



Oundle School

Oundle School Policy on Under and Over Age Rugby Players

General Rules

Oundle School intends to follow the RFU guidelines, which state:

‘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.

The ultimate consideration must be for the welfare and safety of the player and those with whom he will be playing.’

In practice this means that:

The Headmaster is the ultimate arbiter regarding in which year group a boy will play rugby.

All boys in the **First and Second Forms** in the Michaelmas and Christmas Quarters will play rugby. The school will combine both 1st and 2nd form boys at the U13 age group to field U13A, B and occasionally C teams. The boys will play 15 a-side rugby. 1st form boys will be playing ‘up’ an age group with 2nd Form boys.

All boys in the **Third Form** will play rugby in the Under 14 cohort in the Easter Quarter.

All boys in the **Fourth and Fifth Form**, who play rugby in the Michaelmas and Christmas Quarters, will be subject to the rules identified within this policy document.

In general for ‘under age’ and ‘over age’ players it is the master-in-charge of a team’s responsibility, in conjunction with the master in charge of rugby, to understand fully the possible consequences of playing an under or over aged player. This is of special significance whenever there is a significant physical discrepancy in size or maturity between the player and his teammates and/or opponents. A decision not to play an individual may occasionally need to be made on the afternoon of a match, although it is much better if this is done beforehand.

‘Under age’ Players

It is the School’s responsibility not to allow an ‘underage’ boy to play ‘up’ an age group (rather than in his year group) if staff feel there is a significant threat of injury occurring to the individual concerned or to those with whom the boy will be playing.

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The decision to allow a boy to play out of age group lies with those in the best position to assess all the relevant circumstances, the master in charge of the team and the Master in Charge of Rugby. The Head of Junior Sport (U13 Rugby) and the Director of Sport may also be involved in the decision making process. The Headmaster will be informed.

The decision will be clearly communicated to those affected by the decision, namely opposition schools, parents, teaching and coaching staff.

'Over age' Players

It is the School's responsibility not to allow an 'over age' boy to play in his year group (rather than age group) if staff feel there is a significant threat of injury occurring to the individual concerned or those with whom the boy will be playing.

For each boy, who does not meet the age criteria, we shall conduct a risk assessment to assess the risk of injury to the boy, or to other players, from the boy playing within his own year group. If the risk is small (and indeed if we believe that there is a significantly greater risk of a rugby injury occurring to other boys who are correctly placed by age within their own age group) then for important social reasons such 'over aged' boys will play within their year group rather than their natural age group.

It is the School's responsibility to assess whether any discernible advantage is gained by a team with an 'over age' boy playing. Where common sense dictates that this is the case then a boy will not be allowed to play in his year group in School rugby matches but will be promoted to his correct age cohort.

The decision will be clearly communicated to those affected by the decision, namely opposition schools, parents, teaching and coaching staff. The Headmaster will be informed.

Contact with Opposition Schools

All 'over age' boys who represent Oundle School at rugby will be identified by age but not name, in their correct teams, to opposition Schools in advance by the Head of Rugby.

We hope opposition schools will feel able to trust the judgement of Oundle School on this matter. Any concerns before, during or after a match, should be drawn to the attention of the Head of Rugby (Mr John Olver), Director of Sport (Mr James Husbands), or the Headmaster.

Oundle parents are informed of this policy by letter before the start of the season and by reference on the website.

JRH/CMPB
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