



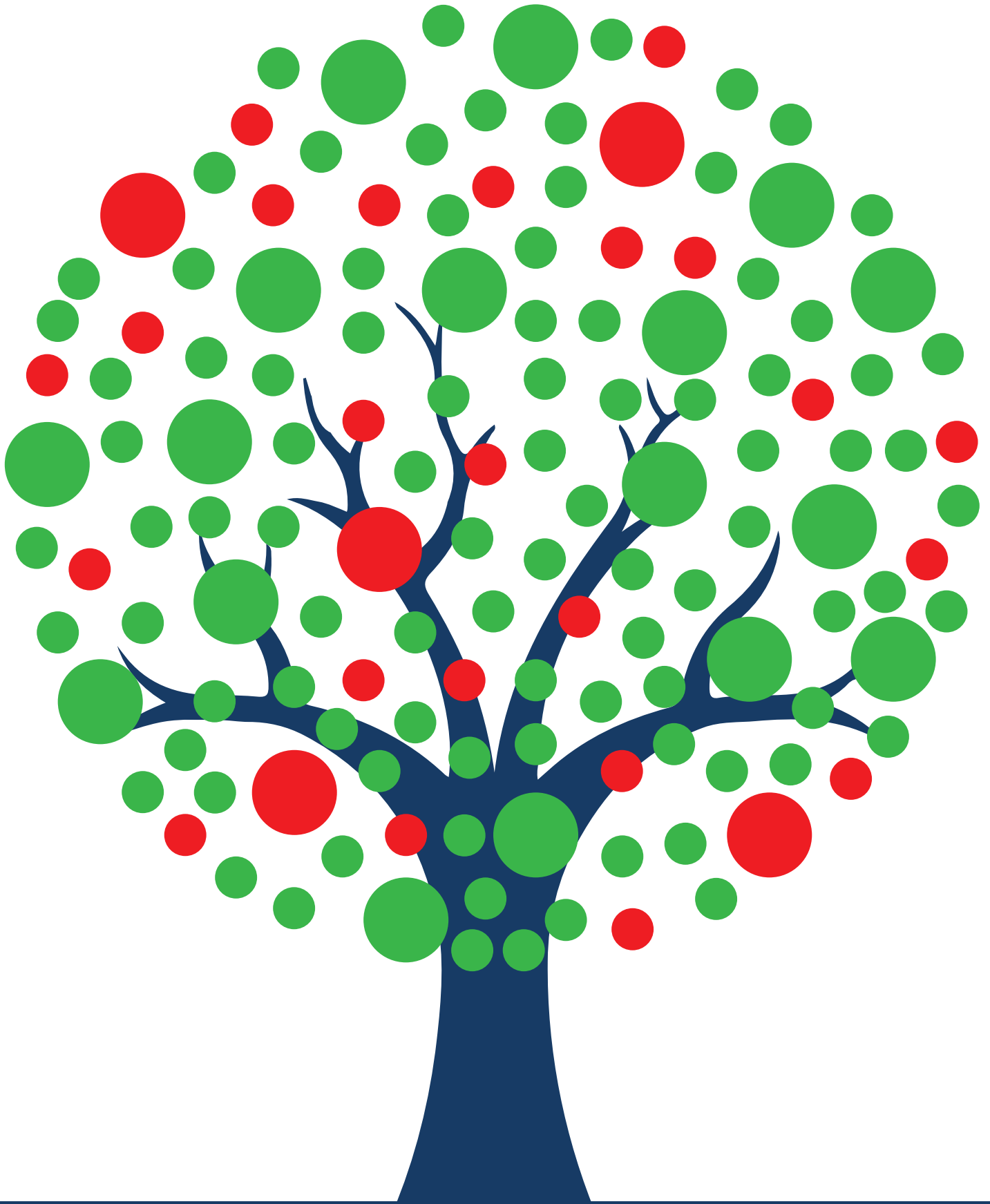
Mindfulness in Schools Project

Charity number 1168992

Impact Report

2017/18





CHAIR'S WELCOME

It has never been a more relevant time to share the benefits of mindfulness in schools and we welcome your interest in Mindfulness in Schools Project and our 2018 Impact Report.

This year we have seen stories continue to emerge about the crisis in mental health services and the need to promote well-being and resilience in our children. Pressures on our schools and their staff have never been greater, and society is increasingly turning to quick-fix solutions: installing 'plug and play' relaxation apps on mobile phones and disseminating 'well-being' advice.

We believe that 'quality' mindfulness will have a significantly greater impact than 'quick' mindfulness; it is a skill that needs to be learned, not a five minute fix. Experience tells us that introducing mindfulness in schools takes time, but once embedded can have a profound impact on individual children, teachers, school staff, and parents. Our role is to inform, train and support the whole community during this journey whilst safeguarding the integrity of mindfulness as an educational discipline.

That is why, this year, we have introduced .begin, our eight-week introductory mindfulness course for teachers and school staff, taught 'live' online. It has been received extremely positively, and has enabled more teachers to successfully bring mindfulness into their classrooms.

We have also begun to develop the support that we offer to our alumni via our online Hub as we recognise the huge benefits that access to ongoing support, encouragement and expertise provides to teachers.

