



**Service Excellence Virtues Aspirations**

# **Kirpan Policy**

## **2019-20**

Policy last Reviewed	27 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
Reviewed by	Senior Leadership Team
Agreed by Governors	Governors / Trustees
Shared with staff	Annually
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## **1.Introduction**

This policy is intended to provide advice to students and staff regarding the wearing of the Kirpan. In view of the fact that a number of Sikh students/staff have gone through the Amrit ceremony and are required to wear the "5 Ks", including the Kirpan, this policy has been created, based on guidelines issued by DfES.

## **2.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' religious and cultural practices.
- Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

## **3.Preface**

Sikh children, of all ages, have been wearing the Kirpan in UK schools for decades. 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 considered appropriate to wear one of the Five K's without wearing the other four (apart from the Kara).

The Kirpan 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).

## **4. The Five K's**

The Panj Kakaars (Five K's) are as detailed below:

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

However, it is understandable that Seva School 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 Kirpans, their fellow pupils or members of staff whatever the actual level of risk.

## 5. School Policy

- School staff should be aware that the wearing of the Five K's at all times is of utmost importance and sensitivity for initiated Sikhs, and is the subject vows made during the Amrit ceremony. There should be no objection to the practice of wearing the Five K's, including the Kirpan.
- It is essential for an initiated Sikh to keep his/her vows and this commitment, which is not entered into lightly or easily, should be respected by the school community.
- The school has to balance responsibilities of ensuring the health and safety of persons using the school premises, with the religious requirements of practising Sikhs.
- The school will allow the Kirpan to be worn, subject to the following conditions:
  - I. That it is restricted to students/staff who have gone through the Amrit ceremony.
  - II. That the Kirpan is no more than 6 inches long including the handle, will be sheathed and restrained with a cord, to the satisfaction of the school, in such a way as to ensure that it will be incapable of withdrawal
  - III. That the Kirpan will be worn under clothing and will not be visible, to provide the highest possible safety at all times.
  - IV. That, on no account, will the Kirpan be drawn while the young person/staff members is on school premises whilst on a school trip or on school transport or involved in other school activities.
  - V. That the student or parent/carer, will be required to sign a declaration indicating that they are aware of the implications of the young person wearing the Kirpan in school, and in particular,

during physical education activities, and that they waive any claims against the school or anyone working for the school.

VI. If any of the above conditions have not been observed during the school day or whilst on a school activity the Head of School has the discretion to exclude the student from a particular activity if they believe that the student or others may be at risk of injury. In the event of serious or persistent breaches by the student, the Head of School can refuse permission for the student concerned to continue to wear the Kirpan at school or whilst attending any school activity.

- Parents of pupils who wear the Kirpan 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 Kirpan. Pupils would be subject to a school's disciplinary procedures; this might include police involvement.

## **6. 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.

**Parent / Carer – SEVA School KIRPAN Disclaimer**

I hereby accept full responsibility for my child to carry their Kirpan whilst attending school and outside related activities. I understand the following:

- My child has undertaken the FULL AMRIT Ceremony
- The Kirpan is no longer than 6 inches including the handle, will be sheathed at all times and will be restrained with a cord in such a way that it will be incapable of withdrawal.
- The Kirpan will be worn under clothing and not to be visible to other students.

*In the event of my child using their Kirpan unlawfully whilst on school premises or at any school related activity; causing risk, injury or even death, the Head of School will notify the local Authority and the local Police who will deal with the situation according to UK Law.*

*I confirm that I will waive any claim against the school or any member of staff representing the school.*

Name of parent/carers (print).....

Signed (parent/carers).....

Full name of pupil.....

Signed (pupil).....

Date.....