



Match Day Ball Retriever Policy

Notts County FC



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Signed off by

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Our Promise

Notts County Football Club is committed to the safeguarding, wellbeing, and safety of all our players, staff, and spectators. Within our duty of care, this also applies to those within our Academy who volunteer as ball retrievers for our first team home fixtures. As the young players are placed in the 'buffer zone' between spectators and players on match days, their safety is paramount, and so adherence to this policy is vital to ensure that they are well protected and enjoy their day.

Preparation For A Fixture

Notts County Football Club takes the following measures for the preparation of our young Ball Retrievers:

The relevant Academy Phase Lead will communicate via Team App, the Ball Retriever schedule for each relevant age group in advance and ask for parents to confirm their child's availability. By confirming their attendance, parents are:

- Giving their consent for their child to participate.
- Agreeing that their contact details are up to date on Team App in case of an emergency.
- Agreeing that the Academy is fully aware of any medical issues/additional needs, and that their child will carry any necessary medication with them, on their person to the fixture (e.g., epi-pen, inhaler).
- Agreeing that in the case of an emergency, urgent medical attention can be provided by medical professionals, including the need for blood transfusion and anaesthetic.
- Agreeing that their children can be involved in match day photography and videography, as well as being aware that their child may be viewed on television and social media sites. These images can also be used for promotional opportunities at the Club.
- Agreeing to drop off and collect their child at the agreed times for the fixture.
- Agreeing to report any absence no later than 2 hours prior to the fixture kick-off via Team App.
- Agreeing to provide their child with appropriate clothing to represent their Club (e.g., Club tracksuit/training kit), along with necessary protective clothing for the weather (e.g., coat, hat, gloves, preferably in Club colours). Ensure their child has their own drink and applies sun cream as necessary before the fixture.
- Agreeing that they have gone through Notts County Football Club Ball Retriever Code of Conduct and Notts County Football Club Ball Retriever Policy with their child on Team App, under important documents. They should fully understand their child's role and responsibilities, along with expectations of their conduct.
- Agreeing that Notts County Football Club will take no responsibility for valuables that children bring to the game with them. Children will not be permitted to have bags with them pitch side. Parents should inform us if their child needs to bring medication with them (e.g., inhalers, insulin, or epi-pens).

- Agreeing that their child is fit and healthy to be able to participate and has no symptoms of Covid.
- Agreeing that their child will always remain on duty during the fixture. Players must always stay on duty and cannot visit or be visited by parents in the stands unless there is an emergency. • In such cases, a coach will find the parents to ensure that the player has met the parents at the safety pick-up point (academy doors).
- Pre-Academy (U7s/U8s): There should be one adult supervising for every six children.
- Foundation Phase (U9-U12): There should be one adult supervising for every eight children.
- Youth Development Phase (U13-U16): There should be one adult supervising for every ten children.
- All supporting staff must possess a valid DBS check, have completed their FA Safeguarding certificate and EFL safeguarding training, and be registered and actively engaged with My Concern.
- Match Day Meet and Greet at Meadow Lane Stadium
- On match days, all participants, accompanied by their parents/guardians and supporting staff, are required to assemble at least 1 hour before kick-off, outside the Stand ticket office. The Academy ball retriever support staff will conduct a headcount of all players and record their names in a register, which will be signed for registration purposes.
- The Academy support staff will provide a comprehensive explanation of the Ball Retriever code of conduct to the children, delineate the Ball Retriever roles and responsibilities, and go over the match day risk assessment. They will also distribute wristbands, which are mandatory attire for all ball retrievers throughout the event. Moreover, the support staff will underscore the importance of the match day safeguarding officer, Kirsty Pringle, and inform the children about the appropriate person to approach should they encounter any issues or concerns during the match – the nearest match day steward.
- Before the players proceed to the pitch, they will be given an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Additionally, they will be provided with a match day lanyard containing crucial information, including evacuation procedures and any key health and safety information they might need to be aware of during the match.

Warm Up and During The Fixture

- Under no circumstances will any of the ball retrievers be positioned in front of any betting promotional banners.
- Ball Retrievers must not approach or distract players from either team during their warm-up or while they are playing within the fixture unless it is to return a stray ball to them.
- When the ball is in play, the operation of the ball retrieval system should be consistently applied for both teams and adhered to in all matches:
- The operation should remain consistent throughout the game unless it is suspended by the referee.
- Ball retrievers cannot be intentionally slowed down by the home club.
- Ball retrievers should treat both teams equally in terms of the speed and efficiency of the ball being returned. They should not roll, bounce, or kick a ball to a player to avoid any misinterpretation.

