

Karate & Dance Fed Ltd - 17150545

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Missing Child, Elopement & Uncollected Child Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Karate & Dance Federation Ltd (KDF) is committed to ensuring that children remain appropriately supervised from the point they are accepted into KDF care until they are collected, released under an agreed arrangement or otherwise leave safely. A missing child, unexpected elopement or failure of an authorised adult to collect a child can create an immediate safeguarding risk and must be treated seriously.

KDF recognises that children may leave a supervised area for different reasons. A child may become lost accidentally, leave during emotional dysregulation, attempt to run from a demand or sensory trigger, follow another person, leave because of conflict, or intentionally abscond. The response must therefore consider both the immediate safety risk and the individual circumstances of the child.

KDF will respond quickly, proportionately and without unnecessary delay. Staff will prioritise locating and safeguarding the child, maintaining supervision of the remaining group, contacting parents or guardians and involving police or emergency services where the circumstances require it.

KDF's approach reflects its values of Kindness, Diversity, Friendship and supports the KDF Promise: Every Student, Every Session, Every Time.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish KDF's procedures for preventing and responding to missing children, elopement, absconding, unexpected leaving, failed collection and late collection.

It also explains how staff should manage search activity, site security, parent communication, police contact, safeguarding referral, individual risk planning and post-incident review.

The policy is intended to provide staff with clear action during circumstances that may become urgent very quickly.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all children and young people under eighteen participating in KDF activity.

It applies during ordinary lessons, breaks, performances, gradings, external events, trips, transition periods, arrival and collection, and any other activity where KDF has accepted responsibility for supervising a child.

It also applies to staff, coaches, administrators, volunteers, junior coaches and young leaders insofar as they have responsibilities relating to supervision and escalation.

4. Definitions

For this policy, a missing child is a child whose whereabouts are unknown when they should reasonably be under KDF supervision.

Elopement means a child leaving, or attempting to leave, a supervised area unexpectedly and without appropriate adult agreement. This may be associated with SEND, dysregulation, anxiety, sensory overload or other individual needs.

An uncollected child is a child who remains in KDF care after the agreed collection time because the responsible adult has not arrived or cannot be contacted.

These situations overlap but may require different practical responses.

5. Safeguarding Principles

A missing child incident must be treated first as a safety and safeguarding matter rather than a disciplinary issue.

The immediate priority is to establish the child's location, protect them from harm and ensure the remaining children continue to be supervised safely.

Staff must not delay escalation because they are concerned about embarrassment, blame or how the incident may reflect on KDF.

6. Supervision Responsibilities

Staff are responsible for maintaining appropriate awareness of the children in their care throughout the session.

Attendance registers, transition counts and active supervision should be used to support accountability.

Supervision does not mean that every child must be watched continuously without interruption, but staff should know who is present and respond promptly when a child is unexpectedly absent.

7. Arrival

Children should enter through the approved KDF access arrangements.

Parents and guardians should ensure that younger or otherwise vulnerable children are handed over appropriately rather than simply left outside the premises.

KDF responsibility begins when the child has been accepted into the session or another agreed handover arrangement has taken place.

8. Attendance Recording

Attendance should be recorded accurately at the beginning of the session and updated where a child arrives late or leaves early.

Where KDF uses digital attendance systems, staff should still remain aware of the actual children physically present.

An inaccurate register can delay identification of a missing child and must therefore be treated as a serious operational concern.

9. Transition Checks

Particular attention should be given during transitions, breaks, movement between spaces, toilet visits and changes of activity.

These periods can create increased opportunity for a child to move away unnoticed.

Staff should use proportionate headcounts, visual checks or register verification where appropriate.

10. High-Risk Times

Arrival, collection, toilet access, crowded events, external venues and moments of dysregulation are recognised as higher-risk periods.

Staff should increase awareness during these times, especially where the child has a known history of running, hiding, leaving or becoming disoriented.

Supervision should remain proportionate and should not unnecessarily stigmatise the child.

11. Known Elopement Risk

Where a child has a known history of elopement, running or limited danger awareness, KDF should consider an individual risk-management plan.

The plan should identify triggers, early warning signs, preferred regulation strategies, likely locations the child may move toward, communication methods and emergency arrangements.

Parents or guardians should normally contribute to this planning.

12. SEND and Elopement

KDF recognises that elopement can occur as a response to sensory overload, anxiety, demand avoidance, communication frustration or emotional dysregulation.

Staff should not automatically treat elopement as deliberate defiance.

Prevention should focus on understanding triggers, improving regulation support and reducing unnecessary escalation while preserving essential safety boundaries.

