



Sikh Articles of Faith in School Policy

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Our Vision and Ethos

Nishkam schools are Sikh ethos multi faith schools or faith ethos schools that take a distinctive approach to many traditional faith or faith ethos schools. The Trust's education model is led by virtues such as, compassion, humility, service, contentment, optimism, trust and forgiveness. Virtues are prevalent throughout our teaching and learning model and are modelled by our students, staff and teachers. Our pupils explore the divine context of humanity and wonder of all creation and also learn from the wisdom of all religions and in doing so explore the infinite human potential to do good unconditionally. We support all pupils and staff to develop aspects of their own religious, spiritual or human identities. In service of God, we pray for guidance in this endeavour and forgiveness for the errors we may make.

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance to Nishkam schools regarding the wearing of the **panj kakaars** or five articles of faith (colloquially known as the 5k's) and dastar (turban) by Amritdhari Sikhs initiated in a Khande di Pahul Amrit Sanchar¹ (or those preparing to become initiated as Amritdhari). This guidance applies to teachers, members of staff and students who have been initiated as Amritdhari Sikhs.

Please note terminology used such as 'articles of faith', may risk reducing their significance to 'artefacts', tokens or badges of faith membership. The appendix in this document describes for the Sikh why these are more than a symbolic function and describes a fuller picture of their meanings, virtue and guiding influence in the heart, attitudes and actions of a practicing Sikh.

The guidance is a part of the School ethos and is designed to:

- Encourage and value the religious practices of students and staff whilst ensuring the health and safety, and wellbeing of all students and staff.
- Support the practice of religious understanding and harmony within schools serving diverse religious and ethnic communities.
- Meet the requirements of the law and government guidance on the wearing of the Sikh articles of faith in the workplace and public spaces (such as Equalities legislation, Health and Safety practices and school policies).

2. Guidance in school

Amritdhari Sikhs in school need to follow the specific guidelines given below, as well as displaying a knowledge of the significance of the panj kakaars, and the responsibilities that come with wearing them.

3. Kirpan and Gatra

- The Kirpan should be worn only if your child is an *Amritdhari* (initiated) Sikh.
- The Kirpan should be worn with a *gatra* under the shirt or blouse and not displayed.
- The blade of the Kirpan should be no more than 3 inches long and should always be unsharpened.
- The Kirpan should never be withdrawn from its sheath in school. If withdrawn, the Kirpan will be respectfully removed from your child, and the student will lose his/her place in school. Any such incidences will always be reported to the Chair of Governors and the Trust Lead for Faith.
- In allowing your child to wear a Kirpan, whilst there are no set age restrictions, the maturity of the child in being able to understand the reasons for wearing a Kirpan and being able to undertake the full responsibilities of wearing a Kirpan in school (as above) are key factors.
- For primary aged children a discussion about the wearing of the Kirpan should take place with a senior member

During contact PE/sports activities the school, students have a choice of two options depending on their personal preference:

Choice 1: Pupils can choose to wear a smaller Kirpan in their Kesh connected to their Kanga from home in the morning (can be provided by the student or obtained from the school);



Choice 2: Pupils can choose to wear a school approved Kirpan and gatra purchased directly from the school during PE and sports, with additional protective safety precaution of a (two-part) padded belt pocket.



- a. The padded belt-pocket, and the correct size Kirpan and gatra can be obtained as a set from the school . (Please note, if preferred, this Kirpan and Gatra can also be worn at all other times, without the additional protective belt).
- b. A video of how to use the padded belt pocket for PE can be found [here](#):
- c. Please note that it is your responsibility to support your child using the (two-part) padded belt-pocket, and ensuring that they wear it from home on days when they have PE or sports. If your child forgets to bring/wear their padded belt, he/she will be respectfully asked to kindly remove their Kirpan and will be provided with a small Kirpan to wear in his/her Kanga instead (as pictured above in Choice 1).

a. **Dastaar**

All Keshdari male Sikh students are required to wear the dastaar from year 7 to year 13. This is optional for female students Please start practicing with your child as early as possible and at least by the beginning of the summer break. Please let us know if you require specific support to help your child learn to tie the Dastaar when school starts.

b. **Kara**

One slim **Kara** (steel bracelet) not exceeding 7mm in width, is permitted for Sikh students. During PE, the Kara should be covered at all times with the uniform sweatband. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that a sweat band is provided and brought to PE lessons.

