



KIRPAN POLICY

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1. Trust Policy Statement

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) considers the safeguarding of pupils 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, BDAT pledges that our policies will seek to promote equality, fairness, and respect for all staff and pupils. Our policies reflect the BDAT values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience, and excellence. By working closely with a range of stakeholders, such as our school, union, and HR colleagues, we have ensured that BDAT's policies do not unlawfully discriminate against anybody.

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

For the purpose of this policy, the term Trust refers to BDAT. The term school and the term academy are interchangeable. The term pupil and the term student are interchangeable.

2. Introduction

The Kirpan is like a small sword that is one of the Panj Kakaar, often referred to as the '5 Ks' of the Sikh Faith, that must be always worn by all initiated Sikhs. These are articles of faith that collectively form the external identity and devotion of an initiated Sikh to the Sikh way of life.

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.

[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 BDAT ICARE (Inclusion, Compassion, Aspiration, Resilience, Excellence) values are fundamental to the 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](#).

In implementing this Kirpan Policy, BDAT aims to guide our schools in balancing the rights of individuals with the best interests of school communities as a whole.

The following links are to relevant guidance and BDAT policies which may provide further information:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Offensive Weapons Act 1996](#)
- [DFE Guidance on Developing School Uniform Policy](#)
- [BDAT Equality Statement and Objectives](#)
- [BDAT Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

3. Aims of the Policy

The aims of the BDAT Kirpan Policy are to:

- Ensure religious harmony within all our richly diverse school communities
- Encourage and value the religious and cultural beliefs and practices of all pupils and staff
- Ensure the health, safety and welfare of all stakeholders
- Provide clear and consistent guidance for all BDAT schools to support pupils who are initiated Sikhs with the wearing of the 5 Ks

4. The 5 Ks of the Sikh Faith

In order to understand the guidance within this Kirpan Policy, it is important to understand the context of the 5 Ks of the Sikh Faith.

Khalsa is a Panjabi word meaning 'to be pure' or 'to be liberated' that also refers to Sikhs who have been through the initiation ceremony of Amrit. The Khalsa tradition was initiated in 1699 by the tenth Guru of the Sikh Faith, Guru Gobind Singh, and is marked annually during the festival of Vaisakhi.

Participating in the Amrit ceremony and becoming Khalsa is a hugely significant event in the life of a Sikh, as they are committing to living their life by the Sikh Code of Conduct and always wearing the 5 Ks. These are:

- Kesh, meaning uncut hair, which symbolises respect for the perfection of God's creation.
- Kangha, a small wooden comb which symbolises cleanliness of the mind and body.
- Kara, an iron bracelet that acts as a constant reminder to Sikhs that whatever a person does with their hands has to be in line with Sikh teachings, and to symbolise God as never-ending. The Kara is made of a cheap metal purposely to demonstrate equality and so that no-one can be shown to be more important than anyone else.
- Kachera, typically an undergarment that symbolises self-respect, modesty and high moral character.
- Kirpan, a small sword, that comes from the Panjabi words 'Kirpa' and 'Aan'. Kirpa means mercy, kindness and compassion, whilst Aan means honour, dignity and grace. The Kirpan is never used for offensive purposes and is a sacred instrument of Sikh life.

For an initiated Sikh, it is not considered appropriate to wear one of the 5 Ks without wearing all the others. Everyone across BDAT and our school communities should be aware that the wearing of the 5 Ks is of the utmost importance and sensitivity for Khalsa Sikhs and is a lifelong commitment that is not entered into lightly or easily.

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.

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. Guidance for BDAT Schools on Pupils Wearing the 5 Ks

In line with the BDAT Scheme of Delegation, it is for the Local Governing Body of each school to determine the uniform policy, including the wearing of religious articles. BDAT recommends, however, that governors should consider the following guidance:

- In general terms, it is advisable for uniform policies to acknowledge that school 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 reviewed on a case-by-case basis considering all relevant guidance and legislation. Students should not wear uniform outside of the normal policy prior to any request being made and considered.
- Information about the school's uniform policy should be accessible for all stakeholders.
- There should be no objection to the practice of Khalsa Sikh pupils wearing the 5 Ks, including the Kirpan.
- Schools should seek confirmation from parents that a pupil wishing to wear a Kirpan has been through the Amrit ceremony of initiation and is therefore authorised and expected to wear the 5 Ks.
- The Kirpan should not be more than 9 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.
- 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 and Safeguarding Policies, which may include police involvement.
- If a Khalsa pupil is not wearing all the 5 Ks, the Kirpan should be removed from them and parents contacted to discuss the situation with them.
- During physical activities, school should risk assess the nature of the activity to determine whether it is safe for a Khalsa pupil to wear their Kirpan. Where a risk assessment shows it to be unsafe, this should be discussed with the pupil and parents so that an appropriate alternative arrangement can be made.
- The Headteacher reserves the discretion to isolate a pupil and take appropriate next steps in line with the Behaviour Policy (if required), in the event that any situation arises that poses a safety risk to any member of the school community.
- Pupils 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.
- During physical activities, Sikh pupils will be expected to cover their Kara (e.g. with a sweatband around their wrist) to minimise any Health and Safety risks to themselves or others.
- Pupils should be allowed to wear a Turban or a Patka (a square piece of cloth used to contain the hair).
- Pupils may remove their Turban during physical activities if they wish to do so, but this should not be an expectation. Parents should ensure that their child is able to retie their Turban independently.
- It is always advisable for schools to work in proactive partnership with families to achieve mutual understanding and promote parental confidence.
- It is strongly encouraged that schools raise awareness of the Sikh Faith and the 5 Ks as part of our Trust ethos of promoting inclusion, diversity, equality and religious and cultural harmony.

This can be done with pupils through the curriculum, with staff through the Continuous Professional Development programme, and other stakeholders via their chosen communication channels.