



The Kirpan Policy

Document control	
Date for Review	January 2026
Authorised By	Trust Board
Published Location	Trust Website
Document Owner	Trust Faith Lead

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to One Multi Academies Trust (ONE Mat) and its academies regarding the wearing of the Kirpan by Amritdhari Sikhs. This advice applies to teachers, members of staff and pupils who have gone through the Amrit ceremony (i.e. who have been initiated into the Khalsa) or those who are practising to take Amrit.

Aims

The policy also aims to:

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

Background

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the founder of the Khalsa Panth (community of Sikhs), instructed his congregation to wear five articles of faith to demonstrate their commitment.

These are known as the five Ks and these signs are:

- Kesh (uncut hair),
- Kangha (comb),
- Kara (steel/iron bangle),
- Kachhera (short trousers or under garments) and
- Kirpan (small sword).

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 or adult of a Sikh family.
- Kachhera 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.

What is a Kirpan?

The Kirpan is a curved, single-edged blade (ceremonial small sword). It is worn over the body in conjunction with a 'gatra', a strap made of cloth. The word kirpan is comprised of two connotations – 'kirpa' which refers to 'mercy' and

'aan' which refers to 'grace'. The kirpan represents a commitment to stand for truth and to protect the weak from tyranny. However, the kirpan is not to be used as an offensive weapon.

Millions of Amritdhari Sikhs throughout the world wear the kirpan. It is used in Gurdwaras (place of worship) for ceremonial purposes, and to stir and bless food that is given to the congregation. However, the Kirpan is never used for offensive purposes. A high level of loyalty and sacrifice for Sikhi 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 the Kirpan as one of the five Ks without wearing the other four.

ONE Mat academies need to be aware of the significance and importance of these signs of an amritdhari Sikh. At the same time, issues relating to the wearing of the Kirpan may need to be addressed.

Kirpans in the UK

Although there is no legally prescribed size in the UK, section 139(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 allows the wearing of the kirpan for religious reasons. The government clarified the legality of wearing the kirpan in the UK through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019. The legislation reaffirms the right of the Sikh community to possess and supply kirpans. Section 47 of the Act provides new defences for some articles such as the kirpan and 'katar' (Sikh ceremonial weapon) to enable possession in private for religious reasons and to enable them to be presented.

Sikh staff and pupils who are initiated as amritdhari Sikhs wear the kirpan as part of the Five Ks. However, in line ONE Mat policy, all Sikh staff and pupils who wear the kirpan, are expected to wear the kirpan underneath their clothing, so that it is not accessible to anyone. This mitigates any risk and ensures that the amritdhari Sikh can observe the tenets of their faith without overtly displaying the kirpan.

Policy

The Offensive Weapons Act creates the offence of having an article with a blade or point (or offensive weapon) on school premises. A person has a defence if the article in question is worn for religious reasons.

- 1) There should be no objection if students are practising wearing all the Five Ks before taking Amrit. They will only be allowed to wear the kirpan if all Five Ks are being worn.
- 2) Members of the academy community – pupils, parents, staff, LAB members and Trustees – should be aware of the significance of the Five Ks.
- 3) Members of ONE Mat academies staff should be informed of the policy and guidelines on the wearing of religious articles including the Kirpan, where appropriate.
- 4) Parents or religious leaders should be asked to authorise the wearing of the Kirpan by confirming that a young person has been through the Amrit ceremony of initiation or is practising to take Amrit, and is always therefore expected to wear all Five Ks.
- 5) Under health and safety legislation ONE Mat academies will need to be able to satisfy themselves that the wearing of the Kirpan does not present any health and safety risks. The Kirpan should not be more than 6 inches in length (including both blade and handle) and the blade should not exceed 3 inches in length; the Kirpan should always be sheathed and worn out of sight.
- 6) 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. Pupils would be subject to a school's disciplinary procedures; and could include police involvement.
- 7) During PE, sports, other physical activities pupils will be expected to wear a sweatband over the Kara and the Kirpan, which should be under worn under clothing.

It cannot be stressed enough that to resort to the forced removal of the Kirpan or any Kakar without a valid reason, from any young Khalsa pupil, 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. The above policy would enable a young Khalsa to fulfil their obligations to their faith, whilst also allowing the academies to have assessed and managed any perceived risks.

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. During PE, a sweatband should be worn over the kara at all times.

- 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 uniform policy.
- 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 re-tie the Dastar independently.
- Home/academy liaison may be appropriate in order to achieve mutual understanding and gain parental confidence.

Policy Review Statement:

This policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with the Trust's strategic objectives, regulatory requirements, and best practices. The review process will be conducted as follows:

- **Policy Owner Review**
The Policy Owner will conduct an initial review to assess any necessary updates or amendments.
- **Executive Team Policy Committee**
The revised policy will be presented to the Executive Team Policy Committee for further evaluation and recommendations.
- **Trust Board Approval**
Following review and necessary revisions, the policy will be submitted for formal approval by the Trust Board in accordance with the scheduled review cycle.

For details on the specific review schedule, please refer to the review table on the front page.