

RFU SCHOOLS & YOUTH REGULATIONS

These apply to any player in the Under 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 age groups.

2. Age Grades and Applicable Variations

- 2.1 In Youth Rugby players shall play in their own age grade unless they fall within one of the following exceptions:
- (a) Very talented or physically developed players in the U13, U14 and U15 age grades may play up one age grade with appropriate permission;
 - (b) Those in the U16 and U17 age grades may play up two age grades;
 - (c) In very exceptional circumstances, where a young person's safety may be compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural) that young person may play down one age grade.
- 2.2 Players may only play adult rugby, or train with other adults, when they have reached their eighteenth birthday unless they comply with one of the following exceptions:
- (a) Players who are aged 17 may play adult rugby and train with other adults provided they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults. This exception does not apply to playing in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages either during training or in a match, where there is an absolute prohibition on players under the age of 18 playing in adult rugby.
 - (b) Players who are aged 16 may play adult rugby and train with other adults if they are members of one of the RFU's England Rugby Academies and the RFU Elite Rugby Director has given his specific consent. Such consent must be given on each occasion of playing or training.
- 2.3 Permission to play must be obtained from either the player's parent, guardian or head teacher before any person under the age of 18 plays adult rugby or plays with players who are not in the same annual age banding. When assessing whether a player under 18 is capable of playing adult rugby, those responsible for making the decision must take account of the guidelines at paragraphs 1.1 – 1.6 below.
- 2.4 The Age limit for all Age Grades is determined as being under the specified age at midnight on 31 August at the beginning of the season in which matches are to be played. The appropriate age group applies for the whole season. At representative level (U17 and U18 only) the age limit is determined at midnight on 31st December of that season.

- 2.5 No player may be permitted to play in matches involving school teams once he has reached his 19th birthday.
- 2.6 The Under 19 Law Variations at Appendix 1 apply to matches when all players are aged 18 years and under.

Guidelines

1. Playing out of Age Grade

- 1.1 The decision to allow a young person to play out of age grade lies with the person in the best position to assess all the relevant circumstances.
- 1.2 For guidance in making a decision the following aspects should be considered:
 - a. The physical development of the individual and his playing colleagues
 - b. The skill level and experience of the individual
 - c. The individual's playing position in the team
 - d. The competitive standard of the particular match and playing conditions
- 1.3 The ultimate consideration must be for the welfare and safety of the player and those with whom he will be playing.
- 1.4 Permission to play out of age grade must be obtained from the young person's parent or guardian or head teacher.
- 1.5 There must be clear communication with all those involved in and affected by the decision.
- 1.6 Clear and complete records should be kept of decisions taken and the bases for them.

COMMENT

These Regulations have only recently been revised and approved by the RFU Council. They place the decision with those who are closest to the players and who are able to make a considered decision on such a matter. The club's executive committee should take time to consider the child's case in conjunction with these revised Regulations and Guidelines. (1)

Comparison of the previous Regulation 2 and the revised Regulation 2 show that the provision for a player to play DOWN one age grade has been tightened up (Regulation 2.1(c)) and now only apply IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

The provision to play UP one age grade still applies, for example, an Under 13 can play with an with an Under 14's team BUT NOT with an Under 15's Team and an Under 16 can play with a Colts Team PROVIDED IT IS AN UNDER 18's TEAM.

A Player who has reached his 17th Birthday can play in an Adult Team BUT NOT IN THE FRONT ROW, provided permission has been obtained from their parent or guardian. A player has to be at least 18 years of age to play in a Front Row.

Guideline 1.6 states 'clear and complete' records need to be kept, therefore, it is strongly recommended that any permission granted is in the form of a WRITTEN permission, a copy of which should be lodged with the Club Secretary (or Junior Section Secretary) and Devon RFU Mini & Junior Committee Secretary. The original should be held by the Coach concerned and be made available for inspection on request.

