Playing Up an Age Group Policy

Stokenchurch Juniors Football Club

At Stokenchurch Juniors Football Club, we believe that in the vast majority of cases, there is little or no benefit to a child playing in an age group above their natural, chronological age. We firmly advocate that playing with familiar faces, building peer relationships, and competing at a level that is physically and emotionally right for the child is far more important than accelerating a player simply because they are deemed skillful at their given age.

1 Communication Framework & Parent Approaches

To maintain a fair, structured, and objective environment, the club enforces a strict protocol regarding how playing-up opportunities are initiated:

Direct Parent Requests: Any direct approaches or applications from parents to team managers, coaches, or assistants requesting for their child to play up an age group will be denied as a matter of course.

Playing up will only ever be initiated via internal club consultation between the coaching staff of both affected age groups and the club committee. Coaches will approach parents if a clear operational or developmental need arises, not vice versa.

2 Core Criteria for Eligibility

A child will only be permitted to temporarily or permanently play up one age group if all four of the following threshold conditions are simultaneously met:

Mutual Team Benefit: The arrangement must actively benefit both of the respective teams involved, rather than serving the narrow interest of a single squad or individual.	**Protection of Playing Time:** The transition must not be to the detriment of the playing time, match-day experience, or development of any other child in either of the affected age groups.
Safety First: It must be comprehensively safe to do so, strictly adhering to The FA Youth Football Age Rules which limit grassroots players to a maximum of one age group above their chronological bracket.	**Absence of Feasible Alternatives:** There must be no other practical or feasible structural options available to solve the squad or operational problem within the two age groups involved.

3 Player Selection Considerations

When selecting a child to play up, Stokenchurch Juniors FC does not make decisions purely based on technical ability or footballing skill. Instead, a holistic review will evaluate the following five considerations:

Source Team Stability: There must be zero physical, tactical, or structural detriment to the team the child is moving away from.	**Physical Attributes:** The child's physical size, strength, and stamina must safely allow them to compete against older, more physically developed opposition.
Emotional Maturity: The child's emotional requirements must be a match for the environment of an older age group, ensuring their confidence and enjoyment of the sport are protected.	**Chronological Age:** The child's precise age and date of birth relative to the target squad's bracket will be evaluated to ensure format changes (e.g., transitioning from Mini-Soccer to 9v9 or 11v11) are manageable.
Attitude Towards Learning: The child must demonstrate an exemplary, coachable attitude, a willingness to listen, and a positive mindset toward learning in a more challenging environment.	

4 Policy Review and Governance

Any proposed instances of a player moving up an age group must be documented by the team coaches and submitted to the Stokenchurch Juniors FC Committee for final ratification before the player takes the pitch for the older squad. This ensures compliance with league registrations, club insurance, and safeguarding standards.