

Karate & Dance Fed Ltd - 17150545

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Sensory Regulation & Calm Spaces Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Karate & Dance Federation Ltd (KDF) recognises that some students may become overwhelmed, dysregulated, anxious, overstimulated or emotionally distressed during karate, dance or related activities. KDF therefore provides structured sensory-regulation support and designated calm spaces to help students regain control, reduce distress and return to learning safely.

Sensory regulation is not treated as a reward, punishment or privilege. It is a support strategy that may be required because of SEND, emotional regulation needs, anxiety, sensory processing differences, fatigue, environmental stress or other individual circumstances.

KDF's calm-space model includes the Tiger Retreat within karate and the Leopard Retreat within dance. These spaces are intended to provide a safe, lower-stimulation environment for short periods of regulation and should never be used as isolation rooms, detention spaces or places in which a student is locked away.

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 clear expectations for sensory regulation, calm-space use, supervision, equipment, safety, reintegration and staff practice.

It aims to ensure that students who need sensory or emotional regulation support receive it consistently and safely while remaining connected to the wider KDF environment.

The policy also sets out how KDF should avoid overusing calm spaces in a way that unintentionally removes students from learning or creates dependence on withdrawal.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all KDF students who may benefit from sensory or emotional regulation support, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis.

It applies to staff, coaches, assistant coaches, volunteers and junior leaders involved in supervising or supporting students.

It applies to the Tiger Retreat, Leopard Retreat and any temporary or adapted calm area used during KDF activity or at external venues.

4. Sensory Regulation

Sensory regulation refers to the process of helping a person manage sensory input and emotional arousal so that they can remain or return to a state in which they can participate safely.

Some students may become overwhelmed by noise, movement, physical proximity, touch, lighting, waiting, transitions or other environmental factors.

Others may seek additional sensory input and benefit from structured movement, pressure, rhythm or similar support.

5. Emotional Regulation

Sensory regulation and emotional regulation often overlap.

A student may become dysregulated because of frustration, anxiety, peer conflict, task difficulty or sensory overload.

Staff should consider both the emotional and environmental context rather than assuming there is a single cause.

6. Calm Spaces

A calm space is a designated area that reduces stimulation and supports regulation.

At KDF, the principal calm spaces are the Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat.

These spaces should remain welcoming, safe, uncluttered and suitable for short-term regulation.

7. Tiger Retreat

The Tiger Retreat is KDF's karate calm and regulation space.

It may be used by students who need a temporary break from the main training environment because of sensory overload, emotional distress, anxiety or dysregulation.

Its purpose is to support successful return to participation rather than remove the student from the session permanently.

8. Leopard Retreat

The Leopard Retreat provides the equivalent calm and regulation space within dance provision.

It should operate under the same principles as the Tiger Retreat, with emphasis on dignity, safety, reduced stimulation and eventual reintegration.

The space should not be used to segregate students because their behaviour is inconvenient.

9. Access to Calm Spaces

Students may request access to a calm space or may be offered it by staff where dysregulation is observed.

Access should be supportive rather than coercive.

Students should not be required to "earn" use of the Retreat and should not lose access as a consequence for behaviour.

10. Voluntary Use

Where a student recognises that they need a break and asks to use the Retreat, this should be viewed positively.

Self-identifying the need for regulation is an important skill.

Staff should reinforce this without making the student feel different or embarrassed.

11. Staff-Suggested Use

Staff may suggest Retreat use when they observe early signs of overwhelm or escalation.

The suggestion should be framed as an option and not as a threat.

Where a student does not want to use the Retreat, staff should consider alternative regulation support unless immediate safety requires stronger intervention.

12. Calm Spaces Are Not Punishment

The Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat must never be described as detention, isolation or a place for “naughty” students.

Sending a student there as punishment undermines trust and may make them less willing to use the space appropriately in future.

Behaviour consequences, where needed, should be managed separately.

13. Calm Spaces Are Not Seclusion Rooms

Students must not be locked into a calm space or prevented from leaving through physical obstruction except where emergency safeguarding action is lawfully required to prevent immediate harm.