(1) e-mail dated 17th August 2007 from Andrew ROGERS, RFU Regulation Manager

Other Associated Regulations

- 5.1 Schools and Clubs are responsible for ensuring that referees appointed to take charge of youth rugby matches are adequately qualified or experienced to officiate at an appropriate level.

- 6.1 Players aged under 18 must not play more than one game of rugby on any one day except where specified at paragraph 7 below.
Note: It is not desirable for anyone to play two games in two days. The day after playing should be a recovery day.

- 6.2 Periods of Play and ball sizes for Age Grade rugby (not including festivals):
 - (a) Under-13 & Under-14: not exceeding 25 minutes each way with size 4 ball total playing time 50 minutes.
 - (b) Under-15: not exceeding 30 minutes each way with size 5 ball total playing time 60 minutes.
 - (c) Under-16 & Under-18: not exceeding 35 minutes each way with size 5 ball total playing time 70 minutes.

CONTINUUM REGULATIONS

These apply to all age grades from Under 6 to Under 12 inclusive.

6. Age Grades & Dispensations

6.1 Age Grades

6.1.1 The age grades are as follows:

- Under 7 and Under 8 (stage 1) - both age grades play Mini Tag Rugby to the same rules except that Under 8s can only be tagged a maximum number of times;
- Under 9 and Under 10 (stage 2) - both age grades play Mini Rugby to the same rules except Under 9s have uncontested scrums and line-outs and Under 10s have contested scrums and line-outs;
- Under 11 and Under 12 (stage 3) - both age grades play Midi Rugby to the same rules.

6.1.2 A player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31 August at the beginning of each Season.

6.1.3 During the course of each Season, players may only play rugby with other players in their age grade unless they are permitted to play with players from a different age grade under a dispensation.

6.1.4 When participating in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club and/or School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.

6.2 Dispensations

The following dispensations apply as exceptions to the age grade provisions above. Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.

6.2.1 Team Dispensation

If Clubs or Schools do not have enough players to complete a squad, players may play down one age grade within each Continuum Stage only subject to the strict observance of the following qualifications:

(a) the maximum number of players allowed to play down is two;

- no player will be allowed to play down two age grades in any circumstances; and,
- no Under 9 (or above) player may train or play with a player aged 6 in any circumstances.

A Club or School may complete multiple squads using this dispensation.

6.2.2 Training Dispensation

During internal Club or School training, players may train together and play internal training matches together in the following groups only:

- (a) Under 7 and Under 8 squads;
- (b) Under 9 and Under 10 squads, although no Under 10 player or above may play with an Under 8 player playing in an Under 9 team under a dispensation;
- (c) Under 11 and Under 12 squads, although no Under 13 player is permitted to train with an Under 11 or Under 12 squad in any circumstances.

6.2.3 RFU Special Dispensation

The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exception circumstances, where the safety of the child may be compromised due a developmental disability (physical or behavioural), application may be made to the RFU for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will last for only one Season. Application for such dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Tournaments & Competitions Director and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability. For the avoidance of doubt, special dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

6.2.4 6 Year Old Player Dispensation

To encourage recruitment, children may enter the Under 7 age grade immediately they attain their sixth birthday. Players aged 6 or over may not however take advantage of this dispensation if it will result in their training or playing with Under 9s playing in an Under 8 team under Continuum Regulation 7.5.1. Clubs and Schools are advised that the introduction of players under the age of 6 into Mini-Midi Rugby squads may invalidate the compulsory insurance cover provided by the RFU for players in those squads and for their coaches and/or match officials.

6.2.5 12 Year Old Player Dispensation

In addition to any Team Dispensation, where a School or Club does not have enough players to form an Under 12 squad, Under 12 players may play with an Under 13 side but only with written parental consent. A Club or School may use this dispensation if it has more Under 12 players than are required to complete a squad.

6.2.6 Special Dispensation for Clubs with Small Number of Players

(a) Dispensation:

- (i) To allow age bands rather than single age grades. i.e. U7s with U8s; U9s with U10s; U11s with U12s
- (ii) Dispensation to be for one season at a time.

