

## GUIDELINES TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN IN FOUNDATION CLASS

The starting age for Foundation class is 6 years old. When they start at this age they would have completed one years schooling in Reception and would now be in year 1. Because of having been at school they would hopefully have learnt that you have to be quiet when told, and also be able to sit for periods of time to be able to listen to their teacher. Children at a young age are not able to absorb things straight away and breaking down the requirement of throws/hold downs into little steps seems to be the best way of teaching them. This also can apply to an older Foundation judoka who might not want to look silly being unable to do something that they feel they should be able to do.

We cover a syllabus that contains all breakfalls, 7 hold downs, 9 throws, escapes from hold downs and the Judo Code which covers areas from counting numbers in Japanese through to etiquette and behaviour on the mat. We also like to make learning fun for them and have designed various games that they get to do as a reward occasionally. They are still doing judo without realising it and children benefit from being rewarded for their hard efforts. This makes them realize that if they concentrate hard on the lesson plan as a group they might get a game as a reward

Reward belts are another way of showing the judokas to try their very best while learning judo. At the end of the session if a reward belt is available we choose one judoka who has tried their very best during lesson. There are lots of reasons why we can give out the reward belt, and the decision is made by the adults teaching on the mat that day. This may not have been because of a good technique they performed during the lesson, but that they might have helped another judoka without being asked while trying out something new on the mat. Another reason might be that a very shy new judoka who in the past has kept going off the mat back to their parents has managed to stay on the mat for the whole lesson and this shows a massive achievement on their part. The judoka is able to wear the special reward belt for one week and also gets to be at the top of the line when we start and finish a session.

As a responsible adult teaching the Foundation class we have to keep a respectable distance in how close a contact we are able to get to the judoka we are trying to teach. When trying to explain a hold down or throw we must not use a child judoka but find another adult to use instead. If they are unsure of something the child judoka must use another child to show/explain what they need to know. This is sometimes hard to do but it is part of the Safeguarding of Children Act we follow. We are able to help them tie their belts if required but avoid having to deal with anything other than this where possible. Tying of trousers should be done by the judoka or their guardian off the mat. We try to encourage all the judokas on the mat to visit the toilet before they start the lesson. Being only young they may need to visit the toilet

again during lesson. The judoka must tell an adult teaching on the mat and they will contact the parent/guardian to take them to the toilet. If the parent/guardian is not there then a responsible adult can take them but if it ends up being one of the teachers on the mat he/she must be accompanied by another adult of the same sex to witness the toilet visit as per guidelines of The Safeguarding Act.

In another area we have to follow procedure is if the child judoka complains of feeling unwell or injures themselves. If the judoka feels unwell then it is probably best to seek out the parent/guardian who brought them, and get the judoka off the mat and under their care, making sure we are aware of any change in their condition and told if they decide to leave the mat for the rest of the lesson. Young children find any injury upsetting for them and if they hurt themselves by catching their toe or twisting an ankle briefly we must not dismiss their pain but check area involved and if it's something very minor encourage them to continue if they feel up to it. Where possible have another adult or a parent present so that they are witness to any touching we might have to do on the judoka. In the case of a serious injury we have to make sure the injured judoka is kept safe from more harm and a senior Sensei and the first aider in charge needs to become involved. There may be a need to call an ambulance if the injury calls for it. The other judokas on the mat might find this distressing so we should try and protect them from seeing too much and may have to finish teaching on another mat. All incidents need to be brought to the attention of Sensei in charge of the mat and documented in the first aid book if required. The parents need to be informed of how we dealt with the incident if not present during lessons.

As a Foundation teacher we need to work within the capability of the child and in using praise and encouragement we are able to get the best out of the judoka and make them feel happy and safe while they learn their judo. Some of the judokas will be with us for quite along time especially if they started at 6 years old as they are unable to go up to the main mat until they are 8 years old. These are the ones who might need more encouragement as they will be going over the same syllabus time and time again but they will be the ones who when they go up to the other mat will be more focussed from having a great start in the Foundation class.

By Sam Harrington