13. Early Warning Signs

Staff should become familiar with signs that a child may be preparing to leave.

These may include moving repeatedly toward exits, verbalising an intention to leave, pacing, increased agitation, hiding near doorways, attempting to collect belongings suddenly or disengaging from staff.

Early intervention may include offering regulation support, reducing demands or moving the child away from an exit area.

14. Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat

The Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat may be offered where a child appears likely to elope because of dysregulation or sensory overload.

The Retreats should provide a safer alternative to leaving the supervised environment.

They must not be used to trap, lock in or physically contain a child against their will.

15. Site Security and Access Control

KDF's keyless-entry and access-control arrangements support child safety by reducing unauthorised entry and uncontrolled exit.

Staff should not disable, prop open or circumvent controlled doors in ways that increase elopement risk.

Security arrangements must nevertheless remain compatible with fire-safety requirements and must not prevent lawful emergency escape.

16. If a Child Is Missing

Where a child cannot be located, the staff member identifying the concern must alert the lead adult immediately.

The child's last known location, time last seen, clothing and any known risk factors should be established quickly.

A search should begin without unnecessary delay while another adult maintains safe supervision of the remaining children.

17. Immediate Search

The initial search should focus on likely and accessible areas within the premises and immediately outside.

This may include toilets, Retreat areas, waiting spaces, offices where relevant, corners, storage-adjacent areas, outdoor waiting areas and known preferred locations.

Staff should avoid duplicating effort unnecessarily and should communicate clearly about which areas have been checked.

18. Search Coordination

Where staffing permits, one senior adult should coordinate the response.

That person should ensure that the premises search, external checking, parent contact and police escalation are considered systematically rather than everyone leaving the main group to search independently.

The wider student group must remain appropriately supervised throughout.

19. External Search

If there is reason to believe the child has left the premises, staff may check the immediate surrounding area where this can be done safely and without abandoning other children.

Staff should consider the child's age, road awareness, emotional state, known destinations and any immediate environmental hazards.

An extensive community search should not delay police contact where risk is significant.

20. Police Contact

Police should be contacted promptly where the child cannot be located and there is a reasonable concern for their safety.

Police involvement should be immediate where the child is very young, vulnerable, has limited road-safety awareness, has a relevant medical condition, is distressed, may be at risk of exploitation or harm, or has left into a hazardous environment.

There is no requirement to wait for a fixed period before reporting a missing child to police.

21. Emergency Situations

Where the child is believed to be in immediate danger, staff must call 999.

Examples may include a child running toward a road, railway, water, unknown adult or other significant hazard.

Management permission is not required before contacting emergency services.

22. Parent or Guardian Contact

Parents or guardians should be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable once the child is identified as missing or has left the premises unexpectedly.

Communication should be factual and calm.

Parent contact must not delay police involvement where immediate risk requires urgent escalation.

23. Information for Police

Where police are contacted, staff should be ready to provide the child's name, age, description, clothing, last known location, time last seen, known risks, likely destinations and any relevant medical or SEND information.

A recent photograph may assist where available and lawfully accessible.

Only relevant information should be shared.

24. Staff Pursuit

Staff should not engage in unsafe pursuit that creates additional risk.

Where a child is running but remains visible, an adult may follow at a safe distance and use calm verbal reassurance.

Staff must not run into traffic, climb unsafe structures or otherwise expose themselves or others to serious danger in an attempt to catch the child.

25. Physical Intervention to Prevent Elopement

Where a child is about to enter immediate danger, staff may use reasonable physical intervention to prevent harm.

Any intervention must be proportionate and use the minimum force necessary for the shortest possible time.

Physical intervention should not be used simply because a child wishes to leave an activity area where no immediate safety risk exists.

26. Picking Up or Carrying a Child

A young or vulnerable child may be picked up or carried where this is the safest reasonable means of preventing immediate harm.

Staff should consider the Physical Contact & Appropriate Touch Policy and avoid lifting a struggling child where doing so increases risk unless immediate danger requires intervention.

Any significant carrying or physical intervention should be recorded.

27. Child Located Within the Premises

Where the child is found safe within the premises, staff should first ensure immediate welfare and regulation.

The response should avoid public humiliation or angry confrontation.

Once the child is calm, staff should establish enough information to understand what happened and whether any safeguarding or support issue contributed.

28. Child Located Outside the Premises

Where the child is found outside, staff should return them to a safe environment where appropriate and assess whether they are injured, distressed or require medical support.

Parents should be informed and police updated if they have already been contacted.

The child should not be immediately subjected to disciplinary questioning while distressed.