Additionally, this year we have almost doubled the number of supported places we can offer to schools as they face budget cuts and competing demands for increasingly limited resources. Our aim is to seek funding sources that remove cost as a barrier to schools providing mindfulness to children. That is why we are launching our **A Million Minds Matter** Appeal, to urgently raise funds to bring mindfulness to the next generation of schoolchildren and those that care for them.

We need to increase the financial support we receive from partners and funders to secure the depth and breadth of services we can provide. We welcome your donations, and you can read more details about that further on in this report.

Finally, this year we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our organisation by hosting another 'gold standard' international conference in June 2018. It was a wonderful day of learning and community led by the world's leader in the field, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and attended by hundreds of teachers, mindfulness experts, practitioners, educators and other supporters. I look forward to hearing equally inspiring and uplifting speakers, and meeting more delegates from our fantastic network, at this year's conference and beyond!

Thank you for your ongoing encouragement and support. Our work ensures that whole school communities develop mindfulness toolkits that help them to flourish. I am extremely proud of what we achieve as a small charity.



Andrew Seth (Chair)

OUR TRAINING

I think it's incredibly refreshing and caring for them to be told that their mind is doing what it's supposed to do and what it was designed to do.

Paws b teacher

It's helped me so much with stress and learning to be kind. I have enjoyed it so much and I recommend it to anyone and everyone.

.b pupil

I felt calm. You could find your happy place. Like no one in the world can stop you from just taking a moment and breathe.

Paws b pupil

I think it is very practical, children understand it and can use it. It is a great foundation for further emotional literacy work.

Paws b teacher

The best part about doing .b was that it ended up helping me with my over thinking and my stressing out before exams.

.b pupil

It helped me be better at concentrating and it helped me get to sleep earlier.

Paws b pupil

Delivering Paws b into the special schools I work in has been amazing. Observing the students attitude change over the course of weeks is very overt. Even when they see me in the corridor they are proud to say a part of the brain, or demonstrate a technique learned.

Paws b teacher

I use .b before events like rugby matches and that has helped me to stay calm and relaxed and not stress out under pressure.

.b pupil

Now I feel more grateful about everything in my life and I really do 'take in the good'.

.b pupil

You can do it whenever and if you're feeling sad or unhappy you can do it to make yourself feel better.

Paws b pupil

I'm going through many hard family problems and Paws b helped me calm down.

Paws b pupil

I love this course, so much great learning takes place in sessions. Giving children the language and ability to talk about how they are feeling and recognise their emotions is great. Teacher tools for life.

Paws b teacher

.begin b b Foundations b SML

The trainers were exceptional. It has been the best course I have ever attended in my nine years of teaching. Thoroughly enjoyable.

.b teacher

The best thing about doing the .b course was that it helped me not get angry, sleep better, and calmed me down.

.b pupil

It helps me to get on with my family better.

Paws b pupil

Pupils have told me that they have shared practices with their parents and used techniques before their exams. They have also informed me that they have used it to help them to sleep better and when they get anxious.

.b teacher

I enjoyed learning how to cope in difficult situations and would definitely recommend it to others.

.b pupil

It is such a fantastic course! We are seeing the impact of teaching it for the last 3 years in the way our children can speak about their emotions, manage them and have the tools to help them focus.

.b teacher

The best thing about the .b course was that it helped me control my anger and concentration.

.b pupil

I really enjoy teaching it and love to see the reactions on the pupils faces. The look of relief, calmness and the smiles are priceless. Helping with students' wellbeing in this way has been the most rewarding.

.b teacher

I enjoy teaching the curriculum very much and find it needs little preparation which is great in a busy job.

Paws b teacher

The best thing about Paws b was that it helped you to stay calm and relaxed when you have a wobble.

Paws b pupil

There was a depth to the instruction that went beyond content. It was a privilege to be present and very inspiring.

.b teacher

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES:

