



Bradfield College Head Injury Policy

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Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.0	J. Chapman	Oct 2018	N/A
2.0	P. Kenyon	Nov 2021	Full review of safe practice standards in line with professional sports guidelines and BSA advice
2.1	P. Kenyon	Dec 2023	Re-wrote section 4 in line with national updates

1. Introduction

This policy is written for all members of Bradfield College staff. It's aims are:

- a. To acknowledge the significance of concussion, however it occurs.
- b. To encourage an understanding both by pupils and staff that a return to sport too soon after a concussion injury carries significant risk to immediate and long-term health.
- c. To acknowledge that concussion can affect cognitive functioning for weeks after an injury, and to encourage staff to support affected pupils.
- d. To provide a protocol to follow to facilitate a prompt medical review if a pupil suffers a suspected concussion on school grounds.
- e. To provide a protocol to follow during the recovery phase to ensure that a pupil is appropriately managed to allow them to make a full and safe recovery.

2. Concussion

Concussion is a brain injury caused by a blow to the head or body which leads to shaking of the brain (Concussion Guidelines for the Education Sector [CGES]). **It does not require a loss of consciousness** to be diagnosed – in fact, <10% of people with concussion present in this way. It can occur in any situation where there is the possibility of suffering a head injury – either a direct blow to the head or the head being shaken when the body is struck. Attention should be particularly paid to:

- High-impact sports
- Sports undertaken from a height (e.g., climbing)
- Sports carried out on a hard surface (e.g., cycling, tennis, fives)
- Sports involving a hard ball, bat, or racquet (e.g., cricket, tennis, lacrosse, fives)

Symptoms of concussion can first present at any time after the impact but typically in the first 24-48 hours. It is important to realise that the signs and symptoms of concussion may only last a matter of seconds or minutes and can easily be missed (CGES).

Concussion must be taken extremely seriously to safeguard the short- and long-term health and welfare of pupils. Typically, most people recover from concussion over a period of days or weeks, although in some cases symptoms may be prolonged. A small minority turn into **post-concussion syndrome**, which can last for months and even years, so a conservative approach needs to be taken. This is considered in the guidance. There is good evidence that during the recovery period from concussion, the brain is more vulnerable to further injury.

If a pupil returns to sport before they have fully recovered and have further concussions this may result in:

- Prolonged concussion symptoms
- Possible increased risk of long-term health consequences e.g., mild cognitive impairment or (*possible*) degenerative brain disorders in later life (e.g., dementia. See ‘further information’).
- In adolescents, a further concussive event before recovery can in rare cases be FATAL, due to severe brain swelling. This is known as **second impact syndrome**.

The following pupils may all require a longer recovery period:

- Those with a history of a previous concussion within 12 months
- Those who have had a prolonged period of recovery from a previous concussion
- Those pupils who have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

3. Assessing the pupil

After a blow to the head, the following signs and symptoms indicate that the pupil should be transferred to hospital immediately and a member of staff should dial 999 and *then* call the medical centre:

- Loss of, or deteriorating, consciousness (or becoming drowsier)
- Severe or increasing headache (evident by pupil clutching their head)
- Repeated vomiting
- Double vision
- Severe neck pain
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs
- Increasing confusion or irritability
- Seizure (having a fit)
- Any unusual (for that pupil) behaviour change

If a pupil is unconscious because of a head injury whilst playing sport, the game must be stopped, and the pupil must not be moved until the arrival of the ambulance.

With any of the following signs and symptoms, the pupil must leave the pitch immediately and be taken, with an adult escort, to the medical centre:

- Slow to get up
- Unsteady on their feet/dizzy
- Uncoordinated in their movements
- Blank or vacant look
- Dazed or confused
- More emotional than usual, or obvious sadness
- Headache

- Mental clouding/feeling slow
- Difficulty concentrating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Drowsiness/fatigue
- Pressure in their head
- Blurred vision, sensitivity to light
- Irritability
- Difficulty remembering or amnesia
- Neck pain
- Just doesn't 'feel right'

Any pupil who suffers a blow to the head **MUST** be seen by the school nurse ASAP, whether or not they display any of the above symptoms.

If a situation arises whereby there is a conflict of opinion as to the significance of a blow to the head, in the absence of a qualified medical professional, the Official in charge is the responsible decision-maker. He or she has the authority to remove the player from the game until they seek a medical assessment.

IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT

All Bradfield College staff, and other players, coaches, parents, matrons, teachers etc - have a joint responsibility to do their best to ensure that someone they suspect may have concussion, is removed from play in a safe manner. Any staff or spectators witnessing a pupil with a possible head injury attempting to continue playing, must inform the Official in charge as soon as possible to recommend the pupil seeks medical attention.

IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT

When a pupil is taken to the medical centre, a school nurse will then carry out an assessment of the pupil's neurological status and arrange the appropriate medical treatment:

If any symptoms experienced last less than 30 minutes and the pupil has remained symptom-free, then at the 48 hours follow-up appointment, the pupil may not need to go onto the concussion pathway. This is at the discretion of a registered nurse who will discuss with a doctor if unsure.

If concussion is diagnosed, the pupil will follow the Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance (2018) and the Rugby Football Union (RFU) Headcase guidance (2014) appropriate for their age:

4. Concussion timetable, including graduated return to play programme.

Time since Injury (Earliest Day)	Date	Activity Level	Exercise allowed	Objective
0-2 days		Relative rest	Including 1-2 days complete body and brain rest, if needed. No physical exercise; can travel with the team	Recovery
			Medical assessment with Nurse to confirm diagnosis and give recovery advice	
3-7 days		Light activity	Gentle walks etc. Activity shouldn't leave the pupil breathless	To maintain low level fitness
8 days onwards		Low risk exercise & training	Gradual increase in self-directed exercise – light jogging for 10-15 mins, stationary bike, swimming, supervised weight training etc. Can introduce static training drills (e.g., passing/kicking). Only drills with NO predictable risk of head injury.	Focus on fitness.
			Nurse to assess fitness-to-start a formal return to sport.	
15 days onwards		Gradual return to sports training	Starting with non-contact and gradually building up complexity and intensity. Introduction of contact in the final stages (only when symptom-free at for 14 days)	Exercise, coordination and skills/tactics
			Nurse to assess fitness to return to unrestricted sport, including matches	
Day 21 earliest		Earliest return to competitive sport/matches	Only if symptom free at rest for at least 14 days and has completed gradual return to sports training without any recurrence in symptoms	Return to competitive sports/matches

This programme has been agreed across sports and reproduced as national guidelines for the Education Sector endorsed by the Department of Health and the Department for Education. It must be emphasised that these are minimum return to play times and in pupils who do not recover fully within these timeframes, these will need to be longer.

When a pupil completes each stage successfully without any symptoms, they will take 21 days minimum to complete their rehabilitation (this includes the 14-day rest period). If any symptoms occur while progressing

through the Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) protocol, the pupil must return to the previous stage and attempt to progress again after a minimum 48-hour period of rest has passed without the appearance of any symptoms. If well enough, the pupil will then be moved up the protocol.

If the nurse has any concerns at any point during the concussion pathway, she will speak to the GP or give the pupil a GP appointment. At this stage, if they need it, the pupil will be given a signed certificate that says they have completed a program of GRTP under medical supervision and can now return to play. This is to take to any sports club to which they may belong, that is not associated with Bradfield College.

5. New Heading Advice for Football

Following government research and consultation in May 2021, new advice from England Football, states that: “It is recommended that heading practice is limited to 10 headers per session and only one session a week where heading practice is included. Players should be responsible for monitoring their own heading activity”

<file:///C:/Users/pauli/Downloads/youth-heading-guidance-chart.pdf>

6. Head Injury with Suspected Spinal Injury

Attention should be paid to the following particular activities:

- Diving
- Horse riding (All falls from a pony/horse must be deemed high risk for spinal injuries)
- A fall from a height greater than 2 ½ x the casualty's own height
- Car vs pedestrian > 30mph
- Car vs car > 40mph.

Treatment

- Immobilise the pupil's head by placing your hands on either side.
- Then call 999 and ask for an ambulance
- Call the medical centre
- Do not move the pupil unless necessary
- The pupil may only be moved at the discretion of the school nurse.

7. When No School Nurse is Available

If there is no school nurse available or the incident happens off site, then the pupil should be assessed by a first aider, an accident report filled in on firefly and the pupil must see a school nurse at the earliest opportunity. It is the first aider's responsibility to decide whether or not the pupil requires further medical treatment, and in all cases the parents must be notified.

If a pupil has sustained a head injury at an event not related to the school, it is the parents' responsibility to inform a school nurse in the medical centre so that appropriate care can be continued in school.

8. Further Information and Links

Concussion Guidelines for the Education Sector (CGES) Page 2

https://www.sbns.org.uk/index.php/download_file/view/873/559/

Scottish Sports Concussion Guidance

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/3382/concussionreport2018.pdf>

Rugby Football Union (RFU)

<https://www.englandrugby.com/dxdam/a8/a8de3371-faf7-40c8-8150-6fda7bcb9cd8/HEADCASE%20OVERVIEW%20V2.pdf>

Medical Officers of Schools Association (MOSA) (This can only be accessed by members)

<https://www.mosa.org.uk/>

National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg176>

Alzheimers society - Some research does suggest traumatic brain injuries may increase the risk of dementia. However, there is still much more research to be done to understand this complex issue, particularly in relation to contact sports like football and rugby. (Article written April 2021)

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/risk-factors-and-prevention/head-injury-sport-dementia>