



SAFEGUARDING POLICY: ACADEMIC EDUCATION

Version 1.0



Version History

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Introduction

Creating a safe and enriching gymnastics environment is a collective responsibility for everyone involved. IGA promotes formal education not only for academic growth but also for social development. Clubs and coaches are encouraged to foster equal progress in academic, social, and gymnastic pursuits.

The mandatory guidelines on academic education outlined in this document are supported by the IGA's Safeguarding Policy. This policy specifies its scope and purpose, including who it applies to. If you have any questions or concerns after reviewing this document, please contact the IGA Welfare and Safe Sport team.

This document and its accompanying good practice guidance aim to prevent substandard approaches to balancing academic education with gymnastics club training. Poor practices in academic education are defined as those compromising an individual's academic progress in pursuit of gymnastic ambitions. By law, all children in the UK must engage in full-time formal education until at least 16 years old by the summer holidays that year, with variations depending on their location in the UK.

For clarity, the term 'coaches' in this document encompasses coaches, assistants, and gymnastics activity instructors. This guidance prioritises a child-centered approach to decision-making regarding balancing formal education with gymnastics club training to ensure holistic child development.

In aligning with academic education and gymnastics, adherence to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is crucial. This convention underscores children's rights to express their views, with adults making decisions in their best interests and without discrimination. Additionally, this document includes information on receiving additional support and preventing inadequate practices.

This policy is informed by UK safeguarding guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2024) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).



Definitions

- Formal education encompasses any type of education (such as schooling, home-schooling, or apprenticeships) that is legally mandated. Gymnastics club training refers to any type of gymnastics practice conducted within a club environment. It excludes single events such as competitions.
- Elective Home Education (EHE): A legal alternative to school-based learning in the UK where parents take full responsibility for a child's education.
- Duty of Care: The legal and moral responsibility organisations have to ensure the wellbeing of children in their care, including educational outcomes.

Responsibilities

- Clubs, coaches, and support practitioners must adhere to the guidelines outlined in this document to safeguard a child's academic education while pursuing their gymnastics goals. It is essential that parents/carers, children, and formal education providers thoroughly review, comprehend, and align their actions with the principles laid out in this document to promote safe practices in academic education within gymnastics.
- Clubs must not encourage or promote elective home education (EHE).
- Clubs must designate a named Welfare Officer to oversee academic compliance and act as a liaison between education providers, parents, and coaches.
- All signed education agreement forms must be securely stored with safeguarding documentation and reviewed annually.

Related Policies and Guidance

[IGA's Safeguarding Policy](#)

[IGA's Code of Conduct for Coaches, officials and Instructors](#)

[IGA's Code of Conduct for Registered Clubs](#)



Academic Education

- IGA firmly opposes the notion that a child should miss formal education to pursue gymnastics training.
- Gymnastics clubs and coaches are obligated to ensure that missing formal education for gymnastics training is never mandatory for any child. No child or parent/carer should face discrimination for choosing not to prioritise gymnastics training over formal education.
- Gymnastics clubs and coaches must refrain from scheduling training sessions during formal education hours for children under the age of 12.
- Gymnastics clubs and coaches may schedule training during formal education hours only under exceptional circumstances for children over the age of 12.
- The decision for a child to miss formal education for gymnastics training is always at the discretion of the formal education provider (i.e., school). Any decision must prioritise the child's holistic development, including social, emotional, physical, and psychological aspects.
- If a child is to miss formal education for gymnastics training, gymnastics clubs and coaches must establish a comprehensive plan involving stakeholders to support the gymnast without compromising their overall development. Regular communication and review meetings among the formal education provider, parent/carer, child, and club/coach are essential. Training during formal education hours must be adjusted based on the child's needs, such as school exams, injuries, or academic progress.
- Reference the legal requirement for children in England to remain in education or training until 18.
- Training during school hours must not interfere with statutory school attendance unless expressly approved by the education provider.
- Clubs should request termly confirmation from education providers that academic progress is not negatively impacted.



Overview & Monitoring

- Clubs must ensure a designated staff member (e.g. Welfare Officer) monitors academic arrangements.
- Termly check-ins with schools are recommended for children training during education hours.
- Clubs must keep accurate records of all signed agreements and review them annually.
- Non-compliance with academic support obligations may trigger safeguarding concerns and lead to disciplinary review.



