

FROM THE MINISTER/ÓN AIRE



AN ROINN

**Oideachais**

Department of

**Education**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Lear**

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*A Chairch*

Thank you for your e-mail of 1 March requesting my support to prevent injuries in school rugby. I appreciate you bringing this issue to my attention.

I fully understand the risks associated with some sports activities in schools, in particular collision sports such as rugby and Gaelic football. The curriculum here provides significant flexibility for schools in terms of what physical activities to pursue. The Department of Education (DE) is guided by recommendations from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and we are happy to liaise with relevant colleagues on this issue if they have particular concerns.

DE has worked with relevant parties to produce guidance for schools on the risks of concussion. This followed the tragic death of Benjamin Robinson in 2011 due to a head injury sustained whilst playing rugby for his school. DE and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure launched the 'Recognise and Remove Concussion Awareness Campaign' on 30 April 2014. As part of the campaign, 'Recognise and Remove' leaflets were issued to schools for distribution to pupils from Year 6 onwards, teachers, coaches and parents. Schools were also provided with copies of the 'Recognise and Remove' poster for display purposes and laminated copies of the 'Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool™'.

On 30 September 2015, I launched new Concussion Lesson Plans created by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. The web-based lesson plans and multi-media resources provide information for teachers and pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 and have been designed to reinforce key concepts and

messages about concussion through interactive, multi-media pupil activities. The concussion lesson plan website includes links to advice on all aspects of identifying and managing concussion, including suggestions on when a child may be able to return to school as well as their normal activities.

DE has issued and will continue to issue reminders to schools on the importance of continuing to relay messages about the dangers of concussion to pupils, parents/guardians and school staff. DE will also continue to make all schools aware of the interactive, multi-media concussion lesson plans to support teaching.

I have no plans to make changes in regard to school rugby at this time. However, I hope this information is helpful and outlines what DE has been involved in to date and the steps we will take to ensure that the dangers of concussion continue to be highlighted to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John O'Dowd', is positioned above the printed name and title.

**JOHN O'DOWD MLA**  
**Minister for Education**