



Onslow Junior Football Club

POLICY

P2 – Placement of Players within Grades (Saturday leagues and Nursery Grade)

Section A – Policy objectives

- A.1. To maximise the safety of players.
- A.2. To maximise the development and enjoyment of players.
- A.3. To help the Club to administer its membership and organise teams on a systematic, orderly, and practicable basis.
- A.4. To comply with Capital Football regulations and the New Zealand Football Code of Conduct.

Section B – Principles

- B.1. The safety of players is of paramount concern and should over-ride all other considerations.
- B.2. Players should play with and against players of a similar physique (to maximise their safety and enjoyment).
- B.3. Players should play with and against players of a similar skill level (to maximise their development and enjoyment).
- B.4. Players should not be denied playing or streamed-team selection opportunities because of other players playing out of grade.

Section C – POLICY STATEMENT

- C.1. Boys must play in the correct grade according to their age. For example, boys turning 9 during the calendar year must be placed in a Grade 9 team. The permitted exceptions to this rule are covered by C.3 to C.8 below; such exceptions are granted for one calendar year at a time.
- C.2. Girls must play in the correct grade according to their age or in the grade immediately below their age grade. For example, girls turning 9 during the calendar year must be placed in a Grade 9 or a Grade 8 team. The permitted exceptions to this rule are covered by C.3 to C.8 below; such exceptions are granted for one calendar year at a time.
- C.3. Players may play up a grade if the Club Captain and one other independent expert assessor agree that:
 - a) The player demonstrates a football talent that is exceptional and rare; and
 - b) The player's development would be seriously harmed by requiring the player to remain in his/her correct age group.
- C.4. (i) Players may play up a grade to help resolve overhangs¹ in the player's correct age grade if complete squads in their correct age grade cannot be formed from waitlisted² players and the player's placement up one grade will not displace a player correctly placed in that grade. This may be permitted only if the conditions (a) to (d) below are met.

¹ An overhang occurs when the number of players registered *by the registration deadline* in any one grade exceeds a multiple of n+2 for that grade and also falls too far short of the next multiple of n+2 to enable the feasible creation of smaller squads. For example, for Grade 12 (9-a-side), an overhang would occur if 70 players were registered by the deadline. The Grade Coordinator would form 6 teams (11x6=66), with an overhang of 4 players. The ability to form a 7th team would depend on knowledge about the number of players not registered by the deadline and/or overhangs in adjacent grades that could be used to smooth squad sizes.

² A waitlisted player is a player on the waitlist. The waitlist is the list of players who register after the registration deadline and who are yet to be allocated to a team.

(ii) Players may play up a grade to help resolve shortages³ in the grade immediately above their age grade if not allowing the player to play up a grade would deny them or another player in their age grade the opportunity to play for the Club during the year. This may be permitted only if the conditions (a) to (d) below are met.

- a) Grade numbers have stabilised and other options have been exhausted (including the placement of waitlisted players);
- b) In the relevant Grade Coordinators' opinions, the risk to the player's safety from playing up a grade is not significantly greater than if they were playing in their correct age grade;
- c) In the relevant Grade Coordinators' opinions, playing in a higher grade would not be a negative experience for the player in terms of their enjoyment of the game and their ability to develop; and
- d) The player and the two relevant Grade Coordinators concerned agree to the placement. If the two Grade Coordinators cannot agree, then the Club Captain shall make the decision.

C.5. Boys may play down a grade with the prior approval of Capital Football if (i) it is not possible for the player to play in their correct age grade because of exceptional circumstances (e.g. family transport considerations) or (ii) playing in the correct age grade would pose a significant risk to the safety, enjoyment, or development of the player (e.g. because of the technical, physical, or emotional demands of playing in the correct age grade).

Such instances are expected to be rare, and applications of this nature may be made to Capital Football only if:

- a) Playing down a grade will not significantly diminish the safety or enjoyment of the other players in that grade;
- b) Playing down a grade will not displace a player correctly placed in that grade; and
- c) The placement is agreeable to the player and the two Grade Coordinators concerned and is approved by the Club Captain.

