

Paws b for SEN Pupils

I have provided a commissioned CAMHS in Schools service to 3 special schools within Stoke-on-Trent for over a decade. As part of our model we deliver clinical interventions, either on a 1:1; group, or whole class basis. Historically within these interventions I began sessions with a three minute breathing exercise based on John Kabat Zinn (3 minute breathing space). From this, I became interested in the Mindfulness in Schools Programme, and so explored the requirements to access the training. After completing MBSR training in 2013, I was offered a place for Paws b training in London in February 2014.

I was so passionate about the course that I paid for the training myself. I had a vision to develop mindfulness across the special schools to enable pupils and staff to become more mindfully aware, develop personal awareness, and be informed to consider options and consequences. Moreover, I wanted the pupils to have an insight into themselves and their behaviour by understanding how the brain works.

I chose the Paws b training for delivery to pupils with SEN as all age ranges could access the information. I was keen to implement this training, particularly after visiting Amy Footman's school in Manchester which has a whole-school approach to mindfulness, and with the agreement of the Senior Leaders I began to roll it out across the special schools.

Since 2014 I have delivered this training to a total of 9 groups in special schools (102 pupils ranging from 9-16) and to 57 pupils in a mainstream primary school (who have now had three staff trained in Paws b).

The following table reports pre and post average data from teacher rated strength and difficulties questionnaires for 8 groups (n=92), which demonstrates a decrease in difficulties in most areas and an increase in pro social skills. One group's data has been omitted due to contextual issues affecting scores.

SDQ CATEGORY	PRE TEACHER		POST TEACHER
TOTAL	13.9	↓	12.9
EMOTIONAL	3	↓	2.6
CONDUCT	2.3	↑	2.6
HYPERACTIVITY	5.2	↓	4.9
PEER	3.2	↓	2.9
PRO SOCIAL	6.3	↑	6.8

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Pupil and parent feedback includes comments such as: "My child practices some mindfulness techniques when needed which is an additional tool to managing different emotions"; "I learned how to calm and relax"; "I learned how to paws and be"; and "The petal breathing really helps when my mum and dad argue and I get scared. Doing Paws b helps my breathing and to calm me".

Due the recognition of the ongoing work taking place, I was invited to provide mindfulness techniques for a SEND week at Alton Towers.



Mindfulness techniques, both guided and self-directed practices, have enhanced my resilience, increase my self-awareness, and definitely helped me to get through some extremely challenging and complex issues on personal and professional levels. I value the benefits of embracing most situations and turn towards experiences, and believe that this will help to develop a resilient culture within the schools.