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# Uptake and efficacy of mindfulness activities within educational establishments in Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire.

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## Introduction

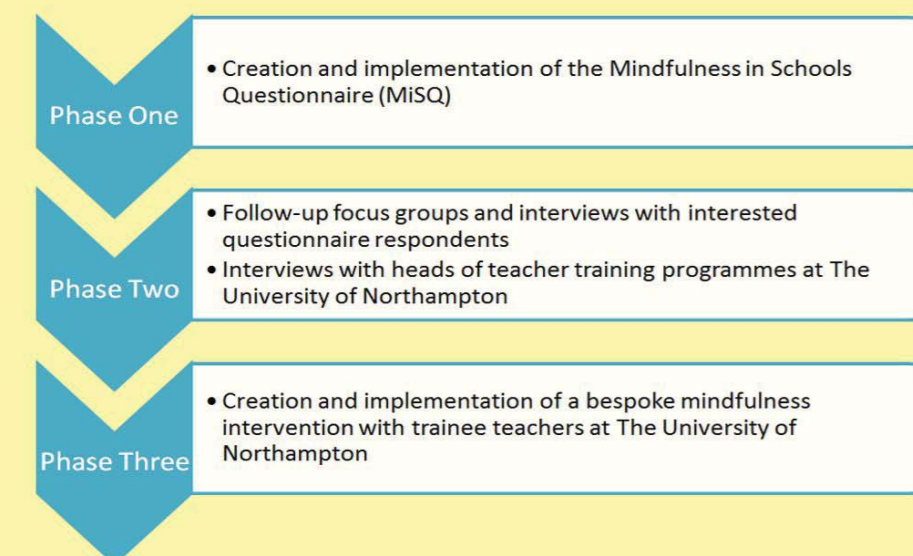
Government initiatives such as Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) programme and the National Healthy Schools programme have been introduced in schools in response to poor levels of well-being in children. The United Kingdom was ranked bottom of the league in a report of the well-being of children in 21 of the world's richest countries (UNICEF, 2007). With the age of onset of depression lowering from the late middle-aged to those in their mid-twenties (Williams & Penman, 2011) and an increase in eating disorders and self-harm in young people (Harden et al., 2001); there is clearly a need to further address the well-being of schoolchildren.

The first phase of this study explores whether mindfulness activities are taking place in schools in Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire. It aims to create a more accurate picture of such mindfulness activities through gathering further details about them, and responses to them, through the Mindfulness in Schools Questionnaire (MISQ).

## Overview

Figure 1 shows an overview of the three phases of this study. The final phase will be informed by the information gathered in the first two phases.

Figure 1



## Methodology

### 1. Mindfulness in Schools Questionnaire (MISQ)

A 22-item qualitative online Mindfulness in Schools Questionnaire was created using SurveyMonkey (SM). The structure of the questionnaire is as follows:

- \* Participant information page
- \* Consent page
- \* Section A: Background (2 items)
- \* Section B: Details of mindfulness activities (13 items)
- \* Section C: Impact (4 items)
- \* Section D: Further questions (1 item)
- \* Section E: Comments (2 items)
- \* Focus group interest

An invitation letter, which included a link to the MISQ, was sent to named contacts in schools from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 5. A reminder email was then sent after a period of two weeks and again after another week if there was no response to the questionnaire. Trainee teachers at The University of Northampton also completed the questionnaire on paper.

### 2. Definition of mindfulness activities

The following definition of mindfulness activities is proposed in the Mindfulness in Schools Questionnaire:

Mindfulness activities in schools are those in which pupils/students, school staff and parents can increase awareness of themselves and others through paying attention, in a non-judgmental way, in the present moment.

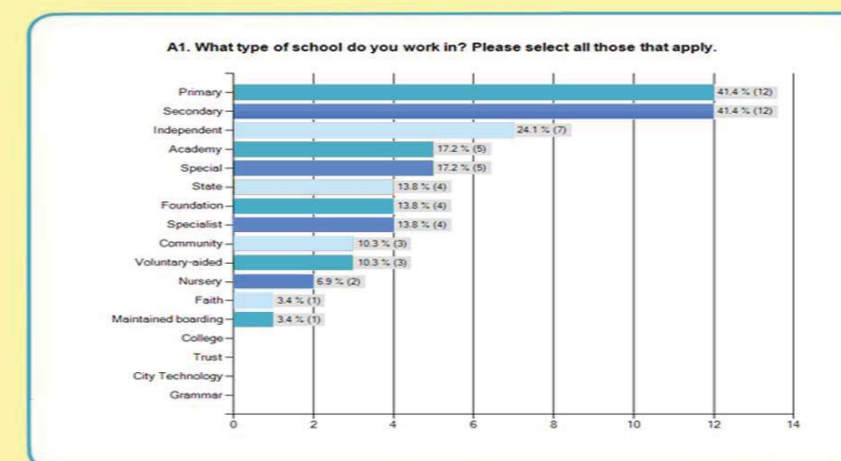
Some examples of mindfulness activities given in the questionnaire include meditation, breathing exercises, yoga, martial arts, journaling, calligraphy and visualisation.

