

News

The real karate kids

BOYS, AGED 10 AND 11, GET BLACK BELTS

A PAIR of martial arts enthusiasts have become two of the country's youngest karate black belts.

Friends Kieran Keenan, 11, and Jordon Hart, 10, were awarded the martial art's highest honour on December 6 last year.

Their new belts were handed to them by the JKA Shokotan Karate Club where they train.

The club meets at St Mary's Primary School in High Street, Lewisham.

Kieran, of Lynch Walk, Deptford, and his father John Allen, 44, both began learning karate five years ago.

Kieran has beaten his dad to the punch, as Mr Allen has to wait until next month to try for his black belt.

Kieran said: "I get a lot of respect from my friends for what I have achieved and bullies at school are never a problem."

His father added: "I've

By JOHN HUGILL

never heard the end of it since Kieran got his belt. But even though he got there first I am really pleased and very proud of him."

Jordon, of Bonfield Road, Catford, was seven when he first took up karate. He said martial arts films were the inspiration behind his interest in the sport.

His mother, Audrey, 41, said: "Before doing karate, Jordon wasn't that interested in school and he wasn't bothered about reading. But after he got his first belt I noticed a dramatic change.



"He really improved. His personality came out and he now does well at school and his reading has really come along.

"It has helped him become a better football player too - he has better coordination, balance and stamina."

The boys' teacher Roy Tomlin, 53, said: "It is rare for children this young to be awarded a black belt and to get it at such a young age is a massive achievement. It is a difficult thing to achieve as it takes a lot of hard work and dedication."

To gain their black belt, the standard of the boys kicks, punches and blocks were all tested and then they had to perform a kata - a special sequence or pattern of karate movements.

After proving their technique, they had to demonstrate their fighting skills against an opponent.

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FIGHTING FIT: Black belts in Karate Kieran Keenan, 11, and Jordon Hart, 10. Left, the boys fighting