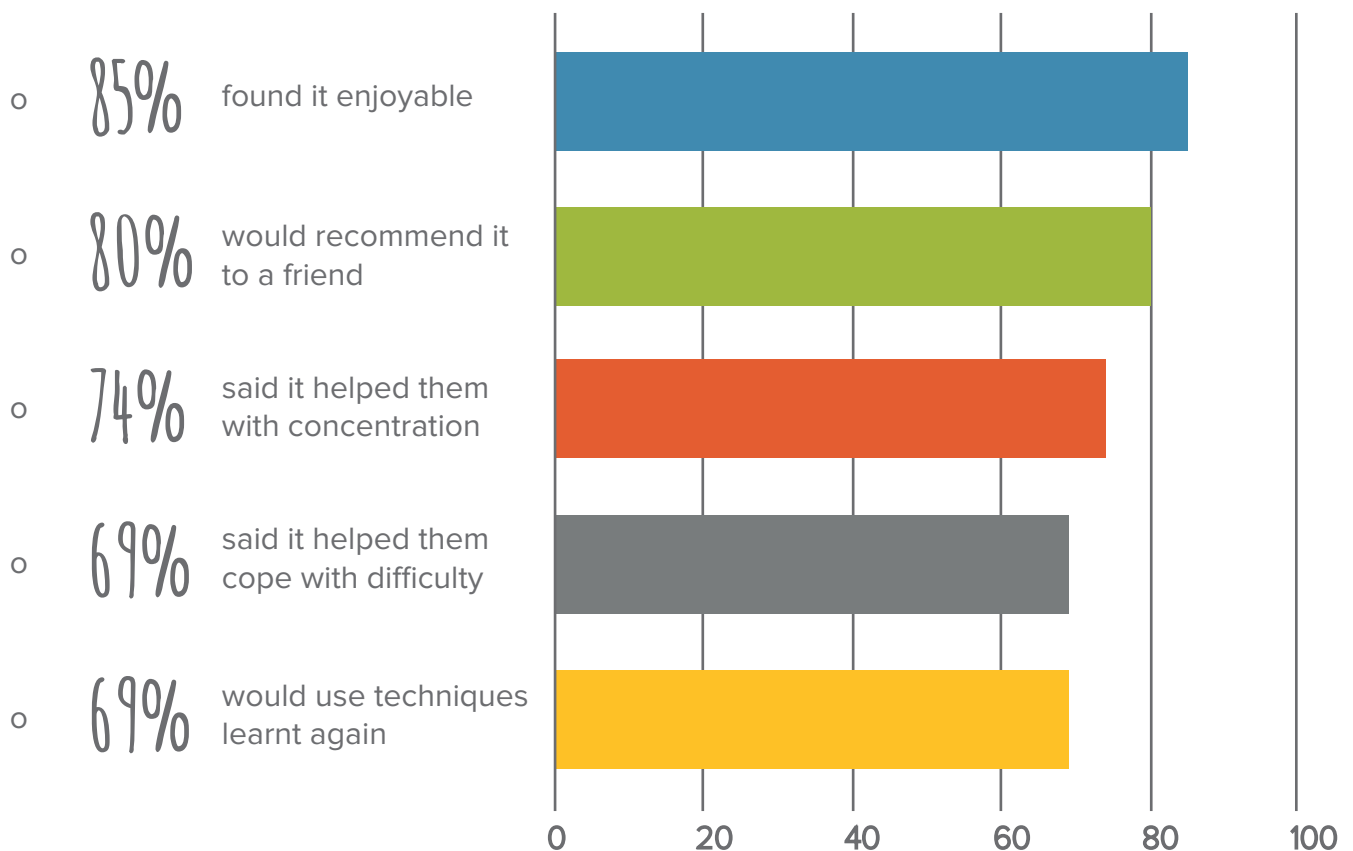
to advance the wellbeing and resilience of young people and those who work with them by promoting the practice of mindfulness primarily, but not exclusively, in educational settings by:

1. developing specialist, age appropriate, skills based mindfulness curricula and digital resources
2. training mindfulness to adults who work with or care for young people;
3. training and supporting qualified adults to deliver the Charity's curricula;
4. facilitating research into the effects of mindfulness on young people and those who work and care for them.

DEVELOPING CURRICULA & DIGITAL RESOURCES:

- To complement the existing .b curricula we released 4 new lessons
- We supported 1,384 members via our online Teacher Hub
- We grew our Facebook audience by 26%, to 12,813 followers by year end
- We grew our Twitter audience by 26%, to 2,401 followers by year end
- We surveyed 2,934 schoolchildren who received our curricula to assess its impact and effectiveness

Of the children who we surveyed, on average:



TEACHING MINDFULNESS TO ADULTS:

- We launched .begin, our new 8 week 'live' online, instructor-led Introduction to Mindfulness course for adults
- We ran 18 .begin courses, and introduced 172 adults to mindfulness during the year
- We held 17 information events around the UK and a total of 693 people attended to hear about Mindfulness in Schools Project
- We hosted 736 delegates at our Annual conference in June 2018

100%
of teachers said
it helped them
with
relationships
with colleagues
and pupils and
their overall
quality of life

TRAINING ADULTS TO TEACH OUR CURRICULA:

97%
of teachers
said our
training helped
them cope
with
professional
demands

- We trained 689 teachers to teach our curricula
- In total we ran 30 'Teach' training courses
- We provide 82 supported places to schools with higher than average free school meals or pupil premium
- We facilitated 7 partner courses internationally which resulted in an additional 134 teachers being trained worldwide

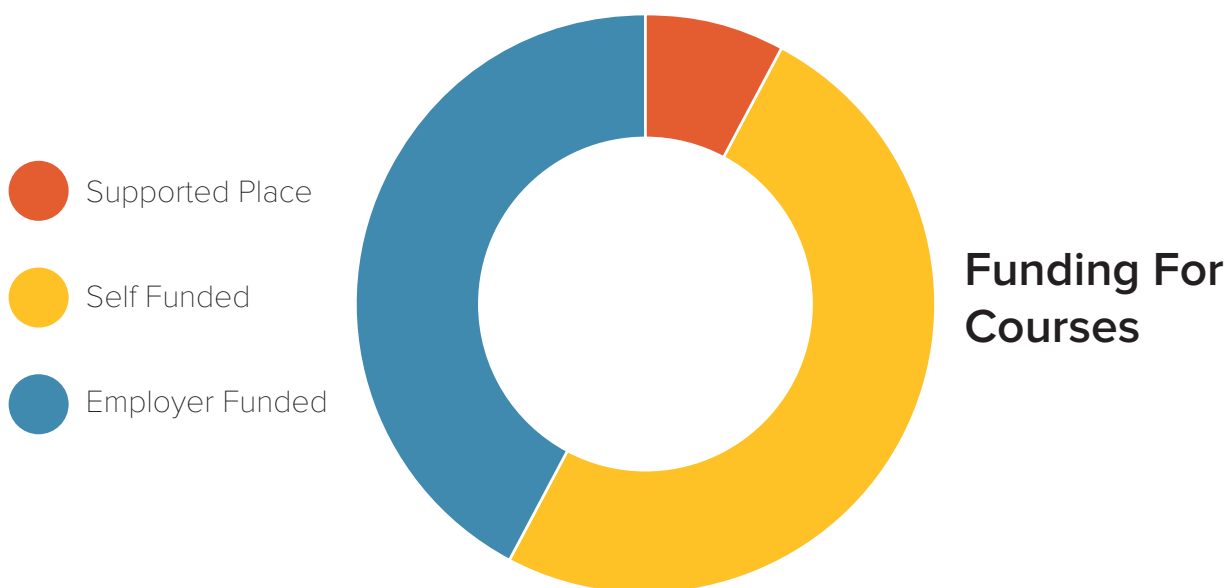
100%
of teachers
would
recommend
it to a
colleague

