



Normalising Mindfulness: The King's School, Ottery St. Mary, Devon

I am a full time Religion, Philosophy & Ethics teacher and also a teacher of mindfulness at The King's School, a fantastic state secondary school for Years 7-13 in East Devon. Mindfulness has now become normalised at my school and seems to no longer elicit a furrowed brow when discussed with staff or students. But how did this happen?

Year 1 – Four years ago I discussed at interview how I was passionate about the possibilities of teaching mindfulness to young people. I had, at my previous school, been funded to complete the 8 week MBSR course at Exeter University, but hadn't had a chance to develop anything with my students. I got the job and, alongside my RPE teaching, ran a once a week mindfulness club at lunchtimes, getting to know students and staff interested in developing a mindfulness practice. During my first year here, my school applied for, and were awarded, a Government Character Education Grant to develop emotional wellbeing for students. Some of this funding was used for me to complete the Mindfulness in Schools Project's Teach .b four day course to train to teach the curriculum to young people. I completed this during the summer holidays of 2015.

Year 2 - Having completed the course, I was full of even more enthusiasm for teaching mindfulness to young people, and offered the .b curriculum course at lunchtimes which more than a handful of students from different year groups signed up to. I also continued to run the lunchtime mindfulness drop-in session on a different lunchtime too. One of the students from my first .b lunchtime course wanted to continue to practise so I developed some 'mindfulness challenges' for students and staff. The 30 Day Challenge was to complete 10 mindfulness practices in 30 days, and the 100 Day Challenge was to complete 50 mindfulness practices in 100 days, and review/reflect on each practice/journey. Within the RPE department I also began teaching our Year 8 classes the .b curriculum and, as the year progressed, mindfulness started to become a dialogue between many students and staff.

Year 3 - I devised a student mindfulness leaders' scheme and one of my students from the first cohort of .b took up the challenge. This was to complete both the 100 Day Challenge and to support development of mindfulness across the school through contributing to assemblies on mindfulness, be an

important part of the student voice on mindfulness, and encourage dialogue about mindfulness. We also started to run a daily mindfulness drop in practice slot every lunchtime.

Our mindfulness movement is a steadily growing journey.

Year 4 – Eleven students have become mindfulness leaders, and many of them came to our local primary school to model mindfulness techniques to Year 4, 5 & 6, alongside completing other duties. The staff team (myself, a fabulous biology teacher who is an expert in neuroscience and an amazing Spanish teacher who loves mindfulness) asked ourselves why aren't we practising more at lunchtimes in school? So now, most lunchtimes, we can now be found on a noisy corridor practising mindfulness with our student mindfulness leaders, other students and staff. From 1.45pm – 2pm everyday of the term there is a practice session available for students and staff. During this 4th year I was also incredibly lucky to be part-funded by our amazing PTFEA to complete the .b Foundations training so I could offer staff the 8-week course. Ten staff completed the 8-week course before the summer holidays.

Year 5 - I came back from the summer holidays to 15 further staff wanting to sign up to the 8-week .b Foundations course. We continue to offer a daily practice slot from 1.45pm – 2pm for students and staff. We now also run a weekly longer practice session after school for staff who have completed the 8-week course.

January 2019 – January 2019 - 9 more students in Years 7-9 have completed the 100 Day Challenge and become student mindfulness leaders creating a current total of 20!

Our mindfulness movement is a steadily growing journey, and I wish you a wonderful steadily growing journey with yours whichever stage of it you are on.

For regular mindfulness-related tweets - follow The King's School RPE Dept on Twitter @rpetheking