# Sikhi or the Sikh Dharam (Sikhism)

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| **General** | * Good practice in RE includes outlining in relatable ways how different facets of religious life fit into a whole. * The text below outlines how the teachings, history, identity and practice of the Sikh faith are linked to its core vision and values, assisting learners to develop their knowledge and interpretive skills, and foster relevant dispositions. * It also assists teachers to see how ways of interpreting and explaining the Sikh faith have evolved this century, both in the academic subject of Sikh Studies and amongst faith practitioners, in comparison to older textbook resources   **Core Belief**  **Sikh**’ means a disciple who learns from the **Guru** – a revered teacher or bringer of sacred wisdom. Sikhs follow a way of life known as **Sikhi** or the **Sikh Dharam**, commonly referred to as ‘Sikhism’. It was founded in South Asia by ten consecutive **Gurus** between 1469 and 1708, across an era of Mughal rule in South Asia, where the main religious influences were Hindu and Islamic**.** Although the Sikh Gurus travelled widely, the **Punjab** was a prominent base. This region is now divided between India and Pakistan and there are Punjabis of different faiths. Because the Sikh Gurus honoured the sacredness of all religions, Sikhs do not actively seek converts. Hence, out of 25 million Sikhs globally, most are still Punjabi, inheriting their Sikh identity through birth. Some fully commit to Sikh discipleship by taking initiation. Outside India, large numbers of Sikhs are settled in Canada and USA, the UK, Italy, Australia and Malaysia. Many follow Punjabi traditions alongside Sikh practices. Sometimes these cultural and religious dimensions are interlinked. In other instances, there are marked differences.  The first Guru, **Guru Nanak**, established the founding vision, values and practices of the Sikh Dharam. When Sikhs say they believe in ‘One God’, they mean the sacred and creative Oneness which Guru Nanak expressed as **Ik Oankar** (its written form is often used as a faith logo).‘**Ik**’ means ‘One’. ‘**Oankar**’ evokes a Divine harmony and energy that creates, sustains and pervades creation. God’s presence is also described as the **jyot** (Divine, life-giving light or flame) and as **naam** or **shabad** (Divine name or word - the eternal vibration of infinite wisdom). The real disciple is our awareness, that learns to sense this sacred presence to transform how we live. Three cardinal questions help to expand our vision: ‘What is our origin, our purpose, our destination?’ **Ik Oankar** sums up that we all emerge from and return to this sacred Oneness that connects everything and lies at the root of our own being. Hence human life holds a Divine potential and purpose. This is to awaken the Divine presence inside us and become empowered to serve **sarbat da bhalla (the welfare of all)**, to contribute positively to the flourishing of a diverse yet interconnected world which we are all part of.  Because every human has a Divine inner light, there are sacred qualities latent within us - spiritual and moral dispositions which bring true beauty and empowerment, and whose source is God. They include the five virtues of compassion (**daya**), integrity (**sat**), contentment (**santokh**), humility (**nimrata**) and love (**prem**). On life’s journey, they are our true allies. **Haumai**, the self-centred ego, is also a part of us. Whilst it helps us operate as an individual, it can overpower and enslave us, bringing us out of harmony with the Divine. Our impulses then turn into vices: desire turns to lust (**kaam**); anger turns to vengeance (**krodh**); need becomes greed (**lobh**); emotional bonds turn into possessiveness (**moh**); and self-esteem becomes arrogance (**ahankara**). Like traitors posing as friends, these traits are known as ‘the five thieves’ that rob us of our humanity.  Guru Nanak’s teaching that ‘**truth is high but higher still is truthful living**’ explains the importance the Sikh Gurus gave to practice over knowledge and belief. They also emphasised the role of Divine grace alongside personal effort, hence our thoughts and actions must always carry a degree of selflessness. When liberated from **haumai**, the mind becomes pure and sovereign and genuinely committed to practicing wisdom and virtue, from a sense of gratitude and responsibility to Creator and creation. Such a way of life, aligned to Divine wisdom, is known as **dharam** – a word that is linked to ideas of duty, order and harmony. Hence the term **Sikh Dharam** describes the enlightened and responsible way of life taught by the Sikh Gurus. Whilst often translated as ‘religion’ it includes ideas of being a good citizen of the world, based on being a good human being.  