



GUIDANCE ON THE

AGE GRADE RUGBY DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

TEAMWORK

RESPECT

ENJOYMENT

DISCIPLINE

SPORTSMANSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The RFU's Age Grade Rugby Disciplinary Procedures (RFU Regulation 19, Appendix 6) are designed to ensure that Age Grade players understand that rugby is a game of controlled physical endeavour and should be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws of the Game. The procedures should be read in conjunction with this guidance.

All those involved in Age Grade rugby need to ensure that rugby's high standards of conduct on and off the field are constantly and consistently maintained. The RFU urges a 'child-centric' approach that deals with players in an appropriate, fair and proportionate manner that supports their learning of the Game.

The RFU is very proud of the many volunteers involved in Age Grade rugby that promote the RFU Core Values - Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship - and teach young players to appreciate the value of the Game.

This guidance seeks to outline best practice. Further advice and assistance are available from the local Constituent Body Age Grade Disciplinary Secretary (CBAGDS), the National Age Grade Disciplinary Secretary (NAGDS), the England Rugby Football Schools Union (ERFSU), the England Colleges Rugby Football Union (ECRFU) and the RFU Discipline Department. This guidance should be read in conjunction with RFU Regulation 15 & 19, the RFU Safeguarding Policy and Toolkit and the Guidance on Obtaining Best Evidence from Child Witnesses in RFU Disciplinary Hearings.

Referees must report any Red Card or Abandonment to the local CBAGDS within 48 hours of the conclusion of the match so that Age Grade matters can be dealt with in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Responsibilities for the administration of disciplinary procedures will be outlined generally before specific differences between Clubs, Schools, Colleges and Regional Academies are addressed.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

TEAMWORK

Teamwork is essential to our sport. We believe the only way to succeed is by working together.

RESPECT

Respect forms the basis of our sport. We believe every person on our team has something to contribute.

ENJOYMENT

Enjoyment is the reason we play and support rugby union. We believe rugby is fun and being passionate and positive are the keys to great performances.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline underpins our sport. We believe it takes strength of character and total focus to deliver.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Sportsmanship is the foundation rugby union is based upon. We believe in bringing fairness and integrity to our organisation by living our values.

CB RESPONSIBILITIES

Discipline is one of the core values of the Game. The RFU has responsibility for the management of all disciplinary issues. As part of the disciplinary framework, the RFU delegates certain disciplinary powers to its Constituent Bodies (CBs). Each CB appoints a Disciplinary Panel, a Disciplinary Secretary, and an Age Grade Disciplinary Secretary (CBAGDS) with responsibility for dealing with disciplinary incidents within the Community Game. The RFU appoints a National Age Grade Disciplinary Secretary (NAGDS) to provide advice and support to the CBAGDSs, Clubs, Schools, Colleges and Regional Academies.

BEST PRACTICE

BELOW ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DEALING WITH THE AGE GRADE RUGBY DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES. THESE APPLY TO SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, REGIONAL ACADEMIES AND CLUBS.

THE PROCESS

Where possible, those that know an Age Grade Player best should be the ones to discipline, mentor, guide and educate that player. The disciplinary process should be conducted more informally than the adult process and the procedures should be simple and easy to understand. Where possible, there should be minimal delay when organising a disciplinary hearing.

If a Referee abandons any Age Grade match then the RFU Head of Discipline or the NAGDS can mandate that both the teams involved in the abandoned match be provisionally suspended from playing matches whilst an investigation is conducted.

PROVISIONAL SUSPENSION

Please be aware that a player ordered-off the field of play becomes immediately provisionally suspended and is unable to take part or be selected for any further match, until their disciplinary case has been concluded.

The matter should be dealt with as promptly as possible, particularly if the player indicates an intention to plead not guilty. This prevents the Player, if found not guilty, from serving a period of suspension that they need not to have served.

HEARING ARRANGEMENTS

For Age Grade players subject to a disciplinary case or acting as a witness to an incident, their welfare should be the primary consideration when making arrangements for a disciplinary hearing. For example, their educational commitments and family life should be carefully considered when deciding when and where the hearing should be listed and how the hearing will be managed.

SANCTION

It is very important that the disciplinary process assists in maintaining high standards within the Game, however any playing suspension imposed on Age Grade players should not normally be so severe as to discourage the player from continuing to play rugby in the future (subject, of course, to the seriousness of the alleged act). Any sanction imposed should be based on the sanctions table; this reflects the Player's age, rugby experience, responsibility and culpability. It may also include, in addition, a non-rugby related element if considered appropriate. Financial penalties or costs should not be imposed on an Age Grade Player. Please note that sanctions imposed are in matches rather than weeks and therefore may apply to a combination of club/school/colleges/regional academies games.

You can find the sanction table in the **RFU Regulation 19, Appendix 6**.

