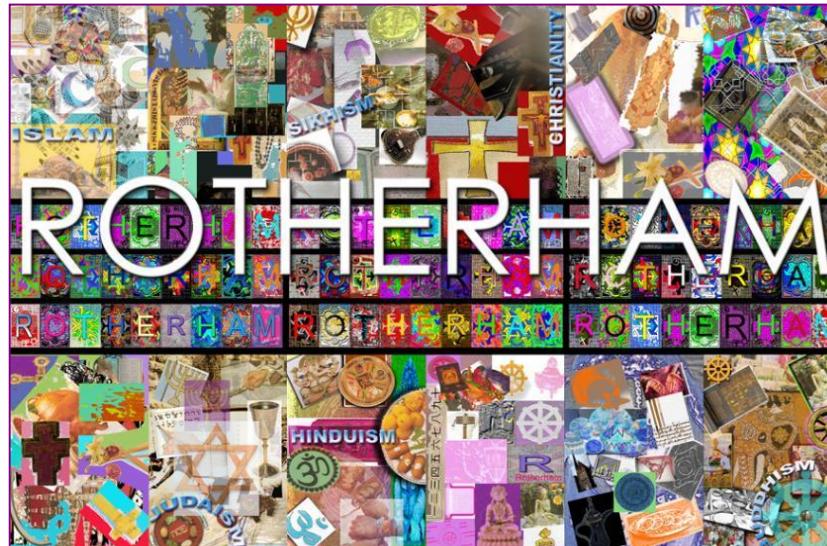


## ROOTHERHAM SACRE'S



## MEETING THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL NEEDS OF LEARNERS GUIDANCE

Sikhism's Five Articles of Faith/Islam's Month of Fasting  
(2019)

## AIMS/PURPOSE

This document provides guidance for all schools across Rotherham on ways in which they may support more appropriately the needs of their learners in observing their religious practices/rituals. It aims to nurture tolerance and harmony, encourage and value learners' religious and cultural diversity and ensure the health and safety and wellbeing of all learners.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance advises that:

*'It is ultimately the responsibility of school governors to develop policies on dress code or the wearing of religious articles'*

# SIKHISM'S FIVE ARTICLES OF FAITH

## Background

Sikhs believe that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru and founder of the Khalsa ordered all initiated Sikhs who have undergone an Amrit ceremony to wear the 5Ks, five special symbols, each with a particular significance. These are:

**Kesh:** means hair. A Sikh should treat their hair as a gift from God. To keep their hair intact is the first and foremost duty of a Sikh. The hair is a symbol of faith, and keeping long hair confirms a Sikh's belief in the acceptance of God's will, and teaches them humility and acceptance.

**Kanga:** means comb. Sikhs wear a small wooden comb in the hair all the time. Apart from its practical use, a comb is clearly a symbol of cleanliness. Just as a comb helps remove the tangles and cleans the hair, similarly a Sikh is reminded to get rid of any bad or evil thoughts by repeating God's name Naam, in their mind.

**Kara:** literally means a link. It is a special steel bracelet which is worn on the right hand wrist. Circular in shape, the kara symbolises there is one God who has no beginning or end.

**Kachha:** is a pair of shorts. This slightly longer type of underwear is symbolic of continence and high moral character.

**Kirpan:** is a sword. Kirpan comes from the word 'kirpa' meaning act of kindness and 'aan' meaning honour and self-respect. All baptised Sikhs should wear a short form of the Kirpan on their body. To call it a dagger or knife is belittling.

A high level of loyalty and sacrifice for Sikhism is demanded from those wearing the 5Ks. Self discipline is considered to be of utmost importance and a member of the Khalsa is expected to observe a strict code of conduct.

### Guidelines

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) School staff should be aware that the wearing of the 5Ks at all times is of utmost importance and sensitivity for initiated Sikhs and is the subject to vows made during the Amrit ceremony and a mature understanding of Sikhism.
- 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 school community.
- c) The school has to balance the responsibilities of ensuring the health and safety of all others on the school premises with the religious requirements of Sikh learners.
- d) The school's preference is that a symbolic version of the Kirpan no more than one and a half inches long, secured and sealed in protective padding or embedded on a Kanga, small wooden comb, be worn. If however,

this is deemed unsatisfactory by Sikhs in observing their religious practices/rituals, then the school will allow the Kirpan to be worn, in compliance with the following guidelines:

- i) that it is restricted to learners/staff who have undergone an Amrit ceremony.
  - ii) that the Kirpan is no more than 6 inches long including the handle.
  - iii) the Kirpan will be sheathed and enclosed in padding securely sewn up and worn under clothing so it is not visible and others have no access to it.
  - iv) on no account, will the Kirpan be drawn while in school, on a school trip or any other school activity or on school transport.
  - v) that a declaration acknowledging the implications and to waive any claim against the school is signed by the parents/carers of learners choosing to wear the Kirpan.
  - vi) that the school reserves the right to exclude the learner wearing the Kirpan from any activity if the health and safety of that learner or others is deemed compromised or the guidelines set out by the school under which the Kirpan may be worn are breached.
- f) The school's preference is that the Kirpan should not be worn during Physical Education, but removed and handed to a member of staff for safe-keeping and collected afterwards. If however, this is deemed unsatisfactory by Sikhs in observing their religious practices/rituals, then the school will allow the Kirpan to be worn during Physical Education, in compliance with the following additional guideline:
- i) the Kirpan will be sheathed and enclosed in padding securely sewn up and worn under clothing so it is not

visible and others have no access to it. Should this guideline be breached, the school reserves the right to ensure the health and safety of all on the school premises.