OUR REACH:

- We ran **50%** courses in London and **50%** across the UK in Manchester, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast, Leeds, Birmingham, Newcastle and Liverpool
- Due to increasing pressures on schools budgets, **54%** of course participant places were either funded by their employers or on a supported place
- **46%** of course participants were self-funded
- Demand for our supported places grew, and we were able to provide an additional **90%** of supported places compared to last year

£27,320

of supported places this year, compared to £14,370 last year.



FACILITATING RESEARCH INTO MINDFULNESS:

- This year, the final cohort of children were trained in mindfulness using our .b curriculum as part of the **MYRIAD** research project.
- In total **174** teachers have been trained to teach .b over two years, across **84** schools involving **7,000** children.

We responded to **67**

external research enquiries relating to mindfulness projects worldwide!

MYRIAD (My Resilience in Adolescence)

MYRIAD is a research project which investigates how schools promote young people's wellbeing and resilience (the ability to adapt in the face of difficulties) throughout adolescence. Funded by The Wellcome Trust, the MYRIAD project is the largest ever randomised control trial assessing the impact of mindfulness training on young people. The project started in January 2015 and will conclude in 2022.

It compares existing, good quality social and emotional learning that is already being taught in schools (known as 'teaching as usual') to a programme of study that is based on mindfulness techniques using the .b mindfulness in schools programme developed by the Mindfulness in Schools Project as a Mindfulness Training (MT) intervention.

Just as physical training is associated with physical health, psychological resilience training is associated with mental health. The three themes of the MYRIAD project are to:

- examine whether MT improves resilience in young adolescents, how it affects their processing of thoughts and feelings, whether there are different effects at different stages of development, and examine effects among both those with poor or good mental health and;
- discover the best way to train teachers to deliver a MT curriculum and how to implement it in schools.
- conduct a large cluster-randomised controlled trial to establish whether mindfulness training in schools is effective and cost effective.

The project is led by Mark Williams and Willem Kuyken at the University of Oxford, with Sarah-Jayne Blakemore of University College London, and Tim Dalgleish of the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at the University of Cambridge.

OUR CHALLENGE:

Children's mental health

- o 1 in 4 children show some evidence of poor mental health (Young Minds Trust 2017)
- o 50% of those with lifetime mental illness experience symptoms by the age of 14 (Public Health England 2016)
- o Between 2011 and 2014 there was a 68% increase in self harm incidence of girls aged 13-16 years old (British Medical Journal 2017)

Access to support services

- o 3 in 4 children with a diagnosable mental health condition do not have access to suitable resources (Young Minds Trust 2017)
- o Average maximum waiting time for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is 6 months until a first appointment and 10 months until the start of treatment (Young Minds Trust 2017).
- o 71% of institutions said that a lack of funding was an issue for schools in setting up mental health provision (Department for Education 2017)

Teacher's mental health

- o Over three quarters (79%) of teachers have reported experiencing work-related anxiety (NASUWT Survey, 2016).
- o 86% have suffered sleeplessness
- o 73% have suffered low energy levels
- o 47% of teachers have seen a doctor as a result of work related physical or mental health problems

They “have to reach crisis point before they are able to get help”

Care Quality Commission 2018

“High quality education cannot be delivered by stressed and anxious teachers.”

Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT

An evaluation of our programme found that “mindfulness interventions can improve the mental, emotional, social and physical health and wellbeing of young people who take part. It was shown to reduce stress, anxiety, reactivity and bad behaviour, improve sleep and self-esteem, and bring about greater calmness and relaxation.”

