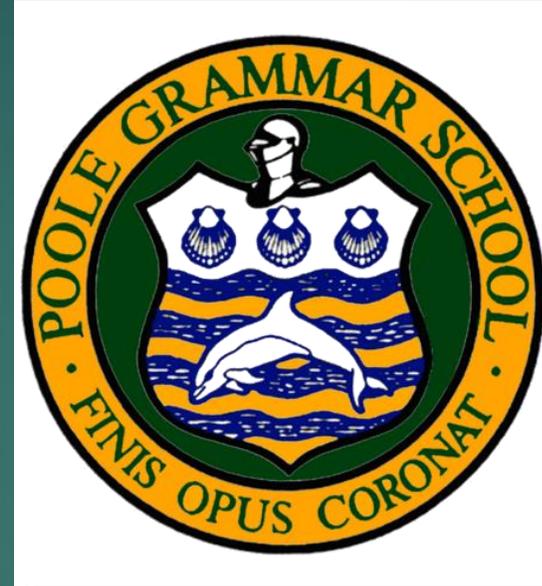


Key Stage 4 Mindfulness



JAMES RANDALL - POOLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

First, a warning...

- ▶ This [Campbell systematic review](#) examines the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) implemented in school settings on cognition, behaviour, socioemotional outcomes, and academic achievement. MBIs are interventions that use a mindfulness component, broadly defined as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally,” and is often combined with yoga, cognitive-behavioural strategies, or relaxation-skills training.
- ▶ A total of 61 studies are included in the review, but only the 35 randomized or quasi-experimental studies are used in the meta-analysis, with a total of 6,207 student participants. Most of the studies were carried out in schools in the U.S. (74%), with some in Asia (5%), Europe (16%), and Canada (5%). The interventions ranged in duration (4-28 weeks), number of sessions (6-125 sessions), and frequency of meetings (once every two weeks to five times a week).
- ▶ The findings show that MBIs in schools had a small positive effect on cognitive outcomes and socioemotional outcomes, **but did not improve behaviour or academic achievement**. There was little heterogeneity for all outcomes, apart from behavioural outcomes, suggesting that the interventions produced similar results across studies on cognitive, socioemotional, and academic outcomes, despite the interventions being quite diverse.
- ▶ Source: *Better: Evidence-based Education Magazine*, May 2017

Background

- ▶ Poole Grammar is a popular and oversubscribed selective boys school, with just under 1200 students on roll.
- ▶ As part of student voice, one concern that had been repeatedly raised was that of the boy's mental well-being.
- ▶ Obviously, this was manifested mostly in exam stress – and pressure to perform (often from parents/carers.)
- ▶ Teachers mop up the emotional damage of ever-spiralling exam stress, heavy testing and a fiercely competitive, perfectionist culture.
- ▶ As head of Religion & Philosophy at the school, I had a background in **stilling**.
- ▶ Stilling can best be described as 'guided meditation.' (Lat Blaylock, *Spiritual RE*) This was developed for KS3/middle school students, but I had used it effectively with older students in my last school as part of RS.

A growing problem...

- ▶ **YOUNG VOICES Schools Are Struggling To Deal With Pupils' Mental Health Issues, Teachers Warn**
- ▶ Only a quarter of teachers think they could get 'timely' help for pupils.
- ▶ 14/04/2017
- ▶ Schools are struggling to deal with a rise in [mental health issues](#) among students, teachers have warned. Almost all teachers (98%) have taught pupils with mental health problems, a poll by teaching union NASUWT found, but 48% have never been given training on how to deal with the issue.
- ▶ One teacher told researchers: "An increasing amount of students are having anxiety issues and panic attacks and they don't know what is causing them. "I struggle to teach students who are worked up because they cannot focus on anything but what has upset them."
- ▶ Others reported children with mental health problems finding it difficult to participate in class or to make friends at school. Nine in ten teachers (91%) said family problems were contributing to children's mental health issues, while 84% blamed exam pressures. A further 72% of those polled pointed toward social media pressures as another significant factor.
- ▶ NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates called on [Theresa May](#) to "make good" on her pledge to improve mental health support for pupils. "[She must] urgently act to improve expert mental health provision for children and young people as it is evident that without timely, high-quality expert support children and young people's wellbeing is being seriously compromised, along with their ability to focus on their learning and achieve their potential. The repercussions for these pupils' health and future life chances will be long-lasting if the government fails to get to grips with this issue now." - Source; Huffington Post

Stage 1: Volunteers & Finding out what works

- ▶ I sent out a message to the year 11s in their assembly that I was looking for volunteers for a stress-management course I was hoping to run for the whole year group, and I was going to run it at lunchtime, once a week.
- ▶ I had 35 volunteers for the first session, and tried two different exercises with them 1. Mindfulness of breathing 2. Guided meditation based on stilling exercises.
- ▶ At the end of the session I asked the boys for some informal feedback and the consensus was that the mindfulness of breathing exercise was the one that the boys could relate to.
- ▶ I continued to run the sessions for 6 weeks before the cohort left for study leave, then asked the participants to fill out a SurveyMonkey survey.

Stage 2: Refining & Applying

- ▶ The survey was very encouraging – I took into account that I was working with students who I already had a good working relationship, and whom wanted to help me – but still, the responses were really positive (more on those shortly...)
- ▶ One thing that came up was that a number of the boys asked if I could ‘podcast’ the breathing instructions – due to a number of factors, I didn’t think that was possible, but it did make me realise that technology could play a part:
- ▶ <https://www.headspace.com/>
- ▶ So, my goal for the 2016-17 academic year was to deliver a 20 minute session to all the year 11 students (featuring 10 minutes breathing exercise) and point them in the direction of both the headspace app, and some YouTube channels. I would also run drop-in sessions at lunchtimes for further advice and guidance.

Benefits

- ▶ “It’s really helped me in the run up to the exams. I look forward to having time out from my day.”
- ▶ “I feel much calmer and composed.”
- ▶ “I got worked up before my year 10 exams, but now I know how to breathe better, I have felt much more in control before I go in.”
- ▶ “It has helped a bit for my exams, but I think it has made me feel more in control as a person. I am doing the exercises before school in the morning and when I get home.”
- ▶ “It really breaks my revision up, and I feel more focused.”
- ▶ “I don’t think it helped me in my exams, but I really enjoyed learning about meditation and breathing.”

Stage 3: Moving Forward

- ▶ I now plan on running modified sessions for the whole school. This year I have done our year 11, 10 and 9 cohorts. Next year, I hope to expand the program on to include the year 7 and 8s.
- ▶ I'm also looking to include our 6th form – but time is a real factor there.
- ▶ If you're thinking of doing similar in your school, I would really recommend it, but do bear in mind the following:
 - ▶ **1. It's not a 'cure-all' or a panacea. It won't work for all students!**
 - ▶ **2. Each school is different (obviously!) Spend time trying different things and methods until you find the best fit for your students.**
 - ▶ **3. Keep your aims (and projected benefits) achievable**

Thank you for your time!

- ▶ ...If you would like any more of my limited advice, I will be delighted to help you as best I can.
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- ▶ Have a great day!