



## INTRODUCTION

# Mapping Curriculum for Wales

Exploring the Relationship between Mindfulness (the MiSP Mindfulness Curricula) and Curriculum for Wales (CfW)



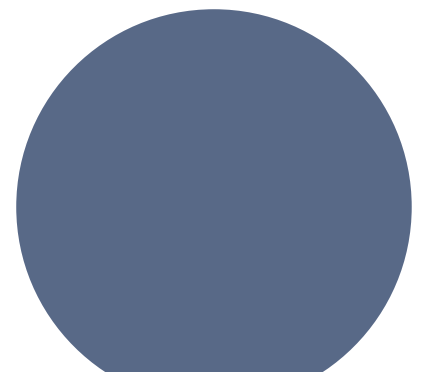
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# Summary

**This resource is for educators who use or plan to use the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) curricula in school. It has been designed to support teachers and school leaders in easily identifying where the themes explored in the MiSP curricula support and contribute to Curriculum for Wales, in particular the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience.**

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# 1. Purpose of this document







The intention of this document is to explore and illustrate the relationship between the MiSP curricula and Curriculum for Wales (CfW). It highlights opportunities for linking and enhancing teaching and learning in schools where there is a commitment to delivering mindfulness to contribute to CfW, within the context of a whole school approach to the well-being of everyone in the school community.

The value and benefits of delivering mindfulness in schools are well documented in research and other guidance. For many children and young people, impact has been shown on their well-being and mental health, concentration and cognition, social and emotional learning and behaviour. For further information about this research and evidence, see the MiSP website.

CfW has been in development since 2016 and takes a radical look at the education learners in Wales need for fulfilling and successful life and work in the 21st century. It has been developed by groups of practitioners with expert input from best practice around the world as a framework within which schools and groups of schools can develop their own more detailed curricula to meet the needs of their pupils. This is an ongoing project and the CfW framework became statutory in primary schools from September 2022. Some secondary schools are also introducing CfW from September 2022 and the legislation applies to all secondary schools from September 2023 leading to new qualifications based on CfW from 2026.

Improving education is Wales' national mission. Nothing is so essential as universal access to, and acquisition of, the experiences, knowledge and skills that young people need for employment, lifelong learning and active citizenship. The curriculum builds out from four purposes which set out the shared vision and aspiration for every child and young person. The aim of a school's curriculum is to support its learners to become:

-  ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
-  enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
-  ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
-  healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

These 4 purposes underpin all aspects of the curriculum and the experiences learners have and might equate to what we describe as intentions in mindfulness.





CfW does not identify specific content or methodology, giving schools the opportunity to design their curricula within the parameters of the guidance, which is described as what learners should understand and be able to do. The framework for curriculum development in the development of the four purposes is set out in six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs):

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Wellbeing
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology.

Each AoLE is built around a number of headings of What Matters – statements developed by the working groups to identify the ‘big ideas’ learners should understand from the experiences, knowledge and skills in the school’s curriculum. The Statements of What Matters are the mandatory elements of CfW and might link to what we refer to as values in mindfulness. The Statements of What Matters are underpinned by Descriptions of Learning (DoL) which are advisory rather than mandatory and which provide guidance on how learners should progress within each statement of what matters as they journey through the continuum of learning. The Statements of What Matters and Descriptions of Learning are intended to complement each other rather than be viewed in isolation.

The most explicit links between mindfulness and CfW occur within the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience but mindfulness can also underpin aspects of the four purposes for education which form the basis of CfW, as well as aspects of the other AoLEs.

**The introduction to the Health and Well-being AoLE states:**

“The Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (Area) provides a holistic structure for understanding health and well-being. It is concerned with developing the capacity of learners to navigate life's opportunities and challenges.”

Mindfulness can play a unique role here. As well as supporting children and young people (and adults) to develop their knowledge and skills, it also helps them to cultivate a way of being or an approach to the way they live their lives. It is fundamentally a practice, and it invites us to model what we learn and to embody and enact mindful approaches and attitudes in everything we do.

This document could support a Health and Well-being or mindfulness lead in schools in explaining to senior leaders, governors and others the potential role and contribution that mindfulness can make to school life and how it can support the wellbeing and learning of adults and children. It could potentially also add to the credibility of its role within and alongside the school's developing CfW curriculum.

