



Mindfulness at Clydebank High School

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

School:	Clydebank High School
Location:	West Dunbartonshire
School Type:	Secondary
MiSP Curriculum:	.b
Age Group/s:	11-18
Author:	Susan Hubbard
Role:	Educational Psychologist
Author:	Gerry Diamond
Role:	CHS Hub / Nurture / Group work /Pupil Support

About Clydebank High School

CHS is a large secondary school of around 1,280 pupils in West Dunbartonshire, Scotland. This is a Council which is geographically small, but which features high levels of deprivation, with 26% of children growing up in poverty. Historically, high numbers of pupils have struggled with the transition from primary school, and behavioural issues have regularly arisen throughout the school.

The nurture approach

In 2017, Clydebank High School (CHS) introduced a whole school nurture approach to benefit all young people in the school, many of whom have complex emotional and behavioural needs. It was hoped that by adopting nurturing principles throughout the school there would be:

- A consistent school ethos and a shared framework around which to understand social and emotional needs and distressed behaviour.
- Improvements in the attendance, attainment and social and emotional competencies of young people.
- Improved family engagement: families will feel more listened to, supported and included in decisions made about supporting their child.
- Improvements in inclusion of young people in mainstream school throughout their secondary education.

This has been supported by the **West Dunbartonshire Psychological Service** as part of the **Scottish Attainment Challenge**, which aims to raise the attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas and close the equity gap. The ambition is for CHS to be a nurturing school environment where young people feel safe and supported, able to succeed in school and gain the skills for life.



Training staff: the systematic embedding of mindfulness

Staff training has been core to developing a whole-school nurture approach at CHS, and mindfulness has been introduced as a key part of that for all staff including janitors and clerical staff as well as teaching staff.

We knew that before mindfulness could be taught to young people, staff would have to be mindfulness practitioners themselves.

Our Education Psychologist, Sue Hubbard, started to build knowledge and capacity in the teaching staff. This involved delivering an 'Introduction to Mindfulness' two-hour course for staff, designed to generate interest and raise awareness amongst staff, before providing them with an eight week Mindfulness Based Living Course sourced externally. Staff have been grateful for the high quality training and we have gathered both quantitative and qualitative evidence that demonstrates strong engagement from staff, improvement in their own wellbeing and support for the approach.

In 2017, Sue trained to teach the **.b** course and delivered it several times to groups of young people in the school. In 2018, myself and one other teacher were trained to teach **.b**, whilst Sue attended the **School Mindfulness Lead (SML)** course that year so that CHS could continue to provide an eight week introduction to mindfulness course to other teaching staff in-house at no additional expense.

In 2019, seven more teachers trained to teach **.b** and in 2020, more staff continue to be trained to deliver **.b** whilst I am attending the **SML** course to be able to run adult training in-house too.

Throughout this time, we have delivered the **.b** curriculum to 50 vulnerable pupils, 40 pupils know to suffer from exam stress, and to over 240 S1 pupils (aged 11-12). We have **.b** posters up around the school corridors to remind pupils to practice mindfulness, and pupils tell us that they can identify which teachers have had mindfulness training by the way they respond!



Impact on staff

The nurture approach including the mindfulness training has changed the school ethos, but the journey has not always been easy and there is still more work to do. Staff have a better understanding of pupils' needs and are better able to manage pupils behaviour within their classroom. There is less confrontation, relationships between staff and pupils have improved and staff are more able to see behaviour from the child's perspective and better able to de-escalate challenging situations. Whilst there has been positive cultural change and staff have valued the training they have received, some staff have been reluctant to get on board with the approach, and not all staff implement the approach consistently. So the work goes on!

Impact on children and young people

The impact on our pupils has been noticeable. As a result of the nurture approach pupils now spend more time in class and are better able to engage in learning. There has been a reduction in exclusions and in the instances requiring SMT intervention in behavioural issues.

Pupils report that:

- Some teachers are understanding, approachable and kind
- Some teachers listen and support them.
- Safe spaces are available.
- Most classes are calm and quiet.
- They feel they have a key adult to talk to/ share problems with.
- Classrooms feel safe.
- When they feel supported by teachers, they feel good about themselves.
- Teachers use simple language that YP can understand.
- Learning is at the right level for them if they have a good relationship with the teacher.

Continuing the journey

Whilst we are very proud of what we have achieved so far, embedding the nurture principles throughout the school so that they permeate every classroom, every area of the school and every interaction that children have with staff and each other is an ongoing task. We will continue to train staff to develop and embed our approach, and evaluate how we are doing by gathering feedback from both staff and pupils.

We will also share our learning with other schools.

In February 2020 we hosted the first ever **West Dunbartonshire Learning Festival**, where teachers and staff from across the area attended workshops, stalls and talks focused on 'Nurturing Positive Relationships' and 'Building Resilient Communities'.

CHS has also been selected as a finalist for the **Scottish Education Award 2020** in the category of 'Making a Difference (secondary)'. These awards recognise and celebrate the exceptional achievements with Scottish Education.

Gerry Diamond was a speaker at MiSP's 2020 conference 'Teaching Mindfully'.