These guidelines are subject to regular review in line with legislative change.

## ISLAM'S MONTH OF FASTING

### Background

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the fourth 'pillar' of Islam, an act of worship of great spiritual, moral and social significance for Muslims. It is obligatory for all males and females to fast once they attain the age of puberty (for some children this can be as young as the age of nine). The physical dimension of fasting involves completely abstaining from all forms of nourishment, food, liquids (including water) and smoking from dawn to sunset for the whole month. Younger children may fast for all or part of the month but this is entirely optional. The spiritual and moral dimension of fasting is considered to be of far greater importance than the physical dimension.

During Ramadan, Muslims should focus on additional worship and God-consciousness, in order to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives and dealings with others, including their character, respect for others, kindness, forgiveness and avoidance of bad language and poor behaviour. In addition, having empathy with the poor, donating generously for charitable causes, the sharing of food and inviting others to one's home to open the fast are important features of Ramadan. Muslims also focus on reading more

of the Qur'an and performing additional prayers in the mosque every evening. The Islamic calendar is based on a lunar cycle, therefore Ramadan falls 10 or 11 days earlier each year. Eid ul-Fitr celebrates the successful completion of the month of Ramadan.

## Guidelines

To support more appropriately the needs of learners fasting during part of, or for all of, the month of Ramadan:

- a) Schools will be informed by parents/carers if their child is going to participate in fasting.
- b) The head teacher will conduct a risk assessment if any learners are fasting.
- c) Schools will inform parents/carers immediately if their child, who is fasting, becomes unwell.
- d) No oral medication can be taken by a person who is fasting. During emergencies, where a learner's wellbeing is at risk, medicine may be administered at the learners' discretion, and in accordance with the schools medicine policy.
- e) If any concerns or signs of dehydration or exhaustion, in any learner who is fasting become apparent, school should advise fasting be terminated immediately thereby ensuring health and safety remains paramount.
- f) While learners are encouraged not to use Ramadan as an opportunity to avoid aspects of normal life, it is sensible for them to refrain from:
  - i) strenuous exercise as they will be more susceptible to headaches, tiredness and drowsiness, due to dehydration.
  - ii) planned swimming lessons since the potential for swallowing water is high.

- g) Schools will consider the impact of fasting during Ramadan and late night prayers on learners:
- i) when setting dates for activities, such as parents evenings, sports days, trips, celebrations and internal examinations.
  - ii) by setting alternative sanctions to post school detentions for breaching school rules, to support learners arrival home in sufficient time to break their fast, especially when Ramadan falls during the winter months.
- h) Schools will provide facilities for learners wishing to offer prayer during the school day.
- i) Schools will provide girls who are menstruating and exempt from fasting with a supervised, quiet space separate from others learners who are fasting.
  - i) The school will ensure that sex and relationships education is not scheduled during Ramadan, as engaging in any sexual relations, any related thoughts or discourse are not permitted.
  - j) Some learners fasting abstain from musical activities including singing and listening to music.
  - k) If Ramadan or Eid falls during formal, public examinations learners are expected to attend school and the school will:
    - i) advise, if fasting is deemed likely to jeopardise a learners' examination performance, it be delayed and days missed made up at a later date.
    - ii) consult with learners who are fasting whether additional revision sessions are better timetabled in the morning or afternoon.
    - iii) ensure room temperatures are conducive to learners who are fasting maximising their potential.
    - iv) ensure invigilators monitor learners who are fasting for overheating and dehydration.



- l) Schools should be mindful that because the Islamic calendar is based on a lunar cycle there may be some uncertainty in determining exact dates of Eid ul-Fitr in advance.
- m) Schools should allow at least one day off for Eid ul-Fitr as obligatory religious observance and mark this as authorised absence.

These guidelines are subject to regular review.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Sikhism**

<http://nsouk.co.uk/contact-us/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/ritesrituals/amrit.shtml>

<http://policeandschools.org.uk/onewebmedia/Sikh%20Pupils%20-%20Schools%20Guidelines.pdf>

[https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/School\\_effectiveness/The%20Sikh%20Kirpan%20in%20schools.pdf](https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/School_effectiveness/The%20Sikh%20Kirpan%20in%20schools.pdf)

[http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s91707/Draft%20Policy%20v2%2006\\_09\\_18.pdf](http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s91707/Draft%20Policy%20v2%2006_09_18.pdf)

### **Islam**

<http://www.religionlaw.co.uk/MCBschoolsreport07.pdf>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/sawm.shtml>