The Statements of What Matters, Descriptions of Learning and supporting materials in CfW are designed to provide guidance on progression to enable schools and groups of schools to develop content to extend the breadth and depth of learning. Assessment is to be an integral and ongoing process as part of teaching and learning.

This work on the possible contributions of mindfulness to CfW is not intended to be used as a checklist of content enabling teachers to say that, by delivering mindfulness, specific Descriptions of Learning will be covered. In keeping with the intentions of CfW the relationship between the two is much more nuanced. Mindfulness can be part of a rich variety of experiences which will build towards enabling learners to demonstrate the Descriptions of Learning and the consequent progression.

It's important to note that mindfulness, like many other experiences, is a potential contributory factor in relation to CfW. Whereas the curriculum in its broadest terms is described as every experience a learner has, the specific statutory framework is set out in the four purposes, the AoLEs and the Statements of What Matters and not in any specific content or methodology. Mindfulness, like Growth Mindset, VESPA, PERMA, outdoor learning and many other activities and experiences is a discretionary aspect which schools or groups of schools might consider to support their pupils in their learning and health and wellbeing and as such is not a statutory requirement.

Schools will have a great deal of autonomy in the activities and experiences they choose to enable pupils to understand and exhibit the descriptions of learning and the four purposes. These are exciting, if challenging, opportunities as schools look to the needs of their pupils and locality within the broader statutory framework.

However, embedding mindfulness in schools must go beyond the curriculum; it is much more than about the discrete teaching. There needs to be a commitment to encouraging staff to have their own mindfulness practice, and it is important that it is embedded within whole school approaches to promoting the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of the whole school community, as explained in Section 3 below.

The MiSP teaching materials are available in Welsh for those trained to teach the programmes.

## 2. Terminology



This document specifically refers to the new Curriculum for Wales with its supporting guidance. For information of the range of guidance applying to schools in other parts of the UK please refer to the MiSP website.







## 3. Whole school approaches



This document is focused on the possibilities for mindfulness to contribute towards CfW, recognising the intentions of CfW that teaching and learning can only be effective within the context of a positive whole school approach to Health and Wellbeing. This commitment is set in the wider context of the guidance in the Framework for embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing.

The Framework is statutory guidance and is intended to support schools, including pupil referral units (PRUs) and education settings in reviewing their own well-being landscape and in developing plans to address their weaknesses and build on their strengths. It recognises that the school alone cannot meet all the needs of a complex population of children and young people, and sets out the role of regional bodies, the NHS and others such as the third sector, in supporting the school. It is meant to support and complement CfW and in particular the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience.

Whole school approaches are also supported in the Estyn (the Welsh Inspectorate) thematic review *Healthy and Happy: school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing*[ii]. The key aspects of good practice identified in the Estyn review of research which can be applied to mindfulness in education for all age groups and settings in Wales include:

-  quality consistent training for staff
-  ongoing support in schools/clusters/colleges/universities/
-  embedding mindfulness in a whole school/college/university or setting
-  cross curriculum application
-  a spiral curriculum throughout education
-  involving families where possible

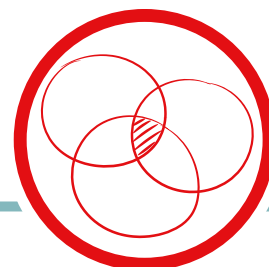


These factors are at the heart of the MiSP approach to mindfulness in schools.

There is a wide range of different programmes and approaches used in schools to frame and enact this. In particular the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools has been working throughout Wales to support the development of whole school approaches and enhance wellbeing. Outdoor learning and Forest Schools have been developing over many years and are growing in significance with the opportunities afforded by CfW. Pupil participation is an important aspect of school life.

Some aspects of mindfulness and the MiSP curricula will provide the foundation for or sit comfortably within or alongside these programmes and/or aspects of school life, without necessarily having a direct link with the statements in CfW e.g. learning about the brain, exploration of breathing etc.

## 4. Overarching aims and outcomes in CfW and in Mindfulness



For both mindfulness and CfW there are some key areas of aims and outcomes that are both overarching and threaded through whole programmes, and both need to sit within a strategic whole school approach to the wellbeing of everyone in the school community. The relationship between the two, and the themes which run across them, can underpin the foundational capacity of mindfulness to support many aspects of mental and physical wellbeing of staff and students in schools.