Sikhs sum up their way of life with the saying: ‘**Naam Japo, Kirat Karo, Vand ke Chhako**’ which can be simplified to ‘pray, work honestly and share.’ **Simran** (remembering God, the Creator) is to be balanced with **sewa** (service to creation). **Kirtan** (singing the sacred teachings) and **sadh sangat** (keeping enlightened company) provide a means to absorb, learn from and interactively transmit the teachings. The concepts of **sant sipahi** (the saint solider) and **miri piri** (worldly leadership that is guided by spiritual wisdom and virtue), echo the striving to conquer the ego and establish the reign of virtue inside us. This was reflected in the formation of the Sikh identity over successive Gurus, as they set up institutions, trained disciples and interacted with religious and political leaders. The **khanda** emblem (another logo of the Sikh Dharam) reflects the fusion of these spiritual, martial and leadership concepts. As the ninth Guru gave his life to protect the religious freedom of non-Sikhs, the **khanda** stands for defending the basic rights of all and rising to our responsibilities.  The tenth, **Guru Gobind Singh**, established two institutions to guide Sikhs into the future: the **Guru Panth** or community of disciples who follow the Guru’s path, led by the **Khalsa** (anorder of initiated Sikhs that he established in 1699) and the **Guru Granth** whom he instructed Sikhs to revere as their perpetual Guru and ever-living source of wisdom. Sikhs thus address the scripture with reverence as **Guru Granth Sahib Ji**. Both the disciples and the scripture were exalted as a means to keep alive the legacy of the ten Gurus across changing times and places, and to serve humanity as one diverse family. Khalsa initiation provides an entry into the school of committed discipleship and a benchmark for Sikh identity and practice. At the same time, a wide spectrum of people and groups, whilst not taking initiation, remain especially inspired by the Sikh Gurus. The official Sikh code of conduct or **Rehat Maryada** defines a Sikh as some who believes in One Immortal Being, the ten Gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib and the Khalsa initiation. Whilst serving all, a Sikh is to maintain this distinctive identity and allegiance.  **Living as a Sikh**  Those who are born and raised in Sikh families become familiar with basic teachings and elements of daily practice that an initiated Sikh would follow committedly. This includes being aware of the threefold calling (see above) to live in a way that is a 1) prayerful, 2) honest and hardworking and 3) generous, so as to lead a God-conscious, responsible and benevolent life. Other practices that you notice in Sikh places of worship also form part of daily Sikh life, to help shape one’s mindset and dispositions. **Simran** (remembering God, the Creator) includes chanting words like **Waheguru** and **Satnam** (that praise God as ‘wonderful enlightener’ and ‘vibration of eternal truth’), repeating the **Mool Mantar** (the short ‘root prayer’ and essence of all Sikh teaching), or reciting other prayers (this recitation is known as ‘**paath**’). **Sewa** (serving creation) can take many forms, when one volunteers to help and support others, e.g. the serving of food equally to all, a tradition known as **langar**. When **simran** is balanced with **sewa**, it is seento foster wisdom and humility. Listening or taking part in **kirtan** (singing of the sacred teachings) is another key practice, using instruments like the harmonium, *tabla* drums or traditional string instruments.  **Amrit-dhari** Sikhs are those who take the step of initiation into the Khalsa, in a ceremony known as the **amrit sanchar.**  **Amrit** is the sweetened, sanctified water that is prepared and given to initiates. This represents a state of loving connection between the spark of our inner being and the Immortal Creator. As the **amrit** is splashed five times in the eyes and crown of the head, and as initiates sip it five times from their cupped hands, this marks a blessing to help them see, think and speak with the Guru’s wisdom. They pledge to maintain a disciplined way of life and distinctive external identity, marked by the **panj kakar** (five articles of faith or ‘five Ks’) and the **dastar** (turban, mandatory for male Sikhs and worn by some females).  