29. Child Returns Independently

If a child returns independently after leaving unexpectedly, the same welfare and safeguarding response applies.

Staff should inform any agencies or family members already involved in the search.

The incident still requires review even if the child returns quickly and without injury.

30. Missing Child at External Venues

At external venues, KDF should establish the venue's own missing-child procedures before or during significant events where practicable.

If a KDF child becomes missing, KDF staff should immediately coordinate with venue security or management while maintaining responsibility for the child.

Police contact should not be delayed because venue staff are conducting their own search.

31. Events and Crowded Environments

Crowded performances, awards events and competitions may create increased risk of separation.

Staff should establish clear meeting points, collection arrangements and supervision responsibilities.

Younger children should not be expected to navigate large venues independently without an agreed arrangement.

32. Toilets

Children using toilets should normally be allowed appropriate privacy, but staff should remain alert where a child is absent for an unusually long period.

Younger or particularly vulnerable children may require additional monitoring consistent with safeguarding and dignity.

Toilet checks must be conducted appropriately and should not compromise privacy unnecessarily.

33. Hidden Child Within the Building

Some children may hide rather than leave the premises.

Staff should consider this possibility during searches, especially where the child is anxious, distressed or avoiding a demand.

Search activity should include suitable spaces while avoiding unsafe entry into restricted or hazardous areas.

34. Deliberate Absconding

Where an older child deliberately leaves despite being aware of expectations, the behaviour may require follow-up under KDF's Behaviour Management Policy.

However, the immediate response remains safeguarding-led.

Intentional leaving may itself indicate distress, conflict, exploitation or another underlying issue that requires further assessment.

35. Safeguarding Considerations

A missing or elopement incident may indicate wider safeguarding concerns.

A child may be attempting to reach or avoid a particular person, may fear collection, may be experiencing peer conflict or may be responding to abuse, exploitation or family difficulty.

The Safeguarding Lead should be informed where the circumstances indicate broader risk.

36. Uncollected Children

A child who remains after the agreed collection time must continue to be supervised safely.

KDF must not leave a child alone, require them to wait outside or send them home independently unless this is part of an established and age-appropriate arrangement.

Staff should begin the late-collection process promptly rather than waiting indefinitely before making contact.

37. Initial Late Collection Response

Where a parent or guardian is late, staff should attempt to contact them using the recorded contact information.

Where there is no response, alternative authorised contacts should be tried where appropriate.

The child should be reassured and supervised while contact attempts continue.

38. Reasonable Delay

KDF recognises that occasional delays occur because of traffic, emergencies or unexpected circumstances.

A short communicated delay should normally be managed proportionately.

Repeated late collection or failure to communicate may require formal follow-up.

39. Persistent Late Collection

Persistent late collection can create safeguarding, staffing and operational concerns.

KDF may meet with the family to review expectations and determine whether practical support or alternative arrangements are required.

Where repeated late collection suggests neglect or places the child at significant risk, safeguarding advice may be sought.

40. No Contact With Parent or Guardian

Where no responsible adult can be contacted and the child remains uncollected, the situation should be escalated to senior staff and the Safeguarding Lead.

KDF should assess the child's age, vulnerability, time elapsed, family circumstances and whether there is reason for wider concern.

Children's social care or police may need to be contacted where safe collection cannot be secured.

41. Staff Taking a Child Home

Staff must not ordinarily take an uncollected child to their own home.

Transporting a child personally should not become the default solution to failed collection.

Where exceptional circumstances require transport, this must be authorised and managed transparently in accordance with safeguarding and transport arrangements.

42. Releasing a Child to an Unfamiliar Adult

A child should not be released to an unfamiliar person solely because that person claims to have been sent by the parent.

KDF should seek confirmation using known contact details or another agreed verification method.

Where identity or authority cannot be confirmed, the child should remain supervised until the situation is resolved.

43. Changes to Collection Arrangements

Parents should notify KDF where someone different will collect the child.

Where notice is given informally or at short notice, staff should use reasonable steps to verify the change.

The process should be proportionate while prioritising the child's safety.

44. Children Permitted to Leave Independently

Older children may be permitted to leave independently where this has been agreed with parents or guardians and is appropriate to age and circumstances.

The arrangement should be clear and consistently recorded.

Staff should not assume independent travel is permitted simply because a child appears mature.

45. Court Orders and Collection Restrictions

Where KDF is informed of a court order, safeguarding restriction or other legally relevant collection arrangement, the information should be recorded securely and shared with those who need to implement it.

Staff should avoid becoming involved in wider family disputes beyond what is necessary to keep the child safe.