These overarching themes can be woven into discussion through enquiry after practices or through the examples used to illustrate learning in lessons across the curriculum. They could include general discussions and learning about mental health and well-being for instance.

Exploring the theme of identity and diversity is another possibility, for example through recognising that when practising mindfulness we explore and normalise that we have different experiences, different perspectives and different responses.

As explored in this document, the proven outcomes of effective mindfulness programmes will certainly contribute to children and young people's ability to manage situations in a wide range of contexts across many of the Descriptions of Learning. Conversely, for example when exploring making choices as a theme in the mindfulness curriculum, examples to do with healthy lifestyles, family relationships or safety could be used.

The development of mindful approaches can also make a significant contribution to children's learning behaviours, for example their ability to concentrate, direct their attention, focus, communicate and cooperate as well as underpinning the Four Purposes.

Although there is not always a direct link between the intentions of a mindfulness lesson and CfW, the teaching and learning in mindfulness can make a significant contribution to overall wellbeing outcomes and teaching and learning more generally. The statements listed in the mapping documents which follow provide more detailed illustration of potential links, but sometimes it is the character and nature of the learning, and how it is delivered that are subtly distinct.

Mindfulness teachers are encouraged to teach from a place of embodiment of their own mindfulness practice, which includes embodying the attitudes of mindfulness - non-judgement, allowing, compassion etc so 'walking their talk' in the classroom. The way mindfulness teachers teach and how they are with children and young people, matters as much, if not more than anything they teach. When leading a mindfulness practice, the teacher is practising alongside the children and young people (whilst at the same time being aware of what is happening in the room), which invites the children and young people to see the teacher as a fellow explorer rather than the expert. The teacher's approach to 'enquiry' in mindfulness supports children and young people in bringing a friendly curiosity to what they notice in their experience and deepens their understanding of how they relate to the world, other people and themselves. It mostly involves open questions, and children and young people learn that there are no wrong answers here - the process of exploration is more than or just as important as the outcomes.





## 5. How mindfulness can enhance a school's approach to teaching and learning in Health and Well-being



The guide 'Implementing Mindfulness in Schools' based on research carried out by Professor Katherine Weare for the Mindfulness Initiative suggests that teaching mindfulness as part of a programme of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can be a good fit.

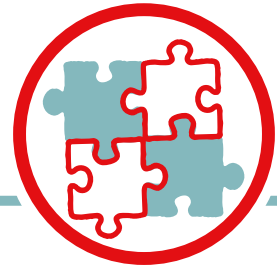
**The following is taken from the document:**

'Evidence suggests that mindfulness practice can cultivate social and emotional skills and qualities including self-awareness, self-regulation, resilience, relationship skills, empathy, compassion and a sense of social responsibility.

- **Through its present moment, embodied, skills-based approach, mindfulness can help ensure that the aims of SEL are realised in practice and action, not just expressed as theories, words and future intentions.**
- **SEL can be somewhat solution focused. In contrast, mindfulness does not immediately focus on outcomes such as finding an answer to a dilemma or feeling better: it offers an alternative response to difficulties that cannot immediately be 'solved'.**
- **Mindfulness adds the ability to be fully present and non-reactive, in body as well as mind, with whatever is happening, including with uncertainty and unpleasant emotions. This can help build patience, resilience and insight - often more realistic and valuable responses to life's dilemmas than knee-jerk reactions.**

If mindfulness is to make this unique contribution it is important that it is taught in its fullest sense, as including but being more than just 'relaxing', 'calming' or even 'paying attention', all of which can easily become a form of simplistic 'fix it'. The core integrity of mindfulness, as forming a new relationship to experience, approaching what is happening in the present moment, including the difficult, with open-minded kindness and curiosity as the basis for wiser action needs to be firmly in place.'

## 6. Delivering an integrated approach to Health and Wellbeing and Mindfulness



The Estyn Thematic Review ‘Healthy and Happy: School Impact on Pupils’ Wellbeing’ found that successful wellbeing programmes required additional specific training for staff who were teaching them. Similarly, for mindfulness to be delivered effectively within a school, it is essential that staff receive appropriate training. Evidence suggests that mindfulness training for staff even if they are not directly teaching the Health and Well-being AoLE can enhance staff’s own well-being and the learning environment. This whole school approach creates an environment in which mindfulness is modelled as well as taught with a consequent impact on staff well-being and the learning environment.

