

ST MARTINS KARATE GROUP

Safe Practice Policy

Safe, disciplined and age-appropriate karate practice

Organisation	St Martins Karate Group
Clubs covered	St Martins Junior Karate Club and St Martins Karate Carnforth
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Approved by Paul Turner and Chris Haggan

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Policy information

This policy is owned by St Martins Karate Group and applies to both clubs, all instructors, assistant instructors, cadet leaders, volunteers, members and visitors taking part in Group activities. It should be read alongside the Group's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures, codes of conduct, risk assessments, first-aid arrangements and relevant CMAA rules and guidance.

1. Purpose, scope and status

Martial arts involve physical activity, controlled contact, partner work and the use of techniques that can cause injury if taught or practised unsafely. This policy explains the minimum safe-practice standards for classes, gradings, competitions, courses, demonstrations, social activities involving training and any other karate activity organised by St Martins Karate Group.

The policy applies to:

- children, adults and adults who may have care and support needs;
- all instructors, assistant instructors, cadet leaders and volunteers;
- ordinary classes, individual coaching, sparring, pad work, partner drills, weapons training,

takedowns and groundwork;

- activities held at the Group's regular venues and at external venues; and
- competitions, gradings, courses and demonstrations attended or organised by the Group.

Everyone involved must follow the instructor's safety directions. Unsafe conduct may lead to an activity being stopped, a participant being removed from a drill or session, or further action under the Group's conduct or safeguarding procedures.

2. General safe-practice principles

- Safety takes priority over performance, competition, discipline, grading progress or completing a planned session.
- Training must be suitable for the participant's age, physical development, health, experience, grade and ability.
- Techniques must be introduced progressively and practised with appropriate control, resistance and supervision.
- Participants must stop immediately when instructed, when a partner submits or signals discomfort, or when continuing would be unsafe.
- No one should be pressured to perform a technique, exercise, level of contact or intensity beyond their ability or against a genuine safety concern.
- Instructors may modify, restrict or remove an activity at any time.
- Safeguarding concerns, unsafe practice and repeated disregard of safety instructions must be reported.

3. Instructor competence and supervision

- Sessions will be led by a suitably experienced and authorised adult instructor.
- The instructor leading the session retains overall responsibility for the training plan, supervision, partner matching and safety decisions.
- Activities presenting increased risk, including sparring, takedowns, locks, escapes, grappling and weapons, require close and active supervision.
- Participant numbers, available space, age range and experience will be considered before deciding whether an activity can be supervised safely.
- Instructors will position themselves so that they can observe the whole group and intervene promptly.
- No person under 18 may run a class unsupervised or hold sole responsibility for a group.

4. Venue and training-area checks

The Group trains on a range of suitable indoor floor surfaces. Before training begins, the responsible instructor will check that the activity area is reasonably clean, dry, unobstructed and suitable for the planned activity.

- Remove or isolate bags, chairs, sharp objects, trailing cables and other hazards from the training area.
- Check that doors, walls, radiators, windows, pillars and other hard surfaces do not create an avoidable risk.
- Ensure there is enough clear space for the drill, particularly for moving combinations, sparring and weapons.
- Check lighting, ventilation and temperature and modify the session where conditions are unsuitable.
- Know the location of exits, first-aid equipment, toilets and the venue's emergency arrangements.
- Mats must be used for grappling, groundwork and planned takedowns, and whenever takedowns are permitted during an activity.

- Mats must be checked for correct joining, gaps, movement, contamination and adequate clearance from hard objects before use.

5. Medical information, fitness to train and first aid

- Relevant medical conditions, allergies, medication, disabilities, injuries and emergency contacts are recorded through the membership process.
- Participants and parents or carers must inform the Group of changes that may affect safe participation.
- Instructors will have appropriate access to necessary emergency and medical information during sessions.
- A participant who is injured, unwell, unusually fatigued or affected by medication must tell an instructor and may be restricted from training.
- No one should train while affected by alcohol, illegal drugs or any substance that makes participation unsafe.
- An accessible first-aid kit and accident book will be available, and appropriate first-aid provision will be maintained.
- Emergency services will be called where required. Parents, carers or emergency contacts will be informed as appropriate.
- Return after significant injury, illness or suspected concussion must be gradual and follow medical advice.

6. Warm-up, cool-down and conditioning

Each session will include a warm-up appropriate to the planned activity, with particular attention to the muscles and joints that will be used. Intensity should increase progressively. A cool-down or lower- intensity finish will be used where appropriate.

- Stretching must be controlled and suitable for age, flexibility and physical development.
- Forced, ballistic or partner-assisted stretching that causes pain or excessive strain is not permitted.
- Strength and conditioning exercises must use safe technique, sensible repetitions and appropriate rest.
- Repetitive heavy impact on bags or pads will be limited for younger students and introduced progressively.
- Knuckle press-ups are not required for children. Safer alternatives should normally be used. For older, physically mature students they may only be offered occasionally, voluntarily, on a suitable surface, with correct technique and immediate alternatives available.
- Exercises must stop if they cause sharp pain, dizziness, breathing difficulty, numbness or unusual distress.

