



# English Shotokan Academy

## **Child Protection Policy**

## Introduction

Karate Instructors have a moral and legal responsibility to support and care for young people and to protect them from abuse. This responsibility applies not only while these students on the club premises, but also if they suspect abuse is taking place elsewhere.

Instructors are expected to demonstrate a duty of care towards children, equivalent to that which a reasonable parent would expect from a teacher in a school environment.

The ESA has therefore formulated a policy to ensure the safety of children in its care and to provide guidelines to Instructors and others who may be involved with the protection of these children.

It has also established guidelines which are intended to ensure that Instructors create a safer training environment for all students, including young people. They will enable Instructors to review their teaching practice and ensure they adopt sound procedures that protect not only the welfare of young and vulnerable people, but also Instructors themselves against false allegations.

These guidelines apply to all ESA Instructors, whether they act in a voluntary or professional capacity.

They will also apply to any person who may have young karate students in their charge, such as mentors, referees, judges and examiners, including also other adult students within ESA clubs.

The ESA will additionally be responsible for managing internal investigations, along with any specific recruitment, induction, and training in the field of child protection.

The ESA Executive Committee has the responsibility to ensure that this policy is implemented and operated effectively. Each club within ESA will be responsible for the adherence to this Child Protection Policy and liaise with the ESA Executive Committee to ensure this. Clubs may, if necessary, appoint their own Child Protection Officer (CPO).

Any arrest or conviction relating to an offense involving a child must be reported to the ESA Executive Committee.

**NB:** The terms child and children are used throughout this document but the policy and guidelines should apply to all young people taking part in Karate. The law defines a child as a person under the age of 18.

These guidelines cannot cover every eventuality and Instructors should always use initiative and common sense when assessing the appropriateness of their actions and advice.

## **ESA Child Policy Statement**

The ESA recognises that it has both a legal and moral obligation to ensure the highest possible standard of care to children they are responsible for.

It recognises that:

- Children's welfare must always be the first priority
- All children have a right to be protected from harm
- All allegations must be taken seriously and responded to quickly
- It needs to encourage continued participation of children in both training and, where applicable, competition
- It needs to define the relationships between the ESA and children, taking into consideration the rules and the demands that Karate may place upon a young developing children.

## **Guidelines for Good Teaching Practice**

These Guidelines for good practice are provided to protect children and ensure that Instructors are protected from accusations of child abuse, along with assuring parents that the highest standards of teaching are being followed within the ESA.

### **General Teaching Guidelines**

#### **Instructors must:**

Place the well-being and safety of the child above the development of performance.

Ensure that skills are taught in a safe, secure manner paying due regard to the physical development of young students.

Always be open when working with children and not place themselves in a position where they and an individual child are completely unobserved.

Ensure that if groups are to be supervised in changing rooms that gender is appropriate.

Ensure that where mixed teams compete away from home, they are accompanied by at least one male and one female.

Respect the rights and dignity and worth of all and treat everyone with equality, always ensuring that their teaching practices are well considered and safe.

### **What constitutes good general teaching practice?**

#### **Good teaching practice can be:**

Treating all members equally, including children, with respect and dignity.

Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust.

Making training fun and enjoyable

Promoting fair play.

Keeping up to date with teaching knowledge and skills

Ensuring all qualifications, certifications and insurance are in date.

Taking action to prevent intimate relationships developing with students.

Getting to know children and their parents/carers.

Being an excellent role model - this includes not using illicit substances and not drinking alcohol or smoking in the company of children.

Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the children, avoiding excessive training and not pushing them against their will.

### **Karate-Specific Teaching Guidelines**

There is no minimum age for a child beginning Karate, as the physical and mental and maturity of individuals varies. However the nature of training can be tailored to consider these factors.

Instructors need to understand the added responsibilities of teaching children and also the basic principles of growth and development through childhood to adolescence. Exercises should be appropriate to age and physicality. Instructors should not simply treat children as small adults, with small adult bodies.

Pre-adolescent children have a metabolism that is not naturally suited to generating anaerobic power and as such they exercise better at a steadily maintained rate. However, they can become conditioned to exercise in the short, explosive bursts that

are more representative of Karate training. Care and consideration is needed to enable this.