Evidence shows that authenticity in mindfulness teaching is a powerful factor in creating a mindful environment – learners “hear your music more than your words”. Supporting staff to experience shared regular mindfulness sessions can introduce staff to mindfulness, support them in their own well-being and teaching whether or not they are specifically teaching Health and Well-being. Quality of teaching, motivation and commitment to mindfulness are crucial to its effectiveness and involvement in mindfulness experiences might support those staff who are motivated to engage in the training.

Mindfulness training begins with an eight-week programme for staff to learn mindfulness for themselves, followed by a period of time when they develop a regular practice, then a recognised MiSP training course enabling them to deliver the relevant programme for children and young people and ongoing support for teacher development and implementation. As well as being able to deliver training for children from their own practice (see section 4), teachers need to understand safeguarding and trauma-sensitive practice in the context of teaching mindfulness programmes to children and young people. We include guidance in our training and teaching notes and recommend further trauma-sensitive training.

There are a number of research and guidance documents that provide evidence of the positive impact staff learning mindfulness can have on staff-student interactions and therefore relationships, including Singh et al (2013). The benefits of having a mindfulness practice for staff in schools are also well documented, and they include psycho-social wellbeing, physical health and wellbeing, reducing and preventing mental health problems and teacher effectiveness (from *Implementing Mindfulness in Schools*). Further information and research references can be found on the MiSP website.

This level of mindfulness training helps to support mindfulness programmes being delivered with integrity, as recognised in the Estyn review *Healthy and Happy* mentioned in Section 3.

It states:

**“Interventions were only effective if they were completely and accurately implemented: this applied particularly to whole-school interventions which could be ineffective if not implemented with clarity, intensity and fidelity.”**

Equally, it is important that staff involved in the teaching and learning of Health and Well-being have received appropriate training, including around mental health and emotional well-being.

To help schools develop a strategic whole school approach to introducing and embedding the programmes into their curriculum and into school life MiSP has developed a Pathways model which is flexible enough for schools to adapt to their own curriculum and well-being needs.

The Pathways model provides appropriately tailored resources, guidance, and support while allowing individuals or schools/settings to create their own bespoke routes for bringing mindfulness into their environment. The model respects the values and culture of each individual and setting, encouraging exploration of respective ideas for development.

The model provides support and guidance to enable schools to progress through five steps which would align with the development and implementation of the schools Health and Well-being AoLE curriculum:

- 1 Exploring the possibilities for introducing mindfulness in a school/setting**
- 2 Introducing mindfulness to staff and/or students**
- 3 Developing a model for mindfulness taught in-house to students, and building a community to share coordination of mindfulness initiatives**
- 4 Embedding mindfulness learning and approaches throughout the setting where appropriate**
- 5 Providing a model of sustainable mindfulness that can also be shared with and inspire others through becoming a MiSP 'Beacon School/Setting'**

As suggested in section 4, when teaching mindfulness there will be significant opportunities to draw aspects of CfW into the discussions. It might be about the open-ended questions and discussions (through enquiry for instance) and scenarios teachers choose to use – for example, when exploring choice, situations involving healthy lifestyles, coping with exams, keeping safe, or friendships and relationships could be included. When teaching about managing risk and safeguarding, reminding children and young people about noticing and allowing signals from their body or emotions, creating space and enabling wise choices which might include seeking help or talking with someone.

## 7. Meeting Estyn requirements for Personal Development



Whilst maintaining their important role in accountability, Estyn[i], the education inspectorate in Wales, is very much a partner in the development and implementation of CfW and plays an important role in supporting schools to prepare for the new curriculum. This section sets out aspects of the inspection process in Wales that might be relevant to mindfulness in schools.

Inspections focus on how schools are developing and implementing CfW including the Health and Well-being AoLE and including pupils' participation and enjoyment in learning. Evaluation of the curriculum is approached in a flexible and positive way in consideration that CfW is a journey and is being rolled out gradually across Wales. Inspectors should have no preference for any particular curriculum model.

