

**An exploration of a school-based  
programme of mindfulness exercises in  
relation to the social and emotional  
wellbeing of children**

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## **Abstract**

This two phase study explored the use of a school-based programme of mindfulness exercises (PME) in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing (SEW) of children in a middle school in South West England. The first phase of the research explored how children, school staff, and parents understand SEW. The second phase of the research explored the use of mindfulness exercises, their relation to children's SEW, and the role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating the PME.

The research adopted a mixed methods pragmatic approach. In phase one data was collected via focus groups and analysed using a thematic approach. The second phase of the research involved a 30 session PME being delivered by two teachers to their respective tutor groups. Pre- and post-programme measures were taken using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS), followed by an evaluation questionnaire and interviews with key participants.

The findings from phase two suggested potential benefits of mindfulness exercises for the children involved. Mindfulness exercises may play a role in the reduction of externalising and conduct problems in children which could lead to improved SEW. Evidence from teachers and fieldwork notes suggest that there may be a role for educational psychologists (EPs) in facilitating programmes such as the one in this study.



## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Overview**

In recent years there has been a growing interest within education in the use of mindfulness based approaches (MBA) in schools (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013). Recent reviews of the research suggest MBA can be effective in promoting a wide range of outcomes, including those associated with wellbeing (Burke, 2010; Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Weare, 2013).

It is now widely acknowledged that schools play an important role in the social and emotional wellbeing (SEW) of children and young people (Public Health England, 2015). The Children Act (2004) legally obliged all maintained schools to promote children's wellbeing.

The overall aim of this two phase research project was to explore the use of a 30 session programme of mindfulness exercises (PME) in relation to the SEW of children. Both phases of this research project were conducted in a middle school in the South West of England. The participants were pupils at the school, teaching staff and parents.

The overall design of this research adopted a mixed-methods pragmatic approach to data collection and analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised across the two phases of research. The first phase of the research explored the views and constructs of SEW held by children, school staff, and parents. Four focus groups were conducted with Year 5 to Year 8 pupils at the school. A total of 22 children participated in these focus groups. Additionally a focus group was conducted with four parents and a further focus group was conducted with four members of the school's teaching staff. A

thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analysing the focus group data was adopted. The first phase of this research project identified the views of children, parents and staff with regards to understandings of SEW, what supports the SEW of children, and times when children experience difficulties with their SEW. The analysis of the data collected in this phase suggested that SEW is understood by the children in constructs such as happy and sad. Parents and teaching staff spoke about the importance of positive relationships, and safety and trust in their understandings of SEW. The children identified friendships as important in supporting their SEW. Difficulties for children's SEW revolved around conflict with friends, whilst parents and staff spoke of how school systems impact on children's SEW. The findings from phase one were used to inform the quantitative measures in phase two of this research.

The second phase of the research involved the implementation of a six week (30 sessions) PME run by two teachers of two Year 5 tutor groups. The aims of this second phase were to explore the use of mindfulness exercises in relation to the SEW of children, explore the feasibility of running a mindfulness programme in a school setting, and explore the role of an Educational Psychologist (EP) in facilitating programmes to support SEW in schools. In total 56 children commenced the PME. The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) were used as quantitative measures to capture different aspects of SEW. Additionally evaluation questionnaires were completed and analysed to explore the participants' views of the PME. A total of six children were interviewed to explore their experiences of the PME and possible impact on their subjective

wellbeing. One of the teachers who ran the PME with her tutor group was also interviewed.

Analysis of the child rated SDQ and SCWBS found that there were no significant differences between before and after scores for total difficulties and total wellbeing respectively. Analysis of the five sub-scales that constitute the SDQ found statistically significant reductions in scores for child related measures of externalising and conduct problems. Teacher rated SDQs showed reductions in total difficulties and externalising problems.

Evaluation questionnaires completed by the children indicated approximately three quarters participated in the exercises every day or most days. The words calm and relaxed featured regularly in children's responses to questions on the evaluation. Criticisms of the PME were the sound of the voice on the CD and finding the exercises boring.

Children interviewed after the PME were positive about the experience and articulated how participating in mindfulness exercises had impacted upon them. An interview with one of the teachers who had run the PME with her class indicated that there had been positive aspects to the PME including a sense of calm in the classroom and changes in the conduct of some children.

Additionally the role of the EP in facilitating programmes, such as the PME in this research, and in promoting SEW was explored through the use of a reflective journal and an interview with one of the participating teachers. The findings of this research suggest that EPs are well placed to facilitate practices in schools aimed at promoting the SEW of children.

## 1.2. Definition of terms

**Social and emotional wellbeing (SEW).** The literature on the topic of SEW uses a “bewildering array of terms” (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 353). The term ‘emotional health and wellbeing’ has become increasingly common in the 21<sup>st</sup> century yet it is poorly defined (Coverdale & Long, 2015). The definition used in this thesis is provided by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) which states that SEW encompasses three areas of wellbeing; emotional, psychological and social (NICE, 2013). Emotional wellbeing includes being happy and confident, not anxious or depressed. Psychological wellbeing includes the ability to be autonomous, problem-solve, manage emotions, experience empathy, be resilient and attentive. Social wellbeing includes having good relationships with others and not having behavioural problems that can lead to violence, disruption, or bullying (NICE, 2013). Research into mindfulness has claimed benefits across these three areas of SEW as defined by NICE.

**Mindfulness.** As a concept mindfulness has existed for over 2500 years and originates from Buddhist philosophy and meditative practices (Weare, 2013). Mindfulness is sometimes used as an overarching term that encompasses a range of ideas and approaches and can be thought of as a method, a perspective, an experience, or a cognitive process (Davis, 2012). Many definitions of mindfulness make reference to ‘being in the present’ such as the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) which defines mindfulness as “learning to direct our attention to our experience as it unfolds, moment by moment...” (*What is Mindfulness?* n.d.) or Shapiro (2009, p. 556) as “the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, accepting and discerning way

to whatever is arising in the present moment”. One of the most widely acknowledged definitions of mindfulness and the one used in this thesis, comes from a well-known and widely published author within the field of mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn. He defines mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2006, p. 145).

**Children.** Children or child is used throughout this paper, mainly for the sake of brevity. Unless otherwise stated the term children in this research is synonymous with children and young people.

**Focus Group.** The term ‘focus group’ can have specific connotations for different people (Robson, 2002). In this thesis I have used the terms ‘focus group’ and ‘group interview’ interchangeably. Both terms refer to a group of participants meeting with an interviewer, or moderator, who asks questions about a particular topic (Smithson, 2008).

**Table 1** – common acronyms used throughout this paper.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full term</u>
MBA	Mindfulness based approaches
SEW	Social and emotional wellbeing
PME	Programme of mindfulness exercises
MBSR	Mindfulness based stress reduction
MBCT	Mindfulness based cognitive therapy

### **1.3. Researcher's Interests**

Prior to commencing my doctorate in educational psychology I worked as a primary school teacher for ten years. The last school I taught in employed an Art Therapist who was interested in the emotional responses that pupils had to events throughout the school day. She wanted to know if breathing exercises could be used to inculcate a sense of calm and quiet in the classroom and contribute to improved wellbeing. Together we planned to use simple breathing exercises with the children in my class. These breathing exercises and my own experiences and thoughts about their impact were important factors when I first began exploring ideas for my doctoral research project.

As a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) I work regularly with a range of pupils, school staff, and parents. The actions that are commonly implemented as a result of meeting with staff and parents are aimed at improving the wellbeing of the child. Beaver (2011) views the psychologist's role as being involved in enhancing achievement and wellbeing, as opposed to identifying deficits or problems in functioning. It is often bemoaned by the profession, and teachers themselves, that too much EP work is reactive and only at the point of crisis, and that there should be more of a focus on preventative work (Wagner, 1995).

My interests in children's SEW, my experiences of using breathing exercises with the children I taught, and the desire to undertake systemic preventative work were the main reasons I chose to conduct research that explored the use of mindfulness exercises with children.

As a researcher I acknowledge that my own history and beliefs will have affected the way in which I conducted this research project, from the questions devised for use in the interviews to the analysis of data. My interest in promoting the SEW of children through my work as a TEP and my own beliefs about the use of mindfulness in schools have informed my thinking throughout this research. Creswell (2012, p.18) states that the “researcher brings to the inquiry certain theories, paradigms, and perspectives”. Reflexivity in research, Creswell argues, is when the researcher “positions themselves” (2012, p. 47) in a research study. A pragmatic approach of ‘intersubjectivity’ acknowledges the influence of my background and that my understanding of the ‘reality’ of this research may differ from others but that a sufficient degree of mutual understanding will be achieved through communication and shared meanings within this paper (Morgan, 2007).

#### **1.4. Purpose, Context and Rationale**

Since the turn of the century there has been a growing change within education towards a more holistic, integrated approach that addresses the social, emotional and mental health needs of children (Huppert & Johnson, 2010).

The National Healthy Schools Programme was launched in 1999 with the aim of helping schools to develop a whole school approach to the health and well-being of children (Arthur et al., 2011). The programme consisted of four key areas of which one was emotional wellbeing. Schools were able to work towards fulfilling 41 criteria across four key areas in order to obtain Healthy School status (Arthur et al., 2011). Although since redefined by the previous coalition government, the new Healthy Schools’ programme still exists,

although participation is now led by schools on a 'plan-do-review' cycle (Leeds City Council, 2015).

In 2003 the then Labour government launched Every Child Matters (ECM) which at its heart had five outcomes for children; be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic wellbeing (DfES, 2003). The Children Act 2004 provided the legislative bedrock on which the ECM framework was built.

The ECM framework made clear that being healthy was not just about physical health but included mental and emotional health as well (DfES, 2003). The ECM framework (DfES, 2003) and Children Act 2004 had clear implications for local authorities and schools in how they worked towards the five outcomes for children. The emotional health of children became part of a school's focus and development plans.

In 2005 the government launched a programme called Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) (DfES, 2005). SEAL was aimed at schools who wished to incorporate the teaching of social and emotional skills into their curriculum. Although widely used across many school settings there were some problems with its implementation and suggestions that its use had little impact on pupils' SEW (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010).

From 2008 until 2011 the government ran the Targeted Mental Health in Schools programme (TaMHS) which aimed to help schools deliver timely interventions in response to local needs in an attempt to improve the mental health of at risk children (DfE, 2011). TaMHS was set within wider government policy on promoting the emotional health and wellbeing of children and their



families, and built upon the principles of the SEAL programme (DfE, 2011).

Wave 1 (of 3) of TaMHS support consisted of the delivery of whole school approaches to emotional wellbeing (DfE, 2011) and reflected the ongoing trend for schools to actively promote the wellbeing of children. Recent government advice from the DfE (2014) highlights the important role that schools have to play in supporting pupils to be resilient and mentally healthy.

Recently, the National Children's Bureau (NCB) advice for schools and framework document (Weare, 2015) has outlined effective approaches for schools to improve outcomes in SEW. Amongst these are several approaches that could incorporate mindfulness with children, including; raising awareness about early intervention, providing universal work to promote well-being, developing a supportive school and classroom climate, teaching of social and emotional skills in the mainstream, and engaging and encouraging pupil voice (Weare, 2015). In the NCB's advice specific reference is made to the use of MBA with staff (to improve well-being) and with pupils (to develop social and emotional skills) (Weare, 2015).

In the field of mindfulness research with adults findings suggest that MBA may be beneficial in the treatment of anxiety and comorbid depressive symptoms (Vøllestad, Nielsen, & Nielsen, 2012), supporting cancer care (Smith, Richardson, Hoffman, & Pilkington, 2005), obesity related eating disorders (O'Reilly, Cook, Spruijt-Metz, & Black, 2014), recurrent major depressive disorders (Galante, Iribarren, & Pearce, 2013; van der Velden et al., 2015), fibromyalgia syndrome (Lauche, Cramer, Dobos, Langhorst, & Schmidt, 2013), subjective well-being (Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011), eating disorders (Wanden-Berghe, Sanz-Valero, & Wanden-Berghe, 2011), stress (Praisman,

2008), and overall psychological health (Baer, 2003). NICE currently recommends the use of MBCT for people who have had three or more recurring episodes of depression (NICE, 2009).

Although MBA with adults have been extensively studied there is as yet relatively little research into MBA with children (Weare, 2013) and questions about their use remain largely unanswered (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). The research addressing the benefits of MBA with adults suggests there is promising scope for MBA to have positive impacts on different aspects of children's wellbeing. Brown, Ryan and Creswell (2007) state that mindfulness may have positive impacts across four domains; mental health and psychological wellbeing, behavioural regulation, relationships and social interaction, and physical health. The first three of these are areas in which EPs specifically work (Farrell et al., 2006) and are well placed to make a contribution. EPs work with children, parents and school staff on a regular basis and could have meaningful conversations at individual and systemic levels to promote the use of strategies and interventions, such as MBA, that can positively impact upon different aspects of SEW (Roffey, 2015).

**1.4.1 Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Educational Psychology.** It has been argued that whole school approaches to student wellbeing are beneficial to mental health and resilience and also promote pro-social behaviour, pupil engagement and academic learning (Roffey, 2015). The Mental Health Foundation (2004, p. 8) stated that "all children will benefit from a greater focus on emotional well-being in families, schools and the wider community."

EPs are well placed within the education system to promote the SEW of children and in recent years there has been recognition of the role that EPs

could play in working with schools to positively impact on the SEW of both staff and students (for example, Ewing, Monsen, & Kwoka, 2014; Gibbs & Miller, 2014; Liddle & Carter, 2015; Pritchett, Nowek, Neill, & Minnis, 2014; Roffey, 2015).

**Positive Psychology.** Positive Psychology has been proposed as a framework which EPs can use in their work to bring about positive change, particularly in relation to wellbeing (Joseph, 2008). Positive psychology is interested in the conditions and processes that foster happiness, optimal functioning and mental wellness in people (Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Instead of focussing on ameliorating unhappiness, positive psychology seeks to enhance happiness through a focus on positive traits and positive emotions (Kristjánsson, 2012). Positive Psychology is largely associated with the work of Martin Seligman who has stated that its ultimate goal is “to make people happier by understanding and building positive emotion, gratification and meaning” (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004, p.1379).

It has been claimed that many EPs have incorporated the goals of positive psychology without explicit reference to the term (Gersch, 2009). Joseph (2008) argues that positive psychology is the antithesis of the so called ‘medical’ model and notes how concepts such as wellbeing have traditionally been viewed as the absence of negative traits or psychopathology. An alternative vision presented by positive psychology looks at the facilitation of desired states, the promotion of happiness and individual growth (Joseph, 2008). Some aspects of positive psychology are most likely used by EPs in their day to day work and include work on resilience, problem-solving, solution focussed work and positive casework with children and school staff (Gersch, 2009). The central

tenets of positive psychology are closely related to the ECM agenda and the promotion of wellbeing in schools (Gersch, 2009). In seeking to build on strengths and obtain optimal functioning the ethos of positive psychology moves away from a discussion of social, emotional and mental health difficulties, where interventions are based on deficits and 'fixing' the problem, towards the promotion of wellbeing for all. The teaching of wellbeing in schools can promote skills and strengths that are valued by most parents, produce measurable outcomes in wellbeing and behaviour, and facilitate student's engagement in learning (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009)

It has been stated that "mindfulness practices are congruent with much of the theory and practice in positive psychology" (Huppert & Johnson, 2010, p.266). Huppert and Johnson (2010) suggest that mindfulness practice has the potential to enhance wellbeing in a number of ways, for example, the act of responding rather than reacting may reduce negative interpersonal behaviours such as anger or aggression. A review of positive psychology interventions analysed several studies where mindfulness was the key element in the intervention (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). It has also been claimed that positive psychology interventions such as the best possible selves and three good things activities may foster the development of mindfulness skills (Seear & Vella-Brodrick, 2013).

In terms of my own research positive psychology resonates with a universal programme of mindfulness exercises. The implementation of such a programme aims to build social and emotional wellbeing and foster an ethos of mental health promotion within schools. Gersch (2009) argues that there is "total harmony" (p. 13) between positive psychology and the ECM agenda.

Furthermore mindfulness meditation offers a promise for promoting many elements of positive psychology (Hamilton, Kitzman, & Guyotte, 2006). Some of the goals of mindfulness such as enhancing wellbeing are consistent with the positive psychology goal of promoting resilience (Hamilton et al., 2006). The overall aims of my research are concerned with exploring SEW and the possible impact that mindfulness exercises may have on SEW. These aims are congruent with a positive psychology approach.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section of my thesis will review the literature on mindfulness and MBA with children.

The aims of this literature review are to:

- Critically review the existing literature relevant to my research focus and how this has contributed to current understanding in this field
- Identify the gaps in the literature that my research hopes to address and how my research will contribute to existing knowledge

### **2.1. Literature Selection**

A literature search was conducted electronically using EBSCO, ASSIA and PsycINFO databases. Keywords used were 'mindfulness', 'school', and 'children'. The search was limited to articles that contained these keywords in the abstract, were in the English language, from the year 2000 onwards, and full access to the papers could be gained. These articles were then selected based on their relevance to the keywords and if they fell within the scope of my research focus. Furthermore the studies included in this review are ones where MBA were used with children in educational settings. I excluded studies that included clinical populations or were conducted outside of educational settings.

The reference sections of selected papers were also used to identify additional literature. Relevant books were searched using the University of Exeter's library database.

## **2.2. What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness has its origins in Buddhist tradition and dates back over 2500 years (Weare, 2013; Zoogman, Goldberg, Hoyt, & Miller, 2015). The popularisation of mindfulness into Western science was undertaken in the 1970s by Jon-Kabat Zinn who developed an eight week MBSR programme aimed at reducing stress (Weare, 2013). Kabat-Zinn's MBSR programme and subsequent variations of MBSR tend to be secular in nature (Baer, 2003).

As stated earlier in this paper mindfulness can be thought of as an overarching term that incorporates a range of ideas and approaches (Davis, 2012). The most common definition found in the literature is provided by Jon-Kabat Zinn, the founder of MBSR. He defines mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2006, p. 145). Although this is a widely accepted definition of mindfulness (and incorporates both processes and an outcome) other authors have attempted their own definitions (for example, see Shapiro, 2009).

Davis (2012) argues that mindfulness has been conceptualised by researchers as a method, a perspective, a subjective experience and as a cognitive process. As a method mindfulness can be thought of as a form of training where repetition of a mental activity towards present experience is the objective (Bishop, 2004). As a perspective mindfulness can be conceptualised as cultivating a particular perspective towards an experience. As such these experiences are judged neither as good or bad but just 'are' (Davis, 2012). When conceptualising mindfulness as a subjective experience the feelings

noticed (such as anxiety) are viewed as distinct from the experience of mindfulness. Davies highlights links with subjective states of wellbeing that mindfulness is said to encourage and those referred to in positive psychology such as calmness and vitality (Davis, 2012). As a cognitive process mindfulness involves meta-cognition (Bishop, 2004) through observing internal and external processes (Davis, 2012) and cognitive flexibility (viewing situations from multiple perspectives and shifting perspectives depending on context) (Carson & Langer, 2006).

The conceptualisations proposed above hint at the difficulty in arriving at an operational definition of mindfulness and offer challenges to research in this area (Davis, 2012).

### **2.3. Mindfulness and children: an overview**

Interest in mindfulness and its application with children has been growing rapidly since the turn of the century (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). MBA with children are increasingly an area of interest within education (Weare, 2014), although research in this area is in its “infancy” (Burke, 2010, p. 133).

The literature searched for this paper revealed a number of reviews and meta-analyses that have been conducted in recent years on MBA with children.

Burke’s (2010) review aimed to provide an overview of the limited number of studies assessing the effectiveness of MBA with children. Of the fifteen studies reviewed nine were with clinical samples and five with non-clinical samples. All the studies used outcome measures to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and there was many variations in the core elements of MBSR or MBCT that were used in the interventions (Burke, 2010). Burke comments that



none of the studies she reviewed used any formal qualitative analysis. Burke found that there was overall support for the feasibility of MBA with children but little empirical evidence of the efficacy of these interventions. Burke's review recommends quantitative measures, standardised interventions and randomised control trials to further enhance the field.

Harnett and Dawe (2012) reviewed a further 24 studies conducted after Burke's (2010) review. Thirteen of the studies were conducted in educational establishments whilst the remainder were conducted with clinical samples in other settings (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). Of the studies conducted in educational establishments Harnett and Dawe concluded that there was reasonable cause for optimism when considering using MBA with children in schools. They argued that limited conclusions can be drawn from the studies due to the wide variability in implementation of the interventions and range of measures used to assess outcomes. Harnett and Dawe stated that whilst mindfulness as a construct was assumed to be responsible for the improvement in outcomes this was not systematically investigated in any of the studies they reviewed.

There are potential benefits of integrating MBA into schools' curriculums with effects on cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and spiritual domains (Rempel, 2012). In her review Rempel (2012) argues for the universal application of mindfulness in schools arguing that such universal programmes are strength-based, preventative and carry less stigma. In suggesting future directions for research Rempel highlights the importance of methodological rigour, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, investigating greater ranges of outcomes, and exploring the practicalities of running mindfulness programmes in schools.

Due to methodological limitations such as a lack of standardised measures, reliance on self-reports and selection biases Weare (2013) commented that conclusions about the benefits of MBA with children have to be tentative. She notes that children generally enjoy the interventions and that there are a range of positive outcomes associated with the effects of mindfulness including improvements in wellbeing, sleep, calmness, relaxation, self-regulation, and reductions in worries, anxiety, distress, reactivity and 'bad' behaviour (Weare, 2013).

A meta-analysis of MBA in schools identified 24 studies of which thirteen had been published (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). Fourteen of the studies had been conducted in North America and seven in Europe. Only one published study conducted in the UK was found in Zenner et al.'s (2014) literature search. The majority of mindfulness research reviewed in this paper has taken place in the USA, a country where modern mindfulness practice was first developed (Weare, 2013).

Zenner et al. (2014) identified a wide range of outcome measures which they grouped into the domains of cognitive performance, emotional problems, stress and coping, resilience and third person ratings. Zenner et al. calculated overall effect sizes for the studies included in their meta-analysis and found effect sizes significant at  $p < 0.05$  for cognitive performance, stress, and resilience. In their suggestions for further research Zenner et al. stated that studies should use a mixed-methods approach to assess outcome and acceptability and include methods such as teacher reports, individual interviews, observations of training sessions and student questionnaires and interviews.

A further meta-analysis of MBA with children in schools found that the studies selected could be characterised as most frequently addressing non-clinical populations in school settings (Zoogman et al., 2015). Similar to other reviews of the literature there was a wide variability in the content of the interventions used.

Zoogman et al. (2015) concluded that MBA can be used with children to address a broad range of social and emotional outcomes and they can be integrated successfully into a range of settings including schools.

#### **2.4. Mindfulness and Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

The studies reviewed in this section have explored the effects of MBA on a range of outcomes related to the SEW of children.

Given the evidence for the benefits of mindfulness with adults recent research with children is exploring to what extent similar benefits are congruent with child populations (Zenner et al., 2014; Zoogman et al., 2015).

Semple, Reid, & Miller (2005) ran a six week intervention with five 7 and 8 year olds attending an elementary school in New York. There were weekly sessions lasting 45 minutes that included psycho-education, a worry box and scaling activity as well as mindfulness exercises. The children were selected by their teachers due to observations in the classroom of 'anxious' behaviours. This study was primarily a feasibility study which succeeded in demonstrating that the mindfulness intervention was liked and well tolerated by the participants. As with some of the other studies in this review there was a 'novel' element to the intervention that may have influenced the findings. Children were taken out of

class to participate in a small group, completing novel activities with adults (the authors) who did not work at the school.

A study conducted in the USA assessed the usefulness of mindfulness meditation (MM) in reducing anxiety and increasing social skills in students with learning disabilities (Beauchemin et al., 2008). A total of 34 students aged 13-18 years of age and diagnosed with a learning disability participated in daily five to ten minute MM for a total of five weeks. There was no control group.

Beauchemin et al. (2008) hypothesised that MM would be effective in reducing anxiety and improving social skills amongst students with learning disabilities.

Interestingly, and different to most mindfulness research in schools, the MM sessions were led by the usual class teachers after they had received a two hour introduction to MM from an experienced instructor. Pre- and post-intervention measures were taken. Consistent with other studies self-report measures predominated, however there was also the inclusion of a measure that used both student and teacher ratings of social skills. Beauchemin et al. reported that students' social skills improved and anxiety decreased from pre- to post-intervention. Students, parents and teachers responded positively to the intervention and student questionnaires revealed an overwhelming satisfaction with the MM programme. Some limitations of this study were the teachers not being blind to the test conditions, the small number of participants and a lack of a control group. Sadly a lack of detail about the type of activities used in MM means that comparison to other studies is problematic.