C.6. Boys turning 15 years old during the calendar year (i.e. of College football age) may play down a grade in Grade 14 for the Club with the prior approval of Capital Football if the player is denied a place in a College football team, provided that playing in Grade 14 for Onslow JFC:

- a) Will not significantly diminish the safety or enjoyment of the other players in Grade 14;
- b) Will not displace a player correctly placed in Grade 14; and
- c) The placement is agreed by the Grade 14 Coordinator.

C.7. To enable the Club to deal with legacy issues, players who played out of grade during the 2010 season may continue to do so under the following circumstances:

- a) Their playing out of grade has previously been sanctioned by the Club;
- b) The player and the player's parents/guardians have a reasonable expectation that the player continues playing out of grade because of advice previously given by the Club;
- c) The continuing arrangement complies with Capital Football regulations or Capital Football approves the continuing arrangement;
- d) There are no health or safety issues arising from the player playing out of grade; and
- e) The initial placement of the player playing out of grade did not result from an error on the part of the Club or from dishonesty, misinformation, or insufficient information on the part of the player's family.

C.8. Nursery Grade is open to children turning 5 or 6 and girls turning 7 during the calendar year. Players turning 6 years of age during the calendar year who were incorrectly or inadvertently admitted early to Nursery Grade may play up a grade in Grade 7 only if they have already played two seasons in Nursery Grade and they agree to play two seasons in Grade 7 to return to their correct age grade.

³ A "shortage" occurs when the total number of players applying for registration (i.e. including wait-listed players) in a grade exceeds a multiple of n+2 for that grade and also falls short of the next multiple of n+2.

Section D – Explanatory comments

- D.1. Large variations in physical attributes such as size, speed, and strength may affect player safety and enjoyment. Large variations in skill levels may affect player development and enjoyment. The NZ Football Code of Conduct encourages players of similar physique and skill levels to be grouped together.*
- D.2. For the purpose of grading players, age is an adequate proxy for physical attributes such as size, speed, and strength in almost all cases. Although there are wide variations of size, strength, and speed within single age groups, rarely will these variations justify placing players outside their age groups, except for girls who are conventionally permitted to play down a year.*
- D.3. For the purpose of grading players, age is also an adequate proxy for skill levels for Grades 7 and 8, after which the streaming of top players within a grade (i.e. from Grade 9 onwards) will usually provide an effective means to ensure that players of similar ability are grouped together.*
- D.4. The desire to play with friends is not an exceptional circumstance and does not justify a player being placed in a different grade from their correct age grade.*
- D.5. Every team has a “best player” and every grade has a “best player”. Being the best player in a team, or even in a grade, is not an exceptional circumstance and does not of itself justify being placed above the correct age grade.*
- D.6. In smaller junior clubs, it may be necessary to allow better players to play up a grade to ensure they are placed in teams with players of similar ability. However, in a large junior club such as Onslow, we have sufficient numbers such that the formation of streamed teams (which usually play in the regional leagues – JPL and Promo) will usually provide a sufficiently safe and challenging environment for such players, without the need for placing better players above their correct age grade. In addition, the better players from within the top teams will receive an even more enhanced developmental environment in the regional and federation talent centres, which are also age based.*
- D.7. An age-based grading policy is consistent with the NZ Football Code of Conduct and also complies with the Capital Football regulations, which require players to play in their correct age group while allowing girl players the choice of playing down a grade.*
- D.8. Although it is not the primary consideration, an age-based grading policy is important for the smooth running of the Club because an alternative approach would provide less certainty for players and their families, Grade Coordinators, and the Registration Secretary as well as considerable administrative difficulty.*

Section E – Other requirements

- E.1. In giving effect to this policy, consideration must be given to the Club's policy on squad sizes.*

Section F – Guidelines

- F.1. Grade Coordinators should keep a watch on the waitlist and also keep in constant contact with the Grade Coordinators in the grades immediately either side of them, so that they are aware of shortage/overhang issues in adjacent grades so they can deal with “overs” and “unders”.*
- F.2. Grade Coordinators should rank their waitlisted players by date of registration so they can be placed on a first-come first-served basis.*
- F.3. Grade Coordinators should also be aware of whether a player has incorrectly registered for their grade and notify the Registration Secretary and Grade Coordinator of the correct grade.*