



POLICY HANDBOOK

PLAYING UP

1. Purpose of the Policy

“Playing Up” refers to a player participating in training or matches with an age group above their own.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure **player welfare, fairness, consistent development pathways, and balanced squads** across the club.

This policy will be strictly enforced from the 2026/27 season for all age groups where no historical playing-up arrangement exists.

Playing Up is encouraged where appropriate, but **each case must be individually assessed** to ensure it benefits both the player and the club.

2. Eligibility & Competition Age

- The Playing Up process applies from **Under-10 onwards**, when players enter official competition age.
- All decisions must prioritise the player’s **age-appropriate group**, as stated in the original policy:
- If a player has been “playing up” with a group before this, the historical factor will be taken into consideration.

“Priority must be given to the players age-appropriate group at all times...”

3. Selection Process

1. Nomination

- A player may only be nominated by their **current age-group coaches**.
- Parents **cannot** request Playing Up or training up.

2. Agreement Between Coaches

- The older age-group coaches must agree to consider the player.

3. Conflict of Interest

- Coaches or officials must remove themselves from decisions involving their own child.

4. New Amendment (2026): Squad Placement When Playing Up

To ensure fairness, balanced development, and safeguarding:

4.1 B-Squad First Rule

Any player approved to play up **must enter the B-squad of the age group above**, not the A-squad.

This applies to both training and match selection.

4.2 Rationale

This amendment is based on existing policy principles:

- **Player welfare**

“Player welfare is important to the club...”

The B-squad provides an appropriate developmental step without excessive pressure.

- **Age-appropriate priority**

“Priority must be given to the players age-appropriate group at all times...”

Entering the A-squad prematurely disrupts the home age group and reduces fairness.

- **Fairness and consistency** The B-squad ensures equal opportunity and prevents A-squad talent-poaching.

4.3 Progression to A-Squad

A player may only progress to the A-squad of the older age group if:

- They have demonstrated consistent ability at B-squad level for a number of seasons.
- Both sets of coaches agree.
- It does not negatively impact their home age group.

This creates a **clear, transparent pathway: Home age → B-squad above → A-squad above (if appropriate)**

5. Training Requirements

- All players must **continue to train and play with their correct age group first**, before any involvement with the older group.
- Training load and match minutes will be monitored by coaches.

6. Playing Priority

- Age-appropriate players always have priority for selection within their own squad.
- Playing Up players may only be selected when it does not disadvantage the home age group.

7. Parent & Coach Conduct

- Parents may not request Playing Up or training up.
- Parents may not request Playing Up due to siblings or friends.
- Any such cases will be reviewed by the Club Coaching Officer.

8. Issues, Queries & Review

- Any concerns or disputes must be reported to the Executive Committee.
- All Playing Up cases must be formally agreed and signed off if required by Child welfare Officer/Executive Committee members.

- Policies are subject to ongoing review and may be updated without prior notice.

Review & Amendment - Annual review.

Endorsement

Approved by: Kiltullagh Pioneers A.F.C. Executive Committee

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