



RAHEEN NATIONAL SCHOOL  
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## **Mindfulness policy**

"The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will. . . An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence"

William James, 1890

### **Raheen National School Context**

Mindfulness was introduced on a formal basis throughout the school in October 2015 as a result of the SPHE school of excellence award programme being undertaken. It was felt that this practice had the potential to make a significant contribution to the learning and well being of the children and its introduction followed on from successful initiatives on the part of a number of teachers who had used mindfulness in a variety of contexts over the previous few years. These contexts have included P.E., Yoga, Thinking Time, Quiet Time etc. Mindfulness meditation directly supports the aims and objectives of the Core Curriculum and of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum. It also has the potential to enhance the child's learning across all subjects. The Rationale is based on the Wellbeing policy statement and framework practice 2018 – 2025.

### **Benefits of Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a secular practice which does not depend on, or interfere with, any belief system and is increasingly used in business, healthcare and education to improve attention and well-being.

Mindfulness practices help students focus and pay attention. A few minutes of mindfulness practice can improve the learning environment.

The Association for Mindfulness in Education -

<http://www.mindfuleducation.org/index.html> state that the documented benefits of the practice include:

- Increased emotional regulation
- Increased social skills
- Increased ability to orient attention
- Increased working memory and planning and organization
- Increased self esteem
- Increased sense of calmness, relaxation, and self acceptance
- Increased quality of sleep
- Decreased test anxiety
- Decreased ADHD behaviors - specifically hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Decreased negative affect/ emotions
- Decreased anxiety
- Decreased depression
- Fewer conduct and anger management problems



According to the Mindwell Foundation - [www.mindwellfoundation.org/schools](http://www.mindwellfoundation.org/schools) :  
Research over the past few decades has found that mindfulness training develops:

- attention and concentration,
- social-emotional awareness,
- body awareness and coordination,
- interpersonal skills.

As such, mindfulness is a foundation for education; mindfulness provides the optimal conditions for learning and teaching and also supports all pedagogical approaches. There are many links on the websites mentioned above for anyone who wishes to explore further.

### **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness has been defined as the practice of bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis.

Mindfulness is paying attention here and now with kindness and curiosity. Examples of mindfulness practice include:

- Becoming aware of the breath;
- Feeling the various physical sensations of an emotion;
- Noticing thoughts as they pass through the mind;
- Paying attention to all the sounds in the room;
- Noticing what happens in the body when there is stress;
- Watching the thoughts that arise when there is boredom;
- Feeling the stomach rise and fall with each breath

### **Current Situation in Raheen National School**

Staff training has been undertaken by individual staff members as CPD courses or summer courses in the above mentioned above and modelled various ways of working with children of different ages throughout the school.

Since then, all classes have been practicing mindfulness regularly with the recommendation that each class should spend between five and ten minutes daily on the practice.

Opportunities for practice include when children return to class after breaks or transitioning between subjects. Teachers have a good deal of latitude as to how and when they do it as there is no one correct way to practice and different approaches will work with different ages of children.

The following are some approaches which have been used successfully in Raheen National School:

- Mindful eating in the junior classes and throughout the school with the Food Dude programme.
- Relaxation position at the beginning and end of PE lessons – children lie on their back with knees bent or sit in a restful position while the teacher leads a brief body scan followed by a minute or two of mindful breathing
- Listening to guided meditations (see below)

There is a lot to recommend the teacher personally leading the practice but there are also audio resources (see below) available on the network storage to facilitate other approaches.



These may be most useful as an occasional refreshing change rather than relying on them on a regular basis.

