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## **SRFC Mini and Junior Ways of Working Policies.**

### **Kids First Ethos**

- SRFC Coaches will plan and run child centred sessions, that incorporate:
  - Encourage fun.
  - Provide a healthy environment for children to learn and feel safe to challenge.
  - Allow for children's views to be listened to, as and when appropriate.
  - Learning by mistakes.
- Champion Rugby's Core Values.
- Challenge any poor behaviour's which conflicts with the above in a child centric manner (children are not small adults).
- Treat each child as an individual.
- Work with parents/guardians to gain feedback on how children are finding sessions.
- It's not all about winning, safety and enjoyment are just as important.

More details on Kids First RFU Policy, and suitable course and examples of engagement can be found at this link [Kids First \(englandrugby.com\)](https://www.englandrugby.com/kids-first)

On top of the RFU Kids First Policy we will be looking to implement a 'Childs Voice' Project at SRFC.

### **Half Game Rule.**

SRFC fully supports the half game rule. To this end any player that is taken to a game in the 'playing squad' must play at least half of the available playing time. If the Head Coach has reasons for this not to be the case, then they must discuss this with the player/parent/guardian in attendance before the fixture (or at the fixture in the case of injury). If a player attending the match doesn't wish to play, or a parent/guardian has reasons for their child not to play the allocated time, then this needs to be discussed also.

**WHAT MUST ABSOLUTELY NOT HAPPEN IS FOR A PLAYER NOT TO PLAY HALF A GAME, BECAUSE THE GAME IS CLOSE AND WE WANT TO WIN! AT ANY AGE U6 to COLTS.**

If a player will not play the allocated half game time, then it may be a suggestion for the opposition coach to be made aware and the reasons why - ideally before the game starts.

It should be noted that if the club gets cited as not following the half game rule, then our 1<sup>st</sup> team can be docked points. This would have meant our 1st team being relegated last season. Please see link for sanctions of being cited; Appendix 6 [Regulation 19 Appendix 6.pdf \(englandrugby.com\)](#)

In addition to the half game rule per fixture, the club will also state that every paying member will get a roughly equal chance to play in half of all fixtures throughout the season. The club accepts that this will be best efforts and parents are requested to raise any ***significant*** concerns to the Head Coach initially, but if needs be, then to the Director of Minis and/or Youth Rugby



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## **Mixed Ability Games.**

The RFU policy is founded on the fact that children develop at different rates at varying ages, and as such all games are played as mixed ability. SRFC fully supports this and will expect all age groups to adhere to this policy. The club recognises there are arguments for and against, but we have agreed a practical policy to be implemented by all our age groups.

However, the club's view and experience are that the RFU cannot and do not police this policy. Any challenges to this via the safeguarding/discipline route quickly become a 'they said this and they said that', so we need to manage this at the club level. Over the last few years, the segregation of squads into 'A' and 'B' teams, has slowly increased across some of the clubs we play regularly. SRFC accepts there may be genuine reasons for this; a club may only have 25 squad members and they are all excellent players, or they may only have their 'good' players available. Therefore, the SRFC's approach to this will be as follows:

- SRFC will never request an A and/or B match.
- If SRFC are asked to supply an A or B team, then the club are happy this is accepted, so long as the half game rules are followed.
- SRFC will not pigeonhole players into positions at age grade U6 to U11.
- At age grade U12, there may be a case for splitting into "forwards" and "backs", but positional interchange opportunities must always be kept in mind as players develop.
- At age grade U13+ positions can be considered. Discussions with player and parent/guardian should be ongoing as children develop e.g., a lot of back rows develop into centres and *vice versa*.
- If an age group has a large squad and can form 2 teams then there is the ability to do so. The players must not be split into two distinct squads and all players should train with and play in games with all other players as much as possible. It should be remembered that teamwork is founded on relationships between players.

The club accepts that this will be the best effort and parents are requested to raise any **significant** concerns to the Head Coach initially, but if needed then to the Director of Minis and/or Youth Rugby.



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## **Competition.**

The RFU Policy is that there should be no competitive (win/lose) league/knockout games until the age of U14s. Up to that point U12 and U13s should only take part in Waterfall tournaments. Please see the link for details. [211231 Age Grade Rugby Playing Calendar 2022-23 - FINAL.xlsx \(englandrugby.com\)](#)

We have spoken to the RFU and D&W and there is a difference of opinion. The RFU stated that their intent was for Waterfall competitions to be held in a single day. This is to reduce the mental anxiety that may hang over children when their actions/mistakes in a drawn-out league cannot be addressed until the next game in one or even more weeks' time. During a 'day' waterfall tournament a coach then can address the performance issues in a positive (Kids First) manner and the child can move on. D&W, however, believe that their half-season-long approach equates to a "waterfall" tournament. The SRFC Board does not agree with D&W and believes their view and policy are contrary to RFU Guidelines. The board also feels it may also reduce the amount of rugby the children get, as it means they only play one short match every few weeks. The board feels that if clubs ran more waterfall day tournaments the players would get more game time which would allow them to develop quicker.

Due to the difference between RFU and D&W, the club's view is that entry for our U12 & U13 will be on a case-by-case basis. At the start of the season, we will ask coaches to form an opinion based not only on the squad's physical skills and mental maturity. This will be discussed with parents by the Youth Manager and Age Grade coaches. If coaches and parents feel that the age group is mature enough for the current D&W league, we will then hold a session with the players on their own and talk to them about what will be involved, and they will have a vote on if they wish to compete in a league structure. This is all in line with the Kids First Policy and the Children's Voice drive at the club from next season.

The club will endeavour to engage with D&W and discuss our views and thoughts with the hope that we can get an agreed way forward that is supported by the RFU.



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## **Mental Health.**

The world is starting to feel that it is safe to talk about mental health in a much more open and honest way. It is also recognised that adult mental health issues stem back to childhood trauma and experiences. Salisbury RFC understands that it needs to be aware of this and play its part in supporting this new openness. Obviously, as the mini and junior sections of the club will focus on the child's aspect of mental health, this does not mean that the club isn't willing to support any other family member with a safe space to discuss mental health concerns.

Currently, we have no trained mental health first aiders but the club, in particular the minis and junior sections, will look to engage with a professional charity to support this area of development. Therefore, please bear with us as we find a partner charity and any support current members can offer from professional life will be gratefully received as we develop and after we fully launch the initiative.

This also links to the RFU and the club's Kids First policy along with the drive for the club to have a Child's Voice project.