Some children have difficulty in concentrating and Karate training has been shown to improve their ability to concentrate, which can be beneficial in other aspects of their life, such as education.

Good discipline is seen as an essential element of the Karate ethos. It helps build good character and to ensure a good and safe training environment. This discipline is for the good of all children and does not constitute abuse.

Respect for senior grades and for their instructions and decisions is also a vital element of the discipline of Karate.

Physical contact is seen as a necessary and positive part of teaching Karate and is acceptable practice as long as it is appropriate and done in a safe and open manner. Instructors might manually adjust a student's technique - for example by straightening a wrist or moving a block to a more effective position. They will often test the strength of a child's technique or their balance by applying pressure. They may need to move a child for safety, e.g. to avoid collision or prevent them falling. Physical contact may also be used to re-assure or reward - for example, a light pat on the back or shoulder.

A child taking part in a class should not be allowed to leave the dojo without the permission of the Instructor. Where practicable, supervision should be provided.

Parents or guardians should be advised when to deliver and collect children, and not to leave children at the Dojo unless the Instructor or a responsible person is present.

If there is no other viable option, it is acceptable for an Instructor to give a child a lift in their car, but it is important to inform the parents.

### **Instructors should:**

Always ensure that children are fit to train.

Not allow children to do assisted stretching - they generally don't need to and there is a real risk of damage with an inconsiderate or over-enthusiastic partner.

Try to match children for size and weight for sparring wherever possible.

Take great care, especially where children train in the proximity of adults, to avoid collision injury.

Always take into account the age, grade and ability of children involved in Karate. Care should be taken with certain exercises and equipment and consideration should be given to the potential outcome of any activity.

Not allow children to perform certain conditioning exercises, especially those which are heavy load-bearing, for example weight training or press-ups on the knuckles

Not allow children to do any heavy bag or heavy impact work - rather, they should concentrate on the development of speed, mobility, skill and general fitness.

### **Acceptable practice, poor practice or abuse?**

In some cases it is hard to distinguish between poor teaching practice and abuse. Your responsibility is to do everything within your power to ensure your teaching practice is beyond reproach.

An Instructor must always examine their own teaching methods and practices and remember the basic principal that they must be in the best interest of the child.

### **What Constitutes Unacceptable Practice?**

Unacceptable practice is anything which might harm a child or prevent them from developing properly. Those practices which harm children are generally referred to as abuse and they fall in to the following main categories.

Physical Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Neglect

Sexual Abuse

The following are more comprehensive descriptions of these categories:

#### **Physical abuse**

In general terms, this would include hitting and shaking, etc.

It would also be where drugs or alcohol (specifically with children) are advocated or tolerated.

In Karate, this may include:

An Instructor deliberately striking a child in order to inflict pain and damage

An Instructor encouraging another student to strike a child in order to inflict pain and damage

An Instructor asking a child to train in a reckless way which is likely to lead to physical harm.

### **Emotional abuse**

This may occur if children are subject to:

Constant criticism

Bullying

Constant taunting of individuals

Unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations.

Instructors should also consider the potential emotional abuse from excessive pressure during training regimes or in relation to examinations or competition.

### **Neglect**

This may result from a failure to ensure that children are:

Safe

Free from risk of excessive cold, heat, or injury

Properly insured

### **Sexual abuse**

This may be the result of Instructors involving children in any form of sexual activity.

This may be the result of Instructors allowing other adult members to involve children in any form of sexual activity.

Showing children pornographic material is also a form of sexual abuse.

Talking in a sexualised manner or discussing issues of a sexual nature in the presence of children.

### **What signs might indicate abuse?**

Abuse may result from various causes through the misuse of power by adults or peers in any of the above ways.

Abuse may not be apparent from physical signs. There may be other indicators, particularly changes in behaviour.

Children may tell someone directly or indirectly that they are being abused. This will have taken enormous courage on their part because it is possible they will have been threatened by the abuser not to tell, or will have been aware and are very frightened of the consequences. In all cases, children will tell you because they want the abuse to stop, therefore it is very important that you listen to them and take them seriously.

Abuse can go unnoticed for a long time, yet have lasting and very damaging effects on children.

Physical indicators of emotional abuse include:

- A failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances (e.g. in hospital or away from home).
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.