Mental Health Foundation 2016

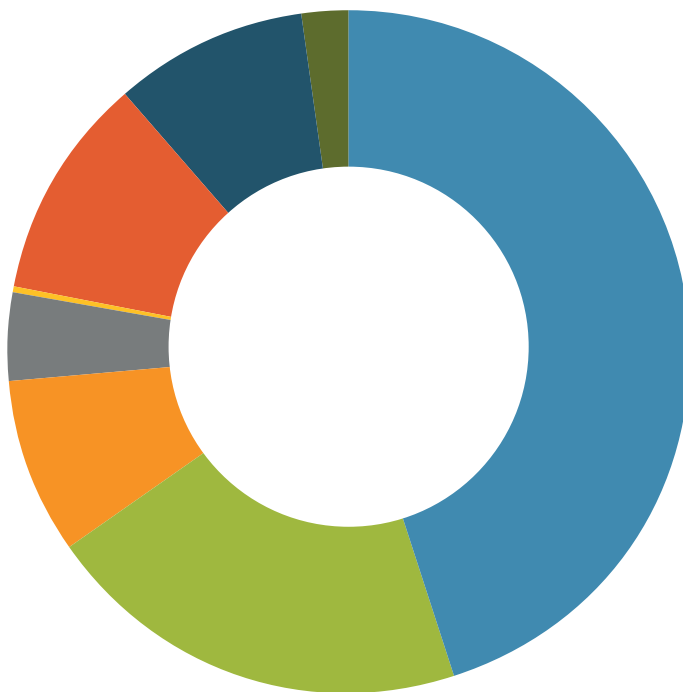
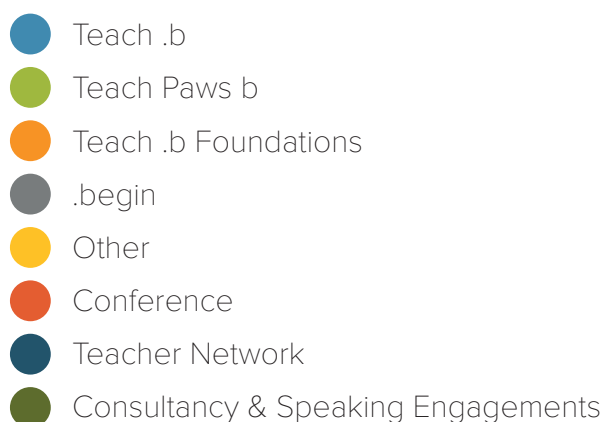
OUR RESOURCES:

People

At 31 August 2018 Mindfulness in Schools Project comprised 10 staff: 4 full-time and 6 part-time, equivalent in total to approximately 5.5 full-time staff.

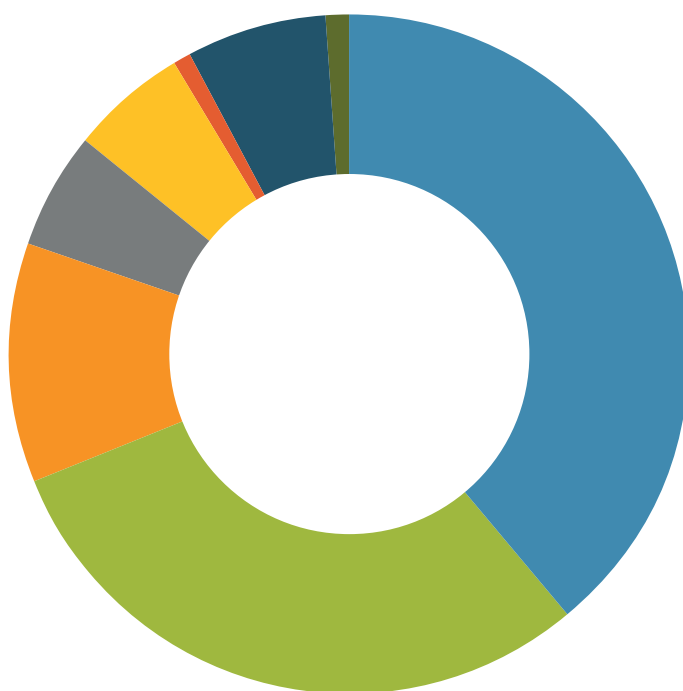
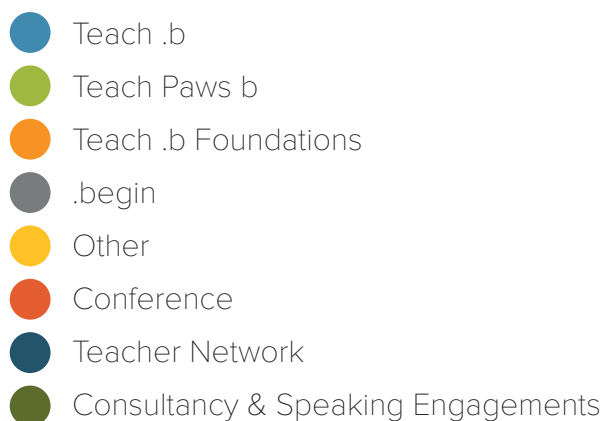
Income

£646,590



Expenditure

£658,984



SUPPORT OUR APPEAL - WE NEED YOUR HELP

Schools are increasingly struggling to send their teachers on our intensive training courses, due both to funding constraints and time pressures. Whole school communities are missing out on the far-reaching benefits of our mindfulness training.

The core funding for our charity has drastically decreased. The reduction in income from our training courses means that our charity cannot continue to introduce mindfulness to the next generation of school children, and we will struggle to provide new resources and ongoing support to our existing school network.