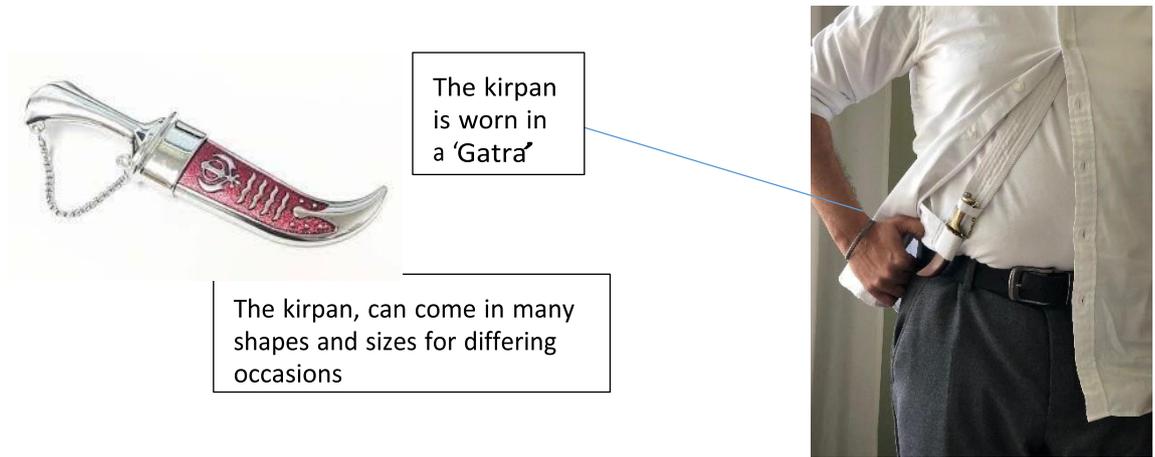


- c. **Kashera** (please see below for definition) should not be asked to be removed by staff.

4. What are the Sikh 'articles of faith'?

The **panj kakaars** and the **dastaar** are for Sikhs, in essence the spiritual 'limbs' of the individual, an extension of one's being. Because the unbreakable oath is made to God, during the **Khande di Pahul Amrit Sanchar** initiation ceremony, it is taken for life. A Sikh separated from any one of the five kakaars and the dastaar will try their utmost to re-acquire them as soon as possible.

