



M&Ms, badges & t-shirts, leaders & mentors

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

School:	The King's School
Location:	Ottery St. Mary, Devon
School Type:	Secondary & Sixth Form
MiSP Curriculum:	.b
Age Group/s:	11-18
Author:	Sarah Gotting
Role:	RPE Teacher
Issue/s Addressed:	Anxiety, confidence, wellbeing.

A few weeks ago on a dark, cold morning, on my way from the school carpark into school I heard these words being shouted to me, "Miss, Miss, I still do my mindfulness practice every day on the bus to college!" These were the words of Jake (an amazing human and our first ever student mindfulness leader) who can passionately express how his mindfulness practice has supported him in managing his daily anxiety, which was

manifesting as pains in his chest, which he associated with the daily anxieties of life and being autistic. You may have been lucky enough to have seen him speak at the **2018 MiSP Conference**.

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Five years ago after I was funded from part of the Character Education grant that my school had been successful in winning, I completed the four day **MiSP .b** mindfulness course in Manchester. I tentatively returned to school, advertised that I was going to run it one lunchtime per week for 10 weeks and Jake was one of the first students to take part with a small group of students from different year groups. At the end of the course Jake came to see me and asked, "what do I do now Miss?" "Er, come back on Monday," I replied, "and

I will let you know!” I thought do I get him to download a mindfulness app, do I tell him to keep coming to our daily lunchtime practice slot? Yes, of course, but was that enough? I started thinking about how young people may need some sort of mindfulness challenge, not to focus them on the goal, but to keep them safely on a mindfulness journey that will support them to flourish and keep going. This is when I developed the M&Ms’ (Mindfulness and Meditation) challenges (the M&Ms’ 100 day challenge is to complete 50 x 10 minute mindfulness practices in 100 days and the M&Ms’ 30 day challenge is to complete 10 x 10 minute practises in 30 days). When Jake came back to see me on the Monday he took the 100 day challenge card and started recording each practice he did at home and at school, he recorded what he noticed next to each practice, he got home or school to sign the card every time he practised. Meanwhile our amazing PTFA agreed to fund some mindfulness leaders badges for which Jake chose the colour (orange which was not available so second choice being green!) and upon completion of the 100 day challenge Jake received the first badge in front of the whole school during final assembly and became our first ever student mindfulness leader. Since and because of Jake’s inspiring message over 30 students have now completed the 100 day challenge.

After becoming student mindfulness leader Jake started to help me to promote our daily mindfulness practice slot which other student mindfulness leaders started to join him in doing over time. Jake has also spoken about his experiences of mindfulness and led mindfulness practices at information events, conferences, in PSHE lessons and has even returned to school to talk and lead practices with lower school tutor groups.

Last year our current student mindfulness leaders asked me if there was a way they could train to be senior mindfulness leaders and off I went again to think about this! We then came up with a student mindfulness mentor scheme which is only available for student mindfulness leaders to apply for. Eight student mindfulness leaders applied and secured this role and have been since September 2019, once a fortnight at lunchtimes, training to guide staff and students in one minute pocket mindfulness techniques. Each student mindfulness mentor has a MiSP t-shirt (again funded by our fantastic PTFA) that they wear once per fortnight, on the same day of our two week timetable along with the super three members of staff who run the

daily lunchtime practice slots. This is to continue to encourage and develop dialogue surrounding the possibilities of mindfulness. These same students have also just started their 2020 challenge which is to guide 20 x 1 minute pocket mindfulness practices with others, to record on their challenge card what they notice, in order to become a fully-fledged student mindfulness mentor with another badge being awarded to them upon completion (again funded by our brilliant PTFA) but this time in the colour blue (their choice!) In future, they would like to guide others in their tutor group, guide their younger siblings, guide staff, re-visit our local primary school to lead practices and have also expressed an interest in possibly going into our local care home to guide any elderly who might want to learn some mindfulness practices from young people.

This is a reflection of where we are on our mindfulness journey at The King’s School; I should mention that we have become a community where using mindfulness as a tool to support your own wellbeing has become normalised for both students and staff. We teach a mindfulness unit to the whole of Year 7, our daily practice slot is available to all students and staff. Almost two years ago I started to offer the eight-week mindfulness course to staff once per year to support their wellbeing.

Although I can vouch for the impact practising mindfulness has had and continues to have on me it is the inspiring accounts of Jake and other students that shows that mindfulness, although not a panacea for all things, is a powerful tool when understood and practised in an informed and supported way. Jake’s Mum once said to me that they had been searching for something to support Jake’s wellbeing, that he could take ownership of, since he was three; these words continue to encourage me to teach young people mindfulness, so they are accurately informed of what mindfulness is and what the possibilities are.

What have we got planned for the future? Currently, 24 members of staff have completed the mindfulness eight-week course, numerous classes have completed the **.b curriculum** and we are hopeful that other staff will also be able to be trained in .b in the future to further support our ongoing mindfulness journey so it can continually grow and develop in a sustainable way. Let’s see what happens! We wish you all well wherever you are on your mindfulness journey.