



## Mindfulness Policy

### Mission:

Our PSHRE Policy aims to ensure that our children develop the skills necessary to become healthy, independent and responsible members of society. We are committed to helping children make informed choices about the way they live their lives in terms of how they feel about themselves and the relationships with other people. Incorporating and embedding mindfulness techniques across our school will enable the children to step back and notice things more clearly. They will better understand their emotions and learn how to let go of negative and stressful feelings.

*“Teaching mindfulness to young people gives them the crucial tools to deal with the pressures of life. It is empowering, and once they know how to do it they can draw on it whenever they need to.”*

(Mindfulness in Schools Project - MiSP)

### Aims:

1. This policy will sit beside our PSHRE Policy to enhance the excellent provision that we already provide.
2. Torpoint Nursery and Infant School is an innovative educator and we pride ourself in being a trauma informed school. We understand that a child's emotional well-being cannot be separated from their learning and so to support each child's mental health we will embark on a 'whole school approach' to incorporate 'Mindfulness techniques' into our daily classroom routines. By doing this we will aim to increase the children's self-esteem, reduce anxiety levels, increase confidence and concentration levels and improve children's performance in class.

### Mindfulness for children: Fun, effective ways to strengthen mind, body and spirit:

Mindfulness has an extraordinary capacity to build a strong body, mind and spirit in ourselves as adults as well as in the children in our class. Science has shown us that it can help to protect against stress, anxiety, depression, illness and pain. It can also ease the symptoms of autism and ADHD. When used on a regular basis improvement of academic performance and social relationships will be observed as well as expanding the children's capacity to experience positive emotions.

Mindfulness is about stepping back and seeing feelings come and go without judgment, but with a relaxed mind, fully focused on the present moment.



A regular mindful practice will ensure that the existing neural connections are strengthened and new ones established.

Mindfulness for young children generally works best if it is kept to about five minutes or less, but of course if they are able to use the technique for longer then go with their lead.

### **Mindfulness activities:**

#### *What is mindfulness?*

Mindfulness means paying attention, with kindness and patience, to what is going on inside and outside of you right **NOW**. A goal of mindfulness practice is to calm the constant restlessness of an agitated and distracted mind.

#### *How do we become mindful?*

You can be mindful by focusing your attention, expanding your awareness and by being patient even when things are hard.

Mindfulness activities can be divided into categories depending on the programme being followed such as-

- Learning breathing techniques to '*Start your day*'.
- Finding '*Calm*' when activities teach the children how to handle tricky or challenging emotions.
- Strengthening the mind by learning to '*Focus*' with activities to wake up the brain, build concentration and sharpen the children's sensory awareness.
- Accepting life with kindness when you '*Open your Heart*.' This focuses on teaching the children how to feel a sense of self-acceptance and a connection to the world.
- And finally at the end of the day '*Rest and Relax*' when the children are given the opportunity to reflect, relax and ease their busy minds.

We have a range of resources (which we intend to expand on in the future) readily available within the school to guide teachers when implementing the techniques of 'Mindfulness' with their class.

### **The theory backing Mindfulness:**



Solid scientific evidence suggests that mindfulness interventions improve attention, self-control, and emotional resilience, recovery from addiction, memory and immune response.

- **Attention:** Strengthens our 'mental muscle' for bringing focus back, where we want it and when we want it.
- **Emotional regulation:** Observing our emotions helps us recognise when they occur, to see their transient nature and to change how we respond to them.
- **Adaptability:** Becoming aware of our patterns enables us to gradually change habitual behaviours wisely.
- **Compassion:** Awareness of our own thoughts, emotions and senses, grows our understanding of what other people are experiencing.
- **Calming:** And other mindfulness practices relax the body and mind, giving access to peace independent to external circumstances.
- **Resilience:** Seeing things objectively reduces the amount of narrative we add to the world's natural ups and downs, giving us greater balance.

*"Mindfulness meditation appears to reshape the neural pathways, increasing the density and complexity of connections in areas associated with both cognitive abilities such as attention, self-awareness and introspection, and emotional areas connected with kindness, compassion and rationality, while decreasing activity and growth in those areas involved in anxiety, hostility, worry and impulsivity."*

(Davidson et al, 2003; Davidson and Lutz, 2008; Hölzel et al, 2011a and b).

*"Although the most striking changes are observable in long term meditators, short mindfulness interventions have clear and visible impacts on brain function and performance."*

(Hölzel et al, 2011a).

### **How mindfulness techniques will be incorporated into our class daily routines:**

Incorporating mindfulness into our school life can be quite simple and we don't need previous experience to start using mindfulness with children.

We can begin by introducing the children to the practice and explaining how we will use it. Mindfulness techniques can be as short as 5 minutes and there are a range of styles and topics to be explored. As teachers we should try some sessions and choose the ones that we and the children in our class like best. Sessions can be repeated to allow children to familiarise themselves with the technique being used and do not have to be changed every day.



The more consistently and frequently you practice, the better. By practicing at the same time each day, you ensure consistency and increase efficacy.

Each class teacher will be responsible to embed mindfulness techniques to their own class on a daily bases.

We aim that during our registration time each class will start the day with a session that focuses on relaxation with breathing techniques.

During the day, at an appropriate time to suit each class teacher's daily routine, the children will have another planned mindfulness activity which will focus on calmness.

During our daily planning meetings for each year group the mindfulness focuses will be discussed and our daily planning sheets will have a space to show what activities are being planned for both of our daily mindfulness focuses.

There are many reasons why the development of mindfulness for teachers and school staff is a welcome move. Mindfulness has the capacity to improve staff wellbeing, job satisfaction and improve performance. The evidence base for the beneficial impact of mindfulness on the young is growing rapidly and our children clearly need teachers skilled in the benefits of mindfulness to teach it.

Mindfulness is more effective when taught by those who can understand from within what their students are learning, and model and embody the particular qualities that mindfulness develops, such as flexibility, attention, open minded curiosity, kindness, empathy, compassion, acceptance, and patience, in their everyday interactions with children. These are skills and attitudes that underlie all effective engagement with young people: mindfulness for school staff clearly has a central role to play in educational improvement.

The implementation of our whole school 'Mindfulness program' will be monitored closely to ensure the incentive is rolled out to each class in an appropriate manner. Further training will be available for all staff to ensure all teachers feel confident to deliver the appropriate techniques and topics.

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