Where a person attempts to remove a child contrary to a known restriction and immediate risk exists, police should be contacted.

46. Domestic Abuse and Collection Risk

Where domestic abuse, stalking or coercive control affects collection arrangements, KDF should establish safe and discreet procedures.

Staff should not disclose the child's attendance or collection arrangements to a person who may pose a risk.

The Safeguarding Lead should coordinate with relevant agencies where necessary.

47. Aggressive Collection Incidents

If an adult becomes aggressive, threatening or violent during collection, staff should prioritise the safety of children and staff.

The child should not be handed over merely to end the confrontation where there is a genuine safeguarding concern about immediate safety.

Police should be contacted where necessary.

48. Child Refusing Collection

Where a child strongly refuses to leave with an authorised adult, staff should not automatically dismiss the behaviour.

The reason should be explored calmly and safeguarding concerns considered.

Where the child discloses fear or abuse, the safeguarding procedure should take priority over ordinary collection arrangements.

49. Documentation

Missing-child, elopement and serious uncollected-child incidents must be recorded accurately.

The record should include timings, locations searched, people contacted, police or social-care involvement, how the child was located, the child's condition and any subsequent safeguarding or behaviour action.

Routine minor lateness need not become a safeguarding incident record unless patterns or circumstances warrant it.

50. Timeline Recording

For significant missing-child incidents, a clear chronological record should be maintained where practicable.

This should show when the child was last seen, when the absence was identified, when searches began, when parents were contacted, when police were contacted and when the child was located.

Accurate timelines support investigation and organisational learning.

51. CCTV and Digital Information

Where KDF has lawful access to CCTV or access-control information that may assist in locating a missing child, this may be reviewed by authorised personnel.

Digital information should be used proportionately and preserved where relevant to an investigation.

CCTV review must not delay immediate physical search or police contact.

52. Communication With Other Families

KDF should not disclose unnecessary information about a missing-child incident to other families.

Where a significant incident disrupts a session, parents may receive a general explanation where appropriate.

The child's personal or safeguarding information should remain confidential.

53. Media and Social Media

Staff, parents and outsourced social-media personnel must not publish information about an active missing-child incident without appropriate authorisation.

Police may determine that public appeals are necessary, but this should be coordinated through the relevant authorities.

KDF social-media channels must not become an unofficial search or speculation forum.

54. Post-Incident Welfare

A missing or elopement incident can be frightening for the child, other students and staff.

The child should be supported calmly following return and should not be publicly shamed.

Other students who witnessed the incident may also require reassurance.

55. Debrief With the Child

Where appropriate, the child should be given an opportunity to explain what happened once they are calm and safe.

Discussion should focus on understanding triggers, feelings, decisions and what may help next time.

The conversation should not become an interrogation or demand for an immediate apology.

56. Parent Review

Following a significant incident, KDF may meet with the parent or guardian to review what occurred and agree preventative measures.

The discussion should consider known triggers, communication strategies, collection arrangements, supervision and whether an individual plan is required.

Families should be encouraged to share relevant information that may help reduce future risk.

57. Individual Elopement Plan

Where risk is recurring, KDF may create a written individual elopement or safety plan.

The plan may include supervision arrangements, high-risk triggers, preferred calming strategies, door and transition controls, likely destinations, emergency contacts and escalation thresholds.

The plan should be reviewed after any significant incident.

58. Reasonable Adjustments

Where elopement is linked to disability or SEND, KDF should consider reasonable adjustments to reduce foreseeable risk.

Adjustments may include additional transition support, visual schedules, reduced waiting, structured choices, increased supervision around exits or use of the Retreat.

Adjustments should support inclusion while maintaining realistic safety boundaries.

59. Behaviour Consequences

Where an older or competent child leaves deliberately in circumstances not primarily driven by dysregulation or safeguarding need, behaviour consequences may be appropriate.

Any consequence should remain proportionate and should focus on safety and responsibility.

The child should not be punished for behaviour that arose from circumstances they could not reasonably control.

60. Suspension

Temporary suspension may be considered where repeated elopement creates a serious safety risk that cannot currently be managed.

Suspension should allow KDF and the family to develop a safer plan rather than operate purely as punishment.

SEND and reasonable-adjustment duties must be considered where relevant.

61. Ending Membership

In rare circumstances, KDF may conclude that it cannot safely manage repeated elopement despite reasonable adjustments and risk-management efforts.

Any decision to end membership should consider severity, frequency, environmental risk, staffing capacity, family engagement and adjustments attempted.

Safeguarding responsibilities remain in place regardless of membership status.

62. Staff Deployment During a Missing-Child Incident

Staff should avoid a situation in which all adults leave the main group to search.

