



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

*Approved October 2020*

Each Harpenden Colts year group operates within the constitution of the Harpenden Colts Football Club ("Harpenden Colts" or the "Club"). The Football Management Committee ("FMC") of the Club will be the final arbiter of any disputes relating to this document and any decisions relating to it will be guided by the Core Philosophy.

This policy has been adopted by the FMC to establish the approach to squad size and composition to be used by Harpenden Colts year groups in which squads are to be/have been established.



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

### **1. Basic Principles**

Once a squad structure has been established in a year group, the Club follows clearly defined principles in relation to the composition of squads and the allocation of players between them.

- From U8, year groups may be organised into squads of appropriate sizes
- Squad size is aimed at viable squads which optimise access to match time, taking into account availability of players
- Squads are generally organised on an ability basis – although variable streaming structures may be adopted (see Section 5 of this Policy) and in some years (generally older year groups), with the agreement of the FMC, a transition may be made to a non-streamed structure
- For streamed year groups, players are organised between squads based on criteria recommended by the FA and set out in this Policy
- Players belong to the Club and their year group, they do not belong permanently to a squad
- Players should be assessed by Year Group Leads, Squad Leads and squad coaches throughout the season and during any specific sessions designed for assessment of players
- Movement up and down between squads occurs at the end of the season to balance squads and, if appropriate/necessary, half way through the season
- Year Group Leads and Year Group Administrators manage the squad composition/allocation process, liaising closely with the Squad Leads
- Squad Leads/coaches are custodians of their players for the season and they should not resist movement of a player on the basis that it will impact on the “success” of their squad in a particular division/league (if a squad loses players meaning it is less able to compete in its current division/league – the appropriate response is to request with the league a move down to a lower division – not to resist the appropriate movement of players)
- The Club seeks to balance some impossible equations. We are principally about involvement and enjoyment but aim – particularly with the most able footballers – for genuine competitiveness. Achieving the balance between these twin aspirations is the key to the management of squad composition and player allocation.



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

### **2. Squad Sizes**

Squad sizes will depend on a number of factors, including the age of the players, whether they are playing league football, the total number of players in the year group and the requirements of the league in which they are playing.

The number of squads and squad sizes for a year group is determined at the end of each season by the Year Group Lead in consultation with the Squad Leads and other coaches in the year group and based on the Club guidelines (see Schedule 1). Squad sizes should not be increased or decreased during the season other than with the permission of the Year Group Lead and the approval of all Squad Leads of affected squads.

#### *League Squads*

For squads playing league football, the squad size should be chosen to ensure that in so far as is practicable each player in a squad has the opportunity to play at least 3 out of every 4 matches during the season. However, if:-

- players within a particular squad will be able to exceed this commitment, then a smaller squad size can be considered – but Squad Leads need to be realistic and allow for the possibility of other commitments, illness and injury so that players are not put under undue pressure
- if there are genuine reasons to believe that players within a squad will not be able to meet this commitment, then a larger squad size can be considered
- from U11 upwards, as games get more physical and players are involved in more school sport, injuries become more prevalent which necessitates larger squad sizes

#### *Non-league Squads*

If a squad is not intending to play league matches, then the squad size will be determined by the number of players that results in a good training session, taking into account the likely attendance rate of the players at training sessions.

#### *General Guide*

A general guide to squad size is set out in Schedule 1 of this policy but should be read in the context of the comments above. Schedule 1 is not prescriptive but every effort should be made not to exceed the maximum numbers specified, as this could impact on players' ability to play matches regularly.



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

### **3. Management and Decision Making**

The process of deciding squad numbers, sizes and the allocation of players to them is managed by the Year Group Lead and the Year Group Administrator. The Year Group Lead works closely with the Squad Leads during the allocation process but the views of all coaches within the year group is taken into account when reaching streaming decisions. For further details see section 7 below.

### **4. Principles for Player Allocation**

If a year group is not streamed, or in relation to non-streamed squads within a year group, players should be allocated in accordance with the Harpenden Colts Non Streamed Transition Policy.

The aim of player allocation is to ensure that, provided optimum squad sizes are not exceeded, players train and play competitive football at a level that is commensurate with their ability, experience and attitude.