SAFEGUARDING

Should any safeguarding concerns arise when dealing with an Age Grade Player (or any witness), advice should be sought immediately from the CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM) or the RFU Safeguarding Department. Under normal circumstance the details of a case involving an Age Grade Player should not be published. Further assistance on this issue may be sought from the RFU Discipline Department.

REPRESENTATIVE, COUNTY AND DIVISIONAL TEAMS

Disciplinary matters involving an Age Grade Player of a Representative Team shall be dealt with by the NAGDS who can issue directions on how the matter should be dealt with. Where an Age Grade Player of a visiting Representative Team is ordered-off the playing enclosure, the Referee shall provide a report to the RFU Head of Discipline, who shall send it to the Player's Home Union to be dealt with. An Age Grade Player representing their County or playing for a Divisional Team will be dealt with by the NAGDS, unless the NAGDS determines that the CBAGDS or the Player's Club would be best placed to deal with the matter.

TOURNAMENT, FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS

If an Age Grade Player is ordered-off in a tournament, festival or competition (e.g. Sevens), the matter should be dealt with by the Player's Coach as soon as possible and, in any event, it must be dealt with before the Player's next match. The Age Grade Player will be provisionally suspended and unable to take part or be selected for any further match until the matter has been dealt with. For serious incidents, a full Club hearing may instead be necessary after the event. For the avoidance of doubt when applying a sanction, tournaments, festivals and competitions should be considered to be equal to one match.

THE AGE-GRADE DISCIPLINE PROCESS IN CLUBS AND REGIONAL ACADEMIES

U12 AND BELOW

The RFU believes that, for disciplinary matters for U12s or below, the Player's Coach/Manager is in the best position to understand the circumstances and deal with the matter and provide the most effective child-centric solution, that are education focused in conjunction with appropriate sanctions.

The primary aim at this level should be teaching young players about the RFU's Core Values and the high standards expected of them. Coaches should work closely with the Player's parents sharing concerns they have about the Player and agreeing how these can best be addressed.

U13 TO U18

At U13- U18 level, most disciplinary issues should be dealt with by the Club's Disciplinary Officer or Panel, consisting of up to three members experienced in dealing with young people, or the Academy Manager.

The Club or Regional Academy should obtain a copy of the Match Official's report as soon as possible

REPORTING

The Club and the Regional Academy must report any Red Card to the CBAGDS within 48 hours. Reporting of incidents is essential to the correct functioning of the disciplinary process. The CBAGDS will be able to provide advice and assistance in relation to the hearing process and procedure if required.

Any discriminatory abuse MUST be reported direct to the RFU and that it is not delegated to the club/regional academy.

AT THE HEARING

Panels need to be mindful of the fact that hearings should be dealt with as quickly as possible. Where matters are contested managing their length is key. Careful consideration should be given by the panel to how the evidence can best be dealt with in order to alleviate potentially lengthy hearings. The hearing should be conducted as informally as possible. It is not a courtroom or an Adult disciplinary tribunal. The Player should be accompanied by their parents, or with their approval, another responsible adult. The process shall be explained carefully to the Player and, they or their spokesperson should be given the opportunity to have their say. If the Player pleads guilty or is found guilty of an offence, the Club's Disciplinary Officer/ Panel or Academy Manager has the power to impose a playing suspension as set out in the Age Grade sanctions table. The table does not show every offence in the World Rugby Law Book, but guidance may be sought from the CBAGDS, NAGDS or RFU if necessary.

Any playing sanction imposed will be in matches and irrespective of whether they are due to play for their Club, School, College, Regional Academy or any other rugby union team. Any sanction imposed on an Age Grade Player for a rugby disciplinary matter may, in addition, include a non-rugby related sanction.

FINDING, SANCTIONS AND APPEALS

Reasons should be provided to support any findings or justify how a sanction was reached.

The outcome of the hearing and any sanction imposed on the Player must also be reported to the CBAGDS within 48 hours.

Sanctions may be reviewed by the CBAGDS and the RFU Head of Discipline and, if the sanction is thought to be unreasonable in all the circumstances, they will refer the matter to the NAGDS for consideration who may require that the case is reconsidered by a new disciplinary panel.

Clubs and Regional Academies are asked to honour and enforce any School or College imposed playing suspensions on their players.

If an Academy player wishes to appeal, this should be dealt with by the Regional Academy's own internal procedures. Appeals from a decision of a Player's Club disciplinary panel will be heard by the CB Disciplinary Panel. Appeals must be lodged with the CBAGDS within 14 days of written notification of the decision.

If a Player appeals, they cannot play in any further match until their appeal has been heard and concluded, unless their suspension period has already been served.