Doors or barriers should not create unsafe confinement.

Any safeguarding concern about restrictive use of a calm space must be reported.

14. Supervision

Students using a calm space remain under KDF supervision.

Staff should maintain sufficient visibility and awareness to ensure safety while still allowing the student appropriate personal space.

Supervision should be proportionate to age, risk and individual need.

15. Privacy and Dignity

The calm space should provide a sense of reduced stimulation without becoming hidden from safeguarding oversight.

Students should not be observed intrusively when they need quiet, but staff must still know where they are and whether they are safe.

The balance between privacy and supervision should be carefully maintained.

16. Duration of Use

There should not be a rigid universal time limit for Retreat use.

Some students may regulate within a few minutes, while others may need longer.

The focus should be on readiness to return rather than enforcing an arbitrary period.

17. Avoiding Overuse

Calm-space use should not become the default response to every difficulty.

If a student is repeatedly spending large parts of sessions in the Retreat, KDF should review whether the main environment or teaching approach needs adjustment.

The aim is successful inclusion, not repeated withdrawal.

18. Reintegration

Students should be supported to return to the main session calmly and without public attention.

Staff should avoid announcing the student's return or requiring them to explain themselves in front of peers.

A brief check-in may be helpful before re-entry.

19. Reintegration After Behaviour Incidents

Where Retreat use follows a significant behaviour incident, regulation should come before restorative discussion.

The student should not be expected to reflect meaningfully while still dysregulated.

Restorative practice may take place later once the student is calm and able to engage.

20. Sensory Equipment

Calm spaces may include suitable sensory resources such as fidget items, soft furnishings, visual aids, tactile resources, weighted or pressure-based items where appropriately assessed, and other low-risk regulation tools.

Equipment should be chosen carefully and used according to age, ability and risk.

Items that create choking, strangulation, trip or impact hazards should not be included without appropriate controls.

21. Use of Weighted or Pressure-Based Equipment

Weighted or pressure-based resources should only be used where their use is appropriate and understood.

Staff should not improvise deep-pressure interventions or place weighted items on students without sufficient knowledge.

Where a student requires significant or specific sensory equipment, this should be reflected in an individual support plan where appropriate.

22. Sensory Stimulation Outside the Retreat

Sensory regulation should also be supported proactively within ordinary sessions.

This may include sensory warm-ups, warm-downs, movement breaks, stretching, proprioceptive activity, reduced noise, predictable routines or other appropriate strategies.

The Retreat should be one part of a wider regulation framework rather than the only option.

23. Early Years Use

Early Years students may use the Retreat in a simple, positive and developmentally appropriate way.

They may need more adult support to recognise when they are becoming overwhelmed and to understand the purpose of the space.

Language should remain reassuring and avoid framing the Retreat as a consequence.

24. SEND Use

Students with SEND may use calm spaces more frequently where this forms part of their support needs.

Where regular use is predictable, staff should consider documenting preferred strategies, triggers and reintegration methods.

A diagnosis is not required before appropriate access is offered.

25. Anxiety and Panic

Students experiencing anxiety or panic may benefit from a quiet space, reduced verbal demand and calm adult presence.

Staff should avoid crowding or repeatedly questioning the student.

Where symptoms appear severe or medical risk is suspected, appropriate first-aid or medical escalation should be considered.

26. Overstimulation

Overstimulation may present as agitation, withdrawal, crying, shouting, refusal, covering ears, pacing or other behavioural changes.

Staff should reduce sensory demands where practicable and consider calm-space use.

The student should not be criticised for showing signs of overload.

27. Under-Stimulation and Sensory Seeking

Some students may become dysregulated because they are seeking additional sensory input.

In these cases, a calm space alone may not be the most effective response.

Structured movement or sensory input may be more appropriate before or instead of quiet withdrawal.

28. Communication During Dysregulation

Staff should use simple, calm and limited language.

Too many questions or instructions can increase overload.

Where visual prompts or familiar phrases are known to help, these should be used.

29. Choice

Where possible, students should be offered simple choices about regulation.