The following principles guide player allocation decisions within the Club:-

- Players are assessed regularly to determine the stage of development they have reached
- Selection takes place primarily on footballing merit, although other factors recommended by the English Football Association may also be taken into account
- Consideration may be given to the willingness, ability and versatility to play one or more positions (including goal keeper), but it should not be the overriding factor that drives decision making
- Coaches should always follow the player and not the other way around. Players should not be placed in a higher team than is appropriate as a result of the involvement of a coach, who is their parent, with a particular squad (although exceptions may be considered if having made reasonable enquiries there are not sufficient qualified coaches, or coaches prepared to obtain qualifications, to run a particular squad
- Squads are not selected according to friendship groups. Sport enables players to make friends with people from different schools and backgrounds and one of the objectives of the Club is to provide such exposure. However player enjoyment is a factor and if there are genuine and significant reasons not to place a player in a squad to which they would otherwise be allocated then this can be taken into account by the Year Group Lead
- Every player merits fresh consideration every year



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

- Parents may express a preference for their child to play at a lower level than a squad to which they have been allocated provided it does not, in the opinion of the Year Group Lead, cause a significant disruption to the balance of the squads across the year group
- Parents may not unilaterally opt for their child to play at a higher level if it is against the judgement of the Year Group Lead
- For squads that are not intending to play league football, it may be easier to manage a mixed ability team and so if the Year Group Lead and relevant Squad Lead agree, the general streaming principles may be relaxed in relation to such squads. It goes without saying, but where a decision has been made to run a squad on a mixed ability basis, players cannot be selected or rejected by the squad on the basis of ability

### **5. Streaming Structure**

The Club uses the following streaming structures:-

- A straightforward linear streaming from A to E (as applicable) is the starting point; but
- An A, B, C, D/D/D streaming structure has many advantages as a completely linear structure will often make it difficult for the last team to compete in any division (the Club finds that more players continue to play for longer with this adjusted linear structure; and
- Prior to 9 aside, a year group may choose to adopt an AA, BB, CC structure but from 9 aside onwards the linear structure above is recommended to assist player development and ensure players are involved in the league at the right level for their experience and ability

### **6. Assessing Players**

In order to be able to allocate players to squads using the principles set out in Section 4 above, the Year Group Lead and Squad Leads, with the help of the coaches, need to assess the players in the year group against appropriate criteria. Such assessment takes place continually as part of the normal coaching process but it is also recommended that, towards the end of the season, at least one session is organised (preferably more than one) which is specifically for the purposes of assessment.

Assessment criteria may include a consideration of the following factors (the three "A"s):-

- *Ability*: ball handling, decision making, speed, physicality, tackling, fitness, shooting, impact and other skills recommended by the English Football Association
- *Attitude*: listening skills, discipline, understanding of instructions, determination,



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

commitment, motivation etc

- *Attendance*: regular attendance at training sessions and availability to play matches

Year Group Leads should seek to communicate with players and their parents the basis upon which players in the year group are being assessed and will inform parents when sessions are being held specifically for assessment purposes.

Squad Leads and coaches should during the season take the opportunity to observe the players in squads above and below their own in training and matches so that they have a good working knowledge of the development of players who might have potential to move to their squad.

### **7. *Process***

Each Year Group Lead will have discretion, with their Squad Leads, to manage in their year groups the precise process for managing player allocation at the end of each season. But the process adopted should incorporate steps which are the same or equivalent to the “Model Allocation Process” set out in Schedule 2 of this Policy. Squad Leads may be asked each season to report back to the FMC on how the player allocation process was managed in their year group.

In order for the Club to be run efficiently, player allocation decisions need to be made before the end of May in each season, which means the player allocation process should commence significantly in advance of that date.

### **8. *Mid-season Transfers***

Generally allocation of players between squads takes place at the end of each season. However the Year Group Lead may decide that an additional rebalancing of squads is required mid-season. Year groups should aim to avoid wholesale changes mid-season and, after an appropriate assessment process, only pursue player swaps between adjacent squads where the players would clearly be better suited to playing with the other squad.

### **9. *Non-permanent Transfers/Loans***

Where the league rules permit temporary transfers or loans, the following principles will be adopted by year groups:-

- Loans will always be organised via discussions between the Squad Leads of the respective squads, not via direct discussions with the parent
- Squads are not obliged to agree to a temporary transfer if such loan could affect the short



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

term viability of their squad.

- Where the motivation for a loan is to give an opportunity to a player to try out at a higher level, with a view potentially to making a permanent transfer, Squad Leads are encouraged to participate and not to resist the loan

### **10. *New Members***

Admission of new members to the Club is dealt with in the Harpenden Colts Year Group Management Policy.