Our ambition is to reach one million minds within the next five years. To achieve this, we need to:

- Provide **1,000 financially supported places** to teachers, to ensure that cost is not a barrier to access.
- Host **150 additional** Introduction to Mindfulness for Adults courses for teachers and parents (.begin) to enable them to bring mindfulness into their schools.
- Campaign to **raise awareness** about the benefits of mindfulness within schools for teachers and for children and how to differentiate mindfulness from other relation and calming techniques: providing information as the go-to experts on mindfulness to every school.
- Develop and deliver a new short six-week Introduction to Mindfulness for Children course (.breathe) to compliment our existing curricula, providing particular support around the transition from primary to secondary school (years 5, 6 and 7). Our ambition is for this short course to be free for every state-maintained school to access.
- Develop and disseminate comprehensive high-quality curricula for Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 16-19 Education, to complement our .b and Paws b Mindfulness in Practice curricula, safeguarding mindfulness best-practice teaching for children throughout their education.
- Develop additional resources and **provide ongoing expert support** to our network of teachers, senior leaders, parents and governors via our **Hub**, maintaining the highest standards for mindfulness as an educational discipline, growing our community and enabling them to continue to deliver our curricula to new cohorts of schoolchildren each year.

We urgently need to raise **£250,000** each year to fund this. Without these funds we will be unable to reach these children and we will have to scale back the support we can offer existing schools. Please help us continue this important work.

A MILLION MINDS MATTER

Please give generously: We welcome ANY donations or sponsorship you can provide.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>£775</p> <p>will sponsor one teacher with no previous mindfulness experience to train from scratch to deliver our existing mindfulness curricula within a school via</p> <p><u>A SUPPORTED PLACE.</u></p> | <p>£1,500</p> <p>will sponsor</p> <p><u>TEN TEACHERS</u></p> <p>to attend an Introduction to Mindfulness for Adults course (.begin).</p> | <p>£1,200</p> <p>will sponsor our</p> <p><u>INFORMATION CAMPAIGN</u></p> <p>enabling us to publish accurate information about mindfulness and myth-bust each month.</p> |
| <p>£110</p> <p>will sponsor free access to our six-week Introduction to Mindfulness for Children course (.breathe) for</p> <p><u>ONE CLASS,</u></p> <p>costing only £3.58 per child.</p> | <p>£3,600</p> <p>will sponsor free access to .breathe for</p> <p><u>1,000 CHILDREN.</u></p> | <p>£25,000</p> <p>will sponsor the development of a</p> <p><u>SUITE OF NEW CURRICULA</u></p> <p>so that all children have the opportunity to access a mindfulness curriculum appropriate to their age and their ability.</p> |
| <p>£1,200</p> <p>enables us to continue to provide expert support to our community via our Hub for</p> <p><u>ONE MONTH.</u></p> | <p>£40</p> <p>will sponsor a single instructor-led</p> <p><u>ONLINE HUB SIT,</u></p> <p>a session bringing together our community in regular mindful practice.</p> | <p>£250</p> <p>will sponsor</p> <p><u>A LOCAL INFORMATION SESSION</u></p> <p>to bring mindfulness to new communities around the UK.</p> |

Alternatively, for **£195 +VAT** train with us and get your own introduction to mindfulness with our **.begin** course. This is a fantastic, instructor-led, live, online, eight-week introduction to mindfulness course where you can learn the benefits of mindfulness yourself.

We would love to hear from you – please email us: charityteam@mindfulnessinschools.org.
Or to discuss sponsorship options or substantial donations in more detail, please email our CEO: chivonne.preston@mindfulnessinschools.org



PLEASE SUPPORT US!

1. DONATE

Please make cheques out to:
Mindfulness in Schools Project

Please send cash and cheques to:

Mindfulness in Schools Project, Bank House, Bank Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1BL

Bank transfer details:

Mindfulness in Schools Project

HSBC, 100 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1AN, UK

Account Name: MiSP | Account Number: 91685236 | Sort Code: 40-44-20

IBAN: GB61MIDL40442091685236 | SWIFT: MIDLGB2159V

Regular giving

A standing order of £10 per month will enable us to provide a six-week .breathe course to a class of schoolchildren each year.

giftaid it

Add 25p to every £1 you donate with Gift Aid.

Email: finance@mindfulnessinschools.org for a simple form.



Mindfulness in Schools Project
<https://www.paypal.com/gb/fundraiser/hub>

JustGiving™

Mindfulness in Schools Project
<https://www.justgiving.com/>

2. FUNDRAISE

If you can run a fundraising event on our behalf or would like to raise money for us via a sporting or personal challenge, we would be very happy to support you!

3. INTRODUCE US

Please put us in touch with organisations or individuals who may have the time and resources to support our work.

4. SHARE

Please help us spread our message! Please invite your friends to our events, repost our social media messages, forward our information emails to your networks, tell your community about our work

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

OUR CONFERENCE - 16TH JUNE 2018

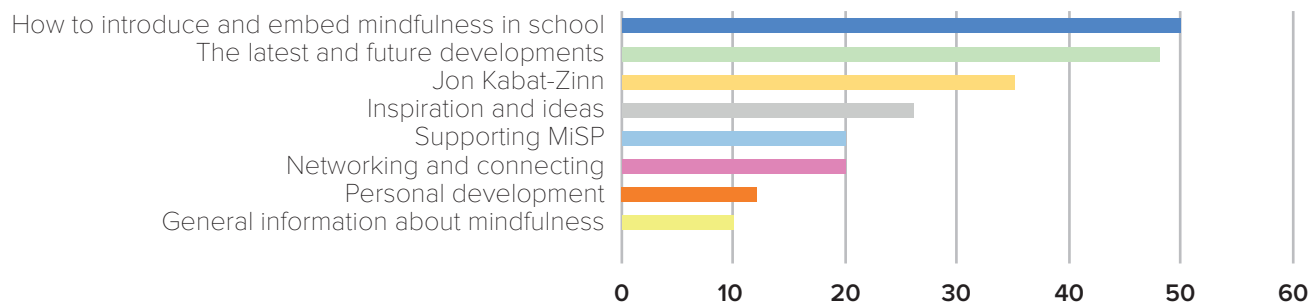
Our hugely successful 2018 Conference took place in London, where we invited leading figures to reflect on what the future holds and offer practical 'next steps' for those in educational or mental health contexts.

