primarily the Sikh community but also diverse religious and ethnic communities.
- Encourage and value pupils/staff' religious and cultural practices.
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all pupils/staff.

Preface

Sikh children, of all ages, have been wearing Kirpaans in UK schools for decades. It simply hasn't been an issue until recently. The current climate is due to heightened security concerns post-9/11 as well as increasingly stringent health and safety concerns, all the more rigorous due to the prevailing litigious culture i.e. everyone wants to sue everyone. However despite the prevailing climate, Khalsa Academies trust is to be informed by Khalsa principles. This was the very spirit behind its inception.

It is well worth remembering that Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji's (10th Sikh Guru) own children, who were of primary school age gave their lives when asked to compromise their beliefs and principles - no wonder that adherence to Khalsa Rehit (discipline/conduct) is of paramount importance for the Khalsa. As per the directive of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji, via his physical representatives the Panj Piyarae (Five Beloveds), the Khalsa (Brotherhood of The Pure) is told when blessed with Amrit (Immortal Nectar) that they are never to part with their Panj Kakaars (Five K's); that these Kakaars are gifts from Guru Ji. This is why the Khalsa does not even part with their Kakars whilst bathing, sleeping, etc. such is their acceptance of Guru Ji's directives. Furthermore, it goes without saying that the Kirpaan cannot be 'temporarily replaced' by a bogus plastic or wooden 'replica'. To do so would be to make a mockery of Guru Ji's Hukams (orders).

The Panj Kakaars (Five K's) are: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (comb), Kara (iron wristband), Kaccha (short trousers or underpants) and Kirpan (sword). Each Kakar is an integral part of the Sikh cultural, ethnic, spiritual and religious way of life and not just a symbol but a practical tool used in the everyday life of a Sikh:-

- **Kesh** signifies spiritual strength, power, humility and an acceptance of God's will.
- **Kangha** signifies cleanliness and a well-ordered life.

- **Kara** signifies strength, unity and equality and is worn by all Sikhs (Baptised or not).
- **Kachhera** signifies high moral character and modesty.
- **Kirpaan** signifies respect, justice and authority; it is a reminder that Sikhs are Saint Soldiers. However, the Kirpaan is never used for offensive purposes. The Kirpaan is a sacred instrument of Sikh life, and is treated and used with great spiritual care.

Sikhs who have been initiated into the Khalsa by receiving Amrit are expected to wear the Five K's at all times. During the Amrit initiation (baptismal) ceremony the Khanda, a double-edged sword, is used to stir the Amrit, which is drunk and sprinkled on the hair and eyes.

A high level of loyalty and sacrifice for Sikhism is demanded from those wearing the Five K's. Self-discipline is considered to be of the utmost importance and a member of the Khalsa is expected to observe a strict code of conduct.

It is not generally considered appropriate to wear one of the Five K's without wearing the other four (apart from the Kara).

However, it is understandable that KAT is not able to knowingly allow the occurrence of what could be perceived by others as a 'hazardous scenario' and which could lead to the injury of those who wear Kirpaans, their fellow pupils or members of staff whatever the actual level of risk.

Policy

- There should be no objection to the practice of wearing the Five K's, including the Kirpaan.
- Members of the school community – pupils, parents, staff and governors – should be aware of the significance of the Five K's.
- Parents should be informed of the school's policy and guidelines on the wearing of religious symbols; information should be included in the school brochure.
- Parents or religious leaders should be asked to authorise the wearing of the Kirpaan by confirming that a young person has been initiated into the Khalsa by receiving Amrit and are therefore expected to wear the Five K's at all times.
- Pupils/staff generally wear small kirpans (for example a common small size kirpan will have a blade around 3 inches long; the Kirpaan should always be sheathed and worn out of sight.
- The Kirpaan should never be unsheathed and should never be used as a weapon to threaten others. In either case the Kirpaan would constitute an offensive weapon within the law. Pupils would be subject to a school's disciplinary procedures; this might include police involvement.

- School staff will expect to remove the Kirpaan from any student not wearing all Five K's and to contact the student's parents at the earliest opportunity to discuss the situation with them.
- If a pupil wearing any Kakars is involved in a situation where it is felt they are compromising the safety and wellbeing of anyone else, or is very likely to do so, staff are to immediately request that they leave the classroom and accompany them to the head teacher's office where appropriate action will be decided and taken.
- During PE, sports, other physical activities pupils will be expected to wear a sweatband over the Kara. The Kirpaan, which should be under clothing, should be carried in a secure cushioned pocket/pouch so that it protects its wearer and others, is not visible, and other children have no access to it.
- Parents of Kirpaan wearing pupils will need to sign a disclaimer which waives their right to make any claims against the school, its staff or pupils should anything happen as a result of them carrying a Kirpaan.

It cannot be stressed enough that to resort to the forced removal of Kirpaans or any Kakars for no good reason, from young Khalsa pupils would not only be highly inadvisable, but it would be completely against the wishes of their faith and would be perceived as an act of extreme disrespect, whereas, the above policy would enable young Khalsa to fulfil their obligations to their faith, whilst also allowing the school to have assessed and managed any perceived risks. Incidentally, to the best of our knowledge, there have never been any cases of school-going Sikh children who wear Kirpaans hurting themselves or others in the UK and for that matter worldwide. If anything, any perceived risk has actually decreased given that less children are blessed with Amrit nowadays than previously i.e. less Kirpaan-wearing pupils in schools.

Related issues

- Pupils should be allowed to wear the standard sized Kara; it should not be regarded as an item of jewellery. The thick Kara, with or without beads, should not be allowed because of the danger of accidental harm to the wearer or others.
- Pupils with long hair should be allowed to wear a Dastar (Turban) and/or Patka (a square piece of material used to contain the hair) to match the school uniform.
- Pupils may remove the Dastar (Turban) during Games of PE if they wish, but should not be expected to do so. Parents should ensure that the child wears a Patka underneath and is able to retie the Turban independently.
- Home\school liaison may be appropriate in order to achieve mutual understanding and gain parental confidence.

This policy will be reviewed in 2017 or sooner if appropriate.