Broderick and Metz (2009) evaluated a mindfulness programme called Learning to BREATHE (developed by the authors) which was designed to be used as part of the school curriculum in a classroom setting. Broderick and Metz's study

looked at the effects of the programme on a range of outcomes including positive and negative affect and emotional regulation. The 120 participants were all girls aged 17-19 years of age in the senior year of their high school. The programme consisted of six sessions lasting approximately 40 minutes each. There was a control group of junior students (n=17). Broderick and Metz's findings suggested that participants in the programme had a reduction in negative affect and an increase in calmness, relaxation and self-acceptance compared to the control group. The authors state that the programme may be a useful way of helping adolescents to manage emotions and think about their feelings.

Mendelson et al. (2010) conducted a study into MBA (combined with yoga) and their effects upon children in the Baltimore region of the USA. The study had 97 participants from the fourth and fifth grade (9-11 years of age) who were assigned to either an intervention or control group. The MBA and yoga classes were delivered by specialist teachers during a part of the school day usually reserved for non-academic activities. Unusually, for studies reviewed in this paper, focus groups were formed after the intervention to discuss the acceptability and feasibility of the programme. In common with other MBA studies both students and teachers' feedback was largely positive and the sessions were well received. Like many of the studies included in this review self-report measures were used, with students having the questionnaires read to them by research assistants to aid completion (Mendelson et al., 2010). Mendelson et al. found that involuntary stress reactions reduced in the intervention group compared to the control and suggest that MBA and yoga were effective in enhancing self-regulatory capacities. Limitations in Mendelson

et al.'s study were that participants volunteered (thus creating possible self-selection bias) and the implementation of the programme was not evaluated for fidelity. The use of outside specialist teachers in this study may have been an influence on the outcomes.

Mindfulness training with 199 elementary school children in the Netherlands was linked with primary preventive effects on stress and wellbeing immediately after the training and at follow up (van de Weijer-Bergsma, Langenberg, Brandsma, Oort, & Bögels, 2012). A six week mindfulness training programme was developed by the authors and run by a trained instructor in conjunction with the classroom teachers. Some details of the programme were provided enabling comparison to other MBSR. Van de Weijer-Bergsma et al.'s (2012) study demonstrated that it is feasible to incorporate low intensity mindfulness training in a classroom setting. The large number of participants, an experimental design with waitlist control, and multiple measures from children, parents and teachers were some of the strengths of this study. The authors acknowledge that only one trainer delivered the interventions to all the classes which could be a potential barrier to implementation on a wider scale. The question of who should deliver mindfulness training in schools will be discussed later in this literature review.

Raes, Griffith, Van der Gucht and Williams' (2014) study involved a RCT of a mindfulness group programme in schools in Belgium. There were a large number of participants (n=408) ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. Measures of depression were taken before and after the intervention with a six month follow up. The programme consisted of a mixture of MBSR and MBCT and was designed for use with adolescents. The sessions delivered to the students

were facilitated by specialists and took place during the normal school day. Raes et al. report that lower levels of depression at the six month follow up were found in the mindfulness group as opposed to the control group. As the sessions incorporated activities other than just mindfulness techniques and also an expectation of homework activities being carried out, it is difficult to draw conclusions about which aspects of the programme were responsible for the obtained results.

One of the few studies to include pre-school children evaluated the effects of a five week mindfulness-based curriculum on children's classroom behaviour (as rated by their teachers) (Black & Fernando, 2014). Data was collected pre- and post-intervention (both immediate and with a seven week follow up). Reported effects from the mindfulness-based curriculum were improvements in paying attention, calmness and self-control, and caring for others (Black & Fernando, 2014).

A further study to examine mindfulness with pre-school children was Flook, Goldberg, Pinger and Davidson's (2015) research. They used a mindfulness-based pro-social skills training curriculum to assess the effects on a range of cognitive and behavioural outcomes on pre-school children in the USA. There were 68 children (30 for the intervention and 38 for the control) who participated in the study. Due to the age of the participants self-report measures were not used which sets it apart from other studies in this review. Flook et al. concluded that there were benefits to using the mindfulness-based 'Kindness Curriculum' (as it was known) and that children with deficits in executive function and social competence may particularly benefit. This study did not include any qualitative data and the views of the children were not reported.

Mindfulness training conducted with primary school children in Spain found a significant decrease in trait anxiety after six weeks of daily mindfulness training (Ricarte, Ros, Latorre, & Beltrán, 2015). There were a total of 90 children aged 6 to 13 years of age who participated in a mindfulness intervention which consisted of daily 15 minutes mindfulness activities in the children's usual classroom. Although no formal qualitative data was collected the authors reported that the children participating said they felt increased wellbeing, calmness and relaxation. The authors include details of the intervention but do not state whether teachers or trained instructors ran the sessions. Additional qualitative analysis would have been useful in further understanding the extent to which the intervention was perceived and also in triangulating with the quantitative data collected.

## **2.5. Mindfulness studies with children in the UK**

The literature reviewed for this thesis was only able to locate three published studies of mindfulness research conducted with children in the UK. Huppert and Johnson (2010) assessed the impact of a modified MBSR programme on adolescents. This research was conducted in schools and involved measures of mindfulness, resilience and psychological wellbeing taken pre- and post-intervention. A total of 173 adolescents from six classes were selected to participate. One of these classes was assigned to the MBSR programme and the other five classes acted as controls. The authors reported no significant differences between the groups after the intervention. This is one of the few studies in this review that used a measure of mindfulness. Interestingly Huppert and Johnson found that scores on the mindfulness scale were not significantly



different for students who had participated in the intervention. Concerns about the 'mechanisms of change' in MBA will be explored later in this review.

A non-randomised controlled feasibility study of the effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme (MiSP) was conducted by Kuyken et al. (2013). An assessment of outcomes was made at pre-intervention, post-intervention and at a follow up after three months. The outcomes measured were well-being, stress, depression, and mindfulness practice. There were a total of 256 students (mean age 14.9 years) in the intervention groups and 266 students (mean age 14.7 years) in the control groups (Kuyken et al., 2013). Kuyken et al. found that depressive symptoms were reduced both immediately after the intervention and also at the three month follow up.

The strengths of Kuyken et al.'s (2013) study were the use of a follow up measurement to look at sustained outcomes and the relatively large number of participants. One of the weaknesses of this study was the sole use of self-report measure to assess outcomes. Kuyken et al. suggest that observer and classroom based measures would be a useful addition to future research.

A recent study aimed to explore the feasibility of running an MBSR intervention with sixth form students in England using an adults' MBSR course with minor adjustments (Bennett & Dorjee, 2016). The course was run over eight weeks and involved a weekly two hour group session at the end of the school day. The participants were encouraged to undertake 45 minutes of home practice every day (similar to adult MBSR programmes). Bennet and Dorjee concluded that the programme was acceptable for 16 to 18 year olds and could be delivered

within a school environment and reported improvements in wellbeing and academic attainment.

Bennet and Dorjee's (2016) study is different to the other studies in this review due to the application of an adult MBSR programme (with minor adjustments in language, examples and metaphors used) (Bennett & Dorjee, 2016). The age of the participants (16 to 18 years of age) is close to adulthood and therefore more likely that these students could conform to adult expectations of mindfulness practice. Meiklejohn et al., (2012) considered difficulties in adapting established adult MBA for children, including researchers agreeing on the 'active ingredients' of MBA that should be included. The content of MBA with children is considered in the next section of this review.

## **2.6. Variety of MBA**

Mindfulness programmes and interventions have been run with children and young people across the educational age range, from pre-school to adulthood (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). Most MBA for use with children and young people have been adapted from existing MBSR and MBCT programmes for adults although there is no agreed adaptation of these programmes and the adaptations tend to focus on practical concerns (for example, shorter durations for shorter child attention spans) rather than models of child development (Harnett & Dawe, 2012).

A programme incorporating MBA specifically designed for use with children is called MindUP (Hawn Foundation, 2015) and was assessed in a RCT exploring effects on cognitive and social development (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). The MindUP programme is described as a mindfulness based social and emotional

literacy programme (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015) which includes a range of activities aimed at promoting social and emotional competencies. Daily three minute mindfulness practice forms an essential part of the programme (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

Children were either assigned to participate in the MindUP programme or take part in 'business as usual' lessons. In total 99 children aged 9 to 11 participated in the research. One of the strengths of this study was the use of a wide range of outcome measures that did not wholly rely on self-report. Behavioural assessments of executive function were carried out as were biological measures (salivary cortisol levels), peer measures of pro-sociality and teacher grades (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). The results of Schonert-Reichl et al.'s (2015) study indicate that children who received the MindUP programme showed significant improvements in executive function, self-report measures of well-being and peer-reported pro-social behaviour.

The above study is one example of research reviewed in this paper that demonstrates the variety of MBA used with children. The diversity of programmes and interventions means that it can be difficult to get a general impression of the effectiveness of MBA (Zenner et al., 2014). A clearer description of the intervention is recommended as one way for researchers to improve the evidence base for MBAs (Greenberg & Harris, 2012). Many of the studies in this review have limited information regarding the activities included during interventions.

Burke (2010) argues that to move the field forward mindfulness research with children should use standardised formats for interventions to enable better

comparisons to be made, whilst Rempel (2012) contends that research examining a range of MBA will increase the understanding of the contributions of each. (Weare (2013) argues that studies exploring the variety of mindfulness interventions are slowly discovering the best methods, content and materials to use with children. Although there is wide variability in MBA there are some similarities emerging that remain at the heart of MBA (for example, paying attention, focussing on the breath) (Weare, 2013).

## **2.7. Mechanisms of Change.**

The variation in the types of MBA used in studies has led to questions about what is actually responsible for bringing about the changes reported (Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Harnett & Dawe, 2012). An example of a study that explored possible mechanisms of change was Britton et al.'s (2014) randomized control trial (RCT) of mindfulness mediation to examine the effects on mental health and affect. Britton et al.'s (2014) study used an 'active' control group (as opposed to a 'business as usual' control). The control group participated in a six week history programme that included the building of a model of a Pharaoh's tomb. This control group was taught by the same teacher as the mindfulness-based lessons. After the intervention students in both groups showed improvements in internalising and externalising problems and attention.

Briton et al. (2014) hypothesise that the mindfulness programme used in their study may produce effects that are shared by other novel activities. The results from this study highlight one of the problems associated with research into mindfulness based approaches – that of which specific aspects of MBA are

responsible for any observed changes. Britton et al. postulate that the history lessons and building of the Pharaoh's tomb may share some aspects of the mindfulness meditation used in their study such as an increase in attention and engaging activities.

Mindfulness can be thought of as a state or trait whereas mindfulness practice or MBA is a time set aside to undertake exercises and activities that encourage mindfulness (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). The literature reviewed in this paper largely explores the impact of MBA on a range of outcomes in order to assess their effectiveness. These studies have an implicit understanding that the practice of mindfulness exercises and activities are inculcating 'mindfulness' in the participants. The extent to which participants experience 'mindfulness' through MBA is open to debate (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Only a small number of studies have measured mindfulness itself as part of their research design (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). This in part is due to a lack of suitable measures of mindfulness, particularly those for children (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Kuby, McLean, & Allen, 2015). There are currently only two measures of mindfulness that have been validated for use with children and young people (Kuby et al., 2015). These are the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale for Adolescents (MAAS-A; Brown, West, Loverich, & Biegel, 2011) and the Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM; Greco, Baer, & Smith, 2011). These measures view mindfulness as a trait (Kuby et al., 2015). Given the subjective experience of mindfulness and the different ways in which mindfulness has been conceptualised (Davis, 2012) the development of measures for capturing 'mindfulness' is another challenge to the field.

## 2.8. Teachers delivering MBA

Predominantly most mindfulness programmes are taught in schools by non-school based staff and few interventions have been instructed by class teachers (Zenner et al., 2014). Broderick and Metz (2009) contend that instructors should have training in mindfulness practices but highlight a need for research to examine whether such training is necessary and whether it impacts on a programme's effectiveness. One of the practical challenges of implementing MBA in schools is the availability of trained mindfulness teachers (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). The MiSP currently has set of pre-requisites for people who want to enrol on its four day course of mindfulness teacher training, including completion of an eight week mindfulness course and six months of daily mindfulness practice (*Teach .b prerequisites*, n.d.). There are time and availability implications for school teachers who wish to teach mindfulness in their school through the MiSP. If non-school based instructors are used instead then there are cost implications and limitations to how many children will access the teaching based on a small number of qualified instructors.

Whilst many studies have used trained instructors some have used class teachers to deliver MBA in schools. One such study was Joyce, ETTY-Leal, Zazryn, Hamilton and Hassed's (2010) research exploring the effects of a mindfulness meditation programme on the mental health of upper primary children in Australia. The mindfulness programme used in this study was developed by one of the authors and lasted for ten weeks. The class teachers were given freedom to teach the lesson materials in a way which suited their class and timetable. Pre- and post-test measures were collected using the SDQ and the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI). Results obtained from the study

suggest that there were improvements in emotional health (as measured by both the students and teachers). The possible differences in how lesson materials were delivered by different teachers may have influenced outcomes and limits the findings of this study.

Britton et al.'s (2014) study used two class teachers with very different levels of mindfulness practice. One of the teachers had five years of daily mindfulness practice whilst the other teacher had no prior experience before completing an eight week MBSR course before the research commenced. Interestingly no differences in outcomes between the two classes taught by the teachers were reported by Britton et al.

One approach to delivering mindfulness in schools would be to have manualised MBA so that they can be delivered by teachers with minimal training (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). There is limited research available for best practices for implementation (of MBA) and questions remain about instructor competency (Lawlor, 2014). Whilst some authors advocate the use of trained mindfulness teachers when delivering MBA in schools (for example, Burke, 2010; Kuyken et al., 2013; Weare, 2013), Joyce et al.'s (2010) study highlighted the feasibility of introducing a mindfulness-based curriculum into schools that can be delivered by class teachers. Programmes such as the one in Joyce et al.'s study are low cost and easily fit into the curriculum; claims which are made about many MBA in the literature (Beauchemin et al., 2008; Flook et al., 2015; Joyce et al., 2010; Zoogman et al., 2015).

## **2.9. Summary**

Research on the use of MBA with children has increased significantly in the last twenty years and there is now a growing evidence base for a range of benefits of mindfulness practice. Whilst most studies in this review have used outcome measures to assess the success of MBA there remains difficulties with operationally defining mindfulness and investigating mechanisms of change. There is a wide variety of programmes and interventions implemented by researchers meaning that it is not always easy to draw comparisons between studies nor to understand the 'active ingredients' of any one programme. There are very few studies of MBA with children in schools that have been conducted in the UK and as noted by Greenberg and Harris (2012) widespread use of MBA in schools is premature due to the paucity of quality research. Whilst arguments have been put forth by researchers for delivering MBA using trained instructors the issue of how 'qualified' somebody needs to be to deliver MBA in schools is still contentious (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

## **2.10. Gaps in the literature and contribution to knowledge**

According to McLaughlin (2008) there has been an 'explosion' of research concerned with emotional wellbeing yet very few studies have explored SEW from children's perspectives (Coombes, Appleton, Allen, & Yerrell, 2013; Coverdale & Long, 2015). Coverdale and Long (2015) also highlight the lack of research incorporating parental and child views of SEW. The first phase of this study attempts to address this gap in the literature by exploring the views of children, their parents and school staff. Children's SEW is an area in which EPs typically have an impact on through individual casework and wider systemic work with school staff (Dawson & Singh-Dhesi, 2010; Liddle & Macmillan, 2010;



Sharrocks, 2014). This present study adds to the current knowledge of how EPs could work with schools to explore children's SEW.

Research into MBA with children is rapidly increasing and as yet the evidence base is not as extensive or well documented as that with adults (Brown et al., 2007; Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Weare, 2013).

A significant gap in the literature is the very small number of studies that have been conducted in the UK. The literature searched for this review was only able to locate three published studies on MBA and children in the UK. My research will therefore add to the limited amount of studies that have been conducted in the UK on MBA with children.

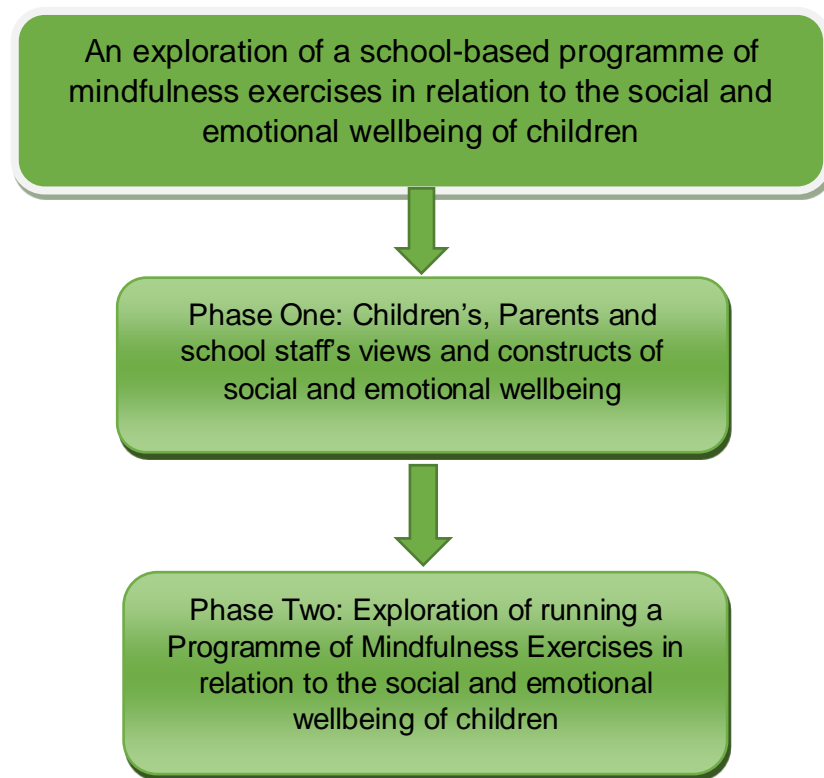
Many of the studies reviewed in this paper share several limitations. The main method of measurement is self-report and data is largely quantitative. Most participants have volunteered to take part. Whilst children are the participants, their views and reflections about mindfulness and the process of being part of a study are largely non-existent. There is also a wide variation in the techniques used as part of MBA interventions. The length of the intervention itself and the amount of time spent on MBA every week also varies considerably between studies. Some studies include details of the lessons and activities but most do not. Comparison between studies is therefore problematic.

My research addresses some of these limitations by using a range of data collection techniques that plan to access and incorporate the views of the children, parents and staff. The participants did not volunteer and details of the PME are also included to enable comparison to other MBA.

Another identified gap in the literature is the lack of educational psychology involvement in MBA and their application in school settings. As recently as 2010 it was highlighted that MBA have yet to make an impact on the work of EPs (Burke, 2010). Although this picture may be changing slightly (Babcock LDP now offer mindfulness training to schools, (*Therapeutic support*, n.d.)) it would appear that the combination of educational psychology and MBA is a new and relatively unexplored area into which EPs could contribute and add knowledge.

My research will be of benefit to schools as they explore ways in which the SEW of children can be promoted and actively engaged with. MBA offer promising ways forward both in terms of their feasibility for implementation in schools and positive outcomes in various aspects of SEW. Engaging with schools in exploring SEW and MBA should be a positive step towards encouraging school staff, children and parents to discuss aspects of SEW that matter to them and ways in which to promote and support their SEW. My research will also benefit EPs who are interested in working within whole school systems to bring about positive change.

### 3. Research Design



*Figure 1: Overview of research phases*

#### **3.1. Research Methodology.**

Pragmatism offers an alternative to the dominating paradigms of positivism and interpretivism and accepts that there are singular and multiple realities that can be empirically investigated whilst orientating itself to solving practical problems in the 'real world' (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010).

The extent to which metaphysical decisions guide researchers' work has been questioned by Morgan (2007) who argues that "almost all of the proponents of the metaphysical paradigm insisted instead that the research question should determine the choice of research method" (p.64). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that "differences in epistemological beliefs should not prevent a

qualitative researcher from utilising data collection methods more typically associated with quantitative research, and vice versa” (p. 15). Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 22) state “We believe that it is more important to choose the appropriate method or methods to address specific research questions than to align with a specific epistemological stance.” Similarly Johnson and Onwuegbuzie argue that research questions, as opposed to epistemological ones, are the deciding factors that influence research methods.

Pragmatic mixed-methods research can answer many research questions and combinations of questions by utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods to offer the ‘best chance’ of obtaining useful answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

When adopting a mixed-methods research design researchers must make two primary decisions: whether they want to work largely within one dominant paradigm or not, and; whether they want to conduct the phases concurrently or sequentially (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

My research is largely qualitative but includes quantitative measures. In doing so I am acknowledging my own philosophical assumptions that knowledge is both socially constructed and objectively ‘real’. This pragmatic approach has been termed ‘intersubjectivity’ (Morgan, 2007) and enables researchers to view knowledge as being both constructed, and based on the reality of the world that is lived in and experienced by all.

In answering the second question posed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) I chose to use quantitative measures concurrently with qualitative data collection. The first phase of this research is concerned with the views and

constructs of children, parents and school staff and a qualitative method was chosen to explore complex, multiple and subjective realities. I was interested in discovering what the participants had to say about SEW. What was their understanding of SEW and what words and phrases did they use to discuss SEW?

The second phase of data collection involved qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires were used to explore participants' experiences and thoughts about the PME whilst reliable and valid measures of wellbeing and children's strengths and difficulties were utilised to quantitatively assess any effects of the PME. Quantitative measures are particularly relevant to previous studies in this field which overwhelmingly use outcome measures to assess the impact of MBA (Harnett & Dawe, 2012).

Another important aspect of a pragmatic approach to research is 'transferability'. Throughout my research I have assumed that my findings are neither completely context-bound nor wholly generalisable. The concept of transferability arises from a pragmatic focus of what people can do with the knowledge they produce (Morgan, 2007). The knowledge produced as a result of my research aspires to be useable in different circumstances by different people.

### **3.2 Programme of Mindfulness Exercises (PME)**

A 30 session programme of mindfulness exercises was designed by this researcher to be used with children in a middle school. The PME was based mainly on introductory mindfulness exercises for children in the book 'Sitting

Still like a Frog' (Snel, 2013). The exercises in sitting still like a frog were developed by Eline Snel who has over twenty years of experience in developing mindfulness training programmes (Snel, 2013). The exercises are all designed to be used by children aged 5 to 12 years of age and provide an introduction to many core mindfulness practices such as attention to the breath (Snel, 2013). The exercises are all less than ten minutes in duration and are accessible for children aged five years or over (Snel, 2013). The length of the PME was based on pragmatic aspects, such as the need to complete a doctoral research project in a timely manner, consultation with teachers regarding time commitments, as well as reference to the literature (for example see Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Zenner et al., 2014). Research into MBA has yet to draw definitive conclusions for the optimum length of mindfulness interventions with children with some suggestions that longer and more intense mindfulness training yields greater effects (Zenner et al., 2014) whilst others have suggested that programme and session lengths of MBA had no significant effects on study outcomes (Zoogman et al., 2015). The PME in this study falls within the majority of programme lengths as reviewed by Meiklejohn et al. (2012) of 5 – 8 weeks. (The rationale and further information about the design of the PME can be found in Appendix 1. The full programme for the PME is in Appendix 3 and an example script for the 'foot scan' exercises can be found in Appendix 4).

### **3.3. Phase One**

**Aim.** The aim of this phase of the research was:

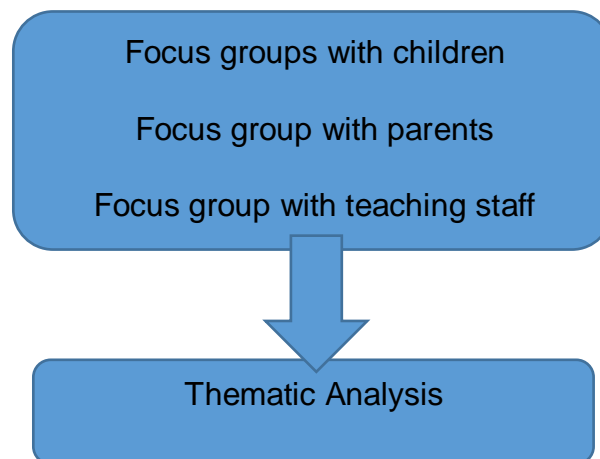
- To explore children's, parents' and school staff's views and constructs of SEW

This broad aim incorporated exploring views of SEW as a concept, what factors contribute to SEW and times when children experience difficulties with their SEW.

