



Triangulating mindfulness: Pupils, staff & parents

For me, mindfulness is a way of life and I believe that if we can teach mindfulness to our children we are teaching them a life skill, which they can use and practice throughout their life. I feel strongly that we need to offer them strategies, tool kits to help them deal with the challenges of modern life.

No one in my school had heard of mindfulness so my first step was to speak to the head teacher about the impact it had had on me and my daughter. I had done lots of research into the benefits of teaching mindfulness in schools that I also shared with him.

He agreed to fund my training to do the **.b** program, then later the first **Paws b** course.

It was the children's experiences and testimonials of how mindfulness benefitted and helped them that really supported me in continuing our school's mindfulness journey. It is definitely the children's experiences which swayed the SLT to continue supporting mindfulness here.

However, I felt strongly that if we were teaching mindfulness to children, we needed to also help staff to become more mindful themselves. Teaching is such a high pressured, stressful job, and so I really wanted to be able to offer a mindfulness course to staff. I did three INSET twilight sessions introducing all staff to mindfulness and gave them experiential practices.

I then offered the **.b** course to all staff, which 20 members of staff completed. Having trained to teach the **.b foundation** course I have now taught three annual eight-week courses with parents. We are trying to deliver mindfulness in a

triangulation with children, parents and teachers here. We really feel this is the most effective way to bring mindfulness into school and our school community and this approach has had a big impact on the children.

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I love walking around the school hearing snippets of conversation between staff and pupils. Mindfulness and the different practices from **Paws b** and **.b Foundations** are creating a common language between staff and pupils, which is fantastic.

As a teacher I find mindfulness useful, especially for settling a class and helping them focus, though never as a form of discipline.

Other staff talk about how it has made them more aware of their thoughts, how it has helped them nourish themselves, they say that this in turn makes them better teachers, improving their lives and those around them.

Seeing the journey the children go on is wonderful. At first



when guiding a practice there are giggles and fidgets, there's always some kind of disengagement. By the end of the course it's a complete transformation, the stillness and quiet never cease to amaze me.

Talking to the children about their own personal experiences of how mindfulness helps in their own day to day life is definitely then most rewarding thing. Hearing about how they use mindfulness away from the classroom or in the classroom but with no guidance is just incredible.

Our pupils talk about how mindfulness helps them in many different ways: getting to sleep, coping with the pressure of exams, dealing with relationships at home, playing sports or just helping them realize when they are feeling wobbly and how to rebalance themselves.

There have been many surprises and lots to amuse.

One mum spoke to me on the playground and told me that her nine year old daughter had been in a gymnastics competition at the weekend. The team were really nervous and one of the girls on the team began to cry with nerves. This then made some of the other girls cry. So her daughter, who had done the **Paws.b** program in school with me taught her whole team to do finger breathing to help calm them down. Apparently she taught the team and they all sat on the bench doing breathing. How brilliant is that?

Another time a year four girl came in with a photo of her and her friend. They had been on FaceTime together and decided to do chest belly breathing practice together. Her mum walked in to the room and had taken a picture of them when she saw what they were doing.

A year six child told me how nervous she was returning to school after the Easter holidays in her summer uniform. She said she noticed she was worrying if she was going to be the only one in a summer dress. So she went upstairs to her room and did petal breathing, she said she calmed down, realised they were just thoughts, went to school and as she walked in the playground everyone was in summer dresses. She said if she

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hadn't have done petal breathing she wouldn't have gone to school and would have told her mum she had a tummy ache.

I make sure that I keep the whole of the SLT informed of how courses are going, and how children have said they helped them. I regularly email, have meetings, and share video footage of the children practicing and talking about mindfulness. It has been beneficial to offer mindfulness courses to SLT and school staff to personally experience mindfulness and understand it more. I run regular taster workshops with parents as well so that we are continually offering mindfulness to the whole community. This is really important. It is important that SLT view teaching mindfulness in schools as a continuous journey and is not something you can do once or twice a year and tick a box.

It takes a lot of effort and commitment to ensure that this journey continues to evolve but it is so, so valuable and worthwhile in my opinion. Once a term I deliver a twilight staff meeting which includes an update for all staff about where we are in our mindfulness journey. There is also an opportunity for staff to share their personal experience of mindfulness. These twilights keep mindfulness on the agenda and helps to give it importance at English Martyrs. Our SLT also include mindfulness on our school development plan, which demonstrates their commitment to the programme.



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