7. Strikes, punches and kicks

- Techniques will be taught progressively, beginning with correct posture, alignment, balance, control and safe targeting.
- Partner drills must use an agreed level of control and a clear target. Excessive force, follow-through or uncontrolled techniques are prohibited.
- Pads and shields must be appropriate, serviceable and held correctly.
- Participants must not strike joints, the back of the head, throat, spine, kidneys, groin or other

vulnerable areas except as a non-contact technical explanation under instructor direction.

- Age, size, grade, experience, confidence and any medical or additional needs will be considered when pairing students.
- An instructor may stop or alter a drill immediately where control deteriorates.

8. Sparring and protective equipment

Sparring is a controlled learning activity, not a fight. The purpose is to develop timing, distance, movement, decision-making and control.

- There is no deliberate contact to the head in Group training.
- A gum shield, head guard and suitable sparring gloves are required for students taking part in free sparring unless the instructor has specifically defined a non-contact drill where an item is not needed.
- Head guards are mandatory for all participants under 14 when sparring.
- Shin pads and foot pads are strongly recommended.
- Groin guards and chest protectors are advised, particularly where appropriate to the participant, activity or competition rules.
- Protective equipment must fit correctly, be in good condition and be used as intended. Protective equipment reduces risk but does not make excessive contact acceptable.
- For training, mixed grades may work together so that more experienced students can support less experienced students. The experienced student must adapt their speed, complexity and intensity, and instructors will monitor the pairing closely.
- Participants will be matched or regrouped where differences in age, size, strength, experience, confidence or control make a pairing unsuitable.
- Sparring will stop immediately for loss of control, equipment failure, injury, distress, unsafe conduct or an instructor's command.

9. Head contact and suspected concussion

Deliberate head contact is not permitted in Group training. Accidental contact must be treated seriously, even where a head guard was worn.

- Any participant who receives a significant blow to the head, face or neck, or shows possible concussion symptoms, must stop training immediately.
- Possible symptoms include headache, dizziness, confusion, memory problems, balance difficulty, nausea, unusual behaviour, visual disturbance, drowsiness or loss of consciousness.
- The participant must not return to training on the same day where concussion is suspected.
- Urgent medical help or 999 will be used for red-flag symptoms, including loss of consciousness, seizure, worsening headache, repeated vomiting, increasing confusion, weakness, neck pain or deteriorating responsiveness.
- A child will be released only to a parent, carer or appropriate responsible adult following a suspected concussion.
- Return to karate must follow appropriate medical advice and be gradual. The instructor may require written confirmation where the injury was significant.
- The incident must be recorded in the accident book and reviewed.

10. Throws, takedowns, locks, escapes and grappling

These activities are taught only occasionally and must be adapted carefully. Mats are mandatory for grappling, groundwork and any planned or permitted takedown.

- Students must first be taught safe positioning, balance, falling or landing skills appropriate to the technique.

- Takedowns must be introduced progressively and performed with control, suitable space and direct supervision.

- Joint locks and escape techniques are practised with little resistance and must stop immediately on a tap, verbal signal or sign of discomfort.
- Techniques must never be forced to the point of pain or joint damage.
- Strangulation or choking techniques are not part of normal Group training for children or adults at risk and will not be practised on them.
- No student may apply a lock, takedown or grappling technique outside an instructed drill.
- Age, size, experience, mobility, previous injury and any care or support need will be considered when pairing students.
- The instructor may limit a technique to selected students who have demonstrated the necessary control and understanding.

11. Training weapons

The Group may use rubber or wooden training knives and wooden sticks. Weapons training is restricted to selected students and must be authorised and actively supervised by an instructor.

- No live, sharpened or metal-bladed weapons are permitted in Group training.
- Training weapons must be checked before use for cracks, splinters, sharp edges, loose parts or other defects.
- Weapons must be carried and stored safely and must not be handled before permission is given.
- Students must maintain safe spacing and follow the instructor's direction on target, speed, distance and level of resistance.
- Techniques begin slowly and without resistance. Speed or complexity may increase only when control has been demonstrated.
- No unsupervised free practice, play fighting, throwing of weapons or contact to the head, throat, spine or other vulnerable area is permitted.
- The instructor will consider age, maturity, behaviour, grade, experience and ability to follow instructions before allowing participation.