They also commit to reciting set daily prayers, known together as **nitnem**. The day begins by rising early to bathe, meditate and recite five morning prayers. The day ends with an evening and then night prayer. The Khalsa discipline includes not consuming alcohol, use tobacco, or any other recreational drugs and many will also be vegetarian (see below). Whilst only **amrit-dhari** Sikhs will keep the full Khalsa identity (again, see below), most Sikhs will wear the **kara** (steel bracelet). Some will maintain the **kes** (uncut hair) or wear the turban without necessarily being initiated.  Often, in the wider spiritual traditions of India, when a Guru initiated a disciple, it involved giving the initiate a sacred word or teaching for daily recitation. This was described as ‘**Naam**’. Whilst Sikhs use this word to mean the power, energy or spirit of God, **Naam** can also mean a name of the Divine, in the form of a *mantar* (a chant to bring about some inward transformation). In the Khalsa initiation, **Naam** takes the form of two widely known Sikh *mantars*: the **Mool Mantar** (the short ‘root prayer’ that begins with **Ik Oankar**) and the **Gur Mantar** (this is the word ‘**Waheguru**’ meaning Wondrous Enlightener). In Sikh teaching, just as worldly work generates material wealth, acts of prayer and service generate spiritual wealth. The initiation ceremony marks the opening of a spiritual ‘account’, to gather this wealth to help us in this life and also enrich the soul for its onward journey. This spiritual ‘earnings’ are the only wealth we take with us when we leave the world.  **Scripture**  Sikhs address their sacred scripture with reverence as **Guru Granth Sahib Ji**. This reflects its status as a living ‘Guru’. ‘Granth’ means a sacred volume of writing and the words ‘Sahib’ and ‘Ji’ give additional honour and respect. Each printed volume contains 1430 **ang** (a word meaning ‘limb’ that refers to the pages). Treated with utmost respect, the scripture will be wrapped in specially sewn fabrics, like royal robes, and enthroned on a platform under a canopy, be it in a Sikh home or a Sikh place of worship. Over the day, its sacred words are recited and listened to. Then the scripture is closed, wrapped and ceremoniously laid to rest for the night. This reflects how the **Guru Granth Sahib Ji** is treated as a revered living presence.  All the verses are written in a sacred script called **Gurmukhi** (meaning ‘from the mouth of the Guru’). This was standardised by the second Guru to preserve and build on the poetic teachings of Guru Nanak. These included compositions that he sang on his travels for around a quarter of a century, communicating to diverse people in diverse places, in different styles of language. These teachings, he indicated, were not his own, but revealed from a heavenly realm. The first version of the scripture was compiled by Guru Arjan, who brought together the compositions of the first five Gurus as well as specifically chosen verses by saintly figures from Hindu and Muslim traditions. The later Gurus honoured the scripture with great devotion. Eventually the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, after adding the verses of the ninth Guru, ended the lineage of human Gurus, and instructed Sikhs to revere it as their perpetual and eternal Guru. This explains the heightened reverence for the scripture that you notice when visiting a Sikh place of worship, the **Gurudwara** (see below).  **Major Annual Events**  Some dates can vary annually according to the method of determination. Major events include:  **Guru Nanak’s Gurpurab** - a celebration of the birth of the founder of the Sikh Dharam – normally celebrated in October/November, although some Sikhs now celebrate this around Vaisakhi due to differing calendars for determination.  **Guru Gobind Singh’s** **Gurpurab** – celebrating the birth of the tenth Guru who founded the Khalsa – December/January  **Vaisakhi** – commemorating the creation of the Khalsa order in 1699.Many Gurudwaras hold initiation ceremonies at this time and arrange to wash the flagpole that bears the **nishaan sahib** flag – March/April  **Bandi Chhor Divas** – on this day Sikhs light candles and traditional earthen lamps in **Gurudwaras** and their homes to remember when the sixth Guru, **Guru Hargobind**, accepted freedom from his unjust imprisonment in a Mughal fort, after ingeniously ensuring that he secured the simultaneous release of 52 princes, who were held as political prisoners alongside him. Since this occurred during India’s ancient festival of **Divali**, lamps were lit to celebrate the Guru’s safe return and his role as a beacon of hope and solidarity in the face of oppression - October/November  **Births**  Sikh teachings encourage us to marvel with gratitude and wonder at our human birth. Sikh teachings also describe how, as we hung upside down in the dark confinement of the womb, it was our soul’s meditation on the Creator that ultimately sustained us. Hence, when a baby is born, the mother, father and family are encouraged to do **simran** (meditative chanting) to sustain an atmosphere of peace and connection that can otherwise become forgotten as a child grows in the material world. After birth, babies are usually blessed with few sips of **amrit** (sweetened sanctified water – see above) that represents this loving state of Divine connection.  Later, on a day when mother and baby are ready, the family will go to the Gurudwara for the naming ceremony. After a formal prayer, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is opened at random to reveal a **hukam-nama** – a verse taken to be the Guru’s message for the moment or occasion. Usually, the first letter of the first word provides the first letter of the baby’s name, which the family can then choose. Scriptural words used as names tend to be gender neutral, so adding Singh or Kaur distinguishes boys from girls. Importantly, the Sikh code of conduct stresses that boys and girls are to be welcomed equally to the world, in contrast to South Asian traditions where boys are favoured, that have long dominated the culture of the Punjab.  Whatever our social status, the Sikh Gurus stressed that all humans are born with equal dignity, and a capacity to ‘live in God’s image’.  Out of all species, humans are uniquely able to imagine, create, reason and discern - and hence grow in wisdom and virtue as we encounter various challenges in our mind and world around us.  Sikh teachings describe the soul journeying across lifetimes and life forms. A baby’s arrival thus provides an occasion to celebrate the great promise of human birth, with hopes and prayers for cultivating a spiritually rich and generous life to fulfil our time here.  Stories about the Gurus' lives as children help us notice wisdom in the young, that adults may sometimes lose sight of.  **Names**  Sikhs are often recognised from using the middle names or surnames **Singh** (for men) and **Kaur** (for women). For centuries in India, both names were associated with royalty, leadership and courage. Singh meant ‘lion’ or ‘tiger’ and a *singh-asan* was a royal throne. Kaur meant ‘royal prince’. Used by Sikh women, it is often translated as ‘princess’. These names have been formally given to initiates as part of their new identity, from the time Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa in 1699. Because people’s traditional surnames usually reflected social divisions and hierarchies, to use **Singh** and **Kaur** built a spirit of equality and mutual respect. These names also reflect the conviction that every ordinary person has the capacity to rise to the best in his or herself to live with dignity, wisdom and responsibility.  **Diet**  Depending on how closely they are aligned to the Sikh religious code of conduct, and on norms they may follow from their Punjabi heritage, the dietary practices in Sikh families can vary. For those who are vegetarian, Sikh teachings about compassion and the common good, and on not taking life unless it is a last resort, mean that they will strictly refrain from eating food containing meat, fish and eggs, but will usually consume dairy products (avoiding ingredients like gelatine and animal rennet). In some Sikh jathas, or organisations, to follow a vegetarian diet is a clear requirement of initiation.  Sikhs who are not vegetarian will refrain from eating ritually slaughtered halal or kosher meat, based on another school of thought, that meat is permissible if an animal is killed swiftly by inflicting minimal pain. Because in India the cow has long be revered as sacred, some Punjabi Sikhs will follow age-old traditions to avoid beef, that are not specific to Sikh teaching.  