One or more adults must continue supervising the remaining students safely.

Where staffing levels are insufficient to manage both the search and the group safely, emergency assistance should be sought promptly.

63. Junior Coaches and Young Leaders

Junior coaches and young leaders should not be expected to lead a missing-child search, pursue a child outside the premises or manage an uncollected child alone.

They should alert an adult immediately and follow instructions.

Their own safety must remain protected during the response.

64. Lone Working

Where a staff member is alone with an uncollected child after other staff have left, additional safeguarding precautions should be taken.

This may include maintaining visibility, informing another senior person, keeping communication records and avoiding isolated or closed environments.

KDF should minimise prolonged lone situations wherever reasonably practicable.

65. External Agency Cooperation

KDF will cooperate fully with police, children's social care and other safeguarding agencies following significant incidents.

Relevant records, timelines and factual information should be provided lawfully when requested.

KDF will not obstruct enquiries or alter records to reduce organisational embarrassment.

66. Near Misses

A near miss should be recorded where a child almost left undetected, reached an unsafe exit or was prevented from entering significant danger.

Near misses are important because they may reveal weaknesses in supervision, access control or individual planning.

Corrective action should be considered before a more serious incident occurs.

67. Premises Review

A missing-child or elopement incident may reveal a need to review doors, waiting areas, staff positioning, signage, visibility or access-control arrangements.

KDF should consider whether physical premises changes could reduce recurrence.

Any change must remain compatible with fire safety and accessibility.

68. Safeguarding Review

The Safeguarding Lead should review significant incidents to determine whether they indicate wider welfare or protection concerns.

Repeated elopement, refusal to go home, fear of collection or attempts to reach a particular person may require further safeguarding assessment.

Behaviour and safeguarding processes should operate together where necessary.

69. Training

Staff should receive information about missing-child, elopement and uncollected-child procedures appropriate to their role.

Training should include immediate response, search coordination, police escalation, collection verification, SEND considerations and safeguarding triggers.

New staff should understand these procedures before being left with significant supervision responsibility.

70. Practice and Preparedness

KDF may review procedures through safeguarding discussions, scenario training or operational briefings.

The aim is to ensure that staff know who will supervise the group, who will search, who will contact parents and who will make emergency calls.

Preparedness reduces confusion during urgent incidents.

71. Kindness

The value of Kindness means responding to a missing, eloping or uncollected child with calmness and care rather than anger or embarrassment.

A child returning after an incident should feel safe enough to explain what happened.

Kindness also requires staff to support children who may have been frightened by another student going missing.

72. Diversity

The value of Diversity means recognising that children may leave supervised areas for different reasons and that SEND, communication, anxiety or sensory needs may affect risk.

KDF will avoid one-size-fits-all assumptions and will provide reasonable individual support where required.

Different safety arrangements may be necessary for different children.

73. Friendship

The value of Friendship means students should be encouraged to alert an adult if they notice another child leaving, hiding or appearing lost.

Students should not be asked to chase, physically restrain or search independently for another child.

Looking out for one another means seeking appropriate adult help.

74. The KDF Promise

This policy supports the KDF Promise: Every Student, Every Session, Every Time.

Every student should be accounted for, appropriately supervised and released safely at the end of KDF activity.

Where a child is missing, elopes or remains uncollected, the Promise requires immediate action, calm safeguarding judgement and continued responsibility until the child is safe.

75. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside KDF's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Roles, Reporting & Responding to Concerns Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Aggressive, Volatile & Challenging Behaviour Policy, Physical Contact & Appropriate Touch Policy, SEND Policy, Early Years Policy, Student, Parent, Guardian & Visitor Code of Conduct, Site Security, Keyless Entry, Access Control & Lockdown Policy, Emergency, Critical Incident & Business Continuity Policy, Lone Working & Personal Safety Policy, First Aid & Emergency Medical Response Policy, Attendance Policy and Accident, Incident, Near-Miss & RIDDOR Policy.

These policies should be applied together where missing-child, elopement or collection concerns overlap with safeguarding, behaviour, SEND, medical needs, physical intervention, security or emergency response.

76. Policy Review

This policy will normally be reviewed annually, but an earlier review will take place following a significant missing-child incident, police involvement, serious elopement event, safeguarding referral, repeated late collection, change to access-control arrangements or evidence that existing procedures are ineffective.

KDF will use incident reviews, near misses, family feedback and staff learning to strengthen prevention and response.

KDF will continue to ensure that children remain appropriately accounted for from arrival to safe collection, with clear procedures that prioritise protection, dignity and timely action.