Speakers included :

- o Jon Kabat-Zinn, founding father of the contemporary mindfulness movement, who led a mindfulness practice and shared his hopes and fears about what the future holds for mindfulness and young people.
- o Oren Ergas, in his book "Reconstructing Education through Mindful Attention" proposed a radical rethink of the way we educate, placing heart and mind at the very centre of how we teach all subjects.
- o Chris Ruane MP, the driving force of mindfulness amongst MPs and Peers in Westminster, explained his vision of how education policy might change to embrace the benefits of mindfulness.
- o Jamie Bristow, architect of Mindful Nation UK, the All-Party-Parliamentary Group report, explained how mindfulness is an essential tool for reclaiming young people's freedom in today's 'attention economy'.
- o Cathie Paine, of REAch2, youngest headteacher in England when first appointed to a large and socially deprived school in "special measures", presented the challenges facing academy chains who want to embed mindfulness.
- o Katherine Weare, author (with Thich Nhat Hanh) of 'Happy Teachers Change The World' and widely held as the UK's custodian of academic research into mindfulness, told us which research findings are robust, which are just wishful thinking, and what we do with the results.

We had 736 delegates attending from all over the UK (and beyond). A total of 187 people completed the end of Conference Survey and told us why they wanted to come to our conference:

What was your main reason for coming to the Conference?



the future of mindfulness & education

The vast majority, 88%, felt that their experience of the Conference was “Very Positive”. None of the attendees gave a negative response. Some comments were:

- o ‘Very positive’ is an almighty understatement. The conference was positively mind blowing! Never have I experienced anything quite so thorough & entirely inspiring.
- o I felt inspired and emotional the whole time. It really changed me positively and it empowered me to want to make a difference.
- o A truly inspiring and engaging day.
- o The children who spoke added the greatest value to the messages throughout, a real grounding for the purpose and responsibility we all have.
- o I don't know how you could possibly improve on the day. The content was deep, diverse and entirely relevant from start to finish.
- o Like no other conference I have attended, the people, the atmosphere, speakers and messages will stay with me and forever guide me in my personal and professional life.
- o I left feeling refreshed and uplifted not only in terms of my own practice but to find the confidence to get back to promoting it in school.
- o An empowering and energising experience to be with so many other practitioners and sharing experiences.
- o The conference was one of the best conferences I have been to; regarding both information and quality of speakers, together with an impeccable deliverance of the true message behind MiSP.

Key messages delegates took home included:

- o The urgency of the need for Mindfulness for our young people - as a pre-emptive programme rather than a remedial one.
- o Implementation takes time: it is a journey not a destination.
- o The need for a whole school approach.
- o Mindfulness in everyday teaching
- o That the growth and development of Mindfulness in our schools and in our world is a gradual process. With determination and patience we can get there
- o Importance of allowing mindfulness to take hold of schools through the inspiring practice of individuals rather than imposing it, top-down, as yet another 'cure-all'.





CASE STUDY

English Martyr Primary, Liverpool: 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.

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.

By the end of the course it's a complete transformation, the stillness and quiet never cease to amaze me.

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

It is definitely the children's experiences that swayed the SLT to continue supporting mindfulness here.

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.



Emma Naisbett
Primary School Teacher,
English Martyrs School,
Liverpool.

CASE STUDY

Solihull Junior School, West Midlands: Nurturing Emotional Well-being

My only thought when I first learned about the Paws b programme was not how, but when I would be able to introduce it into the Junior School. Whilst the decision to do so was not without its challenges, on reflection it has proved more worthwhile than I could ever have imagined.

The first step in the process is developing an appreciation of what mindfulness can offer young children. Look it up! The potential benefits are as profound as they are far-reaching. The second step involves choosing how well you want mindfulness to be done. In that sense, I know of no better means of introducing the benefits of mindfulness into schools than the MiSP programmes. Step three - if you reach the conclusion I did - is deciding whether you want to buy in Paws b trained deliverers indefinitely or whether your ambitions are to develop a team of in-house trained colleagues.

I opted for the latter in the hope that we could build a sustainable and organic model that would allow us to introduce mindfulness through Paws b lessons into our timetable, so that all children could benefit.

For that to happen it was important to make it as easy as possible for staff to meet the first prerequisite of applying to train with MiSP – to complete an 8 hour introductory course in mindfulness with a recognised provider. Over the last 3 years we have offered 2 such courses to staff, and most recently the online course, and over 45 colleagues have completed the course. 8 of those,

myself included, went on to complete our Paws b training; one of whom received a distinction for her MA Thesis on the benefits of Paws b lessons. 5 more have completed their .b training. This now allows us to deliver the lessons to all of our Year 5 & Year 6 pupils each year, six half hour lessons in Yr 5 over six weeks & the second six lessons again in Yr 6. It also means that we can deliver the .b course to our entire Yr 7 cohort from September.