There are physical and behavioural signs that might raise your concern about the welfare or safety of a child.

Some examples of physical signs are:

- Unexplained bruising or injuries and a reluctance to talk about them.
- A change in appearance observed over a long period of time, for example a student losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- Self-harm or mutilation.
- Covering arms and legs even when hot.

Some examples of behavioural signs are:

- Excessive fear of making mistakes.
- Fear of parents being contacted.
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts.
- Running away.
- Fear of going home (e.g. after training).
- Flinching when approached or touched.

- Reluctance to get changed for training.
- Depression.
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. hair twisting, rocking).
- Being unable to play, unwilling to take part.
- Withdrawn behaviour.

These signs are indicators, not confirmation of abuse. However if an Instructor notices any of these signs regularly or more than one sign, they should record and report their concerns.

## **Reporting Procedures**

### **What to do if you suspect abuse**

Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue child abuse can and does occur within institutions and within settings other than the home. It is crucial that Instructors are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action pursued. This would include anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity and there are established procedures to follow should any concerns arise.

If you suspect a child is being abused by an Instructor, student, parent or carer, you will have to report your concerns in order that the abuse is investigated and stopped.

If you are worried, remember it is not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place but it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and do something about it.

If a child tells you about someone's behaviour (e.g. an adult or another child) which he/she finds disturbing, always:

- Stay calm and reassure the child - ensure he/she is safe, feels safe and does not feel to blame for what has happened.
- Listen carefully, show and tell the child that you are taking seriously what is being said.
- Be honest, explain you will have to tell someone else to help stop the behaviour that is distressing.
- Make a note of what was said as soon as possible after the event.

- Maintain confidentiality - only share the information on a need to know basis and if it will help the student.

- Gain medical attention immediately if required and if appropriate contact Police or Social Services.

It is your responsibility to act if you are concerned about the behaviour of an adult towards a child or if you feel a young person/disabled adult is being bullied:

- Always follow the ESA's child protection guidelines.

- Report your concerns with full details to the Executive Committee. It is then the responsibility of the Committee to act.

- If the Committee is not available, the concerns are about a member of the Committee, or you do not feel appropriate action has been taken, you must contact the Social Services or the Police. Both organisations have specialist units trained to deal with these situations and their numbers are available on-line or in the phone book.

- If you were abused in the past, you can still seek help to deal with how you feel. There are many confidential helplines and organisations in the phone book. Please find the courage to call - especially if the perpetrator is still involved in instructing and has access to other children.

### **Do you have any other concerns?**

These guidelines provide some of the steps for safe and sound Karate instructing.

Any further questions may be addressed to the ESA Executive Committee through the General Secretary or Chairman.

The ESA always endeavours to ensure relevant information is provided to, and can be readily accessed, for its existing and new Instructors.

### **Protecting Instructors and Volunteers from False Allegations**

To prevent the possibility of wrongful allegations about your teaching, adopt the good practice guidelines and advice advocated by the ESA. In addition to the points made earlier, instructors should remember to follow the advice below:

- To always work in an open environment - avoid private locations. Never take children to the Instructor's home.

- To maintain a safe and appropriate distance with students. It is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young student or to share a room with them.

- To involve parents and/or guardians wherever possible.

- To be aware of the ESA's child protection policy and their responsibilities.
- To adhere to the ESA's code of conduct.
- To avoid any horseplay, sexually suggestive comments or language.
- To be aware of current child protection information and knowledge.

## **Police Checks**

It is now a requirement that those working with children in particular circumstances are Police checked to ensure that they do not have a criminal record which may preclude them from teaching children.

It is important to note that it is not necessary to gain a Police check in every situation. However, there are three main circumstances in instructing children when a police check should be sought:

- When it involves one to one contact separate from other adults and children without consent of parents or guardians.
- When it is unsupervised and no other responsible adult is likely to be present.
- When the situation is isolated from family surroundings, for example, going on holidays.

However, the most situations will not fall under the above three circumstances and therefore a Police check is not required if the candidate has the correct qualifications and a suitable background history.

If the situation arises that a Police check is required, this can be sourced through the local Authority. The ESA can provide further guidance or advice in respect of this upon request.