- i. **KES:** encouraging the virtues of Wisdom, Saintliness, Sovereignty and Endurance.
Kes is uncut hair maintained by Amritdhari Sikhs (and kept by many Sikhs who have not been formally initiated). For Sikhs the uncut hair affirms a connection with the law of nature as intended by God. Thus the cherishing of this God-given gift becomes an acceptance of the will of God. Through history and across cultures, hair has been associated with wisdom and spirituality; prophets, sages, philosophers and saints have been depicted with natural flowing hair and beards. In some traditions, the shaving of hair was seen as a punishment or a sign of humiliation; in others it indicated spiritual renunciation from the world. In Sikh history, during times of intense religious persecution, the kes became a powerful marker of Sikh identity, commitment, loyalty and endurance.
- ii. **KANGA:** encouraging the virtues of Clarity, Order, Introspection and Detachment.
The kanga is a small wooden comb which an Amritdhari Sikh uses twice daily to comb and keep tidy the hair. The process of detangling the hair encourages one to remove tangles from one's life, promoting clarity, introspection, order and detachment.
- iii. **KARA:** encouraging the virtues of Allegiance to the Guru, Self-awareness, Ethical conduct.
The kara is an iron or steel wristlet worn on the right arm. It is worn universally by those born into the Sikh faith, as well as by Amritdhari Sikhs in particular. The kara signifies a Sikh's allegiance, bond and commitment to the Guru; it is a visible reminder that the Guru has taken the arm of a Sikh to carry him or her through the challenges and pitfalls of life. Like a circle having no beginning or end, the kara reminds us of the same about God. It also serves as a constant reminder to be noble and ethical in one's thoughts and actions.
- iv. **KASHERA:** encouraging the virtues of Self-restraint, Self-respect and Respecting others.
The kashera is a specially designed, non-elasticated undergarment worn by an Amritdhari Sikh, which closes securely with a drawstring and is changed and washed each day. By wearing the kashera a Sikh is taking an honourable vow of respect towards the opposite sex. The vow of fidelity to one's spouse is sacred and Sikhs are prohibited from engaging in sexual relations outside wedlock. Thus the kashera encourages a culture of self-restraint, self-respect and respect for others.
- v. **KIRPAN:** encouraging the virtues of Blessing, Benevolence, Dignity and Courage
A kirpan is one of the five mandatory Sikh articles of faith to be carried by Amritdhari Sikhs. The word "kirpan" comes from two Punjabi words: 'kirpa' means an act of kindness, benevolence; and 'Aan' means honour and self-respect. Because there are no equivalent English words for kirpan, it is mistakenly described as a sword, dagger or knife. Kirpans must be sheathed and worn with a gatra (a strap) underneath clothing.
 - The wearing of the kirpan is a reminder to its bearer of a Sikh's solemn duty to act with, compassion and service to humanity as well as safeguard those who are unable to do this for themselves
 - In congregation and personal settings, in an act of grace, a kirpan is touched to Parshad (holy sweet offering), langar (blessing food prepared in service) before eating.
 - Kirpans also prominently feature ceremoniously in major Sikh events, including religious initiation (Amrit Sanchar), marriage (Anand Karaj), and death (Antim Sanskar).
 - The kirpan is categorically not to be used for aggression and the right to carry the kirpan by an Amritdhari Sikh carries with it the unflinching responsibility of never misusing it.