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow, and so it's proved to be at Solihull School. The momentum of interest in the emotional wellbeing of pupils and the resolve of my colleagues to do all they can to help children to thrive has taken me, very pleasantly, by surprise – sparked in no small measure by so many staff having a deeper

**The momentum of
interest in the
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understanding of how mindfulness can be of great benefit to them professionally and personally.

That same momentum explains why five colleagues were hugely energised after completing Penn Resiliency training and over 65 colleagues to date, across the Junior and Senior School, have voluntarily completed the Mental Health Youth First Aid course this year.

Whilst I too share the concerns about the mental health problems besieging our young children and bemoan the fact that the industry of cure is exponentially larger than the industry of prevention, mindfulness is, I believe, every bit as much about learning how to live in the present moment in order to cultivate the personal space to thrive; as it is a clinically proven means of dealing with deficit.

“You can’t stop the waves but you can learn to surf,” Jon Kabat-Zinn sagely opined, nor by extension should we expect a young child to learn how to surf by chucking them into a great big wave. Ideally, we’d start on land and progress to mild mannered waters before expecting them to straddle choppy seas. Why therefore do educators and health professionals find themselves at the crisis end of the equation far too often, deploying flotation devices in the hope that children will cling on until a big wave runs its course?

Because, in my view, the opportunity to boost the emotional immunity of young children is too often overlooked. To achieve this, I believe, we need to teach children how to think, not what to think.

This is why, for me, the Paws b programme offers so much more than you might expect beyond age appropriate meditative practice. It is a hugely well resourced and well thought out series of lessons for 7-11 year olds, that complements greatly the valuable lessons positive psychology has learned about how we can help young people to thrive.

If you are already discussing the differences between fixed mindsets and growth mindsets with your pupils, learning about parts of the brain and their functions through Paws b lessons

reinforces what they need to know about neuroplasticity. When they learn how to manage their amygdali and how to ground themselves after a wobble, they address the genesis of the resilience training we have introduced into our curriculum. And when, in the final lesson they learn about how to grow happiness, they tick many of the boxes that positive psychologists such as Martin Seligman advocate for human beings to flourish, which we also teach the children about in our curriculum wellbeing lessons.

We now invite parents to join us for a mindfulness seminar each year, to familiarise themselves with the nature of mindfulness and the content of the Paws b programme and a colleague runs a co-curricular Mindfulness Club for pupils each week. The reception of pupils, parents and colleagues has been very positive. Even for many of those pupils who don’t practise meditation as part of their daily routines, often offer the caveat that they don’t - just yet.

My sincere hope is that should any of our pupils reach the point of ‘yet’, that they will have had a very valuable experience of mindfulness to fall back on. Furthermore, I hope that those in our community who have already embraced it, are more mindfully happy than they would otherwise have been.



Mark Penn - Southur Junior School

CASE STUDY

The Gryphon School, Dorset: Improving pupil wellbeing



Mindfulness was pretty unheard of when I decided to train to teach with MiSP, so I paid for the course myself.

Having personal experience of the effectiveness of mindfulness was key, helping me lay out how it could help fellow staff and students at the Gryphon to our management.

As you can imagine, some staff were reluctant to embrace mindfulness to begin with. Mindfulness isn't for everyone, but I was able to bring some of them round by running an introduction to mindfulness as an inset for all staff, then running the first **.b** course with staff as well. That gave some of the staff first hand experience of the impact mindfulness can have, and gave me a chance to practise before I started to teach the students.

Those first members of staff to take the course then became ambassadors for mindfulness at the Gryphon, proactively sharing their experience with colleagues.

The other challenge I faced was making time to teach mindfulness outside class time. I found that using lunchtimes and registration times enabled me to reach a large number of students.

I really enjoy seeing the benefit the students get from learning mindfulness. One told me how he used a 7/11 to calm down before going on stage, another how he uses **.b** to cope when panicking in a classroom. Once a parent caught me at the end of a parents' evening and told me the mindfulness course had transformed her daughter's life.

Those first members of staff to take the course then became ambassadors for mindfulness.

Over time greater interest has developed among the senior management at the school. It helped having two deputy heads come on the staff course, and they have seen the impact on the students as more have taken the course. It is now part of our culture and next term I start a new role as Mindfulness Facilitator, working with students and staff to build resilience at The Gryphon.



Jem Shackleford
The Gryphon

CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you, especially if:

- You are a school leader keen to introduce mindfulness to your school...
- You are a teacher who wants to begin your own mindfulness journey or find out how to teach it in your classroom...
- You are a SEND specialist seeking materials to teach mindfulness to your children...
- You are a parent who would like to know more about how to bring mindfulness to your child...
- You work in the education sector and can help us bring mindfulness to more schools...
- You are a supporter and would like to make a donation...

CONTACT MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT AT:

fundraising@mindfulnessinschools.org

www.mindfulnessinschools.org

Find us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube



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Bringing mindfulness to young people and those who care for them since 2007