### **Example of a mindfulness session:**

Each September, it is worth spending a little time with the class discussing what exactly mindfulness is:

- giving our bodies a rest from using our muscles and giving our minds a rest from thinking: training our mind to be able to focus on one object and bringing our attention back to that no matter how often it wanders.
- It is also important to ensure that each child is clear about the best posture for mindfulness:
  - all chairs in the room facing the same way to reduce distractions
  - sitting up straight with the bum pushed into the back of the chair
  - chin tucked in slightly
  - eyes gently closed
  - Explain the reasons for this – that we are alert and supported in this position and our lungs are not constricted so allowing us to breathe with ease.
- Go through a short body scan with the children eg.
  - Make sure your face is soft and relaxed – nothing tight around your eyes.
  - Nothing tight around your mouth – tongue relaxed.
  - Shoulders nice and relaxed.
  - Belly relaxed.
  - Legs relaxed.
  - Feet flat on the ground.
  - If we notice any part of our body moving we gently stop moving and check that we are nice and relaxed and in the proper position.
  - Now we bring our attention to our breath.
  - Don't change your breath – just notice it.
  - Notice the air going in through your nose.
  - Notice the air coming out through your nose.

Any time you notice that you are thinking of something – just gently decide that you will think about that later and bring your attention back to noticing your breath  
Until the class can maintain this for a few minutes unaided it is probably best if the teacher moves quietly around the room helping children with the correct posture and occasionally repeating some of the instructions above as needed. It is important that the teachers' voice be calm, quiet and soft.

It is worth reminding children that they can do this practice anytime – and like any practice, the more we do it, the better we get at it. Ask the class to try it at home sometime – especially if they are tired or angry or fed up - and notice how they feel after it.

### **Timetable**

It has been agreed that all class teachers will include mindfulness in their working day. It is easier for children to develop their skill and facility in mindfulness if it is embedded in their daily routine.



## Integration of mindfulness across the primary school curriculum

### *Strand and strand units for each class group*

#### Junior Infants & Senior Infants SPHE Myself

- self identity
- taking care of my body- knowing about my body
- growing and changing – feelings and emotions.

#### 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class SPHE Myself

- self identity
- taking care of my body - knowing about my body
- growing and changing – feelings and emotions

#### 3rd & 4<sup>th</sup> Class SPHE Myself

- self identity
- taking care of my body - knowing about my body
- growing and changing – feelings and emotions
- making decisions

#### 5th & 6<sup>th</sup> Class SPHE Myself

- Myself and others
- self identity
- taking care of my body - knowing about my body
- growing and changing – feelings and emotions
- making decisions.
- Relating to others – communicating; resolving conflict.

### **School support**

There is considerable support for this initiative from the parent body as evidenced by discussions at the annual teacher/parent meetings or direct discussion with the parents. Staff have also embraced the culture of mindfulness.

As personnel change over time there is a need to ensure that new staff members are supported in working with mindfulness and while there is considerable expertise on the staff presently it is possible that in the future some further staff training may prove useful. The AP 2 post holder has taken responsibility to monitor practice and policy in this area. She is also available to staff to model a mindfulness session in the classrooms.

## Resources

### **Books for staff to consider:**

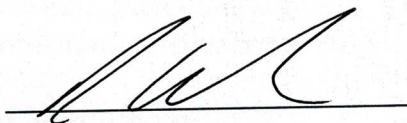
- Teaching Meditation To Children – The practical guide to the use and benefits of meditation techniques. (David Fontana & Ingrid Slack).
- The Mindful Child (Susan Kaiser Greenland).
- The Child's Mind - How Mindfulness Can Help Our Children be More Focused, Calm, and Relaxed (Christopher Willard)
- Other resources are sourced by individual staff members to suit the needs of the class group.

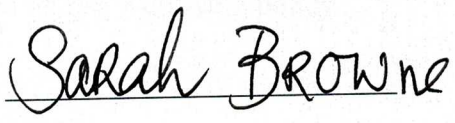
### **Audio resources for staff to consider:**

- Mindfulness Matters
- Still Space for Kids
- Youtube sessions
- Calm meditations

### **Implementation/Ratification and Review**

Review - This practice will be reviewed annually.  
SSE will be used to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and develop a cycle by June 2023.

Signed:   
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 16/12/22

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