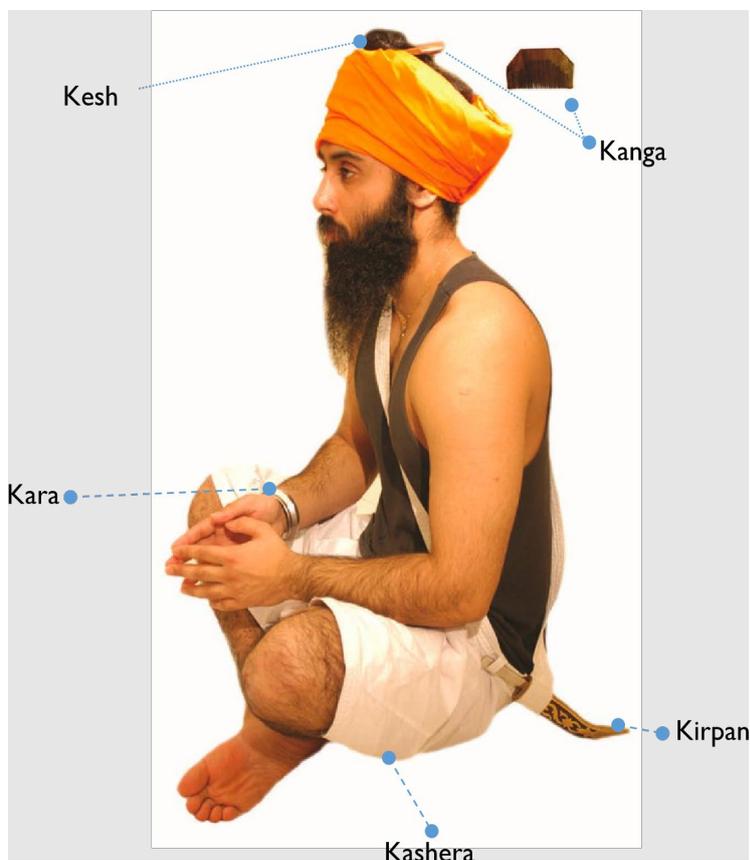


- vi. **DASTAAR** - or turban, signifies Divinity, Holiness, Sovereignty and Wisdom. The dastaar is an integral part of Sikh identity, in addition to the five kakaars. It is worn by Sikh males and some females. It covers, protects and crowns the head – the centre of wisdom in the human frame. It safeguards the uncut hair of a Sikh, which is tied in a topknot underneath. An Amritdhari is required to keep the head covered at all times, (apart from when bathing) as living in the respectful omnipresence of God. Overnight it is often replaced by a smaller Dastaar.

The following would be deeply disrespectful or demeaning to the those wearing the Dastaar:

To ask for it to be removed in public;

- To touch or remove a Sikh's Dastaar
- To ask the wearer to cover the Dastaar by anything else
- To be asked to replace it by a hat or cap



5. Appendix 1: Terms used

1 *Khande di Pahul Amrit Sanchar* – This is the Sikh ceremony of initiation undertaken lasting several hours specifically for those seeking to be initiated and become Amritdhari as a part of the Sikh Khalsa order.

2 *Amritdhari* - This consists of two words- Amrit translates to "immortal nectar" and Dhari means practitioner however commonly it refers to a Sikh who has been initiated (akin to baptism) as a Khalsa after having undergone *Khande di Pahul Amrit Sanchar*. This practice was introduced by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh on 30 March 1699, as a part of the encapsulating how a Sikh should live his or her life.

An Amritdhari is one who abides by the vows of:

- Virtuous conduct and living. At all times it is the Amritdhari's duty to uphold righteousness and to be mindful of exercising compassion, forgiveness and love in daily life.
- The adorning of the panj Kakaars (5 k's) and the Dastaar.
- To rise and bathe in the early hours every morning (normally between 3am and 5am) and recite five set daily morning prayers, evening prayer and prayer before retiring.
- Not to commit the four Kurehats (described below).

Although there is no restriction upon women tying a Dastaar it is more common for males to do so, whilst some women will wear a Chunni (long scarf to cover the head), and some secure on their head a small scarf called a Keski. Before young boys are able to tie their own Dastaar, their hair is kept in a 'topknot' and covered with a scarf called a Patka.

The four *Kurehats* or transgressions: (i) Not to cut hair from any part of the body; (ii) Not to take any intoxicant such as alcohol, tobacco or drugs; (iii) Not to indulge in any pre-marital or extra-marital relationships; (iv) To exercise compassion and, therefore as far as possible, not to kill or eat fish/meat/eggs. Non-compliance renders an Amritdhari Sikh to varying degrees of apostasy.

Any Sikh who breaks the vows taken becomes either a *tankhayia* (literally, a breaker of the vows) or a *patit* (who must again present him/herself for initiation.) Separation from one of the five *kakaars* such as the forced removal of the Kirpan from the body of the individual would automatically group him/her into one of these categories in Sikh religious law. A Sikh will endeavour never to go against the Guru with who s/he has made the vow.

Gatra – The Gatra is the cloth sash or holder for the kirpan. Crossing over one's heart, this sash holds the Kirpan in place. Figuratively, it regulates the wearing of the kirpan, securing it in qualities such *daya*, compassion and mercy; *santokh*, contentment; *jat*, chasteness, loyalty, allegiance, virtuousness, purity, morality and abstinence; and *sat*, truthful sincerity, devoid of hypocrisy.