

WEARING OF THE KIRPAN 2010/11

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 in College have gone through the Amrit ceremony (ie initiated into the Khalsahood) and are required to wear the "5 K's", including the Kirpan, this policy has been created, based on guidelines issued by Wolverhampton City Council to schools.

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.

- [a] College staff should be aware that the wearing of the "5 K's" at all times is of utmost importance and sensitivity for initiated Sikhs, and is the subject of vows made during the Amrit ceremony.
- [b] 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 College community.
- [c] The College has to balance the responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of persons using College premises with the religious requirements of practising Sikhs.
- [d] The College'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 comb.
- [e] Paragraph [d] previous may be acceptable to a number of learners and students. However, if it is the view of particular students that paragraph [d] previous does not satisfy their religious requirements, then the College will allow the Kirpan to be worn, subject to the following conditions:
 - i) that it is restricted to students who have gone through the Amrit ceremony and can produce a certificate or some other form of documentation from their Gurdwara Sahib;
 - ii) that the Kirpan, no more than 6 inches long including the handle, will be sheathed and restrained with a cord, to the satisfaction of the College, 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) 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 is on College premises while on a College trip or on College transport or involved in other college activity;
 - vi) that the College student or parent/guardian, if the student is under 18 years of age or College carer of a young person, will be required to sign a declaration indicating that she/he is aware of the implications of the young person wearing the Kirpan in College and, in particular, during physical education activities, and that she/he waives any claims against the College, its servants or agents, and the Governors of the College;
 - vii) if any of the above conditions have not been observed during the college day or whilst on a College activity, the Principal has a discretion to exclude the student from a particular activity if she/he believes that the student or others may be at risk of a physical 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 College or on any College activity;

- [f] In the interest of safety, the College's preference is that Kirpans are not worn during physical activities or other outdoor activities.
- [g] If the Kirpan is removed for any of the activities in paragraph [f] above, the Kirpan must be given to a member of staff for safe-keeping and collected after the activity is over.
- [h] However, if parents of a student under the age of 18 decide that their child should wear the Kirpan during the activities referred to in paragraph [f] above, 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, he or she should take appropriate action to ensure the safety of all students.

These guidelines may be reviewed from time to time, taking into account local circumstances and legislative change.