

Karate & Dance Fed Ltd - 17150545

Chief Executive Officer: Mr. J Byrne



Early Years Policy

Document Reference Number	SCL15
Title	Early Years Policy
Policy Owner	Mr. Jake Byrne
Version	1.0
Date Written	14.09.2026
Date Ratified	September 2026
Next Review Date	September 2027

Version Control

Version	Last Modified	Modified By	Document Changes

1. Policy Statement

Karate & Dance Federation Ltd (KDF) is committed to providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate Early Years provision that is safe, engaging, inclusive and rooted in play, movement, imagination and positive relationships. Early Years students should experience KDF as a place where they are welcomed warmly, encouraged to explore, supported to regulate and given meaningful opportunities to develop confidence, independence and physical skills.

KDF expects Early Years provision to be deliberately different from provision for older children. Sessions should not simply be shortened versions of Junior Karate or Junior Dance. Teaching should reflect the developmental needs of younger children and use imaginative themes, sensory stimulation, child-led exploration, predictable routines and appropriate opportunities for choice.

The Chief Executive Officer is trained in Early Years practice and sets high expectations for the quality, consistency and developmental appropriateness of Early Years delivery across KDF Karate and KDF Dance. Early Years provision is therefore expected to demonstrate clear curriculum intent, purposeful adaptation and a strong understanding of how young children learn through play, repetition, movement and relationships.

KDF's Early Years 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 expectations for Early Years teaching, curriculum design, safeguarding, behaviour support, sensory regulation, rewards, parent communication and session structure.

It provides a clear framework for staff delivering Early Years karate and dance so that younger children receive provision that is age-appropriate, imaginative and inclusive while remaining aligned with KDF's wider safeguarding, curriculum and behaviour standards.

The policy also explains how KDF uses tools such as the Jungle Magic Bag, Reward Station, Sensei Spots, sensory stimulation warm-up and warm-down activities, adapted session structure and jungle-themed music to create an engaging Early Years learning environment.

3. Scope

This policy applies to KDF Early Years students participating in relevant karate and dance provision.

It applies to all staff, coaches, assistant coaches, volunteers and junior leaders involved in Early Years sessions, together with senior leaders responsible for quality assurance and curriculum oversight.

The policy should be read alongside KDF's safeguarding, behaviour, physical contact, attendance, SEND and medical arrangements.

4. Early Years Philosophy

KDF believes that young children learn best when they are actively engaged, emotionally secure and given opportunities to explore within clear boundaries.

Early Years teaching should therefore combine structure with flexibility. Coaches should know what they want children to learn while remaining responsive to children's interests, attention, confidence and developmental needs.

Play and imagination are legitimate learning tools and should not be treated as distractions from karate or dance content.

5. High Expectations

KDF maintains high expectations for Early Years provision.

High expectations do not mean expecting young children to behave like older students. They mean expecting staff to provide excellent preparation, positive relationships, purposeful activities, clear routines and developmentally appropriate challenge.

Children should be encouraged to try, participate, build independence and develop progressively, while staff adapt the way learning is presented.

6. CEO Early Years Leadership

The Chief Executive Officer is trained in Early Years practice and provides organisational leadership for the quality and development of KDF's Early Years provision.

This includes setting expectations around curriculum design, child development, learning through play, behaviour support, inclusion, sensory regulation and the quality of the environment.

Lead Coaches remain responsible for effective day-to-day delivery within their departments while working within the standards established by KDF leadership.

7. Curriculum Intent

Early Years sessions should have clear learning intentions while remaining accessible and enjoyable.

Karate and dance skills should be introduced through age-appropriate movement, stories, games, repetition, rhythm, imagination and exploration.

Curriculum planning should consider physical development, listening, communication, confidence, turn-taking, self-regulation, creativity and social interaction alongside technical skill.

8. Adapted Early Years Sessions

Early Years sessions should be specifically adapted for younger children rather than following the same structure used for older classes.

This may include shorter activity blocks, more frequent transitions, greater use of visual or imaginative prompts, sensory elements, movement exploration and structured choice.

Session pacing should reflect the attention and regulation needs of the group.

9. Jungle-Themed Learning Environment

KDF may use a jungle-themed environment and language to support engagement across Early Years provision.

Jungle themes should be woven meaningfully into activities, movement challenges, stories, rewards and sensory experiences rather than used only as decoration.

The theme should help children connect with the activity and make learning memorable.