**Research Questions.** In order to address the aim the following research questions were developed:

1. What is understood by 'social and emotional wellbeing' by;
  - a) Children?
  - b) Parents?
  - c) School staff?
  
2. What factors contribute to the SEW of children as understood by;
  - a) Children?
  - b) Parents?
  - c) School staff?
  
3. When might children experience difficulties with their SEW as identified by;
  - a) Children?
  - b) Parents?
  - c) School staff?

### 3.3.1. Stages of Research



*Figure 2: Phase one stages of research*

Focus groups were chosen as the preferred method of data collection in phase one of this research. The use of focus groups enables the construction of knowledge through group interaction (Robson, 2002). One advantage of using focus groups is the ability of the researcher to observe a large amount of interaction on a specific topic in a short time (Smithson, 2008). Rationale for the use of focus groups is provided in the phase one methods section of this paper.

Four focus groups were conducted with children, one focus group with parents and one focus group with teaching staff. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen as it a useful method for analysing data for the novice researcher and can also be used within different methodologies, including pragmatism (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The knowledge created during the focus groups enabled a picture of the participants' views to be built up over the course of the analysis of the data.



### **3.4. Phase Two**

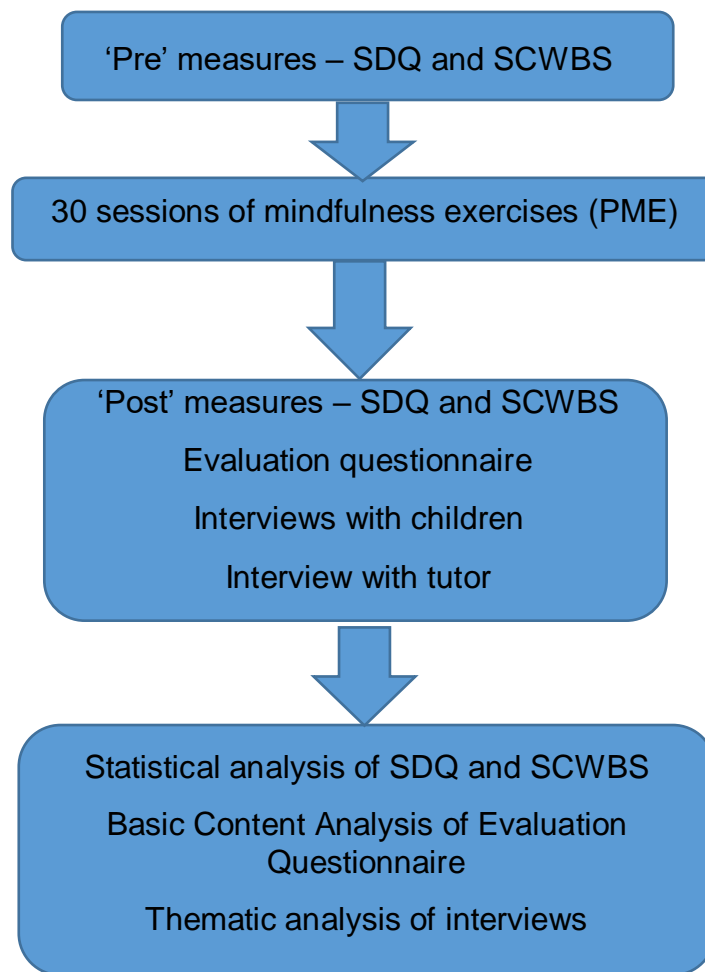
**Aims.** The aims of the second phase of this research were:

- To explore the use of mindfulness exercises in relation to the SEW of children
- To explore the use of mindfulness exercises in a school setting
- To explore how an EP can work within a school setting to promote SEW

**Research Questions.** In order to address the above aims the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do mindfulness exercises impact on the SEW of children?
2. How is a programme of mindfulness exercises perceived and experienced by
  - a) children?
  - b) parents?
  - c) school staff?
3. How could EPs work within a school to implement programmes that promote the SEW of children?

### 3.4.1. Stages of Research



*Figure 3: Phase two stages of research*

To answer the research questions qualitative data collection, in the form of semi-structured interviews and questionnaire responses, was used alongside quantitative data collection in the form of two validated measures of wellbeing, the SDQ and SCWBS.

Measures of children's SEW were taken before the PME commenced. The first mindfulness session took place at the beginning of December 2015 and the final session was delivered in mid-February 2016. During the PME the two teachers were asked to keep brief notes on pupil absence, any particular pupils who were not taking part that day (either voluntarily or due to other

commitments) and any other relevant factors that may have impacted on the sessions.

Once the PME had ended the SDQ and SCWBS were administered again. An evaluation questionnaire was also given to all 56 children who had originally started the PME to ask for their feedback on the programme. Eighteen children were randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview of which six children were interviewed. A further semi-structured interview was conducted with one of the teachers who had implemented the PME with her tutor group.

Quantitative statistical analysis was conducted on the data obtained from the SDQ and SCWBS. The evaluation questionnaire was analysed using basic content analysis to identify categories of words and the frequency at which the categories occurred. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify themes and enable triangulation with the rest of the data collected during this phase of the research. Further details of the analyses carried out is provided in the relevant sections of this thesis.

## 4. Phase One Methods

### Exploring children's, parents', and school staff's views and constructs of social and emotional wellbeing

#### 4.1. Participant Recruitment

**Initial contact.** I initially approached the SENCo of a large middle school that I was linked to in my role as a TEP to enquire about the possibility of carrying out a research project with the staff and students at the school. I provided a short written summary of the research to the SENCo. After speaking to members of the senior management team it was agreed that the school would collaborate on the project. A timescale was agreed with initial data collection for phase one commencing in September 2015 and data collection for phase two ending in the spring term of 2016.

**School information.** All of the participants in this research project were recruited from or via the same middle school. Children attend the school from Year 5 to Year 8 (9 to 13 years of age). The school is in a town within a local authority in the South West of England. The school is a larger than the average middle school with 570 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of those eligible for the pupil premium is just above average. The school converted to an academy in 2011 and the head teacher has been in the post since 2014 (see Appendix 5 for further information about the school).

#### 4.2 Participants

**Children.** In September 2015 information regarding the research was sent out via staff in the school office to parents and carers of every child on roll at the school. Consent was through an opt-out sampling method (see Appendix 6 for

a copy of the consent letter). A total of 25 students opted out of the research. The remaining children were selected to participate in a focus group by taking the 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> name on the register of each of the tutor groups. In total 22 pupils (4% of the pupils on roll) participated in four focus groups as two pupils were absent on the day the groups ran. The 22 participants consisted of 11 boys and 11 girls. All participants were white British or white European and ranged from 9 years to 13 years of age.

The sample selection of children included a range of ages and year groups across the school, an equal distribution across the tutor groups and equal numbers of males and females. I was interested in exploring the views of children across the school and the sampling strategy reflects this interest. All the selected participants were able to take part in the focus groups (except two absent pupils) and none were excluded because of SEN or other concerns.

**Parents.** A letter inviting parents to attend a focus group was sent out via staff in the school office (see Appendix 7). My contact details were on the letter and parents were able to express an interest by e-mail. Six parents initially responded. Further e-mail contact between myself and the interested parents resulted in four parents attending a focus group interview. All four parents were female and had one child each who attended the school. All four parents were self-selecting and shared similar characteristics. They were all white British women over 30 years of age and lived in the same town as the school.

**School staff.** Information about the research project was provided in a presentation delivered to the teaching staff at a school training day (see Appendix 8 for the presentation). Around twelve staff expressed an interest in

participating. Further information about the research and the focus group was sent via e-mail to the interested staff members. From the initial members of staff who had expressed an interest four (two teachers and two teaching assistants) attended a focus group session. Both teachers and one of the teaching assistants were female, the other teaching assistant was male. Participants were self-selecting and represented 4.4% of the teaching staff at the school.

### **4.3. Measures**

**Focus Groups.** Data for the first phase of this research was collected by using focus groups. The use of focus groups within social research has increased considerably this century (Finch, Lewis, & Turley, 2014). A focus group or group interview, as it is sometimes known (Robson, 2002), has the following advantages: it is a highly efficient technique for qualitative data collection, participants tend to enjoy the experience, and they are flexible in their set-up and implementation (Robson, 2002). Focus group interviews can be used as a stand-alone data collection strategy (Berg & Lune, 2013) and when used with children can enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the participants (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

In the first phase of this research I was interested in exploring the views of children, parents, and school staff across the whole school in a manner that would provide data in both breadth and depth. Focus groups were selected as the most appropriate method for the following reasons:

- They enabled access to more participants than single participant in-depth interviews
- Participants' views could be sharpened and refined due to group interaction
- They can be used to gain greater understanding of topics that are not that well understood
- A group environment lessens the power differential between researcher and participant that may be present in single participant interviews
- They can be a very effective approach for collecting data in a setting which children feel comfortable with

(Adapted from Berg & Lune, 2013; Finch et al., 2014; Robson, 2002; Vaughn et al., 1996).

#### **4.4. Procedures**

**Focus groups with children.** All four focus groups conducted with the children took place during the school day and on the school site. A timetable of the focus groups was constructed in collaboration with school staff and the relevant teachers were notified when the children should attend the focus group. The purpose and structure of the focus groups were clearly explained to the children before the group commenced and opportunities were provided to ask any questions relating to the research. Additional information on confidentiality and consent was also provided. Prior to the group interview commencing additional written consent was obtained from all the children, with explicit explanation and clarification around the voluntary nature of their participation. All of the children selected to be part of a focus group agreed to participate. A short PowerPoint

presentation was created prior to the sessions and displayed to the children to help structure all the different stages of the focus group (see Appendix 9 for the PowerPoint slides). The structure of the focus groups was adapted from Finch et al.'s (2014) stages of a focus group. These stages are: scene setting and ground rules; individual introductions; the opening topic; discussion; ending the discussion (see Appendix 10 for a fuller description of these stages). The focus groups were digitally recorded for analysis purposes and lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. As well as the PowerPoint presentation a flipchart was available to record key words and phrases used during the interview.

During all the focus group sessions (including those with parents and teaching staff) I kept a record of what was said, any noticeable non-verbal communication and the group dynamics.

**Focus group with parents.** The focus group was conducted during the school day on the school site and lasted just over one hour. The structure of the focus group replicated that of the focus groups with the children. Additional information was provided regarding the research project and written consent was obtained from the parents. The group interview was digitally recorded for analysis purposes.

**Focus group with staff.** The focus group was run at the end of a school day on the school site and lasted for 50 minutes. Four members of the teaching staff attended. Additional information was provided regarding the research project and written consent was obtained from all the participants. The structure of the focus group was the same as the children's focus groups and adapted



from Finch et al. (2014). The group interview was digitally recorded for analysis purposes.

#### **4.5. My role as focus group facilitator**

A typical focus group procedure is to follow a relatively unstructured interview guide, which generates a list of topics for discussion that address the research aims and questions (Smithson, 2008). Three topics were identified to form the main areas of discussion within the group (aligned to the three research questions for phase one). Within each of these main areas my role as a facilitator and moderator was to enable appropriate discussion that would be useful in answering the research questions. The researcher's aim has been described as allowing as much relevant discussion to be generated while at the same time ensuring that the research aims are met (Finch et al., 2014). Other important roles of the researcher are to be an active listener and respond in the moment, probe for fuller explanations or formulate questions in response to participants' comments (Finch et al., 2014). When facilitating the focus groups with children I used my knowledge of this age range from my work as a primary school teacher to ensure that the language I used and my expectations of how children might respond to questions and behave in a group setting were age appropriate. I found that skills developed as a TEP, including active listening, paraphrasing and summarising, were important throughout the group interviews to support the flow and structure of the conversations.

#### **4.6. Analysis**

The data collected from the focus groups was analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was adopted for a

number of reasons including its flexibility and ability to offer a more accessible form of analysis suitable for novice researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis enabled data to be analysed both inductively and deductively. Initial coding into broad themes was based on focus group and research questions (deductive) and then further codes and themes were identified from the data that corresponded to the broad themes identified (inductive). Braun and Clarke (2006) postulate six phases of thematic analysis which were followed for this study. Initial familiarisation with the data was gained through listening to audio recordings and note taking. Research questions and focus group questions enabled broad and initial coding to commence. Codes and themes were developed and refined through repeated exposure to audio and written transcripts. Coding was conducted manually and thematic maps were devised and refined to produce the final themes (for further information regarding thematic analysis, including transcription and coding, please see Appendices 12 - 21). Table 2 provides an overview of the steps undertaken to analyse the focus group data.

Table 2: *Phases in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)*

<b>Phases</b>	<b>Details of how my analysis was carried out</b>
1 – Familiarising yourself with the data	Listening to audio recordings; taking notes; transcription
2 – Generating initial codes	Based on research and focus group questions. Three broad codes were identified.
3 – Searching for themes	Mind maps to begin sorting sub-codes into themes were used. This was done by hand using paper and different coloured pens.
4 – Reviewing themes	Sub-codes were sorted further into main themes and sub-themes. A thematic map was drawn with identified themes.
5 – Defining and naming themes	The initial thematic map was used to guide further refinement of themes. Codes were rechecked to ensure they fit into each theme and a new final thematic map was produced.
6 – Producing the report	Exploration and write up of themes incorporated into this paper.

#### **4.7 Ethical Consideration**

Children are commonly perceived as being vulnerable when acting as research participants because of their lack of social power (Vaughn et al., 1996). The children in this stage of my research project had not volunteered to take part and were requested to attend a group interview by me via school staff. The sampling strategy used in this phase of my research posed some ethical questions. The children may have held misconceptions about why they were

attending a focus group, they may not have wished to have been there, they may have been confused as to why they were chosen. An important and crucial role for me when meeting the children was to fully inform them about the nature of the focus group and their right to not participate. The PowerPoint presentation used focuses on key questions the children might have had at the start of the group. From a basic principle of “do no harm” (Vaughn et al., 1996, p. 141) I aimed to minimize the potential for stress during the focus group, put the children at ease, value their contributions and empower them to make decisions about their role in the research.

**Informed Consent.** Information about the research project had been sent to parents (for children and parents) and staff prior to the group interview. On the day each focus group received an explanation of who I was and my role (both as an EP and a researcher) along with information about the research project and the nature and scope of the focus groups. Explanations and assurances were given about the anonymous and confidential nature of the focus group and the participants’ responses. The opportunity to ask questions was given and it was stressed on more than one occasion that participants did not need to participate and that they were free to leave at any point during the interview. Written consent was gained from everyone who participated in the focus groups, either by signature or through writing their name. All of the participants were aware that the focus group session would be digitally recorded and the purposes of recording were fully explained. At the end of each focus group session the participants were given an opportunity to add any further comments, ask questions or speak to me privately if they had something they did not wish to say in front of the group.

**Ethical approval.** Ethical approval was gained from the University of Exeter's Social Sciences and International Studies (SSIS) Ethics Committee in June 2015 (see Appendix 11).

## **5. Phase One Findings**

This section details the findings from the focus group sessions conducted with children, parents and staff.

Analysis of the focus groups identified several main themes across the three broad areas corresponding to the three research questions for phase one. I have presented my findings under headings which correspond to the research questions. The main themes from each area are presented along with relevant excerpts from the focus group interviews.

The reporting of the data that follows has attempted to avoid what White, Woodfield, Ritchie, and Ormston (2014) describe as the 'quantification' of qualitative data. White et al. argue that the presentation of qualitative data should avoid numerical indicators as they can be misleading and readers may infer different meanings to words such as 'many' or 'several'.

### **Presentation of transcript excerpts**

All excerpts from the focus groups are in italics and accompanied by a letter and a number, for example B1, where the letter refers to the participant in the group and the letter refers to which group they were in. As the researcher I can be identified by the letter R. Any identifying names or places in the excerpts have been replaced with \*\*\*\*.

## 5.1 Research Question 1a: What do children understand by ‘social and emotional wellbeing’?

The phrase social and emotional wellbeing is one that the children interviewed were not familiar with. Each group was able to successfully deconstruct the phrase into three component parts: social; emotional; and wellbeing.

The main themes identified from the children’s focus groups regarding their understanding of SEW were: ‘different feelings’ and ‘being with friends’.

**Different feelings.** Children spoke about SEW in terms of feelings such as happy and sad. The word feelings was specifically mentioned when articulating their understanding of SEW. Examples of this response were:

*B1: emotional means feeling*

*E4: feelings. I think of crying*

In terms of quantifying feelings children identified a dichotomy of happy and sad with comments such as:

*B4: I think emotional wellbeing is also being happy.*

*F3: Emotional means like when you are feeling sad or happy*

On one occasion participants in Year 8 considered the word emotional, its meaning, and how it related to SEW.

*R: Tell me more what you said about crying?*

*B4: Like if you win something you feel so emotional... it's like...*

*E4: Hang on, no, no, no, erm...emotional I would say that is if you are very sensitive and empathetic.*

D4: *I think emotional is like another feeling. Say if you are proud of yourself for doing something good.*

E4: *I'm so emotional. I won the Olympics.*

**Being with Friends.** Friends and friendships were widely discussed by the participants when discussing the meaning of social wellbeing, and in particular the word 'social',

Typical responses were:

C3: *Social means being with friends and stuff.*

A1: *Socially, really going out with my friends and doing stuff with my family and friends*

B4: *I think being social is sort of being very friendly*

E4: *Having lots of friends*

Friends and friendships were discussed regularly by all the groups at various points during the interviews. Aspects of friendships were also identified as themes with regards to the second and third research questions of phase one and will be discussed in the relevant sections.

## **5.2. Research Question 2a: What factors contribute to the SEW of children as understood by children?**

Across the four focus groups the children discussed a range of experiences related to SEW. Children related their own constructs of SEW to activities, events and relationships that enabled them to keep socially and emotionally well. The three main themes identified regarding what factors contribute to



children's SEW were: 'activities to support wellbeing', 'being part of a family', and 'having friends to talk to'

**Activities to support wellbeing.** The children in all four focus groups discussed activities that they engage in which help their own SEW. My analysis of the data further identified two sub-themes that emerged. These sub-themes were 'solitary activities' and 'social activities'. The results of these two sub themes are presented separately below.

**Solitary activities.** Activities that children engaged in by themselves which helped them to feel better were discussed. For example one participant in Year 8 spoke about building things:

*B4: Like I said earlier, just like building things. I'm making a terrarium. Just like a micro-climate in a bottle. Yeah, it's quite cool. You put moss in it and stuff. It sort of takes my mind off whatever else I'm ... or any problems I ever have I just sort of forget about it.*

*B2: Well when I'm annoyed, or something like that, I usually go and read my book because it really hooks me in and I forget about everything else. It really helps me.....*

The notion of 'losing' themselves or 'forgetting' was specifically mentioned or alluded to by other participants.

*C2: When I'm sad I like to do something that I find fun and then after a while I forget about it.*

*B1: ....because I like riding then I get so carried away then mum asks "Has it gone away?" and I'm "What's gone away?"*

**Social activities.** As well as identifying activities that they participated in by themselves children also spoke about activities involving other people that helped their SEW. For example:

*D3: I do loads of clubs. I do band twice a week as well and then, this isn't a club, I have my flute lesson which is kind of part of [...]. I do netball club with my year and then I also help with the younger netball. So I'll help with the Year 5 and 6 netball club and I'll help teach them with the PE teacher. And I also do tap and ballet and gym.*

*A1: I enjoy riding, building, and doing things with my friends especially I enjoy doing stuff with my brother.*

*B1: Going to see Toffee with people I know and Toffee is the pony I ride and going to Brownies to see people I know.*

The social activities described by the children, by their very nature, involve family and friends however I have chosen to discuss the themes of family and friends as separate from activities involving family and friends. The reason for this is that items that were coded and themed for activities were items that primarily involved the activity or a description of an activity as the mechanism supporting the SEW of the participants. In contrast the items coded and themed for family and friends focused on the friend or family member themselves as supporting the participants' SEW.

**Having friends to talk to.** Many of the participants spoke about the importance of friends in supporting their SEW. Whilst this may not be entirely unexpected, given the manner in which the children had understood SEW, the data highlights that having friends to talk to is viewed by the children as an extremely

important factor in their overall SEW. Participants discussed friends and friendships as a way to support their own SEW, for example:

*A4: Well sometimes you see your friends that live in different villages and towns around that you can't meet up with at the weekend. It's quite nice and seeing friends in general.*

*E2: Sometimes when I'm sad I just try and talk to my friends if I'm at school. That makes me feel a lot better sometimes. It depends if I'm with my friends or not.*

*F3: ...like chat to friends on like social media. Like with Messenger and that. Skype, Instagram and all that. That I can chat to my friends that I don't very [sic] see that often.*

Children elaborated further about how friends and friendships supported their SEW. Examples of this were:

*E4: I made friends with this really cool girl called \*\*\*\*. She's very similar to me, erm, and we have a lot of fun together and we know everything about each other, and so I feel comfortable and happy around her.*

*A2: That you've got people who care about you. Like your family and friends and you're not just on your own when you are upset and that they could help you if you feel sad.*

**Being part of a family.** As well as identifying friends as supporting their SEW the children in all focus groups spoke about the importance of being in a family and the role family members play in their SEW. Specific family members were given as examples by the children.

C4: *Whenever me and my brother get along because me and my brother fight quite a lot...and we're not that...well we are close but whenever we fight I get really upset but whenever we get along we get along for quite a long time until something bad happens.*

C1: *Er, because my big brother \*\*\*\* lives with his dad and when I am with him I feel quite happy because I don't see him a lot.*

F1: *I like it when I am with my dad because I joined a football team and I'm playing well and he's proud of me so I feel happy to spend time with him.*

Other comments related to the family more generally and included being useful to talk to and knowing they were there for them.

### **5.3. Research Question 3a: When might children experience difficulties with their SEW, as identified by children?**

One theme was identified that related to times when children may experience difficulties with their SEW.

**Emotional impact of events.** Falling out with friends, or friendships under strain, were discussed in relation to their emotional impact on wellbeing.

C2: *I had two friends. They both had PS3s and they were like always playing with each other on car racing games and I was actually quite jealous because they're like always playing together.*

Participants commented on feelings of being left out of social groups:

C2: *Your friends are having a good time without you*

F3: *You would feel disowned.*

Other children gave specific examples of when their SEW might be affected:

B1: *When I am annoyed with my mum*

E2: *One of her best friends, she posted a picture on Instagram and then in the comments one of her old best friends posted one of her like really big secrets.... So now they're not really friends*

E2: *My friend came over and I think she was a tiny bit jealous and we kind of had an argument after that*

Some of the participants spoke about life events that impacted on their SEW:

D1: *My dog died and my sister didn't want to live in the house*

F3: *When my step dad left me...because...like...it's hard*

A3: *Last year when I did my SATs*

In one of the groups we also spoke about transferring to middle school at the end of Year 4. For this group the transfer was still very recent and the participants were able to speak about how it had impacted on their SEW.

A1: *I was feeling scared and worried and also exciting [sic] because there's a lot of new lessons*

B1: *I was feeling excited and nervous at the same time*

D1: *I felt very excited and very sad*

C1: *I was nervous then I was excited.*

#### **5.4. Research Question 1b: What do parents understand by ‘social and emotional wellbeing’?**

The two main themes identified with regards to parents’ understanding of SEW were ‘individual attributes’ and ‘positive relationships’. A third minor theme of ‘physical aspects of wellbeing’ was also identified.

**Individual attributes.** The parents’ discussions often involved comments about SEW in terms of perceived individual attributes such as resilience and confidence. In contrast to the children there was much less focus on feelings such as happy and sad in the parents’ understanding of SEW.

The parents spoke about some of the individual attributes that they understood as forming their constructs of SEW. For example:

P1: *Being confident to get involved [a game of football with peers].*

P2: *There’s something about having that resilience, about saying I’m not fantastic at this but I like it [...] self-esteem [...] and self-awareness*

The following is an excerpt from the interview.

R: *What kinds of things are indicative of good social and emotional wellbeing?*

P3: *Resilience, I think resilience...*

P2: *calm response...*

P1: *individualism and being confident in yourself to not be kow-towed or put under pressure necessarily and feeling confident in yourself that what you’re doing is what you want to do and knowing that makes you feel happy and settled...*

And later:

P2: *They're not always going to be perfect. They will sometimes have interruptions and tricky situations that they have to deal with...*

P1: *Resilience?*

P2: *Yeah*

The above comments made by the parents are representative of the language used by them in describing their understandings of SEW.