THE AGE-GRADE DISCIPLINE PROCESS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

ORDERING OFF

Thankfully few Age Grade players are ordered-off in School or College matches, but if this happens, it is the responsibility of the Player's Head Teacher or Principal (or staff they delegate authority to) to deal with such incidents. The institution should obtain a copy of the Match Official's report as soon as possible.

PROVISIONAL SUSPENSION

It is important to remember that from the moment the Player is ordered-off the field of play, they are provisionally suspended from all rugby matches until the disciplinary matter has been dealt with.

REPORTING

Any Red Card must be reported to the CBAGDS within 48 hours.

Any discriminatory abuse MUST be reported direct to the RFU and that it is not delegated to the school/college.

AT THE HEARING

A School or College will have their own way of conducting disciplinary meetings, but, when it comes to dealing with on-field rugby matters, the RFU's procedures and sanction table must be followed. This ensures consistency within the Game. The ERFU, the ECRFU and CBAGDS can offer advice and guidance especially on interpreting the sanctions table if required.

FINDING, SANCTIONS AND APPEALS

Where the offence is admitted or proven, the Head Teacher or Principal has the power to impose a playing suspension in accordance with the framework set out within the Age Grade sanctions table. The sanction should apply to all of the Age Grade Player's matches, irrespective of whether they are scheduled to play for their Club, School, College, Regional Academy or any other rugby team. A Head Teacher or Principal may also impose non-rugby related sanctions if they feel it is appropriate in addition to playing sanctions.

Reporting to the CBAGDS within 48 hours is essential to the successful functioning of the RFU's disciplinary process; especially since any playing suspensions imposed by a School or College apply to all of the player's forthcoming matches, including any Club, Regional Academy or representative teams. Please state if it is known that the player is also in a Club team or Regional Academy.

Schools and Colleges are asked to honour and enforce any Club or Regional Academy imposed playing suspensions on their students.

Sanctions may be reviewed by the NAGDS and if they believe that the sanction is unduly lenient, they may direct that the School or College review the matter.

If an Age Grade Player wishes to appeal, this shall be dealt with in accordance with the School's or College's own internal procedures. There is no right of appeal to the CB or the RFU from a decision of the School or College. If a player appeals in accordance with the School or College's internal procedures, they shall not be selected or play in any further match(es) until their appeal has been heard and concluded, unless their period of suspension has already been served.

CITING

CITING COMPLAINTS MAY BE BROUGHT IN RELATION TO U13 TO U18 MATCHES, BUT NOT AT U12 AND BELOW LEVEL. A CITING CAN BE MADE WHEN THERE IS AN ALLEGATION THAT AN OPPOSITION PLAYER HAS COMMITTED A SERIOUS ACT OF FOUL PLAY.

CLUB CITINGS

The complainant Player, or their parent /guardian, or Club can lodge a citing. The citing complaint must however be made in writing and be signed by the Club Chairman or Secretary and sent to the CBAGDS within 7 days following the match. The citing should set out the following and backed up by supporting paperwork within 14 days:

- The match detail [date, venue, teams, final score, referee etc.]
- Details of the actual allegation as accurately as possible and the time played, the score at the time of the incident, the position on the field of the incident etc.
- The identity of the player(s) being cited (or information to be able to identify the player(s) concerned)
- Sufficient evidence to establish a case to answer.
- If the incident was seen by the Referee, representations should be provided to demonstrate that the Referee was wrong in not awarding the alleged offending player a red card.

Following receipt of the citing complaint, the CBAGDS will set up a Disciplinary Panel, with experience of dealing with young people, to hear the case. If the offence is admitted by the offending Player, the matter may be referred back to the Player's Club to be sanctioned by the Club's Disciplinary Panel but the CBAGDS must always be informed of the outcome of the citing.

SCHOOL OR COLLEGE CITINGS

The procedure for citing in Schools and Colleges is similar to the procedure used by Clubs and Regional Academies. The citing complaint must be lodged by the Head Teacher or Principal. The citing complaint should be sent to the opposition player's School or College within 7 days following the match and backed up by supporting paperwork within 14 days, in order that the matter can be properly dealt with by the alleged offending player's Head Teacher or Principal. Any non-rugby sanction is in addition to the playing sanction as per Regulation 19, Appendix 6, paragraph 1.5 (h). The CBAGDS must be informed of the outcome of the citing.

REGIONAL ACADEMY CITINGS

The citing complaint should be sent to the opposition player's Regional Academy, together with the CBAGDS responsible for that Academy, within 7 days following the match and backed up by supporting paperwork within 14 days. Following receipt of the citing complaint, the CBAGDS will set up a suitably qualified Discipline Panel.

FINAL WORD

For further information on any of the issues outlined in this guidance document, please contact the RFU Discipline Team. You can find the RFU Regulation related to Age Grade Rugby Disciplinary Procedures and Sanction Table in the **RFU Regulation 19, Appendix 6**.

Contact details may be found on the **RFU website** or via your NAGDS.