

## **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 [CBRDP](#) (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.