## Results

### 1. Responses by school type

Figure 2 shows the number of responses to the MISQ by school type (percentage of total responses/number of responses).

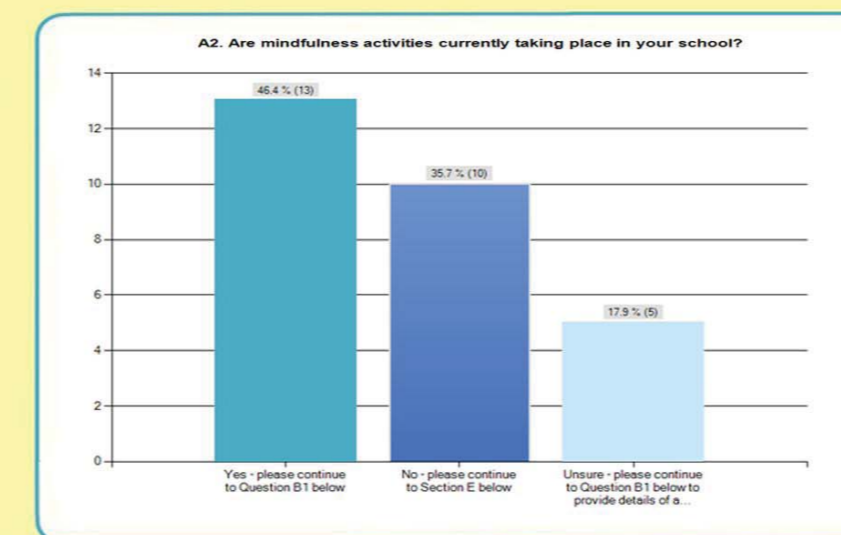
Figure 2



### 2. Are mindfulness activities taking place in schools?

Figure 3 indicates whether respondents considered mindfulness activities to be taking place in their schools (percentage of total responses/number of responses).

Figure 3



### 3. MISQ online

Table 1 shows responses to the MISQ for each of the three counties. Out of a total of 29 responses to the online questionnaire, 19 were complete (65.5%). 11 out of 29 respondents (37.9%) expressed an interest in taking part in a follow-up focus group. These were mostly Head and Deputy Head teachers but also included two Inclusion Leaders and a Pastoral Coordinator.

County	Respondents/ Total emailed	Percentage responded	Schools unsubscribed from SM	Other details
Northamptonshire	20/344	5.8%	4	1 unsubscribe request
Milton Keynes	8/138	5.8%	7	
Bedfordshire	1/82	1.2%	3	1 unable to at moment email
Total	29/564	5.1%	14	

### 4. Trainee teacher paper results

From a total of 14 student teachers, 12 (85.7%) completed the survey and four (28.6%) showed an interest in taking part in a focus group.

In total, 15 respondents from both the online and paper versions expressed an interest in a follow-up focus group.

### 5. A comparison of online and paper results

Table 2 shows the results from both online and paper versions of the MISQ to Item A2 on the questionnaire.

Item A2. Are mindfulness activities currently taking place in your school?		
	SurveyMonkey	Trainee teachers
Yes	13	6
No	10	7
Unsure	5	1
No response	1	0

### 6. Mindfulness activities

The following is an inclusive list of activities, noted by respondents as mindfulness activities, together with the number of responses for that particular activity:

- \* Yoga (6)
- \* Relaxation, music (4)
- \* Silent reflection, meditation (3)
- \* Breathing exercises, Circle Time, drawing/art, martial arts, visualisation (2)
- \* Massage, silent reading, working with bereavement, protective behaviours, chanting, sensory room, free writing/speech, Relax Kids, Brain Gym (1)

## Conclusion

Overall, participants reported positive responses to mindfulness activities in their schools and indicated an understanding of how mindfulness activities could be beneficial in schools, even if they had not had any direct experience of them. Participants showed an interest in taking part in a focus group even if they answered that mindfulness activities were not taking place in their school.

There was ambiguity surrounding whether all activities described by participants met the definition of a mindfulness activity proposed in the MISQ. This raises the issues of the classification of mindfulness activities and the language surrounding mindfulness in schools. Further investigation in phase two of this study will aim to discuss these and other related themes.

## References

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