



Supporting Restorative Approaches using mindfulness

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

School:	Fitzalan High School
Location:	Cardiff, Wales
School Type:	Secondary
MiSP Curriculum:	.b (Year 9), .breathe (Year 7)
Age Group/s:	11-18
Author:	Judith Rees
Role:	Assistant Head Teacher

Context

Fitzalan High School is an English-medium mixed 11 to 18 school in Cardiff. There are around 1800 pupils on roll, including a large sixth form. The school is situated close to the centre of the city, and serves a diverse catchment area in which there are high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 32.7%. Around 60% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas of

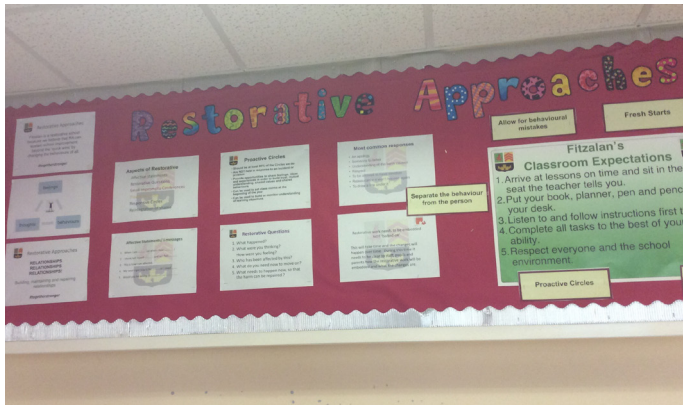
Wales. Around 35% of pupils have a special educational need. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Approximately 70% of pupils come from a minority ethnic background and speak English as an additional language. Over 60 different languages are spoken within the school community.

The current headteacher has been in post since September 2009. Since then, the school has realised significant improvement.

The story so far

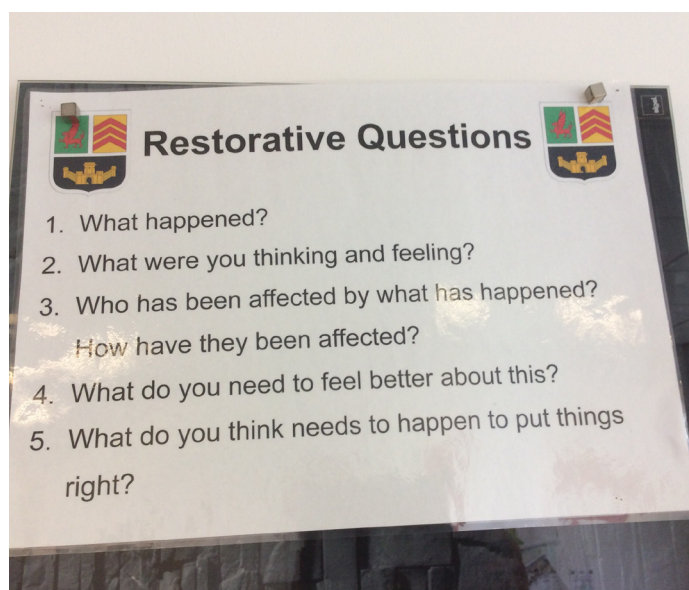
Approximately ten years ago, the school adopted Restorative Approaches (RA). This involved key staff (e.g. Heads of Year) undertaking an intensive training programme before RA was rolled out to the whole staff over a period of two years. All staff new to Fitzalan are trained in Restorative Approaches as part of their induction. This has a highly beneficial impact on relationships across the school community. Circle time is common in lessons and pupils and staff are encouraged to reflect on how they are feeling and what they are thinking.

As the school became more aware of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), we looked for



ways to mitigate the impact of ACEs. We became aware of the work of Nadine Burke Harris and thus of the potential for mindfulness to mitigate the impact of ACEs.

Initially, I undertook a small-scale action research project with a year 8 class. The fourteen pupils in the class all have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). We used MindYeti three times a week. Initially pupils were reluctant to engage, and many were uncomfortable closing their eyes (or even lowering their gaze) and had difficulty participating. However, the consensus in the class was that they found the practice “relaxing”. I observed that the class was more able to settle to work, to focus and less inclined to direct provocative comments at each other. As the term progressed, the class began to ask to “do MindYeti” and reported that they were aware of the positive impact it had on their focus. On one occasion the class arrived having had a disagreement and were very unsettled. Following a settling practice, they were able to resolve the conflict. Several of the group also reported using MindYeti independently when they had felt angry or anxious at home.



Following this action research, I was keen to find a way to introduce mindfulness on a more planned, more quality assured basis to pupils. A colleague and I enrolled on the NAEL course Mindfulness for Education Leaders. This course took the form of an eight week introduction to mindfulness using Williams and Penman's Finding Peace in a Frantic World. Initially I had enrolled as a vehicle for me to be able to find out more and to be better placed to identify an appropriate method for delivering mindfulness to pupils. The course enabled me to do this. The course also had significant personal impact: I am developing a person practice that both complements and enriches my Christian faith. I am also finding that by practicing mindfulness in my working life, I am more able to respond rather than react to people and situations.

In June 2020, I completed the MiSP .b training (online).

With the agreement of the leadership team, I devised a plan to deliver .breathe to Y7 and .b to Y9. All Y7 completed the .breathe sessions in the first half term of 2021. Although a formal evaluation was not undertaken, pupil voice indicates that the pupils valued the sessions, gaining an understanding of some ways to ground themselves and manage some of the challenges that Y7 in a global pandemic has brought.



A flexible timetable has enabled me to deliver the .b sessions to classes in Y9. The move to remote learning has impeded this delivery as I found that pupils were able to engage in subsequent lessons if they had already begun the programme but attempts to introduce the programme remotely were less successful and the decision was made to wait until face-to-face learning restarted. Two groups have completed the programme. The impact report for the first group showed that pupils found the sessions beneficial. Insufficient numbers of the second group completed the evaluation. Currently the programme is being delivered to an ALN group and two top sets and a middle ability set.

Anecdotal feedback indicates that the sessions are well received. This meant that following a mid-year review, the Head agreed to fund me to complete the MiSP School Mindfulness Lead (SML) training with a view to introducing mindfulness to staff (and other adults in the school community). This is indicative of the support shown by the leadership team.

In April 2021, I completed the MiSP SML (online) course to enable me to deliver the .b Foundations course to members of the school community. This experience was very valuable in bolstering my practice and my enthusiasm for sharing the benefits of mindfulness with others. I intend to run the first eight-week course in Summer 2021.



Judith Rees

Where next?

- Following evaluation of the implementation of .b thus far, the intention is that if the findings are as promising as interim evaluation suggests then .b breathe will form part of transition programme for future Y7 cohorts. The .b programme will be delivered to pupils in Y9. It is also intended that the additional four sessions of .b will form part of the KS4 wellbeing provision. In due course, I envisage offering mindfulness to KS5.
- A meeting is planned with the headteachers of the school's partner primaries to share the work on mindfulness done so far with a view to developing a 3-18 approach.
- If the first .b Foundations course is successful then it is intended that this be offered to adults in the school community regularly.
- Ideally this will also mean that further staff express a desire to undertake training to deliver .b in school ensuring its sustainability as we develop our whole school approach to emotional and mental health and move to delivering the Curriculum for Wales.