



Mindfulness at Redlands

After meeting with Mike Sarson and Lynne Wilkes, I leapt at the opportunity to offer mindfulness sessions to all our children in school. It was agreed that they would work with children from Reception Class to Year 6, giving them 30 minutes mindfulness teaching every week over a period of 8 weeks. Given that this was an entirely new and untested initiative, I was somewhat apprehensive about how it would be received, but it was evident from a very early stage that this had been a good decision.

Mindfulness is not something to be taken lightly. It can be hugely powerful and it is essential that the people teaching it are highly qualified. It is clear that both Mike and Lynne both have extensive experience of working with young people, and our children quickly felt at ease with them.

Some of the children found the first couple of lessons challenging, not being familiar with being still and silent for extended periods of time. However, it didn't take very long for them to learn the techniques they were being taught, and to be able to put these techniques into use, not just in the mindfulness lessons but at other times of the day both at school and at home. Almost all the children in school are now able to sustain the stillness and the silence, and they actively look forward to their sessions each week. Children have regularly talked about how they enjoy the sense of calm and peacefulness, how mindfulness helps them to relax, how it has helped them to calm down when they feel cross or stressed, and how they use the techniques at home particularly at bed time.

We, at school, have noticed changes too. We have seen children with anger management or behaviour difficulties using mindfulness strategies to work through difficult times, and we have witnessed children reminding each other to use their mindfulness breathing when they are upset. We asked Mike to include an after-school mindfulness session for parents with their children which has been very popular and parents are now talking extremely positively about it – so much so that they are recommending it to their friends and to their older children's schools! Staff, too, have had their own mindfulness sessions after school from Lynne. They have benefited enormously from these, particularly with regard to managing the day-to-day stresses and demands of their roles.

We plan to arrange another series of lessons in the Spring and my long-term aim is that, through the benefits of practising mindfulness, our children's learning behaviours, their resilience and their ability to face new challenges will be positively affected. We already subscribe to a growth mindset approach in school and the introduction of mindfulness has been a natural progression which fully supports and enhances this approach.

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