

Knives in Schools Policy

Dear Parents and Carers

The NSW Government recently undertook community consultation, working closely with leaders of the Sikh community and health and safety experts to revise the Knives in Schools Policy.

The Department thanks all members of the community who had their say during the consultations and those who assisted in the development of the revised guidelines which set out the circumstances in which a student may have a knife at school.

These guidelines reflect the department's commitment to doing what it reasonably can to protect students and staff from foreseeable risks to their health and safety and its commitment to respecting the diversity of the NSW community and avoiding acts of unlawful discrimination.

The ban on knives in schools remains in force but does not prevent a student wearing a Kirpan provided they comply with strict new guidelines. A Kirpan is an item, resembling a knife, which is worn by baptised Sikhs as an article of their faith and is of significant religious importance.

For a baptised Sikh student to be permitted to wear a Kirpan at school, the Kirpan must:

- be of a small size, full length of 16.5cm (around 6.5 inches) or less, with no sharp edges or points
- have a blade that is secured within the sheath so that it cannot be withdrawn
- be worn under clothes and secured so it cannot be used
- be removed and safely stored, or secured against the body, when undertaking physical activity such as sport.

Note: "secured against the body" means wrapped in sturdy fabric and secured within a sports band or leather belt that ensures it cannot slip out or cause injury to the wearer or another person.

When reasonably asked, the student must verify that these guidelines are being complied with. Any safety concerns will be discussed with the student and their parents or carers.

While baptised Sikh students are able to wear a Kirpan they are not permitted to use it at school for any purpose.

Students are not permitted to have a knife at school in any other circumstances unless the knife is being used for educational purposes (for example during food technology practical classes).

Students who may bring a knife to school because they are attending a TAFE class straight after school are required to hand in the knife in a box or a sheath at the school office at the beginning of the day and collect it at the end of the day.

Further information about the new guidelines is available at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/legal-issues-bulletins/knives-in-schools>

To enable a smooth introduction of the new policies, I would be happy to discuss these arrangements with leaders and members of our local Sikh community.

Families of baptised Sikh students can also seek further guidance through their temple in conjunction with the Australian Sikh Association (ASA).

If you have any questions in regard to this information please ring the school to make a time to discuss.

Yours sincerely

Principal

Telephone Interpreter Service

If you would like more information and you need an interpreter to assist with your enquiry, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. Tell the operator the phone number you want to call and the operator will get an interpreter on the line to assist you with the conversation. You will not be charged for this service.