



Harpenden Colts Player Allocation Policy

Approved January 2023

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.



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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 organised on an ability basis to support player development – 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 or coach.
- 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, halfway 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 development of players and enjoyment but aim for genuine competitiveness across all squads. Achieving the balance between these twin aspirations is the key to the management of squad composition and player allocation.



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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). The number of squads in each Year Group is governed by the availability of facilities and the maximum number of squads at each age group is specified in the Year Group Management policy. Squad sizes must not be increased or decreased during the season other than with the permission of the Year Group Lead and the agreement 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 (75%) 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



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matches regularly.

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.

Where a Year Group is streamed the Harpenden Colts Approach to Streaming Players (Squad Balancing) is detailed in Schedule 3 to this 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 based on the FA's 4 corners model
- Consideration may be given to the willingness, ability and versatility to play one or more positions (including goalkeeper), 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



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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, we should be constantly assessing and reviewing players and the level they are playing at.
- Parents/carers 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/carers may not unilaterally opt for their child to play at a higher level if it is against the judgement of the Year Group Lead
- The Year Group Lead has the discretion to take into account any specific needs or circumstances which may be relevant. These should be discussed with the relevant Squad Leads where appropriate.
- 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/F (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 will 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
- It is also recommended that each year group from U8s should have a Development squad which is non-match playing to ensure players who need it are given more time and focus on developing their basic footballing skills. Within the Girls section it is not always possible to have a Development squad and consequently it is possible to have training only players.



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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 should be based on the FA's 4 corner model.

Year Group Leads should seek to communicate with players and their parents/carers the basis upon which players in the year group are being assessed and will inform parents/carers 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. In appendix 2 is a potential process, but Year Group Leads should feel free to manage their own process provided the process;

- Is objective
- Involves inputs from Squad leads and Coaches across the Year Group
- Takes into account the aspects of this Policy, the Year Group Management Policy and the Squad Management Policy
- Is communicated to parents/carers in a timely manner
- Treats all players and parents/carers with consideration and respect

8. *Mid-season Transfers*

Generally, the 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.



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9. *Non-permanent Transfers/Loans*

Where the league rules permit temporary transfers or loans, the following principles apply;

- 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-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 or to the squad(s) where vacancies exist. 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.



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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



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Schedule 2

Potential 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/carers 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 may be worth asking parents/carers whether they think their child is playing at the right level. Parents/carers 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/carers 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/carers 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 dropouts 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.
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



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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 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 Year Lead will consider all views of Squad Leads and coaches, but player allocation is ultimately their decision.



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Schedule 3

Harpenden Colts FC

Approach to Streaming Players

Created January 2023

The following is intended as a guide for new Coaches and Parents/Carers, to help explain Harpenden Colts' approach to streaming.

We are lucky at Harpenden Colts that we have a large intake of players each season (120+ boys and girls). This enables us to be able to run multiple teams in each Year Group. Streaming is the method by which children are divided into teams, based primarily on the FAs four corners model assessing technical/tactical, social, physical and psychological development. It should be noted that most other local football clubs, who can run multiple teams, also choose to stream in one form or another. We prefer to call the method of streaming we utilise at Colts 'Squad Balancing'.

The boys section chose to stream every year group that joined the club in 2019/20 with the girl's section starting from 2020/21. Squad Balancing is an ongoing process, with players constantly assessed and allocated to squads that best support their development and enjoyment. We believe that this is the correct procedure to follow to best support the short, medium, and long-term development of all the players in the club. Year groups who joined prior to 2019/20 season may not follow the same streaming policy.

The decision to move players between squads is made by the year group lead taking into account the views of squad leads, coaches, parents/carers & players. Squad moves are not decisions made on a weekly basis. Movement between teams will, perhaps, occur twice in a season (normally around the Winter break at Christmas and at the end of the season). More significant changes occur when year groups are moving between 5, 7, 9 and 11 aside, when bigger squads are required, or squads are merged. Squad moves are communicated to parents/carers in a clear and transparent manner.

The reasons Harpenden Colts use a Streaming Policy are as follows:

- We are a sports club, and our club philosophy is centred around helping players maximise their potential.
- We do not stream to win. For Harpenden Colts, Squad Balancing is about developing players and placing them in teams and leagues with players of a similar ability. This is likely to encourage more even games and will inevitably involve wins and losses. These are all helpful and necessary experiences!
- Squad balancing creates a player pathway, motivating the players to improve and encouraging more positive behaviour.



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- Players should be given the opportunity to be placed in a squad, and league, which enables them to positively contribute to the team - without dominating or struggling excessively. A player's development is likely to be enhanced by playing in a team, and in a league, with players of a similar ability. In some very rare cases, this may include consideration of children playing up an age group.
- Squad balancing is an opportunity for players to expand their social group and make new friends.
- As often as possible coaches should also move between squads; this allows more coaches and players to work with each other.
- Every player should be treated the same, whatever team they play for. Harpenden Colts implements a coaching curriculum and common coaching language so there is consistency across year groups and squads.
- Streaming decisions are at the sole discretion of the club.

Every opportunity should be taken, through training sessions, tournaments, and social events, to mix players from different teams in the same age group. This helps to build a sense of belonging, togetherness, new friendships and it eases movement between teams, as and when it occurs.

If you want to discuss the clubs streaming policy please speak to the squad lead, year lead and or the clubs head coach.