

Head Impact and Concussion Policy

Ascham's Head Impact and Concussion Policy is based upon current international research and best practice. The welfare of all students relies on a Head Impact Incident being recognised and correctly managed by both non- medical and medical staff alike. These guidelines should be adhered to at all times. This summary is prepared specifically for the Ascham community and is not a medical document.

It is recognised that most concussions get better in 14 days. However, ignoring concussion signs and symptoms or not recognising them can result in potential catastrophic consequences. Acute brain swelling, traditionally referred to as Second Impact Syndrome is usually fatal. Prolonged symptoms, recurrent concussion, learning difficulties and personality problems have been reported in over 10% of athletes and players who have had Head Impact Incidents.

Students, parents, staff, coaches and officials are expected to act in the best interests of student safety and welfare by taking responsibility for the recognition, removal, response and referral of students to a medical doctor and then ensuring recovery is appropriately managed as per these guidelines.

What is a Head Impact Incident?

For the purposes of this policy, a Head Impact Incident is defined as any scenario where a student receives a blow to the head, a collision where the student's head comes into contact with another person or object, or a head knock.

What is a Concussion?

For the purposes of this policy, a concussion is defined as a disturbance in the brain's ability to acquire and process information. It is a head injury that can result in temporary loss of brain function, which can cause cognitive, physical and emotional issues.

Ascham's Policy

Ascham acknowledges that it is not feasible to completely eliminate the risk of Head Impact Incidents in sport and other areas of School life. However, the School is committed to responding to Head Impact Incidents in a way that facilitates the recovery of the student and does not put them at risk of further harm.

Our policy statements:

- A student involved in any Head Impact Incident will be removed from sport or the activity that she is participating in and not allowed to return to sport or other activities that day.
- A student who has suffered a Head Impact Incident will be treated in the initial incidence as if she has sustained a concussion.
- Ascham will work together with parents to ensure that a student with actual or suspected concussion obtains medical attention and only returns to School, sport and activities under appropriate guidance.
- When recovering from concussion, the priority will be for the student to return to School and learning before returning to sport and activities.

- Any student who has a diagnosed concussion will have her return to School managed by the School Nurse and the Director of Studies.
- Any student who has a diagnosed concussion will then have her return to physical activity managed by the School Nurse.
- Students are encouraged to wear helmets, mouth guards or other protective equipment where applicable. Even though they may not be instrumental in preventing concussion, they do prevent other types of head injuries such as skull fracture and subdural hematoma.
- Staff will be trained in how to identify the symptoms of concussion and the immediate action they will need to take to ensure the safety of students who have suffered a Head Impact Incident.
- Staff will be briefed on how to treat a student returning to School and physical activity following a concussion.

Ascham's Six R's approach to managing to Head Impact Incidents

Ascham will be following the Six R's system when dealing with Head Impact Incidents. These are: Ready, Recognise, Remove, Respond, Refer and Recover.

Ready

In order for the School community to be ready to safely manage Head Impact Incidents, the School will do the following:

- Communicate the policy with all School staff members.
- Train the School staff in how to manage the Head Impact Incident process.
- Ensure that all sports coaches are trained in use of the HeadSmart™ FirstResponder™ Concussion Recognition App.

Recognise

A student will have been recognised to have suffered a Head Impact Incident if it has been witnessed directly by the staff member or reported to the staff member by any other person who observed the incident.

Remove

Any student who suffers a recognised Head Impact Incident will be immediately removed from the activity they have been participating in. The student must not take further part in that activity or any further activities on that day.

Removal of the affected student and return to play is non-negotiable. The nature and score of the match, parent or guardian input and student reports of personal symptoms or affectedness will NOT be considered. The personal safety and welfare of the affected student will be given the utmost priority.

Any student suffering a Head Impact Incident may also have a neck injury. If a neck injury is suspected, the student must only be removed by experienced health care providers with spinal care training.

Respond

An ambulance will be immediately called for any student who is knocked unconscious. As soon as reasonably possible after a Head Impact Incident, the School will use the FirstResponder™ Concussion Recognition App to obtain advice on whether a concussion is suspected.

If a concussion is not suspected, the student's parent/guardian will be advised to monitor the student closely for the next 24 hours. If any concussion symptoms do arise during this time or afterwards, it is recommended that they seek professional medical advice. It is further recommended that the student undertakes complete rest for at least 24 hours.

Refer

All students with suspected or recognised concussion must be referred to a medical doctor or emergency department as soon as possible. This referral must happen even if symptoms or signs have disappeared.

If the student's parent/guardian is present, the School staff member will request that the parent/guardian take responsibility for ensuring that the referral to the medical doctor or emergency department takes place.

If a day girl's parent/guardian is not present, the School staff member will work with other staff members, team members and/or parent bystanders to ensure that the student's parent/guardian is notified and that the student is safely transported to the nearest emergency room.

If a boarder's parent/guardian is not present, the School staff member will notify the School Nurse and work with other staff members, team members and/or parent bystanders to ensure that the student is safely transported to the nearest emergency room. The School Nurse will notify the boarder's parents and the boarding staff supervisor on duty.

Students must not drive until they have been cleared by a doctor.

Recover

If a student has suffered a diagnosed concussion, as soon as practical the student will be required to visit the School Nurse who will commence the GRTP/L process.

Return to School Programme for a Diagnosed Concussion, allows the Director of Studies, medical practitioner and School Nurse to complete a student's rehabilitation to learning at School.

Once this has been completed, the student will be required to complete the Return to Exercise Programme which allows the Active@Ascham Coordinator and the medical practitioner to complete a student's rehabilitation to exercise.

Important reminders

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Concussion causes a disturbance of brain function.
- Children and adolescents are more susceptible to concussion, take longer to recover, have more significant memory and mental processing issues and are more susceptible to rare and dangerous neurological complications, including death caused by a single or second impact.
- Children and adolescents should therefore be treated more conservatively than adults.
- Concussion usually follows a head collision, but can occur with a collision to other parts of the body.
- Symptoms can come on at any time, but usually within 24–48 hours after a collision.

- Concussion can occur without the player being knocked out, i.e. losing consciousness.
- If a player is knocked out, they have a concussion.
- All players with suspected or recognised concussion must be removed from the field immediately.
- Return to play or training on the same day is not permitted for any suspected or recognised concussion.
- Concussion that is not recognised or ignored can prove fatal.
- Most concussions recover with physical and mental rest.

The protocol presented here is consistent with the principles outlined in the following documents:

- 'Consensus statement on concussion in sport—the 5th international conference on concussion in sport'