10. Jungle Music

Adapted Early Years sessions may use jungle music as part of the learning environment.

Music can support transitions, rhythm, imagination, sensory engagement and atmosphere and may be used during arrival, warm-up, movement activities or warm-down.

Volume should remain appropriate and should be adjusted where children have sensory sensitivities or communication needs.

11. Sensory Stimulation Warm-Up

Early Years sessions should include a sensory stimulation warm-up designed to prepare children physically and emotionally for participation.

This may involve movement, rhythm, simple sensory prompts, music, visual cues, animal movements, balance work or guided exploration.

The warm-up should help children transition from arrival into the session while supporting body awareness and readiness to learn.

12. Purpose of the Warm-Up

The sensory stimulation warm-up should be purposeful rather than overstimulating.

It should support regulation, gross motor development, spatial awareness, coordination and confidence.

Coaches should observe how children respond and reduce intensity where a child becomes overwhelmed.

13. Sensory Warm-Down

Early Years sessions should also include a sensory warm-down to support calm transition at the end of the session.

This may include slower movement, breathing, stretching, calm music, simple sensory cues or reflective activities.

The purpose is to help children regulate before collection rather than ending abruptly at a high level of excitement.

14. Child-Led Learning

Child-led learning is an important part of KDF's Early Years approach.

Children should be given opportunities to make choices, explore movement and influence aspects of the session within safe boundaries.

This does not remove the role of the coach; rather, the coach uses children's interests and responses to extend learning.

15. Jungle Magic Bag

The Jungle Magic Bag is one of KDF's Early Years child-led learning tools.

The bag may contain themed objects, visual prompts, animals, props or other resources that children can select or reveal to shape the next activity.

This encourages curiosity, choice, communication and imagination while allowing the coach to link the child's selection back to the intended learning objective.

16. Using the Jungle Magic Bag

The Jungle Magic Bag should be used flexibly and purposefully.

A child may choose an item that determines an animal movement, karate challenge, dance action, rhythm, story direction or group task.

The coach remains responsible for ensuring that whatever is selected is translated into a safe and meaningful learning opportunity.

17. Choice and Independence

Young children should be supported to develop independence through manageable choices.

This may include choosing between two movement options, selecting a prop, deciding which animal theme to explore or choosing a position within the activity.

Choice should remain structured enough that children are not overwhelmed by too many options.

18. KDF Strong Start

Where appropriate, Early Years students may take part in an adapted KDF Strong Start.

This should be simpler and more supported than the version used with older students and may include a visual matching task, movement station, simple prop activity or familiar independent challenge.

The purpose is to help children settle while staff complete arrival and handover.

19. Predictable Routines

Young children benefit from predictable routines.

Sessions should therefore follow a recognisable pattern, even where the activities and themes change.

A consistent beginning, warm-up, learning phase, child-led element, regulation opportunity and warm-down can help children understand what will happen next.

20. Visual Support

Visual timetables, picture cards, simple demonstrations and object cues may be used to support understanding.

These can be particularly helpful for younger children, children with SEND or children who are still developing verbal communication.

Visual support should complement, not replace, warm and responsive adult interaction.

21. Communication

Staff should use simple, positive and developmentally appropriate language.

Instructions should be short enough for young children to process and should be supported by demonstration where useful.

Coaches should avoid lengthy explanations that reduce engagement.

22. Learning Through Repetition

Repetition is an important feature of Early Years learning.

Children may need to experience the same movement, routine or instruction many times before it becomes secure.

Coaches should use repetition creatively rather than interpreting it as a lack of progress.

23. Movement and Physical Development

Early Years provision should support broad physical development alongside discipline-specific skills.

Activities may develop balance, coordination, agility, rhythm, spatial awareness, core movement patterns and body control.

Technical expectations should remain appropriate to age and should not prioritise precision over confidence and safe exploration.

24. Behaviour Expectations

Early Years children are still developing emotional regulation, attention and impulse control.

Behaviour expectations should therefore be clear but realistic.

Staff should use redirection, praise, visual cues, choice, regulation support and restorative language rather than punitive approaches.

25. Behaviour as Communication

KDF recognises that behaviour in Early Years may communicate tiredness, anxiety, sensory overload, frustration, hunger, confusion or difficulty with transition.

Staff should seek to understand the cause rather than simply labelling the behaviour as disobedience.

Consistent boundaries should remain in place while the response is adapted to the child's needs.

26. Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat

Early Years students may access the Tiger Retreat in karate or Leopard Retreat in dance where they require a quieter space to regulate.

The Retreat should be presented positively and never as punishment.

Staff should support the child to return when they are ready and should avoid creating shame around needing a break.

27. Reward Station

The Reward Station is part of KDF's wider values-based recognition approach.

Early Years children may engage with the Reward Station in a simplified and developmentally appropriate way where this supports the session.

Recognition should remain connected to Kindness, Diversity and Friendship rather than purely technical achievement.

28. Three Values Recognition

Where the full Reward Station model is used, three children may be selected, with one recognised for Kindness, one for Diversity, and one for Friendship.

Staff should identify specific observable examples so that young children begin to understand what each value looks like in practice.

Recognition should remain positive and should not create pressure or comparison.

29. Sensei Spots

Sensei Spots is KDF's Early Years karate recognition mascot.

A child may be selected to take Sensei Spots home, together with the associated notebook or family record of adventures.

The selection may recognise effort, confidence, participation, kindness, friendship, listening, bravery or trying something new.

30. Dancing Dodo

Within Early Years dance, Dancing Dodo provides the equivalent mascot-based recognition.

A child may take Dancing Dodo home and share an age-appropriate experience or adventure before returning it for another child.

The focus should remain belonging, excitement and positive engagement rather than competition.

31. Mascot Inclusion

Sensei Spots and Dancing Dodo should be used inclusively.

Children should not need to be the strongest performer or most confident speaker to be selected.

Staff should recognise effort and growth in quieter children, SEND students and children whose progress may look different from others.

32. Reward Dependency

Rewards should support positive culture but should not become the sole reason children participate.

Staff should continue to use descriptive praise, encouragement and relationship-based motivation.

Children should not be threatened with loss of a reward they have already earned because of later behaviour.

33. SEND Inclusion

Early Years provision should be inclusive of children with SEND wherever KDF can safely meet their needs.

Staff may adapt communication, pace, sensory input, transitions, activity length and expectations.

Additional support should aim to enable participation within the group rather than unnecessarily separating the child from peers.

34. Sensory Differences

Some children may seek or avoid particular sensory input.

Jungle music, props, textures, movement and visual stimulation should therefore be used flexibly rather than uniformly.

A child should not be forced to participate in a sensory activity that causes significant distress where a safe alternative is available.

35. Physical Contact

Early Years children may require more physical guidance, reassurance or practical assistance than older students.

Appropriate touch may include hand-holding, posture support, assisting with equipment, brief comforting contact or picking up a child where necessary and safe.

All physical contact must comply with KDF's Physical Contact & Appropriate Touch Policy.

36. Picking Up Children

Young children may occasionally need to be picked up because of distress, immediate danger, injury, fatigue or another legitimate welfare need.

This is permitted where necessary and proportionate.

Children should not be picked up as punishment or used physically to force ordinary compliance.

37. Safeguarding

All Early Years provision remains subject to KDF's safeguarding procedures.

Staff should be alert to changes in behaviour, unexplained injuries, distress around particular adults, unusual sexualised behaviour or other indicators of harm.

Concerns should be reported promptly to the Safeguarding Lead.

38. Arrival and Handover

Early Years children require clear and visible handover from parent or guardian to KDF.

Parents should not simply leave a young child outside or assume staff have taken responsibility without an agreed handover.

Staff should use the Main Office and arrival procedures to support a calm transition.

39. Collection

Early Years students should normally be released directly to an authorised adult.

Independent departure is not appropriate for this age group unless an exceptional and lawful arrangement exists.

Staff should remain particularly alert during busy collection periods.

40. Attendance

Regular attendance supports confidence, routine and familiarity.

Where a child misses two consecutive weeks, KDF's normal supportive attendance check-in process should apply.

Absence does not create an automatic entitlement to a refund or credit.

41. Toileting

Early Years children may need reminders or support around toileting.

KDF should preserve dignity and encourage independence while responding appropriately where assistance is necessary.

Any recurring intimate-care need should be managed through an agreed individual arrangement.

42. Snacks and Hydration

Young children should have appropriate access to drinks and any agreed snack arrangements.

Food and drink should be managed in accordance with allergy and food-safety policies.

Staff should remain aware of choking risk and individual dietary needs.

43. Medical Needs

Parents and guardians must provide relevant medical information and emergency medication.

Staff should understand any healthcare plan applicable to the child.

