



## THE SIX PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR LEAGUE

### 1. WHY WE'RE PLAYING TO LEARN, NOT JUST TO WIN

The FA's guidance is clear. Children's soccer is **not** adult football. The pitch is a classroom and games are designed to help young children **learn** the game, to develop their skills, their confidence and their self-esteem. That doesn't mean it's not **competitive** – it's just that it's the children that are competing not the adults!

Children's soccer is not about **short-term match wins**, instead it's about **long-term player development**. There'll be plenty of time later for teams to concentrate on winning, so please relax, stand back and 'let the game be the teacher'.

### 2. WHY WE DON'T HAVE 'A' TEAMS

Children love competition. If they picked their own teams for a game in the park, they'd make them **as even as possible** because it makes the game more competitive, more challenging and more enjoyable. And if it got to 5-0, they'd stop the game and re-balance the teams to make it more even, and even more competitive. So the League does the same by requiring **all teams to be mixed and even**.

Picking 'A' and 'B' teams actually **holds players back** and slows their development. It makes lots of matches too one-sided and un-competitive. If it ends 9-0, 'A' team players are not stretched or challenged and just 'coast'. 'B' team players are permanently stuck in the slow lane. With mixed teams every fixture is much more **competitive** and so much more of a **challenge** with more chances to learn and chances to lead. **All players become good players and good players become great players**.

### 3. WHY EVERY CHILD SHOULD GET EQUAL TIME ON THE PITCH

It's simple. Children develop by playing, not by watching from the sidelines. The more pitch time they get, the faster they develop. No child should be held back, so all should get equal time on the pitch.

### 4. WHY ALL PLAYERS SHOULD PLAY IN ALL POSITIONS

Parents sometimes say that their child is a 'winger' or a 'striker'. The FA says that playing in just one position **stunts their development**. Why? Because, to become a total footballer, children need to see and understand the game from every angle. Being a goalie or defender helps you be a better attacker.

### 5. WHY YOU SHOULDN'T SHOUT INSTRUCTIONS DURING GAMES

Children are here to learn. And they learn by **making mistakes**. The more mistakes they make, the more they learn. The FA calls this the 'golden age of learning'. So, to accelerate their development, we need to let children make their own decisions and make hundreds of mistakes, the more the better.

It's tempting to shout out instructions, telling them who to mark, where to pass and when to shoot. It feels like you're 'helping' them, **but it really doesn't help**. If adults keep telling children what to do, they stop the children making their own decisions, stop them making mistakes and so they **stop them learning**. You wouldn't stand in your child's classroom and shout out the answers while they're learning maths. So please don't stand on the touchline shouting out the answers while they're learning football.

Coaches should keep advice on tactics to an absolute minimum and the coaching points are best made before and after the game and at half time. **In short, don't shout instructions, just let children play.**

### 6. WHY THE LOUDEST SOUND SHOULD BE THE CHILDREN PLAYING

Children learn best in a calm environment. Young children find the touchline '**wall of noise**' can be distracting, confusing, off-putting or even intimidating. The groans of adult disappointment after a mistake can easily put children off trying new skills for fear of failure and adult disapproval. The FA says that **"pressure from the touchline has to stop"**. That's why we have **Silent Sidelines**.