

‘Keep plugging away’ Lever Park Special School

I am a counsellor/therapist, practising for 22 years and have worked with young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties for 13 years. I was looking for a way to reach these young people and give them a way to develop their skills and life chances. I was following an interest in researching brain development, which led me to mindfulness.

I attended an adult MBSR course and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, I was surprised how well I took to it although I think the research I had done previously had given me the right mindset to benefit.

My husband and children were very supportive, although school and friends were sceptical.

Personally, I use mindfulness regularly to build emotional resilience, develop strategies to deal with challenges and to relax. Professionally, I share mindfulness with clients, which has been really successful. I came across the MiSP on line and attended the b. Course in Cardiff, early in 2017

Although the leadership group at school were supportive, there was, and still is some scepticism. Particularly from members of staff. I initially worked with our Nurture group, a group of 5 pupils of mixed age and ability. All showed some enjoyment and benefit although the course was sometimes difficult to deliver to pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. I followed this by running a course for some teaching staff, to get them on board, all saw benefits and were very enthusiastic. I know that getting mindfulness across the whole school will be a long term project although I have worked with a handful of pupils on an individual basis which worked well and this will be followed up by the year 11 group having some basic introduction training in the next term.

Mindfulness has been delivered over the last two terms as a regular weekly session for the nurture group and

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will be used by the year 11s in a similar way over the next year. SLT were supportive by releasing me to attend the training and allowing me to encourage staff to be more involved. Staff were mostly sceptical, and still are, the word is spreading, but it’s a slow process. Pupils are very sceptical but again, this perception is changing gradually, parents have not been responsive but we are working on this.

I work with pupils in years 7 to 11 (11 to 16 years old) and the first group had mindfulness on their timetable as the first lesson following lunch, which worked well. Apart from myself, there are three other members of staff who are positive about mindfulness, students who were unwilling to take part have become more interested and they reported better sleep, being able to avoid ‘getting onto the thought bus’ and being more able to regulate their behaviour. They loved the ‘shock ball’ especially when staff took part, they really connected with the ‘thought bus’, use the Fofboc and .b practices, and enjoyed some of the animations. The Nurture group have regular morning sessions which include some mindfulness practice to begin their day although I do need to simplify the delivery of the course to make it more accessible to SEBD pupils. Our plans for the future? – Keep plugging away.

Lever Park Special School -Year 7 to 11 (11 to 16 years) SEBD pupils who are permanently excluded from mainstream education. Academy, part of the Bolton Impact Trust.