Medical needs should be incorporated into session planning rather than treated as an afterthought.

44. Parent Communication

Parents and guardians should receive clear communication about the structure and expectations of Early Years provision.

Staff should share relevant information about significant behaviour, medical incidents, progress or wellbeing concerns while respecting confidentiality.

Longer discussions should be arranged separately from busy arrival and collection periods where necessary.

45. Parent Partnership

KDF recognises parents and guardians as important partners in understanding the child.

Families may provide useful information about interests, communication, sensory needs, successful regulation strategies and recent changes.

KDF should listen to this information while retaining professional responsibility for session delivery.

46. Transition Into Older Classes

As children approach transition into older provision, KDF should support the change gradually where appropriate.

This may include familiarisation with different routines, longer activity blocks, greater independence and increased technical expectations.

Transition should be based on developmental readiness and the structure of KDF provision rather than age alone where flexibility is possible.

47. Environment

The Early Years environment should feel welcoming, organised and visually engaging without becoming chaotic.

Resources should be accessible where appropriate, hazardous items secured and pathways kept clear.

The jungle theme should support imagination while the physical environment remains safe and easy to supervise.

48. Equipment

Equipment used with Early Years children should be appropriate to age, size and ability.

Resources should be inspected and cleaned appropriately and should not create avoidable choking, trip or impact hazards.

Children may help with simple tidying where appropriate, but adults remain responsible for safe storage and environmental checks.

49. Staff Deployment

Staffing should reflect the needs of the group and the nature of the activities.

Where one child requires significant individual support, KDF should consider how the rest of the group will continue to be supervised safely.

Junior coaches may assist but must not hold sole responsibility for the class.

50. Junior Coaches and Young Leaders

Junior coaches and young leaders may support simple Early Years activities, demonstrate movements, encourage students and assist with ordinary routines under adult supervision.

They should not independently manage significant behaviour, intimate care, safeguarding concerns or medical emergencies.

An adult coach must remain responsible.

51. Positive Language

Staff should use positive, encouraging language and avoid labels such as “naughty”, “bad” or “difficult”.

Feedback should describe what the child can do next rather than focus only on what went wrong.

This supports confidence and reinforces KDF’s relationship-based approach.

52. Child Voice

Even very young children can express preferences, interests and discomfort.

Staff should observe and listen to these cues and use them to shape learning where appropriate.

Child-led practice should include genuine opportunities for children to influence the session.

53. Observation and Assessment

KDF may use informal observation to understand children's development, engagement and progression.

Observation should support curriculum planning rather than create unnecessary formal assessment.

Staff should notice changes in confidence, coordination, communication, independence and social participation over time.

54. Progression

Progress in Early Years should be understood broadly.

A child may progress through improved confidence, increased willingness to join in, better balance, longer concentration, stronger communication or more independent regulation.

Technical karate or dance progress is important but should not be the only measure of success.

55. Curriculum Pathways

Early Years provision should align with KDF's wider curriculum pathways while retaining its own age-appropriate teaching methods.

The learning journey should prepare children gradually for later karate or dance provision.

The Early Years curriculum should therefore provide foundation skills rather than attempt to accelerate children prematurely into older-group expectations.

56. Child-Led Exploration and Curriculum Balance

Child-led learning should not mean sessions have no structure.

Coaches should balance planned curriculum intentions with opportunities for children to influence how the learning is explored.

The Jungle Magic Bag is one way of achieving this balance by allowing child choice within a purposeful framework.

57. Sensory Stimulation and Regulation Balance

Sensory activities should energise and engage without creating unnecessary overload.

Coaches should vary intensity and recognise that one child may seek more stimulation while another requires less.

The warm-up and warm-down should therefore support both activation and regulation.

58. Music and Noise Levels

Jungle music should enhance the session rather than compete with instructions.

Coaches should reduce or pause music where verbal communication, safety or regulation requires it.

Children with auditory sensitivity should be supported through reasonable adjustments.

59. Inclusion in Rewards and Recognition

Recognition systems should not consistently favour the most verbal, confident or physically able children.

Staff should look for quieter examples of Kindness, Diversity and Friendship.

Inclusive recognition helps all children see that positive contribution takes many forms.

60. Restorative Practice

Restorative language may be used in simple Early Years form to help children understand impact.

Questions should be brief and concrete, for example what happened, how someone felt and what could help now.