If a player joins mid-season they will be allocated to the squad in which a vacancy has arisen (until the next formal player allocation process is instigated). If a new Member joins at the end of the season, they will be placed in the appropriate squad based on an assessment of their ability compared to other existing Members of the year group. As new members will only have been seen on a minimal number of occasions by the Squad leads and coaches, they would need to have demonstrably higher ability than any existing Colts player in order to be placed in a higher squad.

### **11. *League Ready?***

All children regardless of ability will be able to join the Club if spaces are available. However, if it is decided by the Year Group Lead that the player is not yet ready to play league matches, the player may be invited to train with the Club until they have achieved an appropriate level for league football. Other than in relation to specific, justifiable cases within the Girls' Section, the Club applies the same subscription to all players, whether they are training only or involved in league matches

### **12. *Multiple Squad Membership/Leagues***

Players cannot be allocated to play for more than one squad within the same league. However, players can be dual registered for teams in separate leagues but only to provide cover for absences and not to strengthen a team for a specific match. Any dual registration should be made known to the Club Secretary.



## Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy

### Schedule 1

#### Guide to Squad Sizes

MATCH FORMAT	USUAL/RECOMMENDED SQUAD SIZE	NOTES
No league matches	10-16	Where squad is not playing regular league football, a larger squad can be run, assuming there are sufficient coaches to support it
5 aside	7-10	At U8, Mid Herts only allowed registration of up to 8 players for 5 aside squads
7 aside	9-13	Depending on the availability of players for matches
9 aside	12-15	Depending on the availability of players for matches
11 aside (up to U15)	16-18	Depending on the availability of players for matches
11 aside (From U15)	16-20	Depending on the availability of players for matches



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

### **Schedule 2**

#### **Model Player Allocation Process**

1. In mid-March of each season, Year Group Lead/Administrator should:-
  - a. determine which current members of the year group will return and their likely availability for league matches. If some players are only able to play, for example, 2 out of 4 league matches, that might have a serious impact on squad sizes;
  - b. diarise a final selection meeting with their Squad Leads and coaches for April/May (in case a meeting is required).
2. Send out email or poll (template poll available from the Club secretary) asking all parents to reply by a given deadline confirming their intention or otherwise to be part of the Club the following season. Chase responses if necessary.
3. When asking about intentions to return, it is worth asking parents whether they think their child is playing at the right level. Parents are often very perceptive and honest about their child's own ability and may voluntarily suggest a move up or down is in order for the following season. This can sometimes help guide how allocation sessions are organised and the decision making process.
4. Emphasise to all parents that players are joining/re-joining as Members of the Club and they must be ready to be placed in whichever squad they are allocated.
5. Explain the nature of any player allocation sessions that will be held and the timing of any decision. Whilst assessment during the season is important, players welcome the opportunity to attend specific sessions with other players in the year group, particularly with players from squads above and below them, so that they know that coaches within the year group are familiar with all players within the year group.
6. Try not to be influenced by players who prevaricate and suggest they may withdraw if the allocation process goes against them.
7. Make clear the criteria upon which allocation decisions will be made (e.g. Attitude, Availability and Attendance) and invite parents to respond with any worries or issues in advance. Give them every opportunity to engage before the process begins.
8. Year Group Leads must establish the capacity of each squad and the year group as a whole, based on availability poll (see 1 above) and the number of existing "full time equivalents".
9. If returning players do not fill the capacity as calculated above, players on the waiting list (in the order specified in the Year Group Policy) should be invited to attend player allocation sessions so that they can be allocated to the appropriate squad. It is worth inviting a few more players on the list than there are places for as sometimes there are drop outs after the allocation process. Those attending from the waiting list should be told clearly if their place is not guaranteed based on numbers and depends on returning players.



## **Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy**

10. Throughout and after any player allocation sessions the Year Group Lead should seek feedback from the Squad Leads in relation to player performance and the Squad Leads in turn should seek input from their coaches.
11. Year Group Leads should use the feedback from Squad Leads and coaches and, following the guiding principles in this Policy, propose to the existing Squad Leads and coaches by email:-
  - a. the number and size of squads for next season;
  - b. the Squad Leads for next season (note that as coach follows the player, it is not guaranteed that squad leads will continue from season to season);
  - c. the player allocation between squads for next season.
12. If any Squad Lead disagrees with the allocation decision or wishes to discuss the decision in detail the Squad Lead will hold a Year Group Meeting in person to review the decision but whilst the Squad Lead will consider all views of Squad Leads and coaches, player allocation is ultimately their decision.