The concept of resilience appeared several times throughout the interview and was seen as an important aspect of SEW by all of the group. One of the parents summarised the role of resilience and other individual attributes as follows:

P3: *If a child has social and emotional wellbeing overall it means, I think, that they have that ability to bounce back, to recover, to regulate. They might have bad days, you know, an event might happen, but fundamentally they've got a core inside them of [inaudible] social skills, emotional skills that will help them to recover.*

**Positive relationships.** The parents spoke about relationships in their shared understanding of SEW. For example, one of the parents spoke about relationships and maintaining them as a crucial aspect of SEW:

P4: *There's something for me about having relationships, you know, about having friendships where they are actually connecting with other people and maintaining those and managing the kind of hurdles that happen in relationships*

The role of relationships in relation to SEW led one parent to talk about the importance of social interactions:

*P2: social interactions are interesting there because I think it helps kids. You only need one person at school, one mate at school that you know, you come in and you go “oh, do you know what my mum did this morning? It was so embarrassing”, or you know trying to be cool about Bond and she doesn’t know anything about Bond – do you know what I mean? -Or something like that- and the kid goes “I know my mum did that!”.[...] you know they just need one friend or two or three friends and the way you see it expressed is the kids just go “Yeah, I know what you mean. I know what you mean”. I think that’s really important. As long as you know you don’t feel that your reaction to a stimulus to an event is odd and that it’s only yours. That you feel that other people feel the same. It’s that feeling of other people, other children, feeling a bit like you do about things then I think that is really important because then they know “oh ok it’s not just me” and that’s that whole social interaction isn’t it?*

Another parent spoke about the importance of her son fitting in with his peers at football:

*P1: He likes being in the team, being part of the gang.*

The role of relationships was referred to on several occasions by the parents not only in relation to what SEW is but also in supporting SEW and times when children might be having difficulties with their SEW. These comments will be discussed in the sections relevant to the research questions.



## **Physical aspects of wellbeing**

A third lesser theme of 'physical aspects of wellbeing' was identified as it was discussed on a few occasions by the parents throughout the interview.

Initially a parent commented about the link between physical wellbeing and emotional wellbeing:

*P2: I think there is also something about physical health isn't there which we often take for granted, particularly with our kids and ourselves that actually you need to be...that being physically well impacts on you being emotionally well*

Another parent added:

*P4: Physical competence gives you a massive boost as well if you...as a child if you are competent and good physically it boosts your kudos and that's quite a nice power to know that your body cooperates...and that crosses over into social and emotional wellbeing.*

The whole group appeared to be in agreement that within SEW there was an element of physical wellbeing that was important. One parent made the following observation:

*P3: The thing is they're interlinked, fundamentally. It should be social, physical and emotional wellbeing isn't it, almost? They all interlink.*

### **5.5. Research Question 2b: What factors contribute to the SEW of children as understood by parents?**

The topic of what factors contribute to SEW was enthusiastically discussed by the group and three themes were identified. A theme returned to repeatedly throughout the hour long session, was the structures and systems in place

within the school. The three themes were 'being part of a group', 'beneficial activities', and 'school structures'.

**School structures.** Throughout the focus group interview the parents often discussed the role of the school, the structures and systems in place, and the wider political context when attempting to explain and understand SEW.

Very early on in the interview one of the parents discussed the importance of school structures and their role in supporting SEW:

*P3: ... in a school context, they feel safe, there's a degree, the school somehow encourages acceptance of difference, I think, and that they have an ability to express their creativity but also their physical side. And that there's very, very clear boundaries and a definition of what's acceptable and not acceptable behaviour at school [...] stable, consistent structures and boundaries in which they operate.*

The parents spoke about how the school could support the SEW of the children and reflected upon the school's priorities in terms of academic attainment and student wellbeing.

*P4: ...because school's got different priorities and I'd rather they have a slightly broader set of priorities than tests and results. I've found it a bit hit and miss depending on the teacher*

*P2: I can see it from their perspective. They're thinking we've got enough to do without worrying about their emotional wellbeing. But I don't think children can learn unless they're feeling happy.*

One of the parents queried how staff at a school could demonstrate that the structures and systems in place are contributing to SEW and the impact that this has on academic attainment.

P3: *How does a head fight to... or be brave enough to give a degree of flexibility to be able to say "Yes, ok. I'm going to maintain this level, I'm not going to go for outstanding". Who wants outstanding you know? Bugger off OFSTED, forget that crap. I want my school to maintain good because that is important [...] how do we as a school demonstrate all this stuff [points around to displays on the wall in the room we are in] feelings, how am I feeling, Every Child Matters, good skills, all that stuff. How do you identify presenting behaviours in your pupils which are qualitative on a daily, weekly, monthly, annual basis to show what you are doing to maintain that and how that then impacts your academic results?*

**Being part of a group.** Similar to the children's groups the parents also spoke about the importance of friends and family in supporting SEW. I interpreted the comments about friends and family as being related to a theme of being part of a group, be this a family or friend group.

One of the parents commented on her son being bought a mobile phone which helped him to 'fit in' with his peers.

P4: *\*\*\*\* has just got his first phone and it was very important to get a phone and feel that he was part of the people that had a phone. It was big for him. He feels socially well because he has a phone*

Another parent added:

P1: *I think a lot of it is a peer group thing at his age. It's about part of a gang – connecting with people because they'll text and say...*

Later the same parent talked about her son's involvement with the football team and the importance of having his friends there:

P1: *But he likes the football because it's a team thing and he's got his gang and they all know each other and they can all mess about, whatever.*

The importance of friends was discussed at some length by the parents with the conversation also focussing on the perceived differences between girls and boys.

P2: *Having a best friend. \*\*\*\*, in particular, would be having a best friend.*

P1: *That might be a girl thing though [inaudible] he has this thing about friends, he complains he hasn't played with anyone or whatever, but they don't seem to have that kind of, it's a boy thing, it's more kind of skit around [...]*

P3: *Is that where boys and girls diverge then? Is it because girls become, you know, more emotionally intense, they want to...*

P2: *Well interestingly our close friends have three girls and we've gone away with them a lot and I've always kind of encouraged the boys [...] to have friends that are girls [...] they get a chance to talk more about emotions*

The conversation continued to elaborate on the differences between boys and girls and how they interact with their friends.

A stable family environment was also put forward by one of the parents as being crucial to a child's SEW and was accepted by the group as being relevant.

P3: *There's an underlying structure, it's almost like a framework around that child's life. You give them, you know if you're a parent who has a certain amount of structure and stability at home, consistency at home and the children are fairly comfortable in their home environment and things between their parents are ok [...] that gives them the framework, the foundation stone upon which they can then focus on their own social and emotional needs. If that starts to disrupt then they're not going to keep socially and emotionally well.*

**Beneficial activities.** The parents spoke of activities that their children might do to support their SEW, for example:

P2: *Well for mine sometimes it's just about chilling out, they want to come back and just watch telly or go on Minecraft or do that and sometimes it's about, or mine will say, "I just want to meet up with you and another family and go for a walk".*

The above comment also related to times when the parent felt that their child was finding things a little difficult with his peers and he wanted the security of his family.

Other beneficial activities related to more physical aspects of wellbeing.

P1: *Exercise, I will send my boys out on their bikes. I'll take them out on their bikes. That sorts them out a treat*

P2: *Swimming, physical exercise basically is massive...*

### **5.6. Research Question 3b: When might children experience difficulties with their SEW, as identified by parents?**

Similar to discussions about what might support children's SEW the parents spoke largely about school structures and how these affect SEW. The two themes identified that address difficulties that children experience with their SEW were 'school structures and systems' and 'not fitting in'.

**School structures and systems.** Throughout the interview the parents often spoke about the structures and systems in place at the school. They reflected upon how these structures and systems could impact on the SEW of children. Early on in the conversation the parents questioned the idea of ranking and rating.

*P2: What I think is interesting about the school is that they are being ranked and rated all the time, academically, which you know, and there's a lot of pressure, you know, thinking about SATs and all that stuff that actually how does that then impact if you're not very competitive or you are competitive and you're not doing so well?*

*P4: It's the constant ranking, I guess that's my overall concern. Does that build children's self-esteem? [...]*

*P2: I really struggle with the gifted and talented [collected groans] [...] if you're gifted and talented then there's this pressure to stay there, to be always gifted and talented.*

A further comment about the pressures of school was made by a parent of a 13 year old:

P2: *Now \*\*\*\*'s gone to the college there's a lot of pressure about you know, "it's a hard world and you've got to work really hard". He's 13! You've got to get those top grades because you know it's going to be really stressful [collective groans and noises of disapproval] and I'm like "what? Why are you telling my son that kind of message?"*

Later on in the interview the parents spoke of events that might directly impact on children's SEW and again several examples of school structures were provided, such as:

P3: *change [...] there's quite a significant difference in the approach to academia between first and middle and I think that transition needs more work.*

And later

P3: *it is when they feel overloaded isn't it? They suddenly come in, they're overloaded, we talked about the homework change, we talked about the structure, and it is all the rules and the signatures*

**Not 'fitting in'.** Comments relating to the theme of not 'fitting in' were made when discussing what might impact on children's SEW.

One of the parents commented:

P1: *fitting in, relationships ...*

P4: *yeah, I'd say it's also sort of getting a sense of themselves, you know, as they get older, it's that whole self-esteem so sometimes they think they're fantastic and sometimes they think they're rubbish and sort of helping them think through that...*

The notion of getting older and changing relationships was also referred to:

P1: ...*the hierarchy within the team, the hierarchy kind of settles in a strange way and it's changed throughout the years [...] as they get older they notice it more [...] now it really matters if they lose and recriminations and all those sort of things start to come up*

P4: *as they get older they start to notice the differences*

P3: ...*when you change their social groups [...] streaming for example [...] they are very aware of their levels [...] they start to think am I good or am I not good*

The idea of being part of a gang was also commented on by one of the parents.

P1: *for my child it's nice because he's in this gang, but not because he wants to be a bully but because he wants to be in the gang and he doesn't want to be the one that everyone's pointing at [...] it's fitting in, it's very important to him*

### **5.7. Research Question 1c: What do school staff understand by 'social and emotional wellbeing'?**

Two themes were identified that address this research question; 'safety and trust' and 'ability to regulate emotions'.

**Safety and trust.** The staff spoke about the importance of feeling safe and secure in a group setting and trusting people around you.

S3: *I think feeling safe within a group, whatever the group may be, and feeling safe, not just physically safe but that all of me is safe so if I do say or do the wrong thing no one is going to turn around and jump on me for whatever reason*

And



*S2: ...trusting people around you as well, that they're there to, not look after you, but just support you and help you when you need it whatever that might be*

A sense of being safe was an important construct for the staff:

*S1: I think feeling safe, feeling valued in what you're doing yourself but also what you're doing as a group feeling that there is communication and a common sort of goal*

The theme of safety and trust was prominent throughout the interview and perhaps reflected the staff's views about the value of support networks in school.

**Ability to regulate emotions.** When discussing their understanding of SEW the staff made a number of references to children being able to regulate their emotions. How this self-regulation is obtained was not discussed but it was felt that possessing emotional regulation was indicative of somebody with good SEW, for example:

*S1: so emotional wellbeing might be people who are able to control their reactions to things*

*S3: Yeah, there are adults and children who seem to better at coping with those fluxes, knowing when it's appropriate to react in particular ways*

*S4: ... so being able to control that*

The staff all agreed that there were children in school who they felt they could tell were socially and emotionally well. These children were thought of as being generally happy and possessing some of the skills necessary for good SEW, for example:

S2: *You can see it with the children. Those that have a good emotional wellbeing they are generally just happy and as \*\*\*\* said they don't overreact to something. They don't have one emotion one minute and another emotion the next...*

S4: *...even if they're feeling it they don't show it and they deal with it at another time if that time is not appropriate.*

Resilience and independence were also spoken of as personal qualities that are indicative of good SEW.

S2: *I think if they've got good social and emotional wellbeing then they are resilient and they are independent [agreement from the group]*

### **5.8. Research Question 2c: What factors contribute to the SEW of children as understood by school staff?**

Two themes were identified from the data which addressed supporting the SEW of children; 'belonging' and 'availability of support'.

**Belonging.** The staff spoke about the importance of groups and friendships and what these can offer children in terms of supporting their SEW, for example:

S1: *I think it's finding friendship groups or any kind of groups that they feel comfortable in where they are feeling valued and safe is an important part...*

Being able to speak to others was also seen as supporting SEW:

S1: *...and communication, when they are in those groups they are able to because the children that I can think of that are isolated are the ones that feel most socially and emotionally inept, the ones that seem to be isolated or*

*addicted to computer games or something they are unable to, sort of, erm, feel valued or share something as a group.*

*S4: talk to other people so if it's a problem talk about it before it becomes a huge problem because a lot of the time it is something quite minor but by the time some of them get round to actually saying something about it it's huge and to them it's just blown out of proportion in their head and they don't know what to do and where to go because they've left it and left it and left it and then it's a huge problem*

Other comments that related to the theme of belonging included feelings of being wanted, feeling that you are making a contribution, joining clubs, being part of a class and making others happy such as:

*S2: I think for some children they are happy when they are helping others and making others happy and being part of a group or just having a couple of close friends that's making them happy because they're going "they're friends with me and they like playing with me and I like playing with them and they're happy because I'm here and I'm happy because they're here"*

**Availability of support.** The staff spoke regularly about the kind of support that is offered in school to help children with their SEW and also mentioned positive home environments as a possible supporting factor in children's SEW.

*S2: ...it's about trying to make them feel that they're in that safe space. That they've got people around them that they can trust and who are supporting them [...] make them feel happy, safe, supported, that they can trust you*

And

*S4: also if we say “I get stressed out by things” then they don’t feel so bad then because sometimes they think it’s only them that can’t move or cope or whatever*

The idea of support at school and at home was also seen as important by the group:

*S4: knowing support is there so even if you do get it wrong or you don’t do it in the right way the first time that you’re not going to be criticised for doing it, you’ll be supported by the people you’re with and I suppose for kids that I suppose that’s having that supportive home life as well, having that supportive family at the end of the day if something’s gone wrong at school*

### **5.9. Research Question 3c: When might children experience difficulties with their SEW, as identified by school staff?**

The main theme identified that addressed the research question was that of school structures and systems. Very few comments were made about ‘non-school factors’ with regards to children’s difficulties with SEW.

**School structures and systems.** The staff made many references to times that children might experience difficulties with their SEW that occurred within the school setting. Transition from first school was discussed:

*S2: ...especially the Year 5s, the younger children it’s a new school, it’s a new system. They don’t know what’s happening.*

*S3: and they’re very young still when they get to us so when you’ve got somebody who’s only possibly just turned nine and they bump into somebody in September who may have just turned 13 and is five foot seven and huge.*

*Especially if you've come from somewhere like \*\*\*\* where there's sixty kids in the whole school [...] You know, when you come in from one of the villages into a school of 600 with these great big halls or what most appear huge halls to those huge bags on your back are we suddenly saying to them right now you've got to go from now until god knows what time you're not allowed to go to the loo and you're not allowed to do this and you're not allowed to do that...*

The staff also spoke of the differences between teaching Year 5 and Year 8 and how these could present problems in terms of the relationships between teachers and pupils.

*S3: What a Year 8, especially some of the boys at the moment, would say to perhaps a KS2 teacher [...] the KS2 teacher quite often will take, go over the top because they don't see them they think of them as younger [...] they forget how much they change and how very quickly and how much the kids, especially in Year 7 and 8 are trying to deal with their own emotions and everything else that's going on. So sometimes there seems to be a bit of a, erm, an overreaction. That's how the older boys would consider it.*

There was also reference to the anxiety that the staff felt some children may experience due to school structures such as:

*S1: ...anxiety is one that is linked with school mostly for children, there are some teachers who might instil anxiety into kids or some who dissipate it quite well but I think that's a big, big part of...depending.... it could be from peer pressure or from exams or SATs or whatever there's a million ways that anxiety, anxiety is the sort of quiet one that gets to....*

*S2: sometimes just the unknown, they're anxious because they don't know what's going to happen*

**Non-school factors.** Very few comments were made by the staff about factors outside of school that may present difficulties for children's SEW. The staff considered the impact of children's home life on SEW.

*S4: I think we have such extremes in terms of home life, yes we have some kids that have fantastic home lives and then some that have, bless them, quite horrific home lives and it's those [other children] being able to understand that they're reacting in that way because there's all of this going on at home.*

Another member of staff commented:

*S1: ...knowing what an effort it is for them to get up in a morning and come into school and then to be greeted by a whole world of kind of demands and they haven't got their pens and they haven't eaten breakfast and it feels that anxiety is the first kind of emotion that they will feel*

## **5.10. Summary of Results**

All three participant groups interviewed were able to provide their own understandings of SEW and the factors that support SEW in children. All three participant groups also identified times when children might be having difficulties with their SEW. In total the six focus groups provided data that was analysed and coded into relevant themes that show a degree of overlap between all three participant groups. Table 3 provides a summary of the themes identified from analysis of the focus groups' data. Additionally some of the themes, although having different names and being subtly different to one another, include some similar constructs and topics (for example, 'belonging' for

staff and 'being with friends' for children). The following discussion section will explore these similarities and differences in further detail.

Table 3: *Summary of themes identified across all three participant groups*

	CYP	Parents	Staff
RQ 1	Different feelings Being with friends	Individual attributes Positive relationships Physical aspects of wellbeing	Safety and trust Ability to regulate emotions
RQ 2	Activities to support wellbeing – solitary – social Having friends to talk to Being part of a family	School Structures Being part of a group Beneficial activities	Belonging Availability of support
RQ 3	Emotional impact of events	School Structures and systems Not 'fitting in'	School Structures and systems Non-school factors

## **6. Phase One Discussion**

This discussion section will be structured according to the research questions, with the findings outlined in the previous sections being explored in relation to existing research and literature.

### **6.1 Understandings of social and emotional wellbeing**

Social and emotional wellbeing is an often confusing and poorly defined concept and a range of terms are used (for example, emotional literacy, emotional health and wellbeing) with no single agreed definition (Coombes et al., 2013; Kidger, Gunnell, Biddle, Campbell, & Donovan, 2009; McLaughlin, 2008; Weare & Gray, 2003). There is a lack of research that explores SEW from the perspectives of children and parents (Coverdale & Long, 2015). The findings from this study have highlighted some common themes and differences in children's, parents' and staff's understandings of SEW.

All of the children involved in the focus group were unsure what SEW was when first presented with the term. Coombes et al. (2013) also found that nearly all the young people in their focus groups had to ask what the researchers meant by 'emotional health and wellbeing'.

In this study the children's understanding of SEW revolved around feelings and friendships. Friendships were clearly important for the children interviewed and they referred to friends and friendships throughout the interviews. Friends were discussed both in terms of people who could offer them support and with whom they could share activities. The Children's Society's original survey of 8000 adolescents in 2005 found that 'friends' was the most common key word in responses to the survey they sent out (Pople, Rees, Main, & Bradshaw, 2015).



Both the parents and the staff also spoke about the importance of friends and peer group relationships. For these participant groups the meaning of SEW involved the kinds of relationships and feelings of safety and trust that arise from positive friendships and aligned more closely with the NICE (2013) definition of social wellbeing.

Both parents and staff groups spoke of individual attributes when articulating their understandings of SEW. Resilience was particularly mentioned or alluded to on several occasions. Resilience features as a key concept in the literature on SEW and plays a role in adopting a strengths based approach to SEW as opposed to a focus on problematic SEW (Graham, Phelps, Maddison, & Fitzgerald, 2011; McLaughlin, 2008; DfE, 2014; NICE, 2013).

The parents also viewed SEW as being linked with physical wellbeing. Neither the children nor staff discussed physical wellbeing as a key component of SEW although the children occasionally spoke about physical activities they took part in which they felt supported their SEW such as horse riding and playing football. Physical activity and exercise are often linked with increased wellbeing (Parfitt, Pavey, & Rowlands, 2009; Public Health England, 2013; Scully, Kremer, Meade, Graham, & Dudgeon, 1998; Pople et al., 2015)

## **6.2. What factors contribute to children's social and emotional wellbeing?**

Friends were spoken about by the children as being very important in supporting their SEW. This is in keeping with previous research exploring children's views on wellbeing which has identified friends as one of, if not the main source, of support for children's SEW (Coombes et al., 2013; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Coverdale & Long, 2015; Gabhainn &

Sixsmith, 2005). Friends and positive relationships were also discussed by the parents and staff respectively. Parents spoke of the importance of relationships and being part of a group whilst staff spoke about communication and feeling wanted by others. Having friends and the quality of friendships are important factors for children's SEW as understood by the participants in this study with children attributing more support from friends than either the parents or staff. Quality of relationships was one of the main themes identified in the Good Childhood Report and positive relationships are at the "heart" of children's wellbeing (Pople et al., 2015, p. 14)

Additional findings from the children's group indicate that they participate in a range of activities that make them feel better and could impact on their SEW (as they understood it). The activities they spoke about fell into two categories of those they undertook on their own and those that involved other people. Similarly Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) found that activities and things to do emerged as a strong theme in children's understandings of wellbeing. Some of the participants spoke of activities that enabled them to forget about things (that were upsetting them) or lose track of time. In my research journal I noted the word 'flow' as I felt that some of the activities the children were speaking of were akin to the concept of 'flow' or being 'in the zone'. Flow can be thought of total absorption in an activity that often leads to a loss of sense of time (Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2009).

The findings in this study indicate that parents consider the activities children undertake to play a part in their SEW, particularly if the activity has a physical element to it which, as suggested by the parents understandings of SEW, is an important factor in maintaining SEW.

The predominant theme for the parents was that of school structures and how these supported the SEW of children. At one point the discussion focussed on what a middle school such as the one this research took place in could do to promote SEW. The parents felt that less focus on academic results and greater input into ensuring the wellbeing of children was an important role that the school could fulfil.

Similarly the staff also spoke at length about the school and its role in supporting SEW. The focus of the staff discussion was more about the things that they, as adults working with children, were doing to look after the children in the school. As outlined in my literature review a series of initiatives since the turn of the century have focussed on the school as a place to support the SEW of children. Schools have become increasingly targeted as sites for mental health promotion (Graham et al., 2011) with schools seen as playing a key role in supporting SEW (McLaughlin, 2008; Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton, & Wolpert, 2013; Weare et al., 2003) however Kidger et al. (2009) explored the extent to which teachers feel appropriately skilled or willing to take on such responsibilities suggesting some difficulties in how different staff perceive their role in relation to children's SEW.

Staff constructs of what supports SEW in children included a sense of belonging with the staff all speaking about the safety and support that staff in a school can offer to children. Comments made by the staff support the idea that for some children just coming to school and being part of a class or friendship group is a valuable factor in supporting their SEW. In fact a sense of belonging to a school has been cited as a protective factor for mental health (DfE, 2014). The findings suggest that the staff believe schools are a place to support SEW

although notable comments made during the group interview suggest that there are variations in individual staff member's abilities or willingness to do this successfully (see Kidger et al., 2009). Interestingly the Year 8 focus group spoke of times when talking to teachers was not beneficial as they did not feel comfortable talking to them about their problems and would have preferred to speak to a friend or someone they know. Coombe et al. (2013) identified peer support as an important social resource valued by children and has been suggested as a whole school strategy to supporting SEW (Cowie, Boardman, Dawkins, & Jennifer, 2004)

### **6.3. Experiencing difficulties with social and emotional wellbeing**

The children's groups gave examples of events that had made them feel emotions such as sad, angry or anxious which was in keeping with their understandings of SEW. Coverdale and Lang (2015) similarly found that young people in their study emphasised emotional wellbeing as subjective, changeable and dependent on day-to-day issues. Many of the events the children talked about involved a friend or family member. Other than the Year 8 example given in the last section none of the children spoke of any difficulties with the staff however the staff themselves identified some teachers and support staff as occasionally overreacting to comments made by children, and in difficulty with adjusting between Year 5 and Year 8 pupils. These findings suggest that for children, events that adults may view as relevant may be viewed quite differently by the children themselves. Previous research suggests that students preferred teachers with a positive attitude who seemed to understand the feeling and emotions they were experiencing and could communicate on their level (Coombes et al., 2013).

Some of the children spoke about the feelings they experienced when starting a new school in Year 5 and the same topic was discussed by both the parent and staff groups suggesting that transition to middle school from primary could be viewed as problematic in terms of children's SEW. Research suggests that transitions between schools for children can provoke feelings of anxiety (Galton & Morrison, 2000; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008) as students have to contend with new surroundings, new friendships and new structures. The parents themselves expressed their own confusion about new systems in middle school and the difficulties both they and their children had in adjusting.

