



Cabot
Learning
Federation



Kirpan Guidance Policy

Version 1.0 September 2021
Review Date September 2024

History of most recent Policy changes

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, Change in legislation
September 2021		Version 1	

Introductory Statement

This policy is intended to provide advice to BMA students and staff regarding the wearing of the Kirpan. In view of the fact that a number of BMA Sikh students 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 DfE.

Section 4 of the Offensive Weapons Act 1996 creates the offence of having an article with a blade or point (or offensive weapon) on school premises, etc. Under Section 4, subsection (4), a person has a defence if the article in question is worn for religious reasons or as part of any national costume.

Background

BMA staff should be aware that the wearing of the “5 Ks” at all times is of utmost importance and sensitivity for initiated Sikhs, and is the subject of vows made during the Amrit ceremony.

It is essential for an initiated Sikh to keep their vows, and this commitment, which is not entered into lightly or easily, should be respected by the school community.

BMA has to balance the responsibilities of ensuring the health and safety of persons using the school premises, with the religious requirements of practising Sikhs.

Rules and Procedures

BMA’s preferred option is that a symbolic version of the Kirpan is worn. The symbolic version of the Kirpan should be no more than one and a half inches long, secured and sealed in protective padding or embedded on a Kanga (comb).

The wearing of a symbolic version may be acceptable to a number of learners and students. However, if it is the view of particular students/staff that a symbolic Kirpan does not satisfy their religious requirements, then the school will allow a more traditional 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 sheathed Kirpan will be further enclosed in secured padding and securely sewn up;
- iv. that the Kirpan will be worn under clothing and will not be visible, to provide the highest possible safety at all times;
- v. that, on no account, will the Kirpan be drawn while the young person/staff member is on school premises whilst on a school trip or on school transport or involved in other school activity;

vi. that the student or parent/carer, if the student is under 18 years of age or school carer of a young person, 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 BMA , its servants or agents, and the CLF;

vii. if any of the above conditions have not been observed during the school day or whilst on a school activity, the Principal of BMA has the discretion to exclude the student from a particular activity if he believes that the student or others may be at risk of injury. In the event of serious or persistent breaches of the above conditions by a student, the Principal may refuse permission for the student concerned to wear the Kirpan whilst at school or on any school activity.

In the interest of safety, the schools' reference is that Kirpans are not worn during physical activities or other outdoor activities which is still in accordance with the Sikh 'maryada' (code of conduct) which states that the Kirpan should be worn on the person 'or as close as possible' at all times.

If the Kirpan is removed for any activities whilst in the care of the Academy (physically on site or otherwise), the Kirpan must be given to a member of staff for safe-keeping and collected after the activity is over.

However, if parents/carers of a student under the age of 18 decide that their child should wear the Kirpan during the aforementioned high risk activities (eg PE), then the following additional condition shall apply:

i. that the sheathed and securely padded Kirpan must be worn under the clothing and will not be visible, or carried in a small pocket in clothing being worn, so that it is safe for the wearer, never visible and so that other students have no access to it.

If the Principal considers that these requirements have not been met, they will take appropriate action to ensure the safety of all students which may include restricting the right of the student to participate in particular activities.

These guidelines will be regularly reviewed.