Young children should not be expected to participate in lengthy reflective conversations beyond their developmental ability.

61. Aggressive or Challenging Behaviour

Where behaviour becomes aggressive or unsafe, staff should follow KDF's Aggressive, Volatile & Challenging Behaviour Policy.

Responses should remain calm and should prioritise safety and regulation.

The child's age and developmental stage must remain central to interpretation of the behaviour.

62. Elopement and Running

Some young children may attempt to leave an activity area impulsively.

Staff should maintain appropriate awareness of exits and use preventative strategies where elopement risk is known.

Any significant incident should be managed under the Missing Child, Elopement & Uncollected Child Policy.

63. Physical Safety

Early Years activities should be designed around safe movement and appropriate challenge.

Coaches should avoid expecting children to perform high-risk skills beyond their developmental ability.

Equipment, spacing and movement pathways should be adapted accordingly.

64. First Aid

Early Years students may experience minor bumps, falls and other everyday injuries during active play.

Staff should respond under KDF's First Aid & Emergency Medical Response Policy and communicate significant incidents to parents.

Any injury inconsistent with the explanation or raising safeguarding concern should be escalated.

65. Infection Prevention

Young children may require additional reminders around hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and not sharing drinks or personal items.

Cleaning routines should reflect the higher level of shared contact common in Early Years activities.

Children may participate in simple supervised tidying but must not handle hazardous chemicals or bodily fluid contamination.

66. Professional Boundaries

Warmth and affection are important in Early Years practice, but professional boundaries must remain clear.

Staff should avoid favouritism, private communication, secretive relationships or unnecessary physical familiarity.

Appropriate care should always be capable of being explained openly.

67. Quality Assurance

KDF will monitor Early Years provision through observation, curriculum review, feedback and leadership oversight.

Quality assurance should consider engagement, developmental appropriateness, child-led learning, sensory provision, inclusion, behaviour support and the quality of adult interaction.

High expectations apply to both karate and dance Early Years provision.

68. Staff Development

Staff working with Early Years children should receive appropriate guidance and development.

This may include child development, communication, behaviour, safeguarding, SEND, sensory regulation and play-based learning.

The CEO's Early Years training should inform organisational standards and ongoing development priorities.

69. Kindness

The value of Kindness means creating a warm environment in which young children feel safe to try, make mistakes and ask for help.

Staff should model patience and gentle correction.

Children should begin to learn that kindness can be shown through sharing, helping, waiting and caring for others.

70. Diversity

The value of Diversity means recognising that Early Years children develop at different rates and may communicate, regulate and participate differently.

KDF will adapt provision rather than expecting every child to learn in the same way.

Difference should be positively represented through activities, resources and adult language.

71. Friendship

The value of Friendship means helping young children develop turn-taking, cooperation, inclusion and positive peer relationships.

Staff should model how to join in, invite others and repair small conflicts.

Friendship should be taught through everyday interactions rather than assumed to develop automatically.

72. The KDF Promise

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

For Early Years students, the Promise means every session should feel purposeful, engaging, safe and appropriately adapted.

Through the Jungle Magic Bag, child-led learning, the Reward Station, Sensei Spots, Dancing Dodo, sensory stimulation warm-ups and warm-downs, jungle music and developmentally appropriate teaching, KDF will provide Early Years sessions that are recognisably designed for young children rather than simply reduced versions of older classes.

73. 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, Missing Child, Elopement & Uncollected Child Policy, Student Arrival, Collection, Handover & Supervision Policy, Student Attendance & Absence Policy, SEND Policy, Medical Needs, Medication & Individual Healthcare Support Policy, Allergy Awareness & Anaphylaxis Policy, First Aid & Emergency Medical Response Policy and Online Safety, Photography, Filming & Digital Communication Policy.

These policies should be applied together where Early Years needs overlap with safeguarding, behaviour, SEND, regulation, attendance, medical support, physical contact or digital activity.

74. Policy Review

This policy will normally be reviewed annually, but earlier review may take place following curriculum change, safeguarding learning, Early Years quality review, change to KDF's Early Years structure or evidence that current practice is not meeting organisational expectations.

KDF will continue to hold high expectations for Early Years provision and will expect sessions to be imaginative, engaging, developmentally appropriate and clearly different from older-group teaching.

The organisation will continue to develop its jungle-themed Early Years model around play, sensory regulation, child-led learning and positive relationships so that children begin their KDF journey with confidence and enjoyment.