DRIFFIELD KARATE ACADEMY

SAFE PRACTICE POLICY

Policy owner: Karen Turner, Chief Instructor
Effective date: 19 October 2026
Review date: October 2027, or sooner if required
Applies to: All instructors, assistant instructors, students, parents/carers, volunteers and other persons participating in or supporting Driffield Karate Academy activities.

1. Purpose and Commitment

Karate is a physical activity involving movement, striking, kicking, blocking and, where appropriate, controlled sparring and other practical techniques. Safe practice is essential to minimise the risk of injury and to protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of everyone participating.

Driffield Karate Academy (DKA) is committed to providing a safe, supportive, disciplined and inclusive training environment. Particular consideration must be given to children, young people and adults who may be at increased risk of harm or require additional support.

All activities must be appropriate to the participant's age, physical development, experience, ability and individual needs. Training must be adapted where necessary to reduce risk.

The Chief Instructor is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy. All instructors and assistant instructors must follow its requirements and raise any safety concerns promptly.

This policy must be read alongside the Academy's Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety arrangements, relevant codes of conduct, emergency procedures and the applicable rules of its governing and affiliated organisations.

2. General Training Safety

Before each session, the instructor must take reasonable steps to ensure that the training environment, equipment and planned activities are safe.

This includes:

- Checking that the training area is suitable, clean, adequately lit and free from avoidable hazards.
- Ensuring the floor is dry, even and free from obstructions.

- Checking that any mats are secure, appropriately positioned and free from gaps, damaged sections or trip hazards.
- Ensuring adequate space between participants and any walls, pillars, equipment or spectators.
- Checking that any equipment is suitable, in good condition and appropriate for the activity.
- Ensuring participants wear suitable clothing and train barefoot or in appropriate footwear in accordance with the venue and activity requirements.
- Requiring jewellery, watches and other potentially hazardous items to be removed where safe and practicable.
- Ensuring long hair is secured and fingernails are kept short enough to minimise the risk of injury.
- Maintaining appropriate supervision throughout the session.
- Ensuring participants understand instructions, boundaries, expected behaviour and the need to stop immediately when instructed.

The instructor must consider the number, age, experience and needs of participants when determining appropriate supervision and activity arrangements.

Any unsafe condition must be addressed before the activity begins. If a risk cannot be adequately controlled, the activity must be modified, postponed or stopped.

3. Warm-Up, Stretching and Physical Conditioning

Every session must begin with an appropriate warm-up that prepares participants for the planned activities.

Warm-ups should include suitable general movement, mobility exercises and progressive activity involving the muscle groups and joints required for the session.

Stretching and conditioning exercises must be appropriate to the participant’s age, development, flexibility and ability.

Instructors must:

- Avoid forcing participants into stretches or movements beyond their comfortable range.
- Avoid excessive stretching, particularly where joints or growth plates may be vulnerable.
- Introduce demanding exercises gradually and allow adequate recovery.
- Modify or discontinue exercises that cause pain, dizziness, unusual breathlessness or distress.
- Avoid inappropriate conditioning exercises that place excessive stress on developing joints, including unsuitable knuckle press-ups or repetitive high-impact exercises.

- Ensure participants understand the difference between normal exertion and pain that may indicate injury.

No participant should be pressured to continue an exercise that causes pain or places them at unreasonable risk.

4. Striking, Punching, Kicking and Kumite

Karate training involving strikes, punches, kicks and sparring carries risks including bruising, cuts, sprains, fractures, dental injuries, joint injuries and concussion or other head injuries.

All striking and kumite activities must be appropriate to the participant's age, grade, experience, physical development and ability.

4.1 General requirements

- Contact must be controlled and appropriate to the exercise being undertaken.
- Participants must be taught to demonstrate control, respect their training partners and stop immediately when instructed.
- Excessive force, uncontrolled techniques and deliberate attempts to injure another participant are prohibited.
- Partner exercises must be matched appropriately, taking account of size, strength, experience, maturity and ability.
- Instructors must provide clear instructions and active supervision during partner work and sparring.
- Participants must not be required to engage in contact activities for which they are not adequately prepared.
- Appropriate protective equipment must be used whenever required by the activity, risk assessment or applicable governing-body rules.
- Training must stop immediately if a participant is injured or there is concern about their wellbeing.