With regards to consuming alcohol, tobacco and recreational drugs, initiated Sikhs will abstain from all three, as per the code of conduct. Whilst some Sikhs who are not religiously observant may be relaxed towards alcohol consumption, smoking tobacco is more strictly avoided.  **Dress**  In general, Sikhs flexibly adapt their dress according to context, wherever they work, study, socialise or live, whilst maintaining key facets of their religious identity. Since the values it reflects are seen to enrich our civic role as members of society, this identity is seen to add value to our public life, rather than be only of private, religious concern. Hence Sikhs have actively engaged with policy makers to ensure that they can maintain their visible identity as citizens of a given region or country. All initiated Sikhs wear the **panj kakar** (five articles of faith, or five K’s) and the **dastar** (turban, that is mandatory for males and worn by some females). As these articles serve a practical role, they are not just symbols, yet they do signal key values to shape one’s outlook and guide one’s actions. They also build a sense of unity, belonging and allegiance, since they are cherished as gifts given from Guru to disciple, that honour the ten Gurus’ legacy. The five articles beginning with ‘k’ are:  **Kes** (uncut hair) – this signifies living in harmony with the Divine order by preserving the complete human form. In many cultures long hair has been associated with wisdom, nobility and courage, and shorn hair with worldly detachment. For Sikhs the **kes** reflects the principle of not renouncing the world, but living fully in it, whilst attuned to a higher reality. Some Sikhs thus describe the hair as ‘spiritual antennae’. Due to eras of persecution in Sikh history, uncut is a bold statement of steadfastness in one’s identity in the face of oppression.  **Kangha** (a wooden comb) – used twice daily to keep the hair tidy and free of tangles, it reminds Sikh that while we are part of nature, we must tend to our own human nature, keeping a tidy, well-regulated mind.  **Kara** (an iron or steel wrist band) – worn usually on the right hand, this reminds Sikhs to lead an active life of benevolent and responsible action. The circular metal shape evokes infinite strength and presence of God, that guides us to exercise self-awareness, self-restraint, and accountability for our actions.  **Kirpan** (a small noble sword) – this is secured in a sheath and held near the hip, in a cotton sash that hangs diagonally from one shoulder, crossing the chest and heart. In the word **kirpan**, Sikhs hear the terms ‘**kirpa**’, meaning blessing, and ‘**aan**’, meaning dignity and honour. It reflects scriptural teachings about the sword of inner wisdom, and about the duty to protect others, uphold goodness and stand up for what is right.  **Kachhera** (specially sewn shorts, secured with a drawstring) - washed and changed each day, the **kachhera** is worn as an undergarment to reflect modesty, fidelity and self-restraint to regulate our physical and sexual impulses. Principles of commitment to one’s spouse and not abusing the dignity of others were also in response to Punjab’s history of invasions, plunder, rape and abduction, as well as violations that occur in the chaos of war. In Sikh tradition, marriage and family life are seen to play an important part in our spiritual learning. Monasticism and complete celibacy are not usually encouraged.  The **dastar** or turban, in the history of many cultures, has often signified a respected social status - as spiritual leader, a king or queen, or person of wisdom and learning. It is worn by Sikh men to cover the topknot of the **kes**. Unlike a hat that is put on or taken off, once tied, the **dastar** is considered part of one’s form as a Sikh. Some women may choose to wear a **dastar,** or to tie a small covering known as a **keski**, or to use a scarf when praying or engaged in religious activities.  **Places of Worship**  A Sikh place of worship is called a **Gurudwara** (also often spelt **Gurdwara**). In English, the ‘G’ may sometimes be capitalised since the title ‘Guru’ usually is. **Gurudwara** means the ‘*dwar*’ or gateway to the Guru. It is where Sikhs come to pay respects to the Guru Granth Sahib, hear scriptural readings and take part in acts of prayer (**paath**), singing (**kirtan**) and selfless service (**sewa** or **seva**). If the Guru is like the Divine teacher, then the Gurudwara is like a school to learn and practice the teachings. People of all backgrounds are welcome to visit, allowing Sikhs to enact principles of respecting and serving humanity.  