- To ensure a fair and consistent application, the same rules should be applied in both halves of the field of play throughout the match.
- If towels are provided to dry the ball, both teams must receive equal consideration. It's worth noting that the guidance does not specify which Club should provide towels, so either the Home or Away Club can do so. However, when towels are available, they should be accessible to both teams. It's important to emphasize that players should not use items obtained from the crowd to dry the ball under any circumstances.
- Whenever possible, Ball Retrievers should be positioned behind perimeter boards or in gaps and should never be placed in front of away supporters.
- All Ball Retrievers should remain seated throughout the fixture until a ball goes out of play near them. When this happens, they should promptly retrieve the ball and throw it (not roll, kick, or bounce) back to the player who is requesting it. Afterward, the Ball Retriever should return to their seat.
- In the event that the ball enters the crowd, the Ball Retriever should stand facing the crowd with open arms, awaiting the return of the ball.
- Occasionally, players may use profanity directed at a Ball Retriever in the heat of the moment. Typically, this is followed by an apology. If any Ball Retriever feels unduly upset or intimidated by such language from players or spectators, they should immediately report it to a steward or Academy support staff and be relocated to a secure area where they can be supervised by a staff member.
- Academy Support Staff should be stationed in diagonal corners of the ground that are considered the most boisterous to provide support to children who may feel intimidated by fan behaviour and chanting. This placement will enable Academy Support staff to promptly assist our young players with the support of stewards.
- Under no circumstances during the game should mobile phones be used to make calls, take photos, or access social media, except in cases of emergency.
- At the sound of the half-time whistle, all Academy support staff and Ball Retrievers should promptly make their way to a designated meeting area underneath the Family Stand, specifically in the 'old first team changing facility.' Subsequently, Academy support staff will lead all children to the restroom facilities located within the Family Stand, encouraging them to use the facilities, have a drink, and stay warm.
- It's important to note that staff should not accompany the children into the restroom but wait outside to ensure their safety. Afterward, the staff will escort the children back to their respective positions on the pitch, preparing for the commencement of the second half. During this break, any players who have brought snacks or drinks provided by their parents can consume them. However, it should be emphasised that players are not permitted to take food onto the pitch; bottled drinks, on the other hand, can be taken with them to the pitch side.
- In case of adverse weather conditions, it is the responsibility of the Academy support staff to relocate any vulnerable children to a more sheltered area within the stadium. Conversely, during hot weather, the Academy support staff should implement a rotation system for the children during the second half to ensure they have a break from prolonged exposure to the sun.

- In the event of an emergency or the need for a stadium evacuation while the children are on the pitch side, it is imperative to adhere to Club safety announcements and instructions. Academy support staff should guide the children from the pitch to the nearest exit as directed by Notts County stewards. Once you have reached a place of safety as advised by the stadium safety stewards, it is crucial to communicate a safe and appropriate alternative collection point for the children with your colleagues and parents via Team App. The designated post-match collection point is the Academy entrance.
- Upon the final whistle, all Ball Retrievers are required to immediately proceed to a designated pitch-side meeting point located underneath the Family Stand and into the changing rooms, bringing their balls and stools with them. There, they will be met by the Academy support staff who will collect these items. Subsequently, the Ball Retrievers will be guided to the Academy entrance, where parents or guardians should be present to collect their child. A de-registration process will be carried out, and it is the responsibility of the Academy support staff to ensure that each child is handed over to the correct parent or guardian.
- If a parent or guardian has not arrived to collect their child, the Academy support staff member should have access to a list of emergency contact telephone numbers for parents (this information is found on the same document used for sign-in). This will enable them to contact parents. Two members of staff should remain with the child in a well-lit area, preferably under CCTV cameras if available, while waiting for their parents to arrive and collect them.
- In the event of non-collection of children, Academy support staff should in the first instance try and phone the emergency contact number(s) that have been provided. If they are uncertain about the appropriate course of action, they should promptly contact the Academy Manager or the Matchday Safeguarding Officer for further advice and guidance. It is vital to emphasise that under no circumstances should a child be transported home by a member of staff.