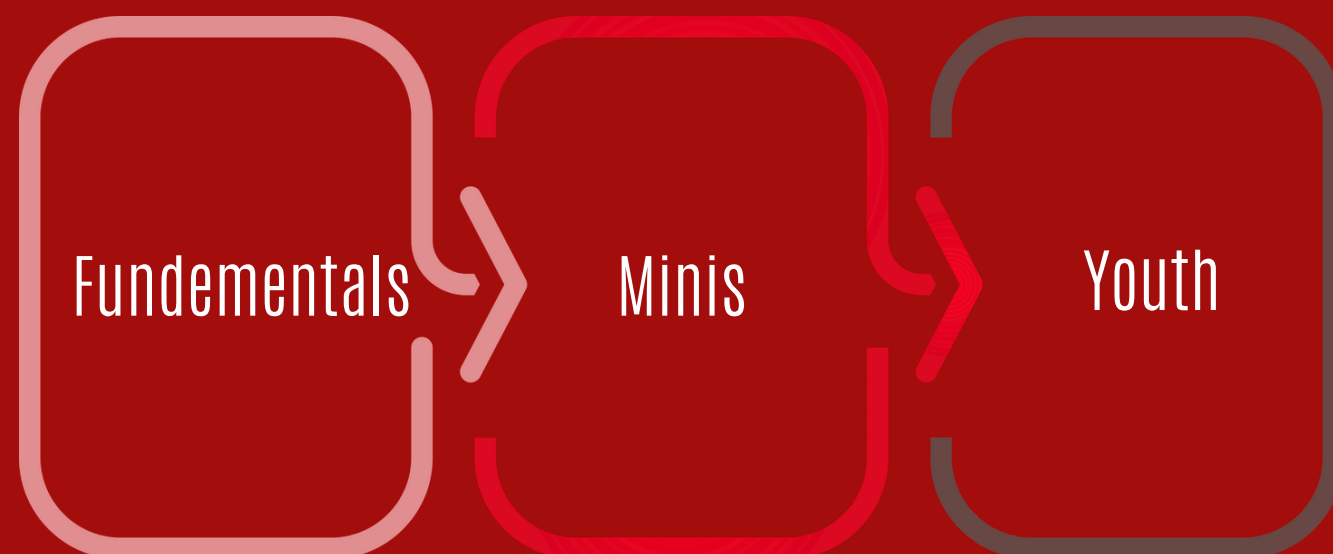


Player Development Pathway

Our journey from first kicks to confident young footballers

At Corfe Mullen Juniors, every child follows a development pathway designed to help them grow at the right pace, in the right environment, with the right support.

Our approach matches children's physical, social, technical and psychological stages of development, ensuring football is always fun, inclusive, and focused on long-term progress — not early results.



Foundation Phase (5-8)

Enjoyment, exploration and confidence building

At this age, children learn best through fun, imagination and movement. Our sessions are active, playful and designed to give every child lots of touches on the ball.

Foundation Phase (9-11)

Deeper skills, teamwork and game understanding

As players grow, their understanding of the game expands. Training becomes slightly more structured while keeping fun at the heart.

Youth Development Phase (12-18)

Independence, identity and advanced football learning

Older players experience rapid physical, social and emotional development. Our role is to support them through this with thoughtful, age-appropriate coaching.

Foundation Phase

Ages 5 - 8

Key Focus Areas

- Developing basic coordination (agility, balance, coordination, speed)
- Having fun while learning simple football skills
- Exploring different positions and roles
- Building confidence, friendships and a love of the game
- Encouraging creativity through small-sided games
- Learning kindness, teamwork and positive behaviour

Matchday Approach

- Focus on enjoyment over results
- All children play at least 50% of match time (This may be spread out across multiple games)
- No tactical pressure or sideline shouting (advice is fine)
- Praise effort and bravery, not just “good play”

Ages 9 - 11

Key Focus Areas

- Developing core football skills: dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting
- Introducing simple tactical ideas (space, support, basic defending)
- Challenging players through conditioned games
- Encouraging teamwork and communication
- Supporting confidence, resilience and problem-solving
- Providing equal chances to try different positions

Matchday Approach

- Players continue rotating positions (no early specialisation)
- Coaches guide with questions instead of constant instructions
- Players begin taking more responsibility (warm-up roles, reflections)
- Performance is measured by effort, decision-making and progress

Foundation Phase

In Possession

Stay on the ball, master the ball- Develop a mastery of the ball and the confidence to try new things.

Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions- Be exciting and positive in possession, playing with individuality and with elements of disguise and surprise.

Connect and combine creatively with others- Combine creatively and intelligently with others to create and score goals.

Out of Possession

Positive and enthusiastic defending- Enjoy winning the ball back, be difficult to beat 1v1 and look to start attacks when you get the ball.

Intelligent defending- Be positive and creative in your positioning and ability to win the ball. Be alert when the opposition have possession.

Master a variety of defensive techniques and roles- Enjoy defending in a variety of roles and develop a range of techniques to regain possession.

Transitional

Instinctive decision-making- React quickly and positively when the ball is won or lost and have a range of individual options and actions.

Positive and intelligent attacking reactions- Have a positive attitude when possession is regained, travelling quickly with and without the ball. Take every opportunity to attack, create and score goals.

Positive and intelligent defensive reactions- Try to win the ball back quickly and prevent opponents from starting attacks. Be proactive when the ball is lost and have confidence in your ability to defend.

Youth Development Phase- Ages 12-18

Key Focus Areas

- Developing advanced game understanding (movement, pressing, transitions)
- Refining technique under realistic pressure
- Position-specific guidance balanced with flexibility
- Building leadership, ownership and accountability
- Supporting emotional well-being and confidence
- Encouraging positive lifestyle habits around rest, nutrition and mindset

Matchday Approach

- Competitive games still with a focus on learning, not must-win outcomes
- Tactical exposure increases as players mature
- Players lead warm-ups, set goals and reflect on performances
- Playing time remains meaningful and purposeful

In Possession

Stay on the ball, master the ball -Look to receive the ball in all areas of the pitch and be prepared to stay in possession.

Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions- Seek creative solutions to game situations particularly when outnumbered or in congested areas.

Connect and combine creatively with others- Stay connected with the ball and your teammates to retain possession, open up compact defences and score goals.

Out of Possession

Positive and enthusiastic defending- Be prepared to defend 1v1 and be confident without cover or support.

Intelligent defending- Outwit your opponent with excellent patience, timing and intercepting skills.

Master a variety of defensive techniques and roles- Win the ball cleanly, regaining and retaining possession in the same action to start attacks.

Transitional

Instinctive decision-making- React quickly and positively to the first individual action when both attacking and defending.

Positive and intelligent attacking reactions- React instinctively and intelligently when possession is regained, recognising opportunities to disorganise the opposition. Manage the game when opportunities to attack are limited.

Positive and intelligent defensive reactions- Prevent progression by disrupting or destroying momentum, forcing errors and protecting the goal.