4.2 Head contact and protection

Head injuries can have serious consequences. DKA adopts a cautious approach to head contact, particularly for children and young people.

- Head contact must only be permitted where expressly allowed by the applicable rules and appropriate to the participant, activity and level of supervision.
- No deliberate or uncontrolled heavy contact to the head is permitted in club training.
- Children and young people must not be exposed to head contact simply because protective equipment is being worn.
- Where an activity requires protective equipment, the equipment must be suitable, correctly fitted and in good condition.

- Mouthguards, headguards and other protective equipment must be used in accordance with the relevant competition rules and the activity-specific risk assessment.
- Instructors must check that participants understand the permitted level of contact before sparring begins.
- Any participant showing signs of a possible concussion or head injury must stop immediately and must not return to training or competition until appropriately assessed and cleared in accordance with current medical guidance.

Protective equipment reduces some risks but does not eliminate the possibility of injury.

4.3 Competition and sparring

Competition preparation and club sparring must follow the rules applicable to the specific event and governing body.

DKA is affiliated through the English Karate Alliance (EKA) to the World Union of Karate-Do Federations (WUKF) and the World Karate Confederation (WKC). Where competition rules differ, the rules of the organisation governing that particular event must be followed.

Instructors and coaches must ensure that:

- Participants enter appropriate age, grade, experience and weight categories where applicable.
- Kumite partners are selected responsibly during training.
- Mixed-gender training is managed sensitively and appropriately, taking account of the participants, activity, age, ability and individual circumstances.
- Competition participation is appropriate to the individual and supported by the necessary consent and preparation.
- Required protective equipment is worn.
- Competition kumite is controlled by appropriately appointed officials in accordance with the event rules.
- Medical and first-aid arrangements are established by the event organisers and followed by participants and coaches.

The rules of a competition must never be assumed to apply automatically to every club training activity.

5. Throws, Takedowns, Joint Locks and Choking Techniques

Throws, takedowns, joint locks and choking techniques carry additional risks, including falls, head and neck injuries, joint damage, fractures and restriction of breathing or blood flow.

These techniques must only be introduced where they form part of an appropriate, authorised and properly supervised training activity.

The following requirements apply:

- The training surface must be suitable for the technique being taught.
- Mats must be appropriately positioned, secure and in good condition wherever required.
- The surrounding area must be clear of hard or sharp objects and other hazards.
- Participants must receive appropriate instruction in movement, balance, falling and safe practice before attempting relevant techniques.
- Techniques must be introduced progressively and only at a level appropriate to the participants.
- Children and young people must not be taught dangerous applications of locks, throws or strangulation techniques.
- Joint locks must not be applied suddenly, forcefully or beyond a safe range of movement.
- Participants must be instructed to release immediately when their partner taps, signals discomfort or is told to stop.
- No participant may continue a technique after a stop command or sign of distress.
- Techniques involving pressure to the neck, restriction of breathing or restriction of blood flow must not be practised on club members as routine training activities. Any specialist activity would require explicit authorisation, appropriate safeguards and a separate risk assessment.

The instructor must stop any activity immediately if control is lost or the risk becomes unacceptable.

6. Weapons and Training Implements

Weapons training, where included in an authorised and appropriate activity, requires strict controls and supervision.

The following requirements apply:

- Only approved training implements may be used.
- Plastic or purpose-designed soft training knives may be used for appropriate drills. Real knives and other sharp weapons must not be used in routine club training.
- Training nunchaku and other implements must be suitable for the participants' age, ability and experience.
- Instructors must inspect equipment before use and remove damaged or unsuitable items.
- Participants must receive clear instructions on safe handling, permitted movements, spacing and stopping procedures.
- Adequate separation must be maintained between participants.

- Weapons training must be directly supervised by a suitably competent instructor.
- Children must not be left unsupervised with training implements.
- Implements must be stored securely when not in use.

Any activity involving a weapon or training implement must be assessed for risk before it is introduced.

