



KIRPAN POLICY

**Approved by
Full Trustees Meeting
12 December 2024**

Date approved:	12 December 2024
Date of next review:	

KIRPAN Policy

1. Trust Statement

The Four Cs MAT considers the safeguarding of pupils / students in all of our schools as the highest priority in our organisation. The Trust is committed to ensuring that everyone working in our schools understands their safeguarding responsibilities.

Furthermore, as part of our focus on diversity and inclusion, The Trust pledges that our policies will seek to promote equality, fairness, and respect for all staff and pupils / students. Our policies reflect the Trust values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience, and excellence. By working closely with a range of stakeholders, such as our schools, union, and HR colleagues, we have ensured that the Trust policies do not unlawfully discriminate against anybody.

This policy has been implemented following consultation with a range of stakeholders, including faith leaders, and will be reviewed in line with other policies, or more frequently if required, to reflect changes in local and national guidance.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide information for all stakeholders within the Trust regarding the wearing of the Kirpan by Sikhs. This advice applies to teachers, members of staff and pupils / students who have gone through the Amrit ceremony (ie who have been initiated into the Khalsa).

3. Aims

The guidance also aims to:

- Ensure religious tolerance and harmony within schools serving diverse religious and ethnic communities
- Encourage and value pupils / students' religious and cultural practices
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all pupils / students.

4. Background

Guru Gobind Singh, the founder of the Khalsa (community of Sikhs), instructed its members to wear five special signs to show that they were Sikhs.

4.1 Known as the five Ks these signs are:

Kesh (uncut hair)

Kangha (comb)

Kara (steel wristband)

Kaccha (short trousers or underpants) and

Kirpan (sword)

4.2 Some Sikhs regard the Keski (Turban) as being one of Ks. Each sign has a particular significance. Kesh is a symbol of spiritual strength and power and an acceptance of 'good will'. Kangha is a symbol of cleanliness and of a well-ordered life. Kara is a symbol of

strength, unity, equality and justice and is worn by any child of a Sikh family. Kaccha is a symbol of high moral character, modesty and sexual morality. Kirpan is a symbol of respect, justice and authority; it is a reminder that Sikhs are warriors. However, the Kirpan is never used for offensive purposes.

- 4.3 A high level of loyalty and sacrifice for Sikhism is demanded from those wearing the five Ks. Self-discipline is 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 Ks without wearing the other four.

5. Introduction

The Kirpan is a small dagger that is one of the Panj Kakaar, often referred to as the 'Five Ks' of Sikhism, that must be worn by all initiated Sikhs at all times. These are articles of faith that collectively form the external identity and devotion of an initiated Sikh to the Sikh way of life.

- 5.1 The Kirpan is not a weapon in the normal sense of the word and has no equivalence in the English language. Its concept, wearing and use within the Sikh religion as an article of faith is unique and original.
- 5.2 For a Khalsa Sikh, the wearing of a Kirpan is a spiritual and sacred tradition, standing as a perpetual reminder of the courage and compassion of the Sikh Gurus and their love for all humanity.
- 5.3 The Offensive Weapons Act 1996 states that a person who has an offensive weapon (such as a dagger) with them on a school premises is guilty of an offence, unless they have lawful authority for having the article upon their person. The legislation goes on to state that religious reasons would constitute a defence in this regard.
- 5.4 Keeping Children Safe in Education and relevant Health and Safety legislation make clear that schools must be safe environments where all reasonable measures are taken to ensure those present do not come to harm. Alongside this, the Trust values are fundamental to how the Trust operates. It is our commitment to make sure that the value of Inclusion is at the forefront of all we do, with particular consideration of our obligations under the [Equality Act](#).
- 5.5 In implementing this Kirpan Policy, the Trust aims to guide our schools in balancing the rights of individuals with the best interests of school communities as a whole.
- 5.6 The following links are to relevant guidance and Trust policies which may provide further information:
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#)
 - [Equality Act 2010](#)
 - [Offensive Weapons Act 1996](#)
 - [DFE Non-Statutory Guidance on School Uniforms – June 2023](#)
 - [Trust Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
 - [Trust Equality and Duty Statement](#)
 - [Trust Equality and Duty Statement Report](#)

6. Guidance for Trust schools on individuals wearing the Five Ks

- 6.1 a) In general terms, it is advisable for uniform policies to acknowledge that schools will consider requests that reasonable adjustments are made to normal school uniform policy on the grounds of any protected characteristic, including those related to religious beliefs. These requests should be considered on a case-by-case basis taking

into account all relevant guidance and legislation. Students should not wear uniform outside of the normal policy prior to any request being made and considered.

- b) Information about the school's uniform policy should be accessible for all stakeholders.
- c) There should be no objection to the practice of Khalsa Sikh pupils / students wearing the Five Ks, including the Kirpan.
- d) Schools should seek confirmation from parents / carers or religious leaders that a pupil / student wishing to wear a Kirpan has been through the Amrit ceremony of initiation, and is therefore authorised and expected to wear the Five Ks.
- e) The Kirpan should not be more than six inches in length, including both blade and handle, and should always be sheathed and worn out of sight under clothing. It should be carried in a securely fastened cushioned pouch, to the satisfaction of the school, to protect both the wearer and others.
- f) It may be that the individual Khalsa pupil / student considers it acceptable to wear a smaller and more symbolic Kirpan.
- g) The Kirpan should never be unsheathed and should never be used as a weapon to threaten others. In either case, the Kirpan would constitute an offensive weapon within the law and the incident should be dealt with in line with the school's Behaviour Policy, which may include police involvement.
- h) If a Khalsa pupil / student is not wearing all of the Five Ks, the Kirpan should be removed from them and parents / carers contacted to discuss the situation with them.
- i) During physical activities, the school should risk assess the nature of the activity to determine whether it is safe for a Khalsa pupil / student to wear their Kirpan. Where a risk assessment shows it to be unsafe, this should be discussed with the pupil / student and parents / carers so that an appropriate alternative arrangement can be made.
- j) Schools will liaise with parents / carers to ensure that they are aware of the implications of their child wearing a Kirpan in school and that they waive the right to make any claims against the school, its staff, pupils / students or governors as a result of any injuries that occur as a result.
- k) The Headteacher reserves the discretion to remove the Kirpan from the pupil / student in the event that any situation arises that poses a safety risk to any member of the school community.
- l) Pupils / students should be allowed to wear a standard sized Kara. Where uniform policies prohibit the wearing of jewellery, it is important to remember that the Kara is a sacred religious article, not a bracelet.
- m) During physical activities, Sikh pupils / students will be expected to cover their Kara (eg with a sweatband around their wrist) in order to minimise any Health and Safety risks to themselves or others.
- n) Pupils / students should be allowed to wear a Turban or a Patka (a square piece of material used to contain the hair).
- o) Pupils / students may remove their Turban during physical activities if they wish to do so, but this should not be an expectation. Parents / carers should ensure that their child is able to retie their Turban independently.

- p) It is always advisable for schools to work in proactive partnership with families in order to achieve mutual understanding and promote parental confidence.
- q) It is advisable for schools to consider raising awareness of Sikhism and the Five Ks through their curriculum, as part of the Trust ethos of promoting inclusion, diversity, equality and religious and cultural harmony.

7. **Other source of information and further reading**

- What is the Kirpan School uniform GOV.UK (pdf)
- Network of Sikh Organisations
- Sikh pupils / students: wearing of the Kirpan
- Equality Act 2010

8. **Monitoring and Review**

The Trust will review this policy in line with the procedure for policy review.

8.1 Date for Review

If no other reason for review (see policy review procedure) this policy will be reviewed in 3 years.