12. Children, adults at risk and reasonable adjustments

- Children are still developing physically and emotionally, so intensity, contact, resistance, stretching and conditioning must be modified accordingly.
- Adults who may have care and support needs will be included through reasonable and safe adjustments wherever possible.
- The participant and, where appropriate, their parent, carer or support worker should be consulted about useful adjustments.
- An adjustment must not expose the participant, their partner or others to an unacceptable risk.
- Students must not be mocked, humiliated or made to feel weak because they need an adjustment, rest, alternative exercise or lower level of contact.
- The Group may request additional information or an agreed support arrangement where this is necessary for safe participation.

13. Cadet leaders and assistant instructors

- Cadet leaders and assistant instructors operate only within the roles and supervision arrangements

set out in the Safeguarding Children Policy.

- No person under 18 may run a class unsupervised.
- Cadet leaders may demonstrate or guide simple activities but must not independently supervise sparring, takedowns, locks, grappling or weapons.

- Assistant instructors may support higher-risk activities only under the direction and observation of the responsible adult instructor.
- The supervising adult instructor remains responsible for partner matching, intensity, protective equipment and stopping unsafe practice.

14. Behaviour, discipline and physical exercise

Good discipline is essential to safe martial-arts training. Instructors may pause an activity, require a student to sit out, move a student, repeat an instruction or use other proportionate measures to restore safety and focus.

- Physical exercise must not be used to humiliate, intimidate, cause pain or punish a mistake.
- Whole-class conditioning may form part of a planned session and may be used to reset focus or energy, but it must remain reasonable, safe, age-appropriate and connected to training rather than retaliation.
- Where an individual is not engaging or is behaving unsafely, the preferred response is clear instruction, a warning, modification of the activity, a brief time out or discussion with the student and, for children, a parent or carer.
- Students must never be made to train through injury, illness, distress or exhaustion as a disciplinary measure.
- Repeated poor behaviour will be addressed through conduct procedures rather than escalating physical demands.

15. Competitions, gradings, courses and demonstrations

- This policy applies to Group activities away from the normal venue as well as regular training.
- The responsible instructor will consider the venue, floor, equipment, event rules, first-aid provision, supervision and participant readiness.
- For competition, participants are matched in accordance with the event rules, normally taking account of age, height or size and grade or experience.
- The Group may withdraw a participant or refuse a bout where the match, rules, equipment, conduct or medical provision appears unsafe.
- External rules apply only where they meet legal, safeguarding and reasonable safety requirements. Group members must still follow instructor directions.
- No student will be pressured to compete, continue after injury or perform a technique beyond their preparation.

16. Accidents, near misses and equipment defects

- Injuries requiring first aid and significant incidents must be entered in the accident book.
- Serious or unusual near misses should also be recorded so that lessons can be learned before someone is harmed.
- Defective equipment must be removed from use, clearly identified and repaired or disposed of.
- The lead instructor will review significant incidents and consider changes to supervision, equipment, pairing, venue layout, teaching method or risk assessment.
- Safeguarding concerns or allegations arising from an incident must also be managed under the relevant safeguarding policy.

17. Policy approval, monitoring and review

- This policy is approved by Paul Turner and Chris Haggan on behalf of St Martins Karate Group.

- Lead instructors will monitor safe practice through observation, incident review, feedback and updates from CMAA and the Safeguarding Code in Martial Arts.
- The policy will be formally reviewed at least every three years.
- An earlier review will take place after a serious incident or near miss, a material change in training activities or venue, or a change in relevant guidance or rules.
- Changes will be communicated to instructors, assistant instructors, cadet leaders, members and parents or carers as appropriate.

Appendix A: Session safety checklist

Check

Completed / notes Venue and floor checked; hazards removed or isolated.

- ☐ Emergency exits, first-aid kit, accident book and emergency phone access confirmed.
- ☐ Relevant medical or support information available.
- ☐ Session plan appropriate to age, ability, numbers, space and instructor supervision.
- ☐ Warm-up appropriate to the planned activity.
- ☐ Pairs or groups matched safely and monitored.
- ☐ Protective equipment checked and worn where required.
- ☐ Mats fitted and checked before takedowns, grappling or groundwork.
- ☐ Weapons checked, controlled and issued only to selected students.
- ☐ Contact, resistance and intensity explained clearly.
- ☐ Students reminded to stop on command, tap or discomfort.
- ☐ Injuries, near misses and equipment defects recorded and reviewed.
- ☐

Appendix B: Immediate injury and concussion guide

Situation

Immediate response Minor injury Stop the activity, assess, give appropriate first aid, record where required and only allow return if safe.

Possible concussion Remove from training immediately. No same-day return. Inform parent, carer or responsible adult and advise medical assessment.

Serious or worsening symptoms Call 999, keep the person still and monitored, follow emergency advice and do not allow them to leave unaccompanied.

Loss of consciousness Call 999. Check breathing, use the recovery position where appropriate, avoid unnecessary movement and monitor continuously.

Return to training Follow medical advice and use a gradual return.

Stop if symptoms recur.

Safe practice is everyone's responsibility.

Document control

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