On entering, visitors respectfully cover their heads, remove their shoes and wash their hands before stepping into the **Guru Darbar**, or the Guru’s Court. This is where the Guru Granth Sahib ‘holds court’, like a wise and revered sovereign who receives visitors, gives counsel and offers blessings. Like a king or queen, the scripture is enthroned on a platform called a **palki** (linked to ‘palanquin’). Resting under a canopy, it is wrapped in **ramallas** - specially sewn fabrics, like royal robes. Walking up an aisle, Sikhs pay respects by bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib, placing in a **golak** or box a contribution of money for congregational or charitable use. They may bring flowers, or items like sugar, butter or milk for the Guru’s kitchen. There is no compulsion to donate or to bow, e.g. if non-Sikh, one may stand respectfully, or bow slightly, as is comfortable.  One may then sit on the floor which is usually covered with white sheets, often men on one side and women on the other, on an equal level before the Guru. It is usual to sit with legs crossed or to the side and out of respect one would not point one’s feet towards the **Guru Granth Sahib**. For those with mobility issues special seating should normally be provided. At any given time, there may be a continuous 48-hour reading of the scripture (**akhand paath**), a slower reading with pauses (**sehaj paath**), the singing of scriptural teachings (**kirtan**) or a sermon (**katha**). Services conclude with the congregation (**sangat**) standing for a prayer of supplication (**ardas**) before the scripture is ceremoniously opened at random to reveal the Guru’s message to all. This is called a **hukam-nama** (from the word for an emperor’s decree or command).  Then **karah prashad** (a warm, sweet mixture of sugar, flour, butter and water that is prayerfully cooked and prepared) is distributed to all. Received by everyone in cupped hands, it is a sign of the Guru’s welcome and hospitality equally to all. Everyone is welcome to partake in the **langar** or communal meal. This means that every Gurudwara has a langar hall and kitchen. The preparation and distribution of food provides an opportunity to engage in serving others. Importantly, everyone is seated on an equal level (traditionally on the floor, although, if tables are used, the principle of equality is maintained), as a means to experience oneness, kinship and sense of belonging as part of the human family.  Around the world, whether they are adapted from existing buildings, or specially designed with domes, Gurudwaras can be recognised by the flagpole that bears the **nishaan sahib** flag. This is usually yellow or saffron in colour and shows the **khanda** emblem - with an upright double-edged sword across a circular ring, and two curved kirpans on either side. These signify God’s oneness, the upholding of goodness and the principle of **miri piri** - leading a worldly life that is led by spiritual wisdom. This marks the building as the Guru’s home, as a beacon of refuge and hospitality and noble seat of governance. | |
| **Classroom Practice** | **Good Practice** | **Things to avoid** |
| Do try to use authentic Sikh terms rather than translations that may have slightly different connotations. Initially, familiar RE terminology can be used to build knowledge, e.g. using terms like ‘Sikhism’, ‘God’, ‘holy book’ – with the main aim being to familiarise pupils to indigenous terms and to connotations that may be different from the English translations.  If you use the word ‘**Sikhism**’ do mention that Sikhs increasingly prefer to use terms like **Sikhi** or **Sikh Dharam**. Sikh means a disciple or learner. ‘Sikhi’ means the ‘way of learning’. ‘Dharam’ can be translated as ‘faith’ or ‘religion’. However, it is not separate from everyday, secular life, but rather an enlightened and responsible way of living that contributes to uplifting our collective lives as members of society and inhabitants of the planet. Hence it is more than a private faith or belief system.  