Both the parent and staff groups spoke about school structures and how these impact on the SEW of children. This reflects similar findings in Sixsmith, Nic Gabhainn, Fleming, and O'Higgins', (2007) study which found that 'school' as a category had more prominence in the adults' conceptualisation of wellbeing than children's. The parents in this study expressed concerns throughout the interview about how schools are ranked (in terms of league tables) and the overriding focus on children's levels and attainment and the impact that this might have on their SEW. The staff also spoke of school structures but focussed more on the new systems in place for Year 5 children and difficulties with teachers teaching across all four year groups. Only one member of the staff group spoke about similar pressures (SATs, exams) within school as the parents. When the children spoke about school and difficulties with SEW it involved Year 5 transition, SATs and how they related to teachers and support staff.

#### **6.4 Comparison of themes across focus groups**

Similar themes were identified in relation to children's, parents' and staff's understandings and constructs of SEW (see Table 3 for a summary of themes). All of the focus groups spoke about the importance of other people as sources of support and in defining SEW. These other people included friends and family for all the focus groups, and staff members for parent and staff groups. Themes relating to the support and importance of other people were being with friends, having friends to talk to and being part of a family (themes from children's groups); positive relationships and being part of a group (parent focus group themes) and; availability of support and belonging (staff focus group themes). The similarity in some themes identified in this present study reflects previous research findings that identify friends and family as important and influential aspects of children's SEW (for example, DCSF, 2008; Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2005).

Staff and parents had similar themes of individual attributes (parents) and ability to regulate emotions (staff). Both parents and staff spoke about children's ability to regulate their emotions and it was felt by both groups that this was an important quality in contributing to good SEW. Coverdale and Long (2015) found that parents in their study considered emotional stability and ability to cope with life's ups and downs as important to children's SEW.

It is interesting in this study that parents and staff discussed the importance of school structures in contributing to children's SEW. A similarity in these two themes included discussions about creating a supportive environment for children. Contrastingly parents focussed on the political aspects of education

and school (such as league tables) as presenting possible difficulties for children's SEW whilst staff tended to focus more on the immediate school environment (such as teacher-child relationships and school systems).

Children's and parent's focus groups had overlapping themes of activities to support wellbeing. The children described activities they undertook to support their SEW whilst parents spoke of activities that they felt were beneficial to children's SEW. Specific examples that were given by both parent and child groups included playing football, listening to music and reading.

### **6.5. Study Limitations**

In this section both methodological considerations and my own personal reflections are included.

The children involved in the focus groups were randomly selected from their respective tutor groups however only 22 children participated out of a total school population of 570 meaning that those children who took part in the groups may not be representative of the whole school population.

The four parents and four staff who participated in the focus groups were all self-selecting which may introduce bias into the data. The parents who participated were largely in agreement with each other on the topics discussed and all expressed political views about the education system and its role with regards to children's SEW. Those who self-selected for the group interviews may have the strongest views about SEW and therefore may not be representative of the parent and staff populations.

A difficulty running focus groups with children is the inevitable power imbalance. In choosing focus groups as the method of data collection for this study I was

attempting to reduce the power imbalance by utilising a group structure where children would be together and reassured by comments made by their peers. It was noticeable in the children's focus groups that there was considerably less group interaction than with either the parent or staff groups which may have been due in part to the power imbalance and children's perceptions of how they should behave in groups (for example, putting hand up, addressing the adult instead of their peers). Future focus groups with children could look to address any lack of group dynamics by incorporating more developmentally appropriate activities that stimulate discussion, such as drawings and vignettes.

I regularly reflected on my role as a researcher. The structure of the focus groups, the questions I asked and the comments I made during the groups will all have a bearing on the participants' responses. Undoubtedly some co-construction of knowledge will have occurred between myself and the participants during the discussions. Using thematic analysis as a method of data analysis also placed my own judgements and beliefs about the data into sharp focus. I am aware that my interpretation of the data, to some extent, reflects my own constructions of SEW and also my own views and thoughts concerning school structures (as an ex-teacher myself).

## **6.6. Relevance to Practice**

This study provides insights into the understandings of SEW by children, parents and school staff and highlights similarities and differences between the three groups in how SEW is construed, supported and in identifying potential times of difficulty for children's SEW. There is very little research that has attempted to elicit children's views with regards to SEW, and wellbeing in



general, much less so that has compared those views with those of parents and staff. This present study therefore adds knowledge to the limited research and also provides further evidence for the importance of accessing children's views about SEW and their lives more generally.

There is added relevance for the school involved in this research as the data generated by all three participant groups can offer insights and inspiration for exploring SEW within the setting and in addressing some of the concerns raised by all three groups.

Identified below are some of the implications for EP practice:

- Eliciting the voice of the child and identifying potential positive changes in school systems
- Working with children, parents, and school staff to promote school community involvement in supporting the SEW of children
- Increasing awareness of factors influencing children's SEW
- Working with schools to engage in research
- Working with school staff to implement whole school approaches to SEW

### **6.7. Future Directions for Research**

Further research that attempts to elicit the views of children with regard to their SEW would be useful. Ways in which this could be done might involve more child friendly and developmentally appropriate data collection methods, perhaps involving the children as researchers themselves. Action research that involves children, parents and staff in conceptualising SEW and how to support it in schools would be beneficial.

## **6.8. Links to Phase Two of this Research Project**

This present research used the findings from phase one to design and inform phase two. By identifying factors that support SEW, and times when children experience difficulties with their SEW, I planned to explore the impact of mindfulness exercises on some of these factors in phase two of this research.

The following findings from phase one were influential in choosing the quantitative measures to be used in phase two:

- The importance of friendships
- The role of emotions in children's constructs of SEW
- A sense of belonging
- Ability to regulate emotions

The range of themes and personal views identified within the six focus groups provided rich data relating to SEW from the perspectives of children, parents and staff. The choice of quantitative measures was guided by the findings from phase one, my reading of the literature and the appropriateness of available measures. Two broad measures of mental health and wellbeing were selected. Further discussion of the rationale for the choice of measures is in the methods section of phase two of this paper.

Developing on from the findings in phase one the second phase of this research explores the use of mindfulness exercises in relation to children's SEW. Research on mindfulness based programmes with adults and children has suggested a variety of positive outcomes across a range of social and emotional competencies and is proposed as one way to promote SEW in schools (Weare, 2015). Phase two looks at:

- Children's and staff's perceptions and experiences of mindfulness exercises
- Impact of the PME on SEW
- The role of the EP in facilitating programmes to promote SEW

## 7. Phase Two Methods

### Exploration of running a programme of mindfulness exercises in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of children

**School information.** The same school collaborated in both phases of this research project. In the time between the first phase data collection ending and the second phase data collection beginning no major changes to the pupil, parent or staff populations took place.

#### **Collaboration with the Senior Leadership Team**

The second phase of this research project involved running a 30 day programme of mindfulness exercises with children. The running of the programme involved some minor changes to the daily routine and curriculum of the children and staff involved. Whilst mindful of the data analysis from the first phase, an acknowledgement of the real world setting of this research was required when selecting participants for the PME. I met with the Head Teacher and the SENCo to discuss the direction of the research. At this meeting I shared a summary of my findings from phase one and also outlined my ideas of how phase two might evolve. We agreed a timescale of when the second phase of data collection would start and end. Letters sent out to parents about the research were in collaboration with the SENCo.

#### **7.1. Participant Recruitment**

**Children.** The selection of participants for the second phase of this research was a collaborative process involving discussions with the Head Teacher, the SENCo and teachers. These discussions, together with findings from phase

one, indicated that Year 5 teachers and pupils would be best placed to take part in the research. Two Year 5 tutor teachers were interested in participating with their tutor groups. I met with the tutors to discuss the research and share a draft version of the PME.

A letter containing information about the research was sent out via the school office to every parent and carer of a child in the two selected tutor groups (see Appendix 22). This letter contained an opt-out consent form which parents could return if they did not wish their child to participate in the study.

Additionally, written consent was obtained from all the children in both Year 5 tutor groups prior to data collection commencing.

No parents opted for their child to not participate and therefore all 56 children from two Year 5 tutor groups started the intervention at the end of November 2015. There were 28 male and 28 female participants. The age range was from 9 years and 3 months to 10 years and 2 months with a mean age of 9 years and 9 months. Middle childhood and early adolescence are developmental periods when the ability to exhibit self-regulation and inhibitory control increases (Mendelson et al., 2010) suggesting that Year 5 would be a good time to practise mindfulness exercises (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

**Parents.** A separate letter was sent to all parents and carers of children in the two tutor groups outlining the research and inviting them to participate in a short group interview (see Appendix 23). Unfortunately no parents responded to this letter and no interview took place.

**School Staff.** Two tutor teachers (one male and one female) agreed to participate after discussions with the Head Teacher and Year 5 teaching team.

## **7.2. Delivery of the Programme of Mindfulness Exercises**

During discussions with the Year 5 tutors it was agreed that the mindfulness exercises would take place every morning during tutor time. This time was chosen as it would not lead to any disruption of lessons and was a guaranteed time for the tutors and their classes to be together. The tutors followed the order of the PME as detailed in Appendix 3. The instructions for exercises were played from a CD from the book 'Sitting Still like a Frog' (Snel, 2013) with two supplemental recordings by me. Any child who did not wish to participate in an exercise was given the option to read quietly at their table.

Both tutor group teachers were asked to complete brief notes about the daily mindfulness exercises. The notes recorded if the exercise had been completed, any absent children, and other relevant information (including observations of whole class engagement, and any disruptions).

## **7.3. Quantitative Measures**

As part of a mixed methods design two measures were chosen to collect quantitative data both pre- and post- the PME. The two scales used were the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Stirling Children's Well-being Scale (SCWBS).

**7.3.1. SDQ.** The SDQ is a behavioural questionnaire that is recommended as a screening tool for mental health difficulties in students (DFE, 2014) and has been used as a treatment-outcome measure and as a research tool (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ consists of 25 statements to which the respondent can answer not true, somewhat true or certainly true (see Appendix 24 for the SDQ). There are self-rated, teacher-rated, and parent-rated versions of the SDQ. The scale

can be broken down into sub-scales corresponding to measurements of emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-sociality. Every scale except the pro-social one is added to provide a total difficulties score between 0 and 40 (*Scoring the SDQ*, 2015). Findings from phase one of this research indicated the importance of friendships and emotions in children's understanding of SEW. The SDQ includes items and sub-scales related to these themes. Previous studies of MBA have suggested improvements in a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties which the SDQ aims to measure, such as externalising problems and peer relationships (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Weare, 2013).

Additionally the SDQ was chosen for its brevity, not being solely problems focussed, and its reliability and validity (Goodman, 2001). Importantly, in terms of this research, the SDQ has been shown to be sensitive to treatment effects (Mathai, Anderson, Bourne, 2003) and to provide useful information when used with children as young as eight (Muris, Meesters, Eijkelenboom, & Vincken, 2004).

**7.3.2. SCWBS.** The SCWBS was developed by the Stirling Council Educational Psychology Service for children aged 8 to 15 years of age and was found to be a reliable and valid measure of wellbeing (Liddle & Carter, 2015) (see Appendix 25 for a copy of the SCWBS). The authors stated that their desired aim was to construct a scale that measured positive changes in children's wellbeing based on positive psychology principles (Liddle & Carter, 2015).

The SCWBS is recommended by Public Health England as a validated measure of children's mental wellbeing (Public Health England, 2015). The

SCWBS consists of twelve items measuring emotional and psychological wellbeing with possible scores from 12 to 60. Children complete the scale by answering never, not much of the time, some of the time, quite a lot of the time, or all of the time to each of the twelve statements. The SCWBS is quick to administer and accessible to school aged children (Liddle & Carter, 2015). The choice of the SCWBS also reflects its inclusion of items that aim to capture components of positive affect and interpersonal relationships (Liddle & Carter, 2015) which are related to elements of the themes identified in phase one of this research.

#### **7.4. Qualitative Measures**

**7.4.1. Semi-structured interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six children and one teacher to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences of the PME. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask structured questions, enabling comparisons across interviews, but also to pursue areas spontaneously initiated by the interviewee (Berg & Lune, 2013). Interview schedules were designed for children and teachers to include questions that addressed the aims and research questions of phase two (see Appendices 26 and 27). Topic areas corresponding to the research questions were included together with questions and prompts. This style of interview allows a degree of flexibility that enables the interviewer to modify questions and explore particular answers in more depth (Robson, 2002). Verbal and non-verbal communication in an interview enables the interviewer to use his skills to probe further and respond to non-verbal cues in an appropriate manner that maintains rapport and respects the interviewee's level of desire to talk about a topic (Berg & Lune, 2013).



**7.4.2. Evaluation Questionnaire.** An evaluation questionnaire consisting of mainly open-ended questions was used to gather the views of all the children who participated in the PME. A questionnaire was chosen to gather additional information that could be triangulated with findings from quantitative measures and the interviews. Open-ended questions were chosen as I was interested in obtaining a broad range of views that required the participants to express themselves in their own words. Closed questions have many disadvantages such as eliciting responses where no knowledge exists, oversimplifying issues and possibly forcing answers into unnatural categories (Julien, 2008). The wording of questions was based on the following criteria: questions were jargon free; questions were short; double-barrelled questions were avoided; questions were at an appropriate reading level; participants were likely to have the knowledge required to answer (adapted from Julien, 2008; Robson, 2002). A draft version of the questionnaire was sent to my research supervisors before being modified and used with the children (see Appendix 28 for a copy of the questionnaire).

## **7.5. Procedures**

**7.5.1. SDQ and SCWBS.** Before commencing data collection I spoke to both tutor groups to outline the research project and give an overview of the PME. Additional written consent was obtained from all the children (see Appendix 29). The SDQ and SCWBS were administered with a total of 56 children before and after the PME. A brief explanation of the scales was given along with instructions for completing them. Both tutor groups completed the forms in their usual classrooms. The statements on the SDQ and SCWBS were read out with a pause after each statement to enable the children to mark the sheet as

appropriate. The SDQ and SCWBS administration procedure allowed efficient data collection from all participants and enabled children to ask questions and express any difficulties understanding words or phrases.

In addition to the child rated SDQs, a further eleven teacher rated SDQs were completed for children chosen at random from the tutor group register. These forms were completed by the respective tutor group teachers before and after the PME (see Appendix 30 for teacher rated SDQs).

**7.5.2. Semi-structured interviews with children.** Interviews were held with six children (three from each tutor group) who had participated in the PME. In total 18 letters with an opt-in consent form were sent to parents of children chosen at random from the classes' registers (see Appendix 31 for the letter). Seven letters giving consent were returned (one child was absent on the day of the interviews). The six children who participated in the interviews also gave additional signed consent. The sampling strategy used aimed to gather a range of views across the two classes. The gender split of the sample and the participants' SCWBS scores were representative of the two classes however there are questions as to the extent to which the sample was representative of both classes and this is discussed in the study limitations section later in this thesis.

Interviews with the children were conducted in a quiet room and each lasted between ten and fifteen minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed (see Appendix 44 for example transcript of interview). The semi-structured interviews all followed a six stage process detailed below:

1. Arrival and Introductions – I was known to the children having visited the tutor groups on several occasions over the course of the PME.
2. Introducing the Research – the children were all aware of the research. I was able to explain the purpose of the interview and where it fitted in with the overall project. I explained about consent and anonymity. All children had opportunities to ask questions about the research at this point.
3. Beginning the interview – I began by asking questions about life at school and encouraged children to talk about things they enjoyed in order to build rapport and put the children at ease.
4. The main part of the interview – I followed a semi-structured interview schedule devised to answer the research questions and obtain further information about the children's experiences of the PME.
5. Ending the interview – the children were asked for their final thoughts and if there was anything else that was important to know
6. After the interview – the children all had an opportunity to ask further questions (whether about the interview, mindfulness or more general questions).

All six steps above are adapted from Yeo et al. (2014).

### **7.5.3. Semi-structured interview with tutor teacher.**

Both teachers agreed to be interviewed but unfortunately one of the teachers was called away urgently on the day of the interview and therefore only one of the teachers was interviewed. Written consent was obtained from the teacher.

The interview with the tutor teacher lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in a classroom at the end of the school day. A similar six step structure to the children's interviews was used.

**7.5.4. Evaluation Questionnaire.** The evaluation questionnaire was administered to the whole tutor group by their tutor teacher. All of the children were given an explanation of the questionnaire and how to complete it. They were encouraged to answer as honestly as possible. All 56 children in both tutor groups completed the questionnaire. The children were able to ask questions for clarification and further explanations of the questions were given if necessary. Whole class administration of the questionnaire avoided common pitfalls of self-administered surveys such as misunderstandings (by giving participants chances to ask questions) and low response rates (Robson, 2002).

## **7.6. Analysis**

**7.6.1 SDQ – Child rated.** Completed SDQs (pre- and post-PME) were hand scored by myself following instructions available on the SDQ website (*Scoring the SDQ*, 2015). The scores for each individual item were then inputted into SPSS, a statistical software programme. The data was subjected to the following procedures:

- Checks of normality and distribution
- Descriptive statistical analysis including means, standard deviations and ranges
- Dependent *t*-tests
- Nonparametric tests

The SDQ consists of a total difficulties score and five other scales of 'emotional problems', 'conduct problems', 'hyperactivity', 'peer relationship problems' and 'pro-social behaviour' (R. Goodman, 2001) . Additionally the 'emotional' and 'peer relationship problems' scales can be aggregated to give an 'internalising problems' score and the 'conduct problems' and 'hyperactivity' scales can be added to give an 'externalising problems' score. In non-clinical populations the use of 'internalising' and 'externalising' scores from the SDQ has been suggested as more appropriate than using the five sub-scales (A. Goodman, Lamping, & Ploubidis, 2010).

**7.6.2. SDQ – Teacher Rated.** The SDQs were hand scored by myself and then input into SPSS. One of the children left during the research period and therefore 11 teacher scored SDQs were subjected to the following procedures:

- Checks of normality and distribution
- Descriptive statistical analysis including means, standard deviations and ranges
- Nonparametric tests

**7.6.3. SCWBS.** The SCWBSs were hand scored by myself and the scores input into SPSS. The SCWBS consists of one overall scale of wellbeing based on twelve items and three items composing a social desirability subscale (Liddle & Carter, 2015). The data were subject to the following analyses:

- Checks for normality and distribution
- Descriptive statistical analysis including means, standard deviations and ranges
- Dependent *t*-tests

#### **7.6.4. Semi-structured Interviews**

All six interviews with the children and the one with the tutor teacher were analysed using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial familiarisation with the data including listening to the interviews and making notes. Interviews were then transcribed. A summary of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, which was used to analyse the interview data in phase two, is given earlier in this paper.

#### **7.6.5. Evaluation Questionnaire**

The questionnaires were analysed by hand and a form of basic content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015) was used to identify the most common responses to the questions. Content analysis is a commonly applied analytic method for analysing open-ended text, such as that in questionnaire responses (Julien, 2008). The type of content analysis used in this research most closely fits with what has been called summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researcher begins with existing words or data in the text, which are counted, and then extends the analysis to include latent meanings or themes (Berg & Lune, 2013). All the written responses were analysed for common words and phrases relating to the question asked on the questionnaire. For example, the comment "*It made me feel relaxed and calm*", was scored once for calm (or derivations of calm) and once for relax (or derivations of relax). Positive or negative uses of the same word were coded separately.

#### **7.7. Ethical Considerations**

Careful ethical consideration was given to including children as research participants and any negative implications of participating in mindfulness

exercises. Children are seen as being particularly vulnerable when acting as research participants due to relative positions of power (Vaughn et al., 1996). I aimed to empower the children in this research by providing information about the study, enabling them to choose whether to participate in the mindfulness exercises, seeking their views and understandings of what they were experiencing, and being sensitive to their developmental needs. The following steps were taken to support children in being active participants in this research:

- I met with both classes prior to the research commencing to explain the project, the concept of mindfulness and the intended programme of mindfulness exercises. At this meeting children were given opportunities to ask questions.
- Children provided written consent to complete the SDQ and SCWBS, take part in the PME, be interviewed and complete a questionnaire.
- Children's right to withdraw from the research was explicitly stated and re-stated throughout the PME. Some children chose to exercise this right.
- The setting of the PME was in the children's usual classrooms during normal school hours. This was intentional in the hope that the PME would be experienced as part of everyday schooling.
- Children were participating with their peers. No child was 'singled out' for participation in the PME as it was universal in its application.

Mindfulness research to date has shown that MBA with children have caused no reported harm and are well tolerated by children (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013; Zenner et al., 2014). Children participating in this research were regularly

reminded that they could stop participating in the exercises at any time. Children were encouraged to speak to their tutor if they had any concerns. I visited the school once every week to observe a session and speak to the tutors.

Approval was gained from the University of Exeter's SSIS Ethics Committee in October 2015 (please see Appendix 32 for certificate of approval).



## 8. Phase two findings

### 8.1. SDQ Child Rated.

Any child who completed only a pre- or post-SDQ was excluded from the analysis. This meant there was complete pre- and post-data for 54 (96%) of the participants (see Appendices 33 and 34 for descriptive statistics and frequency distributions). Before conducting parametric or nonparametric statistical tests it is important to check that the data is normally distributed (Field, 2005). As looking at histograms is “*subjective and open to abuse*” (Field, 2005, p.93) a more objective test, the Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965), was used as well as visual inspections of histograms, to test for normality. This test was chosen as it is recommended for sample sizes up to 2000 and is considered the best test of normality (Hanusz & Tarasinska, 2014) (see Appendix 36 for Shapiro-Wilk test results).

The total difficulties scores for before and after the PME were calculated as normally distributed by using the Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) (before  $W(54) = 0.56, p > .05$ ; after  $W(54) = 0.31, p > .05$ ). Further Shapiro-Wilk tests ( $p > .05$ ) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) showed that the distribution of scores for emotional problems before and after, hyperactivity before and after, externalising before and after, and internalising before and after were approximately normally distributed. The remaining scales of prosocial (before and after), conduct problems (before and after), and peer problems (before and after) were all found to be significant at  $p < .05$  and therefore normality was not assumed.

Dependent *t*-tests (Field, 2005) were conducted on those sub-scales meeting the criteria for normality to test for any statistically significant differences in means before and after the PME. No significant differences were found for four of the sub-scales. A significant decrease in the means was found for externalising scores  $t(53) 2.23, p < 0.05$  (see Appendix 37 for *t*-test results). Field (2005) argues that a *t*-statistic that is statistically significant does not mean that the effect is important in practical terms and that the effect size should be quoted with statistically significant *t* scores. Calculating *r* (Pearson's coefficient) is a frequently used way to calculate effect size (Field, 2005). In the case of the changes on the means of the externalising scores an effect size  $r = 0.29$  was found indicating that there was a medium effect size (Field, 2005).

Nonparametric tests were used with the sub-scales where normality was not assumed (prosocial, conduct and peer scores). The Wilcoxon signed ranks test is the non-parametric equivalent of the dependent *t*-test (Field, 2005; Haslam, 2014) and calculates the statistical significance of changes in mean between two related groups when relaxed assumptions about normality are made (Haslam, 2014). No significant differences were found in scores for prosocial and peer problems. A decrease in conduct problems' scores was found to be significant ( $z = -2.32, p < .05$ ) (see Appendix 38 for full results). An effect size of  $r = -0.21$  indicates a small effect (Field, 2005).

**8.2. SDQ Teacher Rated.** Eleven pairs of teacher rated SDQ scores were collected (pre- and post-PME). Shapiro-Wilk tests ( $p > .05$ ) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) showed that the total difficulties, emotional problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, externalising and internalising scores for both before and after the PME were approximately normally distributed. There is a degree of caution with

this assumption of normality because with small sample sizes, tests of normality have little power to reject the null hypothesis and therefore small sample sizes often pass normality tests (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Due to this reason nonparametric tests were used as they make fewer assumptions about the data and its distribution (Field, 2005).

Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted with the pre- and post-PME means for total difficulties, the five sub-scales of the SDQ and the two aggregate scores of externalising and internalising problems. For teachers' rated SDQs both total difficulties ( $z = -2.16, p < .05, r = -0.46$ ) and externalising problems ( $z = -1.98, p < .05, r = -0.42$ ) were significantly lower after the PME than before. Differences in the remaining sub-scales from before the PME to after it were all found to be non-significant ( $p > .05$ ) (see Appendices 35 and 39 for statistical analysis).