They also look at Well-being, with a particular focus on the four purposes of education, and Attitudes to Learning, including the following key attitudes and behaviours that are relevant to mindfulness in schools:

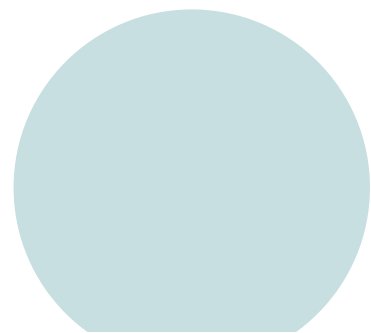
- **the extent to which pupils are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners**
- **how well pupils engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas**
- **pupils' level of interest in their work**
- **how readily pupils engage in and complete tasks**
- **how well they sustain concentration and avoid distractions**
- **how well pupils persevere or look for new solutions when they face difficulties**
- **the extent to which pupils value and demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example by allowing others to speak or by remaining calm when others disagree with them**
- **how well pupils value and respond to feedback from adults and their peers**
- **how effectively pupils use feedback to move their learning forward.**



The guidance on inspection of Personal Development might also have relevance as Inspectors consider how well the setting:

- **helps pupils, including those from different groups, such as those eligible for free school meals, to take on responsibilities and to contribute to the school and wider community**
- **helps pupils to develop an understanding of their identity, heritage and culture and how they relate to the local community and the wider world**
- **helps pupils to understand issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and develops shared values such as respect, empathy, courage and compassion**
- **helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse world, and promotes human rights**
- **challenges stereotypes in pupils' attitudes, choices and expectations**
- **promotes principles that help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong**
- **provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop secure values and to explore their spiritual and ethical beliefs**
- **develops pupils' ability to reflect on fundamental questions and on their own beliefs or values**
- **encourages pupils to use their imagination and to engage with the creative arts through their studies, extra-curricular activities and educational visits**
- **gives pupils the opportunity to participate in performance and events, as individuals and in groups, to foster their self-confidence and expressive capacities, their ability to contribute creative ideas and their ability to work in a team**
- **provides opportunities to encourage pupils to participate in the arts and in sport and recreation, for example through sports teams and tournaments, playtimes and breaks, performances or Eisteddfodau**

Rather than focusing on grading, reports will detail how well providers are helping a child to learn. This new approach aligns with the personalisation of the new Curriculum for Wales. Inspections will also involve more in-person discussions, placing less emphasis on achievement data.



## 8. What is in this document and how it works



Following this introduction, there is a chart for each of the MISP curricula relevant to their guide age range and the approximate Progression Steps in the curriculum framework as a guide:



3-6 years  
or

Progression Step 1



7-11 years  
or

Progression Step 2



9-14 years  
or

Progression Step 3



11-18 years  
or

Progression Step 4

Each chart contains the learning objectives/intentions for each MiSP session, identifying the relevant concepts in CfW. This also includes a list of the 'Core Mechanisms' which appear in the first column and come from the document 'Implementing Mindfulness in Schools', published by the Mindfulness Initiative. The charts also identify the Statements of What Matters, the Strands that describe the aspects of the Descriptions of Learning (taken from the Central South Consortium work set out in Annex 1 of the mapping documents) and the Description of Learning for the approximate Progression Step which might all usefully contribute to the learning objectives of the session.

In the 'Notes/Opportunities' column, some of the possibilities for linking teaching and learning are explored and also indicate where the objectives or intentions differ between mindfulness and CfW. The notes sometimes explain in greater depth the intentions, approach, practices and learning within mindfulness, which supports a deeper understanding of where the teaching and learning are distinct from and/or coincide with that within CfW.



# Conclusion

As guidance around CfW will inevitably grow and change as schools develop their bespoke curricula and the MiSP curricula are updated to reflect current thinking about what is effective in mindfulness in education, we will update this document at regular intervals.

Please refer to **the MiSP website** for reference and further information, and contact us at **enquiries@mindfulnessinschools.org** if we can support you further.

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This work was developed in collaboration with Elizabeth Williams and Annabel Talbot:



Liz was a teacher, Headteacher and Education Advisor, and Head of Children and Young People's Strategy in the Welsh Government. She retired to focus on young people's wellbeing, and now teaches mindfulness to schoolchildren and teachers, and is a Lead Trainer for the Mindfulness in Schools Project and co-leads the Education strand of a cross sector living strategy for mindfulness in partnership with Welsh Government.

Annabel spent 30 years as Adviser for PSHE for Cambridgeshire. This included leading the team in researching, writing and providing training on the renowned Cambridgeshire Primary Personal Development Programme. She was also involved in writing national units of work for PSHE for QCA (for both primary and secondary age groups), and led the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme for Cambridgeshire.



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