Agreement Form

Before a child is permitted to miss any formal education time for gymnastics club training, all stakeholders (parent/carer, formal education provider, and coach/club) must adhere to the following statements and sign the agreement. Additionally, the child must sign a separate agreement form using language appropriate for their age. A new agreement form must be signed annually. If any stakeholder does not agree or comply with the Safeguarding Policy: Academic Education and the points outlined in this agreement form, the child must not miss academic time for gymnastics club training.

- I have reviewed and comprehended the Safeguarding Policy: Academic Education document.
- I acknowledge that IGA does not deem it necessary for a child to miss formal education for gymnastics club training in order to achieve their gymnastics goals.
- I understand that missing formal education for gymnastics club training is not mandatory for any child. No child or parent/carer should face discrimination for choosing not to prioritise gymnastics over formal education.
- I recognise that gymnastics clubs and coach(es) may schedule gymnastics club training during formal education hours only under exceptional circumstances for a child over the age of 12.
- I acknowledge that a child's academic education must never be compromised in pursuit of their gymnastics ambitions.
- I understand that the formal education provider has discretion over whether a child should miss formal education for gymnastics club training.



- I understand that a comprehensive plan must be developed among stakeholders to support the gymnast without compromising their holistic development (academic, social, emotional). Regular communication and review meetings must involve the formal education provider, parent/carer, gymnast, and coach. Any training during formal education time must accommodate the child's needs, such as school exams, injuries, or academic progress.
- I understand that this decision is focused on the child's best interests, with their holistic development (social, emotional, physical, psychological) being paramount in the decision to miss formal education for gymnastics club training.

Name of Child	
Name of Parent/Carer	
Date	
Signature of Parent/Carer	

Name of Coach/ Club Representative	
Date	
Signature of Coach/ Club Representative	

Name of Formal Education Representative	
Date	
Signature of Education Representative	



Agreement Form - For Children

Before deciding whether to miss any school or education for gymnastics club training, please review the statements below and discuss them with your parent/carer, coach, or school if you have any questions. If you agree with all the statements, please sign your name in the box provided at the bottom of this form.

- IGA believes that you do not need to miss any school or education time to pursue your gymnastics goals.
- I understand that my gymnastics club cannot require me to miss school or education for gymnastics club training. You and your parent/carer should not face any discrimination from your gymnastics club for choosing not to miss school or education for gymnastics club training.
- I understand that my gymnastics club and coach(es) may schedule training sessions during school or education time only if I am over the age of 12 and if it is in the best interest of my overall development, both inside and outside of gymnastics.
- I understand that my education must not suffer as I pursue my goals and ambitions in gymnastics.
- I understand that my school or education provider has the final say in whether I should miss school or education for gymnastics club training.
- I understand that a plan must be developed involving me, my parent/carer, my coach, and my school or education provider to support me without negatively impacting my overall development, both inside and outside of gymnastics. Any gymnastics training during school or education time must be adjusted to accommodate my needs, such as school exams, injuries, or academic progress.



Agreement Form - For Children

- I understand that my overall development, both inside and outside of gymnastics, is the primary consideration in the decision to miss school or education time for gymnastics club training.

Name	
Signature	
Date	



Preventing Poor Practice

Query:

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about something you have said, done, or witnessed during practice, it's perfectly fine to discuss it with someone you trust. This could be a coach, fellow gymnast, friend, welfare officer, parent, or club manager.

Reflect:

Pause and reflect on the situation, considering if there could have been alternative actions. Ask yourself: Would this behaviour be appropriate in a non-gymnastics context?

Seek:

If you're uncertain or need assistance, there are several resources available to help. This includes reaching out to other coaches, welfare officers, or contacting IGA at any time without it being considered an official complaint. Please note that all home nation governing bodies have a duty of care and will handle concerns appropriately when raised.

Making Mistakes:

It's perfectly normal to make mistakes! If you do, take responsibility, apologise, and use it as a learning opportunity to prevent it from recurring.

Raise:

If you feel the need to raise a concern, please reach out to your club's welfare officer. They will handle your concern appropriately.

Recommendations:

Foster a psychologically supportive environment in gymnastics by encouraging open, honest, and transparent conversations. Provide regular opportunities for feedback and promote an atmosphere where asking questions and respectful challenges are welcomed.