7. Children, Young People and Adults Requiring Additional Support

All participants must be treated with dignity and respect. Instructors must consider individual needs and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

For children and young people, training must reflect their physical development, maturity, experience and ability to understand instructions.

Where a participant has a disability, medical condition, injury or other support need that may affect safe participation, the instructor should consider appropriate adjustments and seek relevant advice where necessary.

Parents and carers must provide accurate and relevant information about a child's medical needs, injuries and emergency contacts. Participants must be encouraged to tell the instructor if they feel unwell, experience pain or feel unsafe.

Consent to participate does not remove the instructor's duty of care.

All safeguarding concerns must be dealt with under the Academy's Safeguarding Policy and applicable reporting procedures.

8. First Aid, Injury and Medical Emergencies

First-aid arrangements must be appropriate to the venue, activity and foreseeable risks.

DKA will ensure that its training arrangements include access to suitable first-aid provision and that the required emergency contact information and procedures are available.

Where first aid is required, the instructor must ensure that:

- The activity is stopped and the immediate area made safe.
- The injured person receives appropriate assistance from a suitably trained person.
- Emergency services are contacted where necessary.
- Parents or carers are informed promptly when a child is injured or becomes unwell, as appropriate.
- Accidents, injuries and significant incidents are recorded in accordance with Academy procedures.
- Any equipment or training arrangements contributing to an incident are reviewed before the activity resumes.

Suspected concussion, significant head injury, serious bleeding, suspected fracture, neck or spinal injury, breathing difficulties or loss of consciousness must be treated seriously.

Emergency services must be contacted where clinically indicated. A participant with a suspected serious injury must not be encouraged to continue training.

Following an incident, the instructor must review whether changes to the activity, equipment, supervision or risk assessment are necessary.

9. Instructor Responsibilities and Supervision

The Chief Instructor and all instructors and assistant instructors are responsible for promoting safe practice within their roles and level of competence.

Instructors must:

- Hold appropriate qualifications and authorisation for the activities they teach.
- Maintain relevant training, including safeguarding and first aid, as required for their role.
- Follow applicable governing-body rules, Academy policies and venue requirements.
- Plan sessions appropriate to the participants and available facilities.
- Maintain active supervision and intervene promptly when unsafe behaviour occurs.
- Demonstrate techniques responsibly and explain relevant risks.
- Never encourage participants to take unnecessary risks or continue through significant pain.
- Treat all participants fairly and challenge bullying, intimidation and unsafe conduct.
- Report accidents, hazards and safeguarding concerns through the appropriate procedures.

Assistant instructors must work within their competence and delegated responsibilities. They must seek guidance when unsure and must not independently introduce activities beyond their training or authority.

10. Participant Responsibilities

All students are expected to contribute to a safe training environment.

Participants must:

- Follow instructions from the instructor and stop immediately when told to do so.
- Treat training partners with respect.
- Use techniques only as instructed.
- Avoid excessive force, reckless behaviour and deliberate injury.

- Use equipment responsibly.
- Report injuries, pain, illness, hazards or unsafe behaviour.
- Respect personal boundaries and the right of another participant to decline a partner exercise or raise a concern.

Parents and carers are expected to support these requirements and provide relevant information needed to help their child participate safely.

11. Risk Assessment and Review

Risk assessments must be undertaken where appropriate for training activities, venues, equipment and events. They must be reviewed when circumstances change or following an incident, near miss or identified safety concern.

Where a risk cannot be adequately controlled, the relevant activity must not proceed.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if required by changes in legislation, safeguarding guidance, governing-body rules, the Academy's activities or lessons learned from incidents.

The current version must be made available to instructors, participants and parents or carers as appropriate.

12. Policy Statement

Driffield Karate Academy is committed to ensuring that karate training is conducted responsibly, with the safety, welfare and development of participants at the forefront of every activity.

Karate should develop confidence, discipline, fitness, respect and technical ability without exposing participants to avoidable harm. Safe practice is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Academy.

Signed: Karen Turner, Chief Instructor
Organisation: Driffield Karate Academy
Policy review: October 2027