**8.3. SCWBS.** Any child who completed only the pre- or post-SCWBS or had missing data for one item or more from the scale was excluded from the analysis. This left a total of 46 complete pairs of measures. A Shapiro-Wilk test (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965) and visual inspection of histograms showed that the total wellbeing scores were approximately normally distributed for both before and after the PME. The mean total wellbeing score before the PME was 40.4 ( $n = 46$ ) and the mean total wellbeing score after the PME was 38.8 ( $n = 46$ ) showing a small reduction in overall wellbeing scores. A dependent  $t$ -test revealed this change to not be significant ( $p > .05$ ) (see Appendices 40-42 for descriptive statistics and  $t$ -test).

#### **8.4. Semi-structured interviews with children**

**Presentation of Transcript Excerpts.** All excerpts from the interviews are in italics and participants are referenced by a letter and a number. Any identifying names or places have been replaced with \*\*\*\*.

**Children's perceptions and experiences of the PME.** All six children said they participated in all of the exercises with one saying she missed the first couple of sessions. Five of the six participants stated a desire to continue with mindfulness exercises once the PME had finished. All six participants agreed that tutor time was a good time for the mindfulness exercises.

Thematic analysis of the data identified three themes; 'calm, relaxing and peaceful', 'exercises for slowing down and relaxing' and 'difficulties and distractions'. None of the children interviewed had heard of mindfulness nor participated in any mindfulness practice before the PME (please see Appendices 44-47 for transcripts and coding).

***Calm, relaxing and peaceful.*** By far the most mentioned word by all six participants was calm (or a derivation of). Comments about the PME referred to it as calming, relaxing and peaceful and included:

*C1: to me they all had like a different, erm, calmness*

*C5: I really enjoyed the fact that once you've done it, like, it helps you calm down*

*C2: Well for me it felt quite relaxing.*

All the children interviewed felt participating in mindfulness exercises helped bring calm and peace to their classroom, for example:

C3: *I'd say when they're doing mindfulness they're calm and peaceful*

When asked to describe mindfulness in three words the responses featured the word calm (or a derivative) five times, relaxing, peaceful, fun and amazing twice each and easy and joyful once. There were no negative words used to describe mindfulness by any of the participants.

***Exercises for slowing down and relaxing.*** During the interviews the children were able to identify times when they had, or could envisage when, mindfulness exercises could be useful.

One of the children thought that mindfulness could be useful to help them fall asleep.

C3: *it kind of keeps me sleepy...sometimes what I do is I close my eyes while doing mindfulness and then I just fall asleep*

Another child thought that mindfulness exercises could be useful at the beginning of the day.

C2: *I think when I'm just woke up because on the morning I'm very erm, I'm normally rushed because my bus, so I'm normally rushed about, running around, so when I get up it would be nice to have a short one [a mindfulness exercise].*

One child said that it would be useful to engage in mindfulness exercises when his brother is annoying him and that it would be useful to have a place to calm down. Only one of the children interviewed said they couldn't think of a time when mindfulness might be useful for them.

***Difficulties and Distractions.*** The children spoke of some of the difficulties and distractions of participating in the PME which ranged from the conduct of other children in the class to comments on some of the exercises themselves.

Three of the children spoke about difficulties they had with other members of their class during the exercises, for example:

C2: *The girls sometimes giggle about it which is kind of annoying because they distract you*

C1: *...people sitting next to me reading [imitates reading out in a whisper] it's hard to concentrate*

Two of the participants felt that initially taking part in the exercises was a bit 'embarrassing' and 'weird' but both said that after a few sessions those feelings went away.

C5: *Really for the first couple of times it felt like quite embarrassing once you'd done it like a couple of times then you aren't so worried about it because you knew like that they were doing it as well.*

Comments were made concerning difficulties with sitting still:

C1: *Yeah, I found sitting still quite difficult because that's like a whole new level of meditating*

C4: *... where we had to sit like a frog. I found that difficult*

One participant commented that some of the exercises didn't make sense to him.

C2: ...*imagine that you're listening to your breathing going down through your toe and coming back up ... and your toe breathing in which I didn't think made very much sense* [sic]

**Changes since commencing the PME.** During the interview I used closed and open questions to explore children's perceptions of any changes that they had noticed since commencing the PME. Analysis of the data identified two themes relating to the impact of the PME and perceived changes. These themes were 'calm, relaxing, and peaceful' and 'perceived positive changes'.

***Calm, relaxing and peaceful.*** The words calm, relaxing and peaceful were referred to by all the participants during the interviews. The participants expressed that they had enjoyed the exercises and were able to articulate some changes they had noticed in themselves, for example:

C5: *I haven't been as like, I haven't been as pumped up because I've been calmer and it makes me just want to calm down a bit more.*

C4: *Yeah, I've been more calmer* [sic] *because I used to get really hyper but now I'm just normal and I just don't do as much as I normally used to.*

One of the children felt that being calmer had helped her to concentrate more:

C6: *...like calmer and stuff...it's easier to concentrate*

Interestingly one of the participants stated that their tutor Mr \*\*\*\* had been calmer after the mindfulness exercises.

C5: *Once we'd done it he wasn't talking as normal. He was more calm.*

The children were less able to provide examples about any changes in their classmates but some responses included observations about other children in the class.

*C5: Some of them it didn't have much difference but with a few of them it made them a lot calmer as well.*

*C2: mainly the boys I don't think changed but I think me and my mates like some other people and the girls have, not many of them but like two or three, have calmed down a bit.*

**Perceived positive changes.** Participants were able to talk about changes they had perceived in themselves. One of the children said:

*C2: I'm normally quite rushed but I've slowed down my pace a bit now. Not much but just a little bit and thinking about what I say and what I do before reacting*

Another of the participants drew attention to how he felt his listening skills had improved:

*C1: I've noticed a couple of differences. Maybe I'm listening a bit better and I'm learning a bit better. I don't have to keep going to my neighbour "What did she say? I couldn't hear it very well." I don't have to keep doing that anymore.*

One other notable comment concerned the usefulness of mindfulness exercises in reducing peer conflict.

*C5: I think if we carried on we wouldn't have as much trouble as like all falling out or stuff because they would be much more calm they would erm, forgive each other.*



## 8.5. Semi-structured interview with tutor teacher

After thematic analysis of the interview with the tutor teacher the following themes were identified: 'benefits of mindfulness exercises', 'no changes', 'ease of implementation', 'points to consider' and 'the value of professional support' (see Appendix 48 for thematic map).

**Benefits of mindfulness exercises.** The tutor stated that some of the children had enjoyed the PME and benefitted from it. The opportunity to have five minutes every day to be calm and transition into the classroom was really important for some of the children.

*T1: I think some of them just coming in and having five, ten minutes of going [sighs] "right, ok, I'm here" because they've got stressful home lives and just getting to school is stressful for some of them.*

Later in the interview the tutor reiterated her belief that for some children being able to have a time in the day that was calm and relaxing was important for them.

*T1: I think I've realised that they don't all get this calm anywhere else ... and if they're getting excited that this is their five minutes of calm in the day then I want to be able to help with that and let them have it.*

During the interview the tutor repeated her feelings on several occasions that there was a benefit to the class participating in five or ten minutes sitting still in a calm and quiet environment.

*T1: I think it was good for them to just have ten minutes of calm.*

*I enjoyed starting the day with just ten minutes of calm.*

The tutor also spoke of some changes in behaviour that she had seen in some of the children.

*T1: I think some of them are a bit more aware of others. I've had some of them who will do silly things but they're much quicker to apologise or say "oh, that was wrong" and I think, you know, that might be linked to what they've been doing in the mornings.*

*But I think some of them there's definitely been a change, they seem more aware of others and some of them do seem a bit calmer. And I think, some of them have been enjoying it, they've enjoyed coming into school because they know they're going to get their five minutes of just calm and quietness.*

Additionally the tutor also spoke of how the PME had impacted on her own teaching. She felt that participating in the PME had helped her to take a more reflective stance at points in the school day.

*T1: And actually just sometimes stepping back as a teacher and revisiting some of the things that we've sat and done in the morning was quite nice... so I think it's affected me because I've been able to sit and do it with them and then in other lessons at other times in the day I have been able to take a step back, to just go [breathes in, pauses] "yeah, ok".*

**No changes.** Whilst the tutor spoke of the benefits of the PME she also stated that for some children there had been no real changes or differences that she had observed. She had not noticed any whole class differences in behaviour and was aware that some of the children were not fully participating in the PME.

*T1: Some of them didn't really take it seriously.*

*Some of them I've not seen any change whatsoever.*

*I've not seen a whole class change or anything like that.*

The tutor was unsure how many of the children were taking the exercises they had done in school and thinking about them or using them elsewhere.

*T1: I don't know how much they've taken it on-board or how much they do it anywhere else ... none of them have said they do it at home or any other time.*

The tutor's perceived mixed responses of the children to the PME was articulated in the following way:

*T1: They've not said much, some of them have come in and said "oh do we have to do that sitting thing again?" ... and then others have come in and gone [excited voice] "Are we doing it? Do we get to do the mindfulness sitting thing?" They've not really said much else but I've not probed them.*

**Ease of implementation.** The following themes focus on running the PME, its content, and other considerations, additionally comments relating to EPs working with school staff to facilitate interventions and projects such as the PME in this study are reported.

The PME was well received by the tutor and she was happy with the materials provided to enable her to run the sessions every day. The role of this TEP in selecting and planning appropriate daily sessions was commented on.

*T1: It wasn't any hassle to me to be honest. You'd planned it all, we had it all. It was just a case of looking where we were, seeing what I needed to have playing and have open, or have on me. There was no extra work, although I went home and read the book [Sitting Still Like A Frog], that wasn't anything.*

*The planning side of it you'd done it all anyway. It's ten minutes in the morning, we have those ten minutes anyway.*

The tutor also spoke of the level of detail of the planning being enough to enable her to deliver the sessions and having the planning, the book and the CD was really helpful as she had not delivered anything like the PME before.

The PME itself was also thought of as appropriate for the children in her tutor group. The teacher's comments also allude to the role of the EP in judging the appropriateness of interventions for use with children.

*T1: What they were being asked to do was fine, because it was just "think about your breathing"... I think the rest of it is doable, even for nine year olds who can't sit still. There weren't complicated words used, there wasn't too much information about almost sort of the effects of it. It was very much "let's sit, let's take time to think about this." So I think it was well suited to the children, especially the ones that were really into it and really thinking about it.*

**Points to consider.** The tutor acknowledged that for some of the children sitting still had proven difficult and the classroom environment was sometimes not conducive to running the PME.

*T1: These chairs... they're not comfy chairs... that side of it, because we're in a classroom, we can't suddenly get cushions out and actually sit comfortably because for some of them lying down would be better for them so I think that was difficult because the tracks [on the CD] are asking them to sit comfortably and relax and you can't always in these chairs, you know there's lights on, and there's things going around outside, and every morning at some point that door has opened, even when I've got signs saying 'Don't come in'. So I think the*

*being in a classroom possibly isn't the best space to do it just because they can't really relax and there's that constant knock on the door, constant interruptions.*

During the interview the tutor spoke about the possibility of mindfulness not being suited to everyone:

*T1: There's some that kind of "oh, sit still, humph, I'm being forced to sit still" and I think some of it is they may not have benefited a huge amount ... some of them they've got too much energy, it's not how they're going to relax. Yeah, I don't know if I would say it's for everybody.*

**Value of professional support.** The tutor spoke of her previous involvement with EPs being very limited and generally as a result of a situation reaching crisis point. She highlighted the positives of greater collaboration with EPs.

*T1: As teachers it would be nice to have EP input a little bit more because you might be able to stop some of the escalating behaviours rather than dealing with the consequence. Having a bit more support, not on a day to day basis but maybe just weekly or monthly or termly or something and just for everyone not just for those that we think might hit a breaking point.*

*It would feel nice to be supported from other professionals.*

The tutor said that she had never had any outside professionals in to specifically talk about SEW.

*T1: The only time we get to see any outside agencies is when we're at breaking point... we hardly ever get to see anyone.*

*So no we don't get much help, support, training.*

We discussed using EP time to facilitate a programme such as the PME.

*T1: I definitely think, even if it's just working with one person in the school, and then them delivering it to everyone else because something like this... it would definitely be worth some time, some input if it was going to be a whole school initiative where everyone is doing it.*

The tutor spoke of her increased confidence in delivering something similar to the PME having participated in the programme.

In terms of the role of the EP in promoting SEW in schools the tutor thought that supporting teachers to support children would be the best use of EP time:

*T1: I think supporting teachers.... to then support the children. I think the children get more from doing things like this with somebody they know. Unless you were going to be in school every day or every week and they could build up a relationship I think it's more beneficial to support us to be able to support them. Giving us a bit more information about the psychology behind everything and you know a bit more information just about children.*

## **8.6 Reflections from research journal on the role of the EP in facilitating the PME**

When reflecting upon the process of facilitating a programme such as the one used in this study I explored the design and content of the PME as well as my role in developing relationships with and supporting teachers to deliver the programme. The key findings from my own reflections that relate to working with the school staff to facilitate the PME are given below.

- The PME was appropriate to the classes, children, and teachers involved.
- I was working with members of staff who wanted to be involved with the research and were keen to run the PME.
- I ensured that the PME was acceptable to the teachers who would be implementing it by meeting with them before the initial session to look through the plans and discuss the content
- The development of the relationships I formed with the two teachers as well as other members of the school staff was important for the running of the PME.
- I found that regular meetings with key staff was important in supporting them and answering any questions as well as providing me with an overview of how the programme was progressing.
- Although I had informal meetings with the teachers on a weekly basis it may have been useful to consider a more formal structure to the meetings. Finding time to hold meetings with staff was a barrier to developing more formal meetings.

Further details of my role in designing and facilitating the PME along with further reflection on the process can be found in appendices 1, 2 and 49.

### **8.7. Evaluation Questionnaire**

A total of 52 completed questionnaires were returned.

When asked to comment on what they had liked about the mindfulness exercises the most common responses from the children involved feelings of calm and being relaxed. Even those children who did not fully participate

seemed to appreciate the calm and peace during the exercises. One typical response was: "I quite liked the exercises because they made me feel relaxed".

Thirty four of the children stated that they found the mindfulness exercises helpful whilst seventeen said they did not. When asked what they would change about the mindfulness exercises the most common response was the lady's voice (on the CD) and 'nothing' was the second most common answer. The exercises being boring was a common response for children who did not fully participate or did not appear to find the PME particularly useful. This is consistent with Britton et al. (2014) who found 13% of the students in their study reported feeling bored. Over half of the children stated that they were not likely to carry on with mindfulness exercises once they had finished in class however just under half said they were likely or very likely to continue. More children than not said that they would recommend mindfulness to a friend (27 versus 20). Table 4 provides a summary of the findings from the evaluation questionnaire.

### **8.8. Absence of parental data**

Letters were sent to the parents of children who had participated in the PME but unfortunately no parents responded to say they were willing to participate in a group interview. This is disappointing as parents may have provided further insight into children's experiences of the PME. It would have been useful to gain understanding of parents' enthusiasm for such programmes as the one used in this study.



Table 4: Summary of evaluation questionnaire findings

Question	Most common words or phrases featured in the responses (times mentioned by unique participants)
What did you like about the mindfulness exercises?	Calm/calming/calmness (15) Relaxed/relaxing (13) Quiet/quietly (8) Peace/peaceful (3)
Did you find any of the mindfulness exercises helpful? (please tick)	Yes (34) No (17)
If yes can you please write a little bit about which exercises you found helpful and why?	Calm/calming/calmed (13) Raisin (12) Sitting still like a frog (6)
Can you think of a time when you might use one of the mindfulness exercises?	Annoyed/upset/angry (8) Bed (5) Before a test (4) Family member annoying me (4)
What would you change about the mindfulness exercises?	Lady's voice (12) Nothing (11) Less time/shorter (7) By myself (5)
Roughly how often did you join in the mindfulness exercises? (please tick)	Every Day (26) Most days (13) Never (7) 1 or 2 times per week (5)
How likely are you to carry on with mindfulness exercises once you stop doing them in class? (please tick)	Not likely (28) Likely (15) Very Likely (9)
Did you stop taking part in the mindfulness exercises? (please tick)	No (30) Yes (13) Sometimes (8)
If yes or sometimes what made you stop taking part?	Lady's voice annoying (4) Boring (4) Wanted to read sometimes and do mindfulness sometimes (4)
Would you recommend mindfulness to a friend? (please tick)	Yes (27) No (20)

## 9. Phase two discussion

This discussion section will be structured according to the research questions, with the results outlined in the previous sections being explored in relation to existing research and literature.

### 9.1. Impact of the PME on the social and emotional wellbeing of children

Analysis of the child rated SDQs showed a significant reduction in 'externalising problems' and 'conduct problems' from before the PME to after. Teacher rated SDQs also indicated a significant reduction in 'externalising problems'.

Goodman et al. (2010) have argued that the use of aggregated sub-scales to obtain scores for 'internalising' and 'externalising problems' may be a more appropriate measure of difficulties when using the SDQ with low-risk (or non-clinical) populations. Examples of items on the SDQ related to 'externalising problems' include: *I get very angry and often lose my temper; I usually do as I am told; I fight a lot, I can make other people do what I want; I am restless I cannot stay still for long; I am easily distracted, I find it hard to concentrate.*

Previous research has suggested that MBA might positively impact on a range of outcomes commensurate with difficulties captured by the SDQ's 'externalising problems' scale such as executive function (Flook et al., 2010), aggression and oppositional behaviour (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015), and attention (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005).

Analysis of the SCWBS revealed no statistically significant differences in scores from before to after the PME. There were also no significant differences in child rated total difficulties scores as measured by the SDQ. Analysis of the 46 matched pairs of SCWBS and SDQ total difficulties scores found a significant

negative correlation between the two scores with children who scored higher on the SCWBS generally scoring lower on the SDQ. There were also significant negative correlations between the externalising problems sub-scale on the SDQ and scores on the SCWBS, and conduct problems and SCWBS (see Appendix 43 for correlation statistics). Both externalising problems and conduct problems scores were significantly lower after the PME which may indicate that specific items on the SDQ are more sensitive to change as opposed to an overall measure of wellbeing such as the SCWBS. In the development and validation of the SCWBS sensitivity to change was not assessed (Liddle & Carter, 2015) and it maybe that the SCWBS is not an appropriate measure for assessing the impact of an intervention. The SCWBS is based on positive aspects of wellbeing and it may be that change is more likely to be detected in the sub-scales of the SDQ rather than the SCWBS because it is easier to detect a reduction in negative aspects of wellbeing (as mainly measured by SDQ items) than increases in positive aspects (as measured by the SCWBS). As the SCWBS is a new measure further studies will be required to explore its usefulness in assessing change.

Analysis of teacher rated SDQs found a significant reduction in total difficulties. Joyce et al. (2010) similarly found a significant decrease in scores on the SDQ (child rated) for children aged 10-12 years of age after a ten week mindfulness curriculum. Only tentative conclusions can be drawn from the teacher rated SDQ findings in this present study due to the small sample size. The potential bias of non-blind third parties in this study is another limitation that is shared with other mindfulness studies with children, (Burke, 2010).

One of the strengths of this study was including teacher rated measures to triangulate with data from children's self-reports. Only 9 out of 24 studies included in a recent meta-analysis of mindfulness based interventions in schools used some form of third party rating (Zenner et al., 2014). Triangulation of data can reduce threats to the validity and enable comparisons to be made between findings (Robson, 2002).

Whilst the limitations of this present study (discussed later in this paper) mean only tentative conclusions can be drawn, the results from the child and teacher rated SDQs suggest a programme of mindfulness exercises may have a role in reducing externalising problems in children. Further study of the effects of mindfulness on externalising problems would be worthwhile.

The results of the evaluation questionnaire were mixed. When asked what was helpful about the exercises the most common responses related to feelings of calm, suggesting that for some students these calm feelings were of benefit to them. An increased sense of calm is often cited as a benefit of mindfulness practice. Some studies have suggested that fostering feelings of calm can impact positively on a range of cognitive and behavioural processes such as self-regulation, executive functioning and emotional control (Broderick & Metz, 2009; Costello & Lawler, 2014; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Shapiro et al., 2015; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012).

The six children who were interviewed after the PME were positive about their experiences and all but one of the interviewees were able to articulate what they felt the benefits of the PME had been for them. Similar to the questionnaire responses, the children interviewed often spoke of feelings of calm and

relaxation. They also spoke of how this sense of calm had impacted on their behaviour with comments about not feeling as 'pumped' up and finding it easier to concentrate. The children were less sure in detecting any changes in their classmates.

Findings from the teacher interview corresponded to children's responses in both the interviews and evaluation questionnaire in terms of the feelings of calm perceived to be due to the implementation of the PME. The tutor interviewed expressed on several occasions the calming effect of the PME on some of the children in her tutor group. She also felt that some of the children had developed a greater awareness of others since beginning the programme.

Overall the findings from this phase of my research suggest that the PME may have played a role in the reduction of externalising problems (as captured by both child and teacher rated SDQs), a reduction in total difficulties (as captured by the teacher rated SDQ) and to increased feelings of calm and relaxation amongst the participants. There were no reported adverse effects of the PME on the participants' wellbeing which is consistent with findings in previous MBA with children (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013).

## **9.2. Perceptions and experiences of the PME**

Out of a total of 52 returned questionnaires 34 stated that they found the mindfulness exercises helpful whilst 17 said they did not. From the majority of the responses it would appear that the children valued the five or ten minutes of calm that the PME provided most mornings during their tutor group. During the course of the PME some of the children elected not to participate in every session and some stopped participating. These students were able to sit quietly

during the exercises or read a book. A limitation of this study (and other previous MBA programmes) is the presence of non-participants during some of the mindfulness exercises (Burke, 2010). The 'real-world' implementation of the PME means that teachers were unlikely to be able to notice and record the level of participation by all children on every day. Absenteeism and any obvious non-participation (for example, reading) were recorded by the teachers in an attempt to assess the level of participation in the PME rather than the effects of non-participants on the PME. Half of the children indicated that they participated in the PME every day with another thirteen indicating they took part most days. There were no long-term absences from any of the participants. One child moved schools during the PME and was not included in the analysis of findings. The results from this study are consistent with Beauchemin et al. (2008) who found that their intervention was feasible when conducted in a classroom with some students who chose to participate and others that did not.

The tutor was positive about the planning of the PME and the resources provided for her to run the programme. Being able to prepare the sessions on the morning of delivery and clear instructions on the planning sheets were valued by the teacher in supporting her to confidently deliver the PME as planned. Reviews of MBA in schools have highlighted a common concern about the conformity of the delivered lessons or sessions to the plans or scripts provided (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Zenner et al., 2014). The method of implementation in this study ensured that all children received the same content delivered in the same manner.

One of the main differences between this study and other published research on MBA with children was the use of a CD to deliver the exercises. The

exercises are narrated by Myla Kabat-Zinn and her accent would appear to have been one of the least liked aspects of the PME. The voice on the CD, as well as finding the exercises boring, were the two most common answers for why some children did not participate in the exercises. Interestingly the children interviewed stated that the accent was not problematic for them but two interviewees acknowledged that some children found the voice 'weird'. The tutor commented that the two exercises recorded by myself were much better received by the class.

The six children interviewed all spoke positively about the PME with none highlighting any negative aspects or effects. Other studies have found a generally positive experience of MBA (Beauchemin et al., 2008; Broderick & Metz, 2009; Huppert & Johnson, 2010). In keeping with other data collected for this study the interviewees all spoke of the calmness and peace that they had experienced during the PME. Some of the interviewees spoke of other children in the class distracting them and occasionally giggling, whilst some children found sitting still difficult.

There are very few studies that have explored children's perceptions of mindfulness programmes (Zenner et al., 2014) so comparisons to the literature are limited. The literature reviewed in this paper largely focuses on outcomes and there is very little research exploring processes (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Zenner et al., 2014). The collection of more in-depth qualitative data in this study has provided additional information that previous researchers have suggested would be helpful in exploring issues of feasibility and implementation from children's perspectives (Beauchemin et al., 2008; Zenner et al., 2014).

This study also highlights some of the practical difficulties of implementing a six week intervention in a school setting. Following analysis of phase one data the PME did not commence until the very end of November 2015. On some days, in the run up to the winter holiday, no mindfulness exercises were conducted due to extra-curricular activities taking place (for example, Christmas play rehearsals). Similar practical difficulties were reported by Desmond and Hanich (2010) in their research on mindful awareness practices with school children in the USA.

Other practical considerations such as children arriving late, lack of space in the classroom, hard chairs and disruptions were commented on by the tutor. As both tutor groups were located next to each other and undertook the mindfulness exercises at the same time of day any opportunities to explore differences in environmental factors that may have contributed to the outcomes were lost.

