

THE FA'S DISPENSATION POLICY



Dear Colleagues,

I trust you are well.

I am writing to update you upon a change that will be implemented for the 2016-17 season, which concerns youth football.

Introduction of FA's Dispensation Policy:

The FA's Dispensation Policy, which currently allows children with a disability to play in a more appropriate age group according to their physical, emotional and social maturity.

The FA's rules, specifically FA Rule C.4(A) as well as The Standard Code of Rules for Youth Competitions (SCRYC), specify age ranges for children to play in which are designed to ensure that they compete with peers of similar size and development. For example a child born on or before 31 August 2006 (currently aged 9), is permitted to play U10's or U11's football only (children can play up one year above their chronological age group).

For some children with a disability or Significant Physical Development Delay (SPDD) however playing in the specified age range would put them at a substantial disadvantage to their non-disabled team mates, discouraging them from being involved or making it impossible for them to access football altogether. In many cases, playing in a lower age group will reduce risk and ensure greater balance between a disabled child's ability and that of their teammates.

The policy has proved successful in ensuring that children with a disability, who wish to play mainstream football, are able to do so.

Amendment to FA's Dispensation Policy:

The policy however has failed where children without a disability, but who (for a number of possible reasons) are schooled in a separate year group to which their chronological age would normally specify. For example, a child who has delayed starting school for one year, due to a childhood trauma, is currently unable to access Association Football alongside their school peers.

The amendment has been made to address the above. The addition is highlighted below:

"Who is covered by the Policy?"

Any child who has:

- *a disability OR*
- *a significant physical developmental delay (SPDD)*

AND

- *would be placed at a substantial disadvantage (as a consequence of that disability or SPDD) if required to play in his/her prescribed age group.*

OR

Any child who has:



- *delayed no more than one school year, based upon their early social or physical development and is therefore schooled no more than one year behind their 'chronological' age."*

Rationale:

It was clear that there were children who desired to access football, but for whom there were certain difficulties and barriers. Some case studies are below:

CASE STUDIES			
Case Study	Brief History	Current Outcome	Proposed Outcome
TG	<p>TG is a child aged 9, who has a summer birthday. He is small for his age and was brought to the UK after spending his early years in a Ukrainian orphanage.</p> <p>Upon arrival in England, TG was malnourished and spoke no English. As a result he is schooled one year below his 'correct year group', so that he has more time to develop his social, emotional and cognitive skills.</p>	<p>TG does not have a disability and is therefore not covered by the FA's Dispensation Policy.</p> <p>The FA were unable to grant dispensation for TG to play affiliated football outside of his 'correct age group'.</p> <p>TG currently does not play affiliated football.</p>	<p>A certificate received from the Local Education Authority or Admissions Authority, detailing the child's school year would allow the child to play in the same year group in affiliated football.</p>
RPC	<p>RPC is a child aged 8. RPC had complications shortly after birth relating to a cleft pallet. RPC underwent 8 operations and the child's speech and physical development was seen to be 14 months behind where it may have been at school starting age. However, RPC does not have a disability.</p> <p>As a result, RPC delayed entry into school for one year.</p>	<p>RPC has confidence issues relating to speech and finds socialising with those who RPC does not know, very difficult.</p> <p>The FA were unable to grant dispensation for RPC to play affiliated football outside of his 'correct age group'.</p> <p>The child currently does not play affiliated football, as RPC does not wish to mix with peers who RPC does not know amid fears of bullying pertaining to RPC's speech development issues.</p>	<p>A certificate received from the Local Education Authority or Admissions Authority, detailing the child's school year would allow the child to play in the same year group in affiliated football.</p>
BN	<p>BN was abused as a young child and developed severe 'Separation Anxiety Disorder' in BN's early years. The result meant that BN was unable to separate from BN's mother when BN reached school age.</p>	<p>BN does not have a disability and is unable to play affiliated football with BN's peers.</p> <p>BN cannot play football with children of BN's own age and as such does not play</p>	<p>A certificate received from the Local Education Authority or Admissions Authority, detailing the child's school year would allow</p>



	BN delayed entry into school and whilst still finds it difficult make friends and to trust those BN does not know, is making progress pertaining to social and emotional development.	affiliated football.	the child to play in the same year group in affiliated football.
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Change of Process:

Should an application be made on behalf of a child who has delayed entry into their school (due to early childhood development), then evidence may be requested from the school – which does not need to be medically based. A letter from the schools Admissions Authority or appropriate education professional will be sufficient.

Without the need for a medical professional (both from the applicant and FA), the waiting time for a verdict will be far swifter.

What will stay the same?:

- Any application will need to be authorised by The FA centrally.
- An application pack will need to be completed and supplementary evidence will be required.
- Children who are born close to the 31 August cut off point, will not be considered (unless they can show evidence of delaying a school year and why this was appropriate for their development).
- Children who are small for their age group will not be considered (unless they can show evidence of delaying a school year and why this was appropriate for their development).

Other information:

Attached is a copy of the Application Pack and updated policy, for further information – please contact John Stanley in the Player Status team.