



St Martin's School

N O R T H W O O D

11g Concussion Policy

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Aims of the Policy

Any incident of concussion or suspected concussion is taken extremely seriously at St Martin's School to safeguard the short and long term health and welfare of our pupils. That said, the majority of concussions resolve spontaneously within a short time period and from the outset there should therefore be a positive outlook and attitude towards recovery.

Current thinking is that majority (80-90%) of concussion symptoms resolve in around 7-10 days, with some estimates that in around 1/3 the symptoms resolve within 1 - 2 days. It is however widely agreed that children and adolescents take longer to recover, and because their brains are still developing, a more conservative approach should be taken with them. It is also widely agreed that while symptoms may resolve, the brain takes a bit longer to recover fully.

There is now good evidence that during this recovery period the brain is more vulnerable to further injury, and if a pupil returns too early before fully recovering and have repeated concussions this may result in:

- prolonged concussion symptoms
- increased risk of developing Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS) with symptoms lasting over 3 months
- possible increased risk of long term health consequences e.g. mild cognitive impairment or degenerative brain disorders in later life
- further concussive events before recovery in adolescents while very rare and poorly understood, can be fatal, due to severe brain swelling. This is known as second impact syndrome.

Description of Concussion

Concussion is an injury that is sustained as a result of a blow to the head or bodies either directly or through collision. It is a traumatic brain injury that is usually mild with complete recovery and is a functional disturbance of the brain rather than a structural injury. In rare cases, concussion could indicate a serious head injury that will need the emergency services to transfer the casualty to a hospital emergency department.



Danger signs of a concussion

- Sleepiness and cannot be woken
- Worsening headache
- Weakness or numbness
- Repeated vomiting or prolonged nausea
- Slurred speech, difficulty speaking or understanding
- Increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Convulsions
- Clear fluid coming from nose or ears
- Deafness in one or both ears
- Increased problems with eyesight

Concussion can occur in many situations in the School environment. The potential is probably greatest during sporting activities. Pupils may also suffer concussion whilst playing an out of school sporting activity and thus be present at School with signs of concussion. It is therefore important for all adults caring for pupils in School to be aware of the signs and symptoms of concussions as the academic performance and/or behaviour of the pupils can be affected.

This policy aims to ensure that the safety and long term health of pupils is protected by the following points:

- the correct techniques are coached and performed consistently by all pupils of all the schools sporting activities
- the rules and regulations of all sporting activities are instructed and applied during the training and participation at all levels of any sporting activity
- all pupils participating in any sporting activity respect one another
- pupil facing staff are able to recognise concussions and respond appropriately
- pupils suffering with suspected concussion are immediately removed from any sporting activity for immediate assessment
- pupils suffering with suspected concussion will be directed to seek medical assessment and advice
- pupils who suffer concussion recover fully prior to returning to school and sporting activities
- a graduated return following any concussion is considered for sporting activities
- School sports staff educate pupils on the impact of concussion on their health and the importance of reporting concussion
- School sports staff endeavour to identify pupils who play for out of school clubs

Teaching Techniques

All pupils are taught with safety as a prerequisite and in accordance with what is recognised by governing bodies as good technique. All teaching is in accordance with age related laws. Equipment is safe and, where applicable, serviced by qualified persons.

Review

Prior to the start of pre-season rugby training, the Director of Sport reviews and updates the St Martin's safety policy in preparation for the forthcoming season. He circulates these to all Rugby coaches, asking for their feedback at the departmental meeting.

Departmental Meeting

The focus of this meeting will be to ensure how the department can improve standards of child-centred rugby safety in school. The Director of Sport asks for feedback on the St Martin's safety policy, working these ideas into the document as appropriate, notifying the First Aid department of these actions annually.

Communication

Prior to every year's pre-season training, the Director of Sport writes to all parents providing them with a link to the St Martin's safety policy on the school intranet. A covering letter may outline new measures that the school has put in place to protect the safety of young players when rule changes occur.

Pre-Season Rugby Training

Pre-season rugby training usually takes place during the last two or three weeks of the autumn term and provides the School's Director of Sport with the opportunity to ensure that all coaches:

Assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of their teams.

Emphasise safety with all pupils, managing concerns sensitively.

- Teach pupils to manage contact safely.
- Improve pupils' strength, fitness and contact skills prior to matches taking place.

Managing Contact

The Director of Sport will ensure that contact will be built in a gradual process and ensure that all coaches monitor the time spent on contact during any one session, taking into account the age, strength, experience and ability of the children. Where appropriate the coach will employ the following strategies to ensure safe contact:

- Teach safe techniques.
- Place constraints on contact e.g. 1 v 1, 2 v 2 in a ruck or maul depending on the age group.
- Stopping a contact situation if it looks like it is becoming dangerous.
- Matching ability between pupils who are involved in contact together.



Safe Fixtures

When creating fixtures, the Director of Sport will discuss each team's strengths and weaknesses with the opposition school concerning size, weight and levels of rugby experience. They will agree reasonable adjustments to reduce the likelihood of injury. Prior to fixture day, they will confirm the fixture and initiate a discussion with the opposition school to make any changes to the initial agreement.

Match Protocols

Safety

The Director of Sport will ensure that, prior to all matches starting, St Martin's coaches initiate safety discussions with their opposition coaches and agree where relevant any reasonable adjustments to reduce the likelihood of injury. If either coach raises safety concerns, one or more of the following actions (known as creative refereeing) may be taken:

- Match teams accordingly where possible a weaker B team playing a stronger C team.
- Weaken one of the teams (perhaps by rotating players).
- Play four quarters, monitoring the first quarter very closely.
- Play to rules but blow whistle early to avoid possible injury e.g. before maul collapses.
- Play a non-contact game (for lower teams).
- Remove pushing in the scrum (if applicable).
- Shorten or stop the game if necessary.

All St Martin's coaches ensure 'zero tolerance' of dangerous infractions.

Studs

St Martin's coaches ensure that referees, including those from opposition schools or visiting referees, check all players' studs before each session. Players with unsafe studs are not permitted to play. The IRB states:

'Referees and touch judges will inspect boots only to check that they are safe to play in. They will check that there are no sharp edges or burring etc.'

'Referees and touch judges will not be looking for kite marks or similar approval markings or manufacturers details.'

Mouth guards

St Martin's coaches ensure that referees check that all players wear a mouthguard. The type of mouthguard is a matter for each individual school. If an opposition school allows its pupils not to wear a mouthguard, their Director of Sport will need to provide confirmation that this is the case and accepting responsibility for any injuries that might result accordingly.

Glasses

St Martin's coaches ensure that referees check that no players are wearing glasses. (Sports goggles are acceptable).



Pitch Safety

The Director of Sport will liaise with the Head Groundsman prior to matches to ensure pitches are marked and free of any debris. Each St Martin's coach refereeing home matches should ensure they check pitches are free of any debris before matches start.

Injuries

Concussion or suspected concussion

Please see separate '11g Concussion Policy 2023-2024'

Medical Needs

Rugby coaches work closely with the First Aid department to support any pupils with pre-existing medical conditions. Coaches of pupils from other schools are expected to tell the referee if they have a pupil with a pre-existing injury. The medical bag, containing specific medicines, should be taken to away matches by the coaches of the away teams and returned when back from a fixture.

Monitoring of Injuries

If a St Martin's pupil requires first aid treatment at an away fixture, on their return the coach will fill out an injury form giving details of the incident (found in the first aid bag taken on away fixtures). The First Aid department will follow this up with the pupil's parents as soon as possible, and record the incident in the pupil's medical record.