### **9.3. The role of the educational psychologist in working with schools to facilitate programmes aimed at promoting SEW**

The second phase of this research falls within the areas identified by Roffey (2015) of encouraging whole school practices to promote SEW and involvement in SEW research and interventions. The findings from the teacher's interview and my own reflections are used here to discuss the EP role in facilitating programmes aimed at promoting children's SEW.

It was important to me that that PME was supported and run by staff who were motivated to take part. In their study of implementing the 'Friends for life' course in a secondary school Green and Atkinson (2016) suggest that having support



from staff in the school with the power to implement and support a programme is an important consideration for an EP when attempting to facilitate interventions. Supportive staff are also viewed as critical in Georgiades and Phillimore's (1975) strategies for organisational change (see appendix 49 for further discussion). Both tutor teachers volunteered to take part and expressed an interest in mindfulness. By working with two supportive teachers I believed that the PME would be fully implemented.

An often cited problem of mindfulness interventions has been the fidelity of the intervention (Burke, 2010; Zenner et al., 2014). The PME aimed to address this by using pre-recorded mindfulness exercises and planning documents with precise and clear instructions. That nature of the PME plans was welcomed by the teachers and my own observations of several sessions suggest that the sessions were conducted as intended in both classes. The design of the PME also addressed the level of training necessary to deliver the programme. The teacher's comments in the interview suggest she was satisfied with the level of knowledge required to deliver the PME but that more advanced, in-depth mindfulness sessions would require her to have further training. The findings of this study suggest that programmes using pre-recorded instructions and precise plans can be delivered by teachers without expert knowledge of mindfulness.

My own reflections and comments by the teacher interviewed suggest that the PME's design and contents were appropriate and acceptable to the teachers. It was important that the PME required little extra work from the teachers or any expert mindfulness knowledge. The teacher praised the ease of delivering the sessions due to the level of planning and resources provided. As well as

ensuring fidelity of the programme the resources also enabled the teachers to deliver the PME with minimal preparation.

One of the most important aspects from my own reflections on the implementation of the PME was the relationships I built up with the two tutors over the course of the research. These relationships were important in developing a shared sense of ownership of the project and being accepted into the school. I visited the Year 5 teachers every week to speak with them about the research and had regular e-mail contact. Relationships between EPs and teachers have been highlighted as potentially problematic for joint working, with teachers viewing the EP as an expert (Davies, Howes, & Farrell, 2008). I hoped that through the discussions I had with the tutors and by sharing resources that had contributed to the PME I alleviated possible views of myself as an expert. I attempted to develop a shared sense of ownership of the project through regular conversations and collaboration with the tutors. On reflection I feel that using a more formal structure to our weekly meetings, perhaps with a model of supervision, would have been useful in eliciting further information about the PME in terms of what was working well and what could be better. Further reflections on my role in working with school staff to implement the PME can be found in Appendix 49.

More general responses from the teacher interview indicated that greater collaboration with EPs would be valued by teaching staff. The teacher was positive about EPs working with staff to implement programmes such as the one used in this research. She commented that universal preventative work with children, not just those in crisis, would be valued. Interestingly this reflects school staff's and EPs' comments from Wagner's findings over twenty years

ago (Wagner, 1995) and also echoes findings by Rothi, Leavey and Best (2008) in their study of teachers' views of working with EPs. The tutor's comments, whilst reflecting some of my own thoughts about how EPs could work with schools, differ from Ashton and Roberts (2006) findings of what SENCOs wanted from EPs. Ashton and Roberts found 'advice giving' and 'statutory assessment work' were most valued by SENCOs. Whilst the work of EPs still involves statutory assessment the range and derivation of EP work continues to expand (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010).

Interventions have been run by EPs to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of teachers (Gibbs & Miller, 2014; Sharrocks, 2014) and students (Dawson & Singh-Dhesi, 2010; Ewing, Monsen, & Kwoka, 2014; Pritchett, Nowek, Neill, & Minnis, 2014) as well as with parents (Dodd, 2009; Hogg, Hart, & Collins, 2014). Roffey (2015) states that EPs have opportunities for conversations on well-being at all levels of a school. These activities range from in-service training, supervision of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), running and facilitating interventions and projects, consultation with children, parents and staff, to direct work with young people (examples from my own practice). Roffey discusses several ways in which EPs can work to be 'agents of change' for school and student wellbeing including encouraging whole-school practices and policies geared towards universal well-being, promoting social and emotional learning in schools, and social and emotional well-being research and interventions in schools.

### **9.3.1 Summary of findings for EPs working with school staff to facilitate programmes aimed at promoting the SEW of children**

The findings from this study suggest that EPs could work with teachers to facilitate programmes aimed at promoting SEW and that further ongoing systemic and preventative work would be welcomed by teaching staff. A summary of the main findings from this study suggest that the following were helpful when working with the teachers in this study to implement a programme of mindfulness exercises:

- Working with staff who were supportive of the programme or intervention
- Ensuring the programme is acceptable to the staff involved in terms of their commitment and existing knowledge
- Regular meetings and communication with the staff throughout the duration of the programme
- Precise plans and pre-recorded sessions to increase fidelity
- Establishing good relationships with the staff involved and developing a shared sense of ownership of the programme's implementation

### **9.4. Study Strengths**

Many MBA are taught by specialist instructors from outside the school so there is a lack of evidence for interventions run by classroom teachers during school hours (Britton et al., 2014). One of the strengths of this study, in relation to school wide implementation, is the use of usual classroom teachers to deliver the PME as part of the normal school day. When programmes are embedded into the curriculum, like in this study, any effects gained become more generalizable to the entire school (Britton et al., 2014).

This study did not wholly rely on self-report measures like many other studies exploring MBA (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013). The use of third party reports and qualitative data is a strength of this study allowing triangulation of data (Zenner et al., 2014).

The use of qualitative data also marks this research as different from most studies of MBA with children. The literature reviewed in this paper is largely quantitative and very few studies include the views of children and their perceptions of MBA (Burke, 2010; Weare, 2013). The use of mixed methods to include quantitative and qualitative data has been suggested as one way to further the evidence base for MBA with children (Rempel, 2012; Zenner et al., 2014).

The children who participated in the PME did not volunteer to take part. It is another strength of this study that it did not rely on volunteers for participants thus avoiding self-selection bias.

### **9.5. Study Limitations**

Throughout the duration of the PME there were days when some children did not participate at all, participated a little or participated fully. It would be extremely difficult to determine the level of involvement from each pupil on each and every day. Determining the extent to which participants engage with mindfulness practices during interventions and programmes is a challenge for the field (Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This study attempted to capture some barometer of children's involvement by asking the teachers to keep records of who was not participating (for example, reading a

book or absent), asking the children directly in the evaluation questionnaire, and interviewing a sample of those who participated.

This study did not include a control group and therefore alternative explanations for the quantitative findings such as regression to the mean, maturation and history are plausible (Robson, 2002). Additionally the teachers were not blind to the PME and the teacher reports may be subject to expectancy effects. No measure was taken of the individual teacher's enthusiasm or attitude towards the PME whilst it was running. These factors may have had a bearing on the students' levels of involvement throughout the programme.

The reasons for the choice of the SCWBS have already been mentioned earlier in this thesis however the appropriateness of the SCWBS is worth reflecting on in light of the lack of statistically significant differences in SCWBS scores compared to the significant findings in some SDQ sub-scales. It may be that psychological wellbeing (PWB) as measured by the SCWBS is not an appropriate measure for assessing the impact of mindfulness interventions. Perhaps PWB as measured by the SCWBS did not adequately capture any salutary effects of the PME or address relevant areas of SEW influenced by the PME in this study. As the SCWBS has yet to be assessed for sensitivity to change (Liddle and Carter, 2015) it may well be that the measure was unsatisfactory at capturing change over the course of the PME. The SDQ sub-scales that showed a significant reduction in scores were conduct problems and externalising problems. It could be that the items on the SDQ that detected change are underrepresented in the SCWBS and that possibly the SDQ and SCWBS are measuring distinct aspects of SEW of which some are more susceptible to change over the duration of a six week intervention. Liddle and

Carter (2015) state that there is difficulty in defining and measuring PWB and designing a measure to use with children is a relatively new undertaking.

Further use of the SCWBS alongside other measures, including measures of 'mindfulness', will hopefully shed further light on the appropriateness of the SCWBS for detecting change due to school-based mindfulness interventions.

Due to the sampling method employed in this study the children interviewed for the PME may not be representative of both classes. Only the children who returned letters took part in an interview and different sampling strategies may have been more appropriate for this research. There is the possibility that children who returned signed forms may have been more eager to speak than other children or enjoyed the PME more. A more representative sample could have been gained by purposive sampling aiming to interview participants with low, medium and high SDQ before scores. Additionally the use of only six children raises the possibility of only particular types of participants being interviewed (for example, those with low scores on the SDQ, children who enjoyed the PME). The more overtly positive views expressed by participants in the interviews contrasted with the mixed opinions from the evaluation questionnaire. This may be in part to the characteristics of the children interviewed as well as elements of social desirability during the interview process.

A lack of long term follow up measures in this study limits the findings to immediately after the intervention. It may be that any effects do not endure once participation in mindfulness exercises ceases. A lack of longer term follow up measures is a common criticism in the field of mindfulness research with children (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Zenner et al., 2014).

One of the challenges facing mindfulness research is evaluating mechanisms of change within MBA (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Zenner et al., 2014). As an exploratory study with no control group this present research can offer no further insights into possible mechanisms of change. It is therefore conceivable that the effects noticed in this study could be attributed to factors other than the PME, such as taking part in a novel activity or generic resting and relaxing (Zenner et al., 2014).

The PME used in this study was devised by a non-specialist and although the exercises were taken from texts written by trained and experienced mindfulness practitioners claims about the extent to which the PME inculcated 'mindfulness' in those who participated is open to debate.

#### **9.6. Relevance to practice**

This study provides further evidence for the feasibility of running a programme of mindfulness exercises in schools as part of the normal school day. The PME delivered in this study suggests that similar programmes designed to be used with whole classes can be embedded within the school day with minimal disruption to the usual curriculum. The findings from this study add to the growing literature on mindfulness that suggests regular mindfulness practice can be beneficial across a range of outcomes associated with wellbeing (Weare, 2013).

Brown et al. (2007) discussed some of the benefits of mindfulness that included an increase in emotional wellbeing, increased behavioural regulation and better relationships and social interaction. It has been argued that a focus on wellbeing in schools can be a universal and pro-active intervention to promote



relationships and resilience (Roffey, 2015) and is an area in which EPs can promote such 'big ideas' (Cameron, 2006).

The present study has demonstrated that EPs can work with schools to implement a programme of mindfulness exercises aimed at promoting the SEW of school children. This kind of work, at the whole class or school level, acknowledges that schools are ecologies and what happens in one part of the system can impact on the others (Roffey, 2015). Implementing a programme such as the one in this study enables EPs to undertake a wider range of activities in schools and focus more on preventative work, a long since held desire of many EPs (Wagner, 1995).

The running of a universal programme aimed at improving outcomes across a range of domains, including SEW, is congruent with a strengths-based positive psychology approach that has been advocated as a framework for practice for EPs (Joseph, 2008).

The implications for educational psychology practice are:

- Facilitating the implementation of programmes of mindfulness based exercises into a school curriculum
- Working with teachers and school staff to deliver preventative and universal approaches
- Undertaking research in schools and developing a knowledge base of mindfulness and its relevance to educational psychology practice
- Opportunities to develop mindfulness programmes as part of a traded service delivery

## **9.7. Future Directions for Research**

Further qualitative work with children, school staff and parents could seek to explore participants' understanding of mindfulness and also introduce dialogues that provide further information on how mindfulness practice is perceived as an activity within schools. Of particular interest would be exploring reasons why some children choose not to participate in MBA.

Future studies should aim to explore mechanisms of change within MBA. There is a lack of an operational definition of mindfulness that has hampered research that aims to investigate exactly which aspects of mindfulness are responsible for observed changes (Britton et al., 2014; Davis, 2012; Harnett & Dawe, 2012). There are currently only two measures of mindfulness that have been validated for use with children (Kuby et al., 2015). Further use of these scales will help to explain further the 'active ingredients' of MBAs (Harnett & Dawe, 2012) and how these relate to reported outcomes.

## 10. Overall Discussion

### 10.1. Linking Phase One and Phase Two

This two phase research aimed to explore the use of a school based programme of mindfulness exercises in relation to the SEW of children. In the first phase of this research focus groups were conducted with children, parents and school staff to explore constructs of SEW, what supports children's SEW and difficulties with children's SEW. This phase of my research project contributes to the limited research on children's understandings of SEW (Coverdale & Long, 2015). Phase two of this research explored the use of a programme of mindfulness exercises in relation to the SEW of 56 Year 5 children.

Analysis of the data from phase one indicated that friendships, a sense of belonging, emotions, and the ability to regulate emotions were important themes in children's, parents' and staff's concepts of SEW. Findings from the quantitative measures showed a reduction in scores of externalising problems and conduct problems based on child rated SDQs and a reduction in scores of total difficulties and externalising problems based on teacher rated SDQs. In a study looking at bullies and victims Skrzypiec, Slee, Askell-Williams and Lawson, (2012) found that lower total SDQ scores correlated with an increase in good friends and hypothesised that victims with conduct problems might respond by bullying others. Another study looking at depressive symptoms in adolescents found that higher conduct problems (measured by the SDQ) were significant predictors of depressive symptoms in males. The authors state that depressive symptoms can lead to loneliness (Alpaslan, Kocak, & Avci, 2016).

Higher parent scores of total difficulties on the SDQ were associated with poorer friendships in a study exploring family and school influences on SEW in Scotland (Parkes, Sweeting, & Wight, 2014). The findings of this present study suggest that a programme of daily mindfulness exercises may play a part in reducing children's conduct problems and this in turn may have positive implications for the quality of friendships that children experience. For example, the tutor commented that she had noticed a difference in some of her pupils' attitudes towards others. She felt that they had developed a greater awareness of their peers and were quicker to apologise after upsetting them. Whilst these effects were not noticed in all children it would seem that daily mindfulness practice could play a role in moderating children's conduct towards others in some instances. Studies have shown that students participating in mindfulness practice have increased social competence (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015), increased pro-social behaviour (Flook et al., 2015) and reductions in conduct problems and improvement in peer relationships (Haydicky, Shecter, Wiener, & Ducharme, 2015).

Although no specific measure of emotional regulation was used in this study previous studies have explored the relationship between emotional regulation and externalising problems. Emotional regulation was found to be a predictor of girls' externalising problems in a longitudinal study of pre-school children (Hill, Degnan, Calkins, & Keane, 2006). Another study explored links between positive parenting, children's emotional regulation and externalising problems. The authors concluded that emotional regulation mediated the relationship between positive parenting and low levels of externalising problems (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Externalising problems as measured by the SDQ in this present

study were significantly lower after the PME. Previous studies of MBA with children have found increased emotional regulation after children participated in MBA interventions (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Weare, 2013). It may be that some aspects of emotional regulation are captured by the SDQ although future studies using more specific measures of emotional regulation would be more able to detect changes in this domain.

Given the significant negative correlation between the SDQ scores and the SCWBS it may have been expected that there would be a significant change in SCWBS scores from before to after the PME. For child rated SDQ scores only the sub-scales of externalising problems and conduct problems reduced significantly. The total difficulties scores on the SDQ did not significantly reduce which may in part offer some explanation of why there were no significant changes on SCWBS scores. As already noted earlier in this thesis it may be that an overall positive measure of wellbeing such as the SCWBS may not capture significant increase in positive aspects of wellbeing over the course of an intervention. One hypothesis may be that certain items on the SDQ are better able to capture aspects of SEW that mindfulness practice impacts on. Additionally items with negatively worded aspects of wellbeing may be more sensitive to change, or answered differently by children, than positively worded measures such as the SCWBS. One further aspect that should be taken into consideration is the administration of the SCWBS which was immediately after the SDQ. There is a possibility that the order in which the questionnaires were administered had some impact on the responses given by the children. Further research that aims to explore the SCWBS's sensitivity to change would be

useful in assessing if the measure is a useful tool for exploring the impact of interventions and programmes such as the one in this present study.

Children's understanding of SEW involved the role of emotions and their fluctuation across time. There were no significant reductions in emotional symptoms as measured by both child and teacher rated SDQs. The items on the SDQ used to score emotional symptoms (such as reduction in headaches and being confident) may not correlate with possible outcomes of mindfulness practice and therefore it's possible that the SDQ was not able to capture aspects of children's emotions that may have altered whilst participating in the PME.

Transitions for school children occur across their school lives. Year 5 children participating in this study had all transitioned from a first or primary school a few months before the second phase of this research commenced. The choice of Year 5 as participants was agreed in collaboration with the senior leadership team of the school. Although not specifically addressed in this study, the head teacher was interested in knowing if mindfulness could support children transitioning from Year 4 to middle school. Both child, staff and parent focus groups had discussed transition with regards to potential difficulties, such as coping with new school structures and systems.

Brewin and Statham (2011) found a range of factors that supported or hindered successful transition to secondary school for looked after children including resilience and social skills. Other studies exploring transitions to a new school have found a range of protective or risk factors that impact upon successful transitions including emotional regulation (Mason et al., 2015), executive

function (Jacobson, Williford, & Pianta, 2011), early social skills (Robinson & Diamond, 2014), and social and behavioural skills (Bub, 2009).

The findings from this study suggest that children who participated in the PME had a reduction in their externalising and conduct problems. Children suggested they were more relaxed and experienced a sense of calm during the exercises. Studies of MBA with children have found positive effects in executive function, emotional regulation, behavioural regulation and social skills (see Burke, 2010; Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Weare, 2013) and therefore a tentative hypothesis is that 'mindfulness' may play a role in supporting children during and after transition to middle school.

Both parents and staff spoke about the importance of school structures and systems in their discussions about supporting children's SEW. The availability of support and teaching children about feelings and how to manage them were discussed. Weare (2015) recommends that initiatives aimed at promoting children's SEW should adopt whole school approaches that are universal and preventative. Programmes that incorporate aspects of mindfulness can offer exercises and training that aim to build a range of social and emotional competencies (Weare, 2013; Zoogman et al., 2015). If programmes of mindfulness exercises or training are implemented across whole schools then they have the potential to improve teachers' and students' wellbeing in a cost-effective, preventative and universal manner (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Weare, 2013; Zoogman et al., 2015).

## **10.2. Transferability of findings**

From a pragmatic perspective the concept of transferability is concerned with investigating the factors that affect whether knowledge gained can be transferred to other settings (Morgan, 2007). Britton et al. (2014) argue that studies implementing mindfulness programmes universally by classroom teachers, as part of the regular school day, have a greater degree of generalisability to other school settings than programmes delivered by specialists outside of the regular school day. The PME in this study was implemented by the children's usual tutors during tutor time. The universal application of the PME avoided findings that may only be applicable to clinical populations or children with identified difficulties as has been the case with some mindfulness studies (Burke, 2010; Harnett & Dawe, 2012).

The findings from this present study suggest that similar outcomes may be found if this PME was used with Year 5 children in schools in the UK and taught by their regular class or tutor teacher, though further investigation is required. Specific dynamics within a class may play a role in moderating outcomes and therefore further exploration of factors such as teacher's enthusiasm for mindfulness, class composition, and individual characteristics of participants is required for more definite conclusions to be drawn.

**10.3. Who should deliver MBA to children?** It has been argued that mindfulness should be taught to children by trained instructors who regularly practice mindfulness themselves (Weare, 2013; Zenner et al., 2014) and very few interventions have been delivered by class teachers (Zenner et al., 2014). One study suggested that the social and emotional competencies of teachers



were associated with improved social and emotional outcomes for their students (Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013). During the course of this research project I was unable to locate any studies that specifically explore differences when students were taught by either a trained mindfulness instructor or a non-trained specialist.

Assertions that teaching mindfulness to children requires trained instructors requires further investigation due to the lack of attention given to this particular topic in the literature. An analogy for mindfulness teachers being trained practitioners was given by Burke (2010) who stated that swimming teachers need to be able to swim. Within primary education a number of subjects and skills are taught daily by teachers who have no specialist training such as music, PE, Design and Technology, Religious Education, dance, and sport (Cross, 2006; Holden & Button, 2006; P. Morgan & Bourke, 2008; L. D. Newton & Newton, 2006; L. D. Newton & Newton, 2005; Russell-Bowie, 2013). In this present study the usual classroom teachers implemented a programme of mindfulness exercises with their tutor groups. This piece of research is the only one I am aware of where the actual delivery of the mindfulness exercises was by pre-recorded instructions on a CD. Some studies have used scripts for teachers to follow (Joyce et al., 2010; van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012) but most research involves programme delivery by trained instructors following manualised programmes (Zenner et al., 2014). The findings from this study suggest that a programme of daily mindfulness exercises using instructions on a CD is generally well tolerated by the children although some found the voice recorded on the CD to be problematic.

The lack of an agreed operational definition of mindfulness (Davis, 2010) suggests that it may not be entirely clear exactly what is supposed to be taught when 'mindfulness' is part of the curriculum. There may be qualitative and quantitative differences between mindfulness in children and mindfulness in adults (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). It is unclear to what extent teaching children basic mindfulness exercises, such as the ones in the PME in this study, foster a state of mindfulness due to a lack of measure of this in most studies (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). Interestingly two studies reported no increases in 'mindfulness' amongst participants after completing a mindfulness intervention (Britton et al., 2014; Huppert & Johnson, 2010). Equally the 'active ingredients' in MBA may be shared with other activities (Britton et al., 2014).

The tutor who participated in the PME stated that the exercises were at an introductory level which she was comfortable with delivering. She believed that further, more in-depth, MBA with children would require her to have specific training in order to deliver with confidence.

Further research is required to explore the extent to which 'mindfulness' is attained by children who undertake mindfulness exercises in schools and whether the level at which mindfulness is taught in schools requires specialist trained teachers or can be carried out by non-specialists using manualised programmes of study.

**10.4. Mechanisms of change.** Reviews of mindfulness research with children have highlighted the importance of exploring possible mechanisms of change (Harnett & Dawe, 2012; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). With a wide variety of MBA used within the research field there remain questions about what the 'active

ingredients' of mindfulness are (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). It could be that practices common to MBA and other types of contemplative educational practices such as Tai Chi or Yoga may yield similar outcomes (Rempel, 2012). The extent to which any benefits of MBA can be attributed to 'mindfulness' is unknown (Zenner et al., 2014). Although this study includes details of the PME, delivery of the exercises as planned due to the method of implementation, and core mindfulness activities such as attention to the breath, it can offer little more in regards to possible mechanisms of change as many factors, such as teacher-student relationships and the novelty of the PME, were not controlled for nor was any measure of 'mindfulness' used. Future studies could make use of one of the two currently validated measures of mindfulness in children to explore any mechanisms of change when using MBA.

**10.5. Educational psychology.** Whilst mindfulness has yet to establish an evidence base within the field of educational psychology there are promising potential uses of mindfulness within EP work across the domains of emotional wellbeing, behavioural regulation and relationships (Davis, 2012). Cameron (2006) suggests that two distinctive roles an EP plays are using research to recommend evidence based strategies for change, and promoting 'big ideas' for change that may include the use of positive psychology and social and emotional wellbeing. Roffey (2015) argues that EPs need to be agents of change for wellbeing.

The advent of traded work within educational psychology services has seen opportunities for innovative intervention and project work increase (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Kirven & Oland, 2013). My study has demonstrated that an EP can design and implement a basic programme of mindfulness

exercises that can be incorporated into a school curriculum and run by ordinary class teachers. The present research has also shown the role that EPs can have in evaluating research and interventions, a role highlighted by Roffey (2015) and Kirven and Oland (2013).

This current research has shown that EPs can work with children, parents and school staff to develop understandings of SEW and work with school staff to implement and evaluate a programme of mindfulness exercises.

***Positive psychology.*** The present study involved the delivery of a universal programme of mindfulness exercises to Year 5 children. It has been stated that mindfulness meditation offers a way to promote the many elements of positive psychology (Hamilton et al., 2006). The PME in this study was designed to be used with all students and has a preventative focus. Positive psychology is concerned with understanding and promotion of what makes life go well (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). A programme such as the one used in this study can introduce children to the idea that mental health and wellbeing can be looked after and that positive benefits across a range of social and emotional outcomes can be achieved. Whilst the findings from this study need to be treated with caution, due to the limitations already discussed, it is promising that a short programme with only 5-10 minutes of practice every day showed a reduction in scores on the SDQ sub-scales and was positively accepted by the teachers involved. In recent years there has been growing recognition of the extent of mental health needs in children. It has been claimed that one in ten children have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder and one in seven have mental health needs that interfere with their development and learning (Weare, 2015). In the current political climate of austerity and cuts, access to

mental health services for children can be inconsistent (Richardson, 2016; Battle to access children's mental health services, 2014). Programmes that involve mindfulness exercises aimed at promoting the SEW of all children links with a positive psychology approach, with a focus on strengths and achieving optimal functioning, that can support children's social and emotional wellbeing (Weare, 2013).