For example, they may choose between using the Retreat, taking a brief movement break or sitting in a quieter area.

Choices should be limited and meaningful rather than overwhelming.

30. Staff Presence

Some students regulate best with a trusted adult nearby, while others need greater space.

Staff should understand the student's known preferences where possible.

Adult presence should remain supportive without becoming intrusive or creating dependency.

31. Physical Contact

Physical contact should not be assumed to be calming.

Some students may seek a handhold, brief reassurance or other appropriate contact, while others may find touch distressing.

KDF's Physical Contact & Appropriate Touch Policy should be followed at all times.

32. Picking Up Children

A child should not be picked up merely to move them into a Retreat.

Picking up or carrying may only occur where necessary and appropriate, such as immediate danger, welfare need or agreed support.

The Retreat must not become a destination for forced physical removal.

33. Aggression and the Retreat

Where a student is actively aggressive, staff should first determine whether movement into the Retreat can happen safely.

If moving the student would increase risk, staff may instead move others away and reduce environmental stimulation around the student.

The Aggressive, Volatile & Challenging Behaviour Policy should guide the wider response.

34. Elopement and Retreat Use

A calm space may help reduce elopement where a student seeks to escape stimulation.

Where elopement is a known risk, the Retreat may be included in an individual safety plan as a preferred regulation option.

It should never be used as a locked containment space.

35. Peer Access

Calm spaces should generally be used by the student who needs regulation rather than becoming social hangout areas.

Peer presence may sometimes help, but this should be considered carefully and should not undermine the space's purpose.

Staff should retain discretion over access.

36. Behaviour and Learning

A student's need for regulation should not be treated as failure.

KDF should recognise successful use of regulation strategies as progress.

Students should be supported to build skills that help them remain in learning for longer periods where appropriate.

37. Reward Station

Use of the Tiger Retreat or Leopard Retreat does not prevent a student from being recognised through the Reward Station.

A student who regulates successfully and later demonstrates Kindness, Diversity or Friendship may still be selected.

One difficult moment should not define the student's whole session.

38. Early Years Mascots

Early Years students who use a calm space remain eligible for positive recognition through Sensei Spots or Dancing Dodo.

Regulation support should not reduce access to positive reinforcement.

The focus should remain on effort, confidence, participation and growth.

39. Individual Sensory Support Plans

Where a student has significant or recurring regulation needs, KDF may develop an individual sensory or regulation support plan.

The plan may record known triggers, preferred calming strategies, useful sensory resources, warning signs and successful reintegration approaches.

Plans should remain practical and be shared only with staff who need the information.

40. Working With Families

Parents and guardians should be encouraged to share effective regulation strategies where relevant.

KDF may adapt familiar strategies where they are safe and realistic within the club environment.

Families should also be informed where Retreat use becomes frequent or indicates a need for wider review.

41. External Professional Advice

Where appropriate, KDF may consider information from occupational therapists, educational professionals, health professionals or other relevant specialists.

KDF is not expected to replicate clinical or school-based sensory programmes automatically.

Recommendations should be translated into practical, safe strategies suitable for KDF's environment.

42. Hygiene and Cleaning

Sensory items and calm-space surfaces should be cleaned appropriately according to use.

Shared tactile or soft items should be maintained in a hygienic condition.

Students may help with simple tidying where appropriate, but hazardous cleaning substances and body-fluid contamination must remain adult responsibilities.

43. Equipment Inspection

Calm-space equipment should be checked regularly for damage, wear or unsafe components.

Damaged items should be removed from use promptly.

Sensory equipment should not remain in the space simply because it is popular if it presents a safety risk.

44. Environment

The Retreat should be designed to reduce unnecessary sensory load.

It should avoid excessive clutter, overwhelming visual stimulation or equipment that conflicts with the purpose of regulation.

The environment should remain calm, safe and easy to supervise.

45. Lighting and Noise

Where practicable, lighting and noise should support a lower-stimulation environment.

Staff should avoid using loud music or unnecessary conversation around the Retreat.

Any lighting equipment should be electrically safe and suitable for use around children.