- (iii) Teams to play in Continuum Rules of Play for the younger age grade. i.e. Under 7 Mini Tag; Under 9 Mini Rugby; Under 11 Midi Rugby
- (iv) No more than half the players on the pitch at any time in a game should be from the older age grade
- (v) Teams can play in friendly fixtures after advising the opposition and gaining their consent.
- (vi) Teams cannot take part in competitive Festivals (unless they comply with the existing Continuum age grade regulations)
- (vii) The Continuum Age Grade Dispensations 6.2.1 & 6.2.2 are not applicable to those granted this Special Dispensation.

(b) Approval:

To be granted by the RFU Tournaments & Competitions Director upon receipt of:-

- (i) Application from the Club Secretary with a signed declaration showing numbers of players in each age grade
- (ii) This to be certified by CB Rugby Development Partnership (7-18 Chair) / RDO.
- (iii) A declaration by each age group Coach that the children in the proposed age grouping are capable of playing in the proposed amalgamated two year age banding.

(c) Conditions:

- (i) The age group Coach should be qualified and have completed a recognised Child Protection course
- (ii) The coach must discuss with the parents, the differences in physical development of all the children in the proposed age band and how it affects their child before obtaining their consent.
- (iii) The parents must be fully briefed by the coach concerned on how their child could cope with the differences in physical development between the children in their two year age band.
- (iv) Players must be registered on the RFU Youth Registration System.

COMMENT

The general rule is that a player MUST play within his or her own age grade unless certain conditions apply, i.e. the starting point has to be that a player plays with other children their own age and that Clubs should, wherever possible, have Teams in each age group to cater for those wishing to play.

However, it is accepted this is fine in theory but not every Club can achieve this. There are six dispensations which can be used by Clubs. Some deal with Individuals, others with Teams.

6.2.4 allows a player who has reached their sixth birthday to play in an Under 7's Team, provided there are no Under 9's playing down a grade in that Team. (NOTE:- I cannot find what Regulation 7.5.1 refers to, as Regulation 7 determines the season and is only one paragraph.

6.2.5 allows an Under 12 to play UP an age grade into Under 13's with WRITTEN parental consent. HOWEVER, I can find no reference to ANY dispensation for an Under 13 to play in an Under 12's Team, indeed, an Under 13 is not even allowed to train with an Under 12's Team (Regulation 6.2.2).

6.2.3 caters for children with exceptional circumstances which mean in interests of player safety it is better they play down ONE age grade. This is a very restrictive dispensation, and must be sought and approved by the RFU, it cannot be sanctioned by a Club or the Devon RFU. A form for submission for consideration of this dispensation is provided by the Devon RFU.

6.2.2. caters for training situations, so Under 7's and 8's can train together, as can 9's and 10's, and 11's and 12's, BUT they CANNOT play a match together.

There are two dispensations which cover Teams.

6.2.1, which appears to cater for the situation where on a particular day, there are insufficient players to form a Team. In this case, no more than TWO players can play down an age grade. It is clearly good practice for both coaches to be made aware and consent to this, and the referee MUST in my view be made aware that this dispensation is being used.

There are alternatives to using Regulation 6.2.1, for example by one Team lending players to another, or playing with an equal number of players. Under 7's and 8's rules state no more than seven, not less than five. Under 9's and 10's play with nine players, Under 11's with twelve and Under 12's with thirteen.

Regulation 6.2.6 is designed to allow Clubs to combine Teams where there are insufficient players to form a full Team in a particular age grade. This dispensation MUST be granted by the RFU, and requires various conditions to be met. Again, the Devon RFU have prepared a form to allow an application to go forward.

Finally, with Continuum Teams, there is NO provision whatsoever for a player to play UP an age grade, even though this is allowed in Youth Rugby. Indeed, Youth Rugby allows players to play UP, the Continuum to play DOWN. This has been confirmed in an e-mail from Andrew ROGERS, RFU Regulations Manager dated 7th March 2007.