If you use ‘**God**’ explain how God is understood in Sikh teachings - not a ‘God of the Sikhs’ but a Universal Creator, a **Oneness** that connections all creation, the **Source** we all emerge from and return to, the **True Reality** that remains eternal whilst things of the world change, ‘**beyond fear and hate**’ (see the **Mool Mantar** or root prayer for these core teachings). An infinite energy or spirit known that Sikhs call ‘**Naam**’ (Divine name), the unseen light (**jyot**) that sparks and powers existence.  For the sacred scripture, Sikhs will always use the honorific title ‘**Guru**’ along with other markers of respect, such as ‘**Sri**’ at the start and ‘**Sahib**’ and ‘**Ji**’ at the end. Hence it is best referred to, at a minimum, as ‘**Guru Granth Sahib**’ or more fully as ‘**Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji’**. Because Sikhs relate to the scripture as a living Guru who communicates sacred words and teachings, to say ‘book’ unduly objectifies it. Whilst ‘**holy book’** is commonly used in RE, ‘**sacred text**’ or ‘**Guru as scripture**’ may be preferable.  Often, an attendant will fan a **chaur sahib** over the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. This has a ornate metal or wooden handle with a flow of white yak’s hair or similar synthetic material. In the olden days, the **chaur** was a ‘royal whisk’ or ‘royal fan’ that was waved over sovereigns to mark their eminence. In the heat, it also kept the air cool and clean around them. However, avoid using translations of the **chaur sahib** as a ‘fly whisk’ that miss its significance as a mark of the scripture’s authoritative status.  When referring to the **panj kakar** and the **dastar**, to call them **articles of faith** is preferable to saying ‘symbols’. Mandatory for initiated Sikhs, they serve different practical uses as well as having symbolic value. They are also cherished as gifts from the Guru and are thus markers of a loving bond.  **Presenting religious artifacts**  Sensitively prepare pupils if showing them the Sikh articles of faith, **and give adequate context.** They should be handled respectfully and with clean hands and kept in a clean respectful place, away from the floor, when not being shared. It is safer for the teacher to show a **kirpan** from the front of the class and for it not to be accessible to pupils. If possible, please share the Sikh articles of faith in partnership with a Sikh community member. | Because of the noble ethos associated with the **kirpan,** don’t refer to it as a ‘dagger’. This tends to have negative connotations, since a dagger suggests stealthy, underhand motives and behaviour. Try to use terms like ‘**a small, noble sword**’ for the kirpan. Emphasise it is associated with **kirpa**, blessings, and **aan**, dignity and honour.  For the **kara**, words like bracelet or bangle can imply it is merely decorative. One could say a ‘steel wrist band’.  **Acting out religious stories**  If you wish to act out stories from the Gurus, do not use an actor for the Guru – instead, narrate the Guru’s actions or use a picture of the Guru whilst storytelling. |
| **Visits** | **Good Practice** | **Things to avoid** |
| Visitors should cover their heads and wear modest clothing such as calf length or longer skirts; or better still trousers. Bear in mind before the visit that the main principle is to dress modestly. Check if the Gurudwara will provide head coverings, otherwise arrange for pupils to bring one: for girls a long scarf and for boys bandanas are preferred (no baseball caps or hats, unless made of wool or soft material). Please also prepare visitors that they will be expected to remove their shoes and wash their hands if possible as well.  Please explain that there is no compulsion to bow in front of the Guru Granth Sahib or give a donation. However, do encourage and advise that respect is maintained. Visitors can stand respectfully or bow slightly if they do not wish to put their head to the floor.  Depending on the faith tour guide’s discretion, boys and girls may be directed to seated separately or together as a group, depending on numbers or the setting at the time.  Do advise pupils to only accept **karah prashad** if they are prepared to eat it as it is disrespectful to discard it. It is perfectly OK to not receive it. Similarly, in the Langar do not waste food. Ask for a small amount if you only wish to taste. All food in the Langar is vegetarian. | When sitting do remind visitors not to point feet towards the Guru Granth Sahib. |