46. Safeguarding

Calm-space use must remain consistent with KDF safeguarding arrangements.

A child should not be taken into a hidden or isolated area with an adult without appropriate visibility or oversight.

Any disclosure made during regulation support must be handled under KDF's safeguarding procedures.

47. Confidentiality

Information about why a student uses a Retreat should not be discussed casually with other families or students.

KDF does not need to disclose another student's diagnosis or support plan to explain why they receive regulation support.

Staff should use neutral and respectful language when answering questions.

48. Fire and Emergency Procedures

Calm spaces must not obstruct fire exits or evacuation routes.

Students using a Retreat remain part of the premises headcount and must be accounted for during an emergency.

Staff must ensure that a student in the Retreat is not forgotten during evacuation.

49. Main Office Awareness

Where appropriate, Main Office staff should be aware if a student is using a Retreat during a session, particularly where this affects collection, supervision or emergency accountability.

Information sharing should remain proportionate and role-based.

The purpose is safe oversight rather than unnecessary monitoring.

50. Staff Training

Staff should receive guidance on sensory regulation, calm-space use, SEND-aware practice and de-escalation appropriate to their role.

Training should emphasise that regulation support is not punishment and should help staff distinguish sensory overload, emotional dysregulation and deliberate misconduct.

Junior coaches should receive simplified guidance and adult support.

51. Junior Coaches and Young Leaders

Junior coaches may help model calm routines or retrieve simple sensory resources under adult supervision.

They should not independently supervise a significantly dysregulated student in a Retreat.

An adult coach should retain responsibility for risk and safeguarding decisions.

52. Monitoring Use

KDF may monitor how frequently the Tiger Retreat and Leopard Retreat are used and whether patterns are emerging.

Frequent use may indicate a need to review the environment, teaching approach, class structure or individual support plan.

Monitoring should be used to improve provision rather than stigmatise students.

53. Recording Significant Use

Routine short use of the Retreat does not require a formal incident record.

A record should be made where use follows significant aggression, physical intervention, safeguarding concern, injury, elopement risk or unusually prolonged distress.

Records should remain factual and proportionate.

54. Quality Assurance

KDF will review calm spaces as part of SEND, safeguarding and lesson-quality monitoring.

Review should consider whether the spaces remain safe, welcoming, appropriately equipped and integrated into inclusive practice.

The goal is effective regulation support rather than simply having a designated area.

55. Kindness

The value of Kindness means recognising when a student needs space, reducing pressure and supporting them without shame.

It also means maintaining calm, respectful adult behaviour during difficult moments.

Kindness should be visible in how students are welcomed back into the session.

56. Diversity

The value of Diversity means recognising that students regulate in different ways.

Some may need movement, some quiet, some visual support and some a trusted adult nearby.

KDF will avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and will adapt where reasonably practicable.

57. Friendship

The value of Friendship means helping peers understand that some students may need breaks or different support.

Students should not mock, exclude or draw unwanted attention to someone using the Retreat.

A supportive community respects different regulation needs.

58. The KDF Promise

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

For students who experience sensory or emotional dysregulation, the Promise means that every session should include a realistic route back to safety, participation and belonging.

The Tiger Retreat, Leopard Retreat, sensory warm-ups, warm-downs and wider regulation strategies form part of KDF's commitment to inclusive, responsive teaching.

59. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside KDF's SEND & Inclusive Practice Policy, Early Years 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, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Medical Needs, Medication & Individual Healthcare Support Policy and First Aid & Emergency Medical Response Policy.

These policies should be applied together where sensory regulation overlaps with safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, medical needs, supervision or physical intervention.

60. Policy Review

This policy will normally be reviewed annually, but earlier review may take place following a significant incident, premises redesign, repeated concern about Retreat use, SEND review, safeguarding learning or change to KDF's sensory provision.

KDF will continue to develop calm spaces as supportive, purposeful environments that help students regulate without stigma or unnecessary separation.

The organisation will maintain a model in which sensory support strengthens inclusion and helps students return successfully to learning within a culture of Kindness, Diversity, Friendship.