

Teacher training given a more mindful approach

Mindfulness, the art of focusing the mind on the present, is being taken into schools in Wales.

Carmarthenshire County Council says it aims to have a mindfulness teacher in all its schools within the next few years.

The council and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David are working with the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) to bring mindfulness teacher training to the county for the first time.

Project leaders say MiSP gives teachers training to enable them to "embed mindfulness in their school". The course trains staff to teach students how to be mindful in everyday life, as well as during meditation sessions.

MiSP's internationally recognised system runs a mindfulness curriculum for 11 to 18-year-olds and the equivalent "Paws b" programme for younger learners aged seven to 11.

As part of the project - which aims to have a mindfulness teacher in all of Carmarthenshire's 115 schools over the next few years - more than 110 teachers, school staff, FE staff and education officers have been trained in the adult mindfulness curriculum.

Staff from secondary schools, special schools and Coleg Sir Gâr, as well as council education employees, recently took part in training at the Griffith Jones Centre, St Clears, last month to learn mindfulness for secondary school age pupils.

They will now be able to deliver the course in their schools, colleges and workplaces in the next few weeks and months.

Carmarthenshire Council's head of corporate parenting and child welfare Bethan James said: "We are embracing mindfulness as a proactive

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approach that will not only support the wellbeing of pupils but also our school staff.

"All staff that have participated to date have found the mindfulness programme helpful. It is exciting to work in collaboration with UWTSD on this important project and we are looking forward to monitoring its impact."

MiSP chief executive Chivonne Preston said: "We are absolutely delighted to be part of this project bringing mindfulness to more schools in Carmarthenshire.

"The benefits of mindfulness are well-researched and we hope that other county councils can follow Carmarthenshire's lead and establish similar programmes for schools across the UK.

"We know from experience that embedding mindfulness in schools can have a hugely positive impact, on teachers, on the children and on the whole school community."

UWTSD said in a statement: "There is a growing body of peer-reviewed evidence that indicates that mindfulness training is effective in improving pupils' and teachers' psychological wellbeing and health.

"UWTSD is looking forward to further developing this collaboration, with plans to bring the primary curriculum teacher training, Paws b, to Carmarthenshire next term."

UWTSD mindfulness lecturer Heather Fish, who has co-ordinated the latest training session, said: "This creates a sustainable model whereby those involved have the relevant training to now deliver this curriculum in-house, and ensures the greatest integrity in mindfulness teaching."



> Staff from secondary schools, special schools and Coleg Sir Gâr took part in mindfulness training

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

THE Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) describes mindfulness as a practice which "involves learning to direct our attention to our experience as it unfolds, moment by moment, with open-minded curiosity and acceptance.

"Rather than worrying about what has happened or might happen, it trains us to respond skilfully to whatever is happening right now, be that good or bad."

Heather Fish, UWTSD lecturer in mindfulness, says it can help staff with self-awareness, self-care, resilience and in taking care of their own wellbeing.

She said: "Through mindfulness practice, pupils can become more self-regulated and develop strategies to support attention, focus and learning in general.

"The practice also helps to develop a sense of appreciation,

awareness of self and others, kindness and tools for coping.

"In this way, it can be a skill for life.

"Mindfulness can make a significant contribution to the new curriculum for Wales, generally through supporting the common purposes and all areas of learning and experience, but more specifically to the new health and wellbeing area."

RCT headteacher wins award in recognition of her inspiring work

THE head of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda, Rhian Morgan Ellis, has been named Headteacher of the Year at the annual Professional Teaching Awards Cymru.

The awards honour the achievements of teachers across the country.

Rhian was recognised at the awards as someone who demonstrates that she inspires others and has built a strong relationship between the school and the local community. She was also commended for her support of col-

leagues in other schools.

Congratulating Rhian, Joy Rosser, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's cabinet member for education and inclusion services, said: "The council is delighted that Rhian has been recognised and rewarded by her peers at the Professional Teaching Awards Cymru, and, on behalf of the council, I would like to send all of our warmest congratulations for this wonderful recognition.

"She is a shining example of not only the leadership that we have in our schools, but also of the amaz-

ing teaching staff we have here in Rhondda Cynon Taff.

"We have a wealth of talent in our schools and in our classrooms across our county borough, and are proud to have some of the finest school buildings in Wales due to a programme of major investment over recent years.

"More and more of our children are being taught in first-class facilities and, through their hard work, commitment and the invaluable support of our teaching staff, are really reaping the rewards."



> Rhian Morgan Ellis, of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda, has been named Headteacher of the Year