### **10.6. Implementation of the PME**

Details of the PME are provided in the appendices of this paper. This section addresses some of the concerns raised by the literature with regards to implementing mindfulness programmes in schools. Findings from this research are used to discuss how the PME in this study addressed those concerns.

**Core elements of MBA common to different programmes and reporting of programme or intervention detail.** Meiklejohn et al. (2012) ask which core mindfulness exercises are common to MBA with children. There is a wide variety of MBA that have been implemented in the research (Burke, 2010) and the reporting of the content the MBA used is often missing or provides insufficient detail for replication (Zenner et al., 2014). This lack of detail causes two problems. Firstly, studies may have difficulty in replicating the content of previous studies which limits the comparisons that can be drawn. Secondly, different MBA may use very different exercises and methods of delivery to develop 'mindfulness' in the students, therefore it is problematic to draw conclusions about the 'active ingredients' of MBA.

The PME content used in this study is reported in this paper and easy replication would be possible based on the level of detail provided. The tutor

who ran the programme stated that the level of planning and the resources provided enabled her to run the sessions with minimal preparation. Weare (2013) argues that common elements of MBA with children are developing. The wide variety of programmes and a lack of reporting of programme details are problematic for the field in reaching agreement about what works in mindfulness programmes and to what extent.

**Targeted intervention or universal?** Similar to Britton et al.'s (2014) study my research involved MBA that could be delivered by classroom teachers during the normal school day. The PME was for all students and so avoided some of the self-selection bias that has occurred in other studies of MBA with children (Britton et al., 2014). Meiklejohn et al. (2012) recommend more universal applications of MBA in schools to further the evidence base for the effects of the interventions on the general population. The PME used in this study whilst aimed at all the children in a class will have been experienced by different children in different ways with some children opting to not participate in all the sessions. Running a universal programme removes some of the stigma of a withdrawal programme but introduces the possibility that not all children wish to take part. An interesting question posed by the tutor in this study and Britton et al. (2014) is whether mindfulness is equally beneficial for everyone. Future developments in the field may examine which individuals may receive no benefits from MBA or for whom MBA may even be iatrogenic (Greenberg & Harris, 2012).

**Adaptation of adult MBA for use with children.** Burke (2010) reported that the studies in her review used adaptations of MBSR and MBCT although there were many variations and some use 'elements' of MBSR. Practices with

children are generally shorter than with adults and based on concrete experience (Weare, 2013). Adapting MBA for children requires attention to age related developmental needs and acknowledging the fact that children are somewhat embedded within their family and school systems (Burke, 2010).

The PME in this study involved a range of exercises specifically aimed at children aged 5-12 years of age and included concrete experiences like attention to the breath and mindful eating. Feedback from the tutors indicated that the content of the PME used age appropriate language and expectations of exercises to be undertaken was realistic for most children in Year 5. Several of the children participating commented that they had difficulty in sitting still. It may be that for some children the act of sitting still presents particular difficulties or is developmentally inappropriate. In one study of MBCT for adolescents with ADHD the length of 'meditation' was gradually increased over the course of the programme (Haydicky et al., 2015). It would be interesting to find out if children who had difficulty in sitting still could increase the amount of time they sit still after regular mindfulness exercises.

**Conformity to a specified programme (fidelity).** The question of fidelity has been raised when assessing the impact of MBA with children (Joyce et al., 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). The extent to which teachers (trained or otherwise) deliver the mindfulness programme or intervention as intended by the authors is one that has not been regularly reported in existing mindfulness research with children (Harnett & Dawe, 2012). The use of a CD and a script, together with the short timings of each session meant that the content delivery of the PME in this study was most likely the same for both classes. Both teachers reported the exercises that had been delivered by keeping notes on

the planning sheet. Children's questionnaire responses and interviews indicated that children were familiar with a range of exercises in the PME. In my role as researcher I was in regular contact with the tutors and was aware of which exercises had been completed. Possible differences in implementation are the tutors' attitude to the PME, their own level of participation in the exercises and the classroom climate during the daily session.

### **10.7. My journey as a researcher**

**What I have learnt during this research project.** As a novice researcher whose undergraduate degree was nearly twenty years ago I began the research journey with little memory or knowledge of how to conduct research.

***Research questions often come before metaphysical considerations.*** After deciding upon a focus of mindfulness for my research I began to formulate research aims and questions. Consistent with a pragmatic approach to research my own research questions directed the course of this research and methods were used that I felt offered the best chance to obtain answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). My epistemological beliefs are consistent with a pragmatic approach, in particular that knowledge is viewed as being both constructed and based on the reality of the world we live in (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

***'Real world' research involves relationships and collaboration.*** The nature of my research meant that it was conducted in what Robson (2002) would call the 'real world'. All of the data collection took place within a school. The PME itself became part of the participating classes' curriculum and therefore had to be amenable to disruption and interruption. Building relationships with key



members of staff at the school participating in this project was key to ensuring important deadlines were met and information disseminated. Collaboration on this project reflects a number of real world emphases including working with an outside organisation, solving problems, strict time constraints and a need for well-developed social skills.

***The process of writing influenced my thoughts about the research.*** The process of writing this thesis has taken place over many months. The way in which I wrote this paper represents the stages of research I was at as well as my own evolving thoughts about the project.

It took me a long time to start writing. I was concerned about not having a complete picture or a story to tell. Various sections were written days, weeks, and on occasions months apart. I would often find that sitting back down to read through what I had written would instigate conflicting thoughts. A consistent narrative throughout the paper was sometimes elusive. In the end I just started writing and through the act of writing I began to refine my ideas and understand more about my research or as Wolcott (2009, p. 18) stated “writing is thinking”.

### **10.8. Final comments**

When I began to consider an area that I would like to research over two years ago I reflected back on my time as a teacher. Linking my research back to personal relevance in terms of my pedagogy appeared a likely source of inspiration. My interest in this piece of research originated from my experiences of teaching children and from working with an Art Therapist to use simple breathing exercises with the children in my class. In recent years there has been much coverage in the media about mindfulness and the potential benefits

of teaching mindfulness to children (Sellgren, 2016; Woods, 2014). A mindfulness all-party parliamentary group (MAPPG) has produced a report about the possible uses of mindfulness in education, health, workplaces and the criminal justice system (MAPPG, 2015). I approached this research project with an inquisitive and open mind. I was not a mindfulness practitioner nor an expert on mindfulness. Robson (2002) states that it is legitimate to select a research focus which leads to branching out and gaining experience. Throughout the process of conducting this research I have reflected on the use of mindfulness in schools and related this to my observations and findings. Given the lack of published studies in the UK on MBA with children its increasing use is perhaps, as Greenberg and Harris (2012) stated, a little premature and further research should establish its role in improving children's wellbeing as well as any possible negative implications. The findings from my research suggest that practising mindfulness exercises may positively impact on aspects of children's SEW as well as foster an atmosphere of calm and relaxation in a classroom environment. Due to the limitations of this study questions remain about what exactly contributed to the reported outcomes. Was it an increase in 'mindfulness' amongst the children? Could it be that sitting still and being calm at the start of a day share similar 'active ingredients' to MBA? Whilst the literature does not yet have definitive answers the findings from this study suggest that introducing practices that value and inculcate feelings of calm and reflection into a busy and pressured school curriculum might be valued by both children and teachers.

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## **Appendix 1.**

### **Designing the Programme of Mindfulness Exercises (PME)**

For the purposes of exploring the effects of a mindfulness based programme during phase two of this research a suitable programme was required to run within the school. The literature reviewed for this thesis revealed almost as many different mindfulness programmes or interventions as there were studies. One of the difficulties in evaluating the effects of mindfulness based interventions in schools has been the variety of interventions used (Burke, 2010; Harnett & Dawe, 2012). In deciding upon what form the PME would take in this present study I used the literature to guide my thinking and rationale. Joint collaboration with the senior leadership team and Year 5 teachers at the school was particularly helpful in considering the practical aspects of running a programme within their school setting. After reading the literature included in this paper's literature review, additional literature from the wider field of mindfulness and sources of information on the internet (for example the MiSP), and consulting with school staff I decided upon the following criteria for the PME:

1. The PME would be child friendly and age appropriate
2. The daily exercises would be a maximum of 10 minutes in length
3. The exercises would be based on recognised mindfulness practices
4. The teachers delivering the programme would need no prior training
5. The teachers would not be required to carry out any additional work beyond the delivery of the PME

6. The materials provided to the teachers would enable the PME to be delivered with as much fidelity as possible from day to day and between the two classes
7. The PME would be low cost
8. The PME would be secular in nature

Although there are a variety of commercially available mindfulness based programmes I was unable to find any that met all of the above eight criteria. The use of resources for the PME was reliant on their availability to this researcher. The MBA used in studies reviewed in this paper were often developed by the authors of the studies or used a programme that was not available in the UK or required teachers to attend training courses and buy additional resources. These resources were therefore not readily available to third parties. As noted in this paper's literature review there is often a lack of information regarding the content of any mindfulness intervention or programme used in a study making comparisons difficult but also not enabling other researchers to adopt similar programmes.

The design of the PME used in this study was primarily based around a book called 'Sitting Still like a Frog' (Snel, 2014) with additional material from 'Mindfulness in Eight Weeks' (Chaskalson, 2014) and 'The Little Book of Mindfulness' (Collard, 2014). The choice of 'Sitting Still like a Frog' was based upon the exercises described in the book and the accompanying CD meeting all of the eight criteria above as well as been recommended reading by the MiSP. The book itself contains eleven exercises that are included on the CD. The exercises are read by Myla Kabat-Zinn, wife of the founder of modern



MBSR Jon Kabat-Zinn. The exercises are designed to be used with children aged 5 to 12 years of age. The language is developmentally appropriate as are the length of the exercises (between four and 10 minutes long). The length of the PME (six weeks) is congruent with other mindfulness based programmes or interventions in the literature with most being five to eight weeks in duration (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). There were also time limitations for this present study requiring the data collection to be finished by the end of March 2016. The plans for the full 30 day PME can be found in appendix 3.

## Appendix 2

### Delivery of the PME

*The delivery of the PME will now be discussed (appendix 1 discussed the design of the PME).*

In order to facilitate effective delivery of the PME it was necessary to consider the practical implications of running daily mindfulness sessions in a busy classroom environment. It was important that the fidelity of the programme was considered as two teachers would be aiming to deliver the same programme. Fidelity of mindfulness interventions has often been cited as a limitation (Burke, 2010; Zenner et al., 2014). The preparation of materials took place over a number of weeks and resulted in the production of a planning document containing the details necessary to conduct short mindfulness exercises every day for 30 days. The PME was planned to maximise the fidelity of the programme. The use of pre-recorded exercises on a CD ensured that every child heard the same instructions, in the same voice and same intonation. The teacher interviewed expressed her satisfaction with the materials provided to run the PME stating that “it wasn’t any hassle to me... it was case of looking where we are at and what I needed”. She stated that the level of detail in the planning document was appropriate.

The actual delivery of the exercises consisted of the following:

- Children entered the classroom at approximately 8.40am
- They sat at a table (the same place every day).
- The teacher would wait for the children to enter and then ask for quiet.
- The register was either taken now or after the PME (this varied on the days I observed the sessions being run).

- The teacher would remind the children to get ready for the mindfulness exercise before pressing play on the CD player.
- The exercise would run for the allotted time (between 4 and 10 minutes).
- Any child not wishing to participate would read quietly at their table.

(Based on my research notes and interview with the teacher).

The teacher commented that 10 minutes in the morning was relatively easy to fit into the tutor time and allowed her enough time to take the register and deliver any messages to the children.

Although the sessions were planned to be identical between the two classes, and also to be consistently delivered every day at the same time, the real world setting of the PME meant that on occasions there were some disruptions and differences in how the sessions ran. My own research notes included observations of the following: on some mornings noise from building work taking place on the Year 5 building were intrusive; some children would arrive late to the classroom; some children were attracting the attention of others during the exercises; some children had difficulty in sitting still; children entered the classroom to deliver a message to the teacher; one child had to leave to attend a music lesson; number of children engaging with the exercises varied. The teacher interviewed also highlighted some of the difficulties in delivering the PME in a classroom such as interruptions from pupils wanting to enter the classroom and the noise outside. Additionally the planned 30 day intervention was delivered over a total of eight weeks due to some other activities being conducted in tutor time (for example, occasional assemblies and practice for the Christmas play) which meant that exercises did not take place every day.

Throughout the research period I was regularly in contact with the two teachers via email to offer support, answers questions and enquire about the sessions. Additionally I attended the school one morning per week to speak to the teachers before the start of the day and to observe a mindfulness session. I found that by regularly making contact with the teachers I was able to pre-empt possible difficulties and to reassure them about the delivery of the sessions (further reflections on working with school staff can be found in appendix 49). At the end of the research I was able to meet with both teachers to informally discuss their experiences of the PME and to thank them for all their hard work.

### Appendix 3

#### Programme of Mindfulness Exercises (PME)

Day	Activity/Resources	Researcher Notes	Teacher Notes
1	Sitting Still Like a Frog – Exercise 1 from CD (involves sitting still and noticing breathing – directing attention to the feeling of breathing in and out) 9 minutes long with some introduction on CD	It would be good to play the CD from the beginning as there is a good introduction. After today when this exercise is repeated then the intro bit can be skipped. Play all the track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes*
	<i>Sitting Still Like a Frog CD track 1</i>		
2	Sitting Still like A Frog – Exercise 1 as above without intro - 7 minutes long	Play from 2m10s	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 1 2m10s in</i>		
3	Attention to the Breath – Exercise 3 – 9m	Play all of track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes

	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 3</i>		
4	Attention to the Breath – Exercise 3	Play all of track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 3</i>		
5	Raisin Practice – a well-known exercise involving placing a raisin in the mouth and noticing texture, smell, taste, chewing – 7 minutes	This exercise is a well-known one and there is a description of it in the <i>Sitting Still Like a Frog</i> book (p.30). For today there is an audio description which can be accessed using the link on the left.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>A packet of raisins (1 each – please check food allergies and if so a different fruit can be used e.g. piece of apple, orange, grape) Internet connection to <a href="http://www.mbsr.co.uk/mp31.php">http://www.mbsr.co.uk/mp31.php</a> Raisin Exercise – 6m31s</i>		
6	Attention to the Breath – Exercise 3 – 9m	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 3</i>		

7	The Spaghetti Test – 6 minutes – learning to relax, noticing a calm body with relaxed limbs  <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 4</i>	Play all the track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
8	Awareness of Body – 5 minutes – (video clip from Richard Burnett founder of Mindfulness in Schools Project) clap hands- notice and draw attention to sensations in the hand Video and audio here: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mlk6xD_xAQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mlk6xD_xAQ</a> Start from 4m10s and play until 7m25s (or 11m43s)	You will require access to YouTube for this. 4m10s until 7m25s This is the length of the exercise but he continues a nice talk on Mindfulness that lasts until 11.43 and would be interesting for the class to listen to if time.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
9	The Spaghetti Test – 6 minutes – learning to relax, noticing a calm body with relaxed limbs  <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 4</i>	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
10	The Foot Scan – 5 minutes – being aware of how your foot is feeling – the toes, purposeful attention	I have provided a script that I adapted	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)

	<i>Foot Scan Script</i>		Any other Notes
11	Sitting Still like A Frog – Exercise 1 as above without intro - 7 minutes long <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 1 2m10s in</i>	Play from 2m10s	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
12	Your Personal Weather Report – awareness of feelings inside <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog book p.54</i> <i>Foot Scan Script</i>	This is a short exercise to be read from the book but prior to reading out the passage you can practice attention to breathing as at the start of the foot scan script.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
13	The Pause Button – Exercise 5 – 4mins – noticing what is going on inside you <i>Sitting Still Like a Frog CD Track 5</i>	Play all the track This is a very short exercise but teaches the skill of pausing and just having space to notice what is going on Again prior to this children can practice attention on their breathing for a few minutes	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes



14	Attention to the Breath – Exercise 3 – 9m	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 3</i>		
15	The Pause Button – Exercise 5 – 4mins – noticing what is going on inside you	Play all the track This is a very short exercise but teaches the skill of pausing and just having space to notice what is going on Again prior to this children can practice attention on their breathing for a few minutes	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like a Frog CD Track 5</i>		
16	First Aid for Unpleasant Feeling – Exercise 6 - 6mins – noticing and experiencing feelings	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 6</i>		
17	Sitting Still like A Frog – Exercise 1 as above without intro - 7 minutes long	Play from 2m10s I have included this again to remind children of the basics	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)

	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 1 2m10s in</i>		Any other Notes
18	First Aid for Unpleasant Feeling – Exercise 6 - 6mins – noticing and experiencing feelings	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 6</i>		
19	A Safe Place – Exercise 7 – 5 mins – finding a safe place inside to go to, to be calm	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like a Frog CD Track 7</i>	For this exercise children are asked to lay on a blanket or bed. I would suggest they remain sitting unless there is room in the class for them to lie down. There are a few references to lying down but I feel most of this exercise can be done whilst sitting.	
20	Conveyor Belt of Worries Exercise 8 – 6 mins – finding a place to put worries	There is a section in the book p70-72 which you may like to read before the exercise at it helps to put it into context.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like a Frog book and CD Track 8</i>		

21	The Body Scan – 10 mins – focussing attention to different parts of the body	Please use the script provided ensuring it is read in a calm and relaxed manner. If you prefer I have made an audio recording which you may use.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Body Scan Script or audio</i>		
22	Conveyor Belt of Worries Exercise 8 – 6 mins – finding a place to put worries	There is a section in the book p70-72 which you may like to read before the exercise at it helps to put it into context.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like a Frog book and CD Track 8</i>		
23	Raisin Practice – a well-known exercise involving placing a raisin in the mouth and noticing texture, smell, taste, chewing – 7 minutes	Same exercise as day 5 but instead of a raisin you can use something like a wine gum or fruit pastille which will maybe be much harder for children to not chew first! Remind the children that when they hear raisin in the audio they should know it refers to the sweet they have	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>A packet of raisins (1 each –please check food allergies and if so a different fruit can be used e.g. piece of apple, orange, grape) Internet connection to <a href="http://www.mbsr.co.uk/mp31.php">http://www.mbsr.co.uk/mp31.php</a> Raisin Exercise – 6m31s</i>		
24	A Little Boost – Exercise 9 – 4 mins – a short exercise to focus on enjoyable moments	Play all track A very short exercise and as with other short exercises it would be good to begin by having the children focus on their breathing first	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 9</i>		

25	The Body Scan – 10 mins – focussing attention to different parts of the body	Please use the script provided ensuring it is read in a calm and relaxed manner. If you prefer I have made an audio recording which you may use.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Body Scan Script or audio</i>		
26	A Little Boost – Exercise 9 – 4 mins – a short exercise to focus on enjoyable moments	Play all track A very short exercise and as with other short exercises it would be good to begin by having the children focus on their breathing first	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 9</i>		
27	The Secret of the Heart Chamber – Exercise 10 – 5 minutes – focus on feelings and appreciating things	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 10</i>		
28	Attention to the Breath – Exercise 3 – 9m	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
	<i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 3</i>		

29	The Secret of the Heart Chamber – Exercise 10 – 5 minutes – focus on feelings and appreciating things  <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog CD Track 10</i>	Play all track	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes
30	The Wishing Tree – page 91-93 of Sitting Still Like A Frog – making a wish, a desire for change  <i>Sitting Still Like A Frog book p91-93</i>	This is a really nice activity to end on and required the children to visualise a dove flying off with a wish – the script is in the book for you to read. Before the Wishing Tree please could you have a few minutes of attention to the breath as this will be the final chance for them to do this as part of this programme. You can remind the children that if they have found anything useful they can use the exercises themselves whenever they feel like it.	Exercise Done – Y N Duration of exercise Absent Children (initials)  Any other Notes

## Appendix 4

### Script for the Foot Scan (Day 10)

*The purpose of the exercise is to direct attention to the feet. Try not to rush through the exercise and allow time for the children to respond to what you are saying. I would aim for around 5 minutes but it could take longer.*

As we have done with all the other exercises make sure you are sitting on your chair with your hands resting in your lap and your feet on the floor.

Sit up straight but relaxed.

Gently close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Notice the breath as it goes in...and the breath as it goes out (*let them do this for a few seconds*)

Now I want you to notice where your feet are. Direct your attention to your feet.

What do you feel? Maybe you can feel where they are touching the floor?

Maybe the material of your socks? Or how your feet feel in your shoes?

Now direct your attention to your left foot? What can you feel? Just be still a few moments and notice what you feel in your left foot? (*pause for a few moments*).

Is it still? Is it restless? Is all your foot still or is some part of it moving? If you move your toes gently what do you feel?

Next take your attention to just your big toe on your left foot. Just notice it and direct your attention to it. Feel what it is doing? What do you sense? Next imagine you are travelling across your toes. Down the big toe into the space between your toes. Try to go as slowly as you can just noticing what it feels like as you direct your attention to your toes. Keep travelling along your toes, slowly until you reach your little toe (*pause for a few moments*).

Feel the very very end of your little toe. Just be still and notice what it feels like.

Now bring your attention back to your breathing. In and out. In and out.

Now direct your attention to your right foot. What can you feel? Just be still like last time and notice what you feel in your right foot? (*pause for a few moments*).

Next take your attention to just your big toe on your right foot. Just notice it and direct your attention to it. Feel what it is doing? What do you sense? Now imagine you are travelling across your toes, just like you did for your left foot.

Down the big toe into the space between your toes. Try to go as slowly as you can just noticing what it feels like as you direct your attention to your toes. Keep travelling along your toes, slowly until you reach your little toe (*pause for a few moments*).

Now bring your attention back to your breathing. In and out. In and out.

*Script adapted from The Little Book of Mindfulness (Collard, 2014)*

## **Appendix 5**

### **Characteristics of the school**

The school is a larger than average sized middle school in a town in the south west of England. Children attend the school in Years 5 – 8. At the time of this research there were 570 pupils on roll, the majority of which are white British. The number of pupils for whom English is not their first language is much lower than average. The proportion of pupils at the school who are disadvantaged or who have SEND is higher than average. At the time of the research there were 91 members of teaching staff (teachers, teaching assistants, learning support assistants).

I was linked to the school through my work as a TEP and knew the school SENCo and other staff members through my role. My initial approaches regarding the research project were made to the SENCo. There were no particular characteristics of the school that influenced my decision to collaborate with this particular school other than my working relationships with members of staff through my work as a TEP.



## Appendix 6

### Opt-out consent form for focus groups



### What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?

#### Details of the project

This project is being undertaken by Andrew Mearns (a trainee educational psychologist from the University of Exeter) as part of his postgraduate training, along with XXXX.

The first stage of the project involves exploring the views of children and young people about social and emotional wellbeing. Around 10 pupils from Year groups 5-8 will be asked to participate in a focus group. The focus groups will be run by Andrew during school time. They will last for approximately 30 -45 minutes. The purpose of these groups is to gain an understanding of what children and young people think about social and emotional wellbeing. The discussion should not involve anything that your child does not already discuss at school (such as friendships and feelings) or involve any activities they do not already take part in during their normal learning (e.g. group discussion, recording of ideas). All information will be treated confidentially and will be anonymous.

- Consent for participation is opt-out. This means you only need to sign and return the form if you **do not** wish your child to participate in a focus group.

#### Contact Details

For further information about the research please contact:

Name: Andrew Mearns

Postal address: Graduate School of Education, St. Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Telephone: 01392 722238

Email: arm231@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

*Dr Andrew Richards, Director of Postgraduate Research (address and contact number as above)*

**OPT-OUT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' PARENTS AND CARERS.**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU ONLY NEED TO SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. UNLESS THIS FORM IS RETURNED BY FRIDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER IT WILL BE ASSUMED THAT YOU ARE CONSENTING TO YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATING IN A FOCUS GROUP AS OUTLINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- all information my daughter / son gives will be treated as confidential;
- any data collected will be anonymous and any reporting of data and results will be anonymous (e.g. in the final thesis)
- there is no requirement for my daughter / son to participate in this research project and, if s/he does choose to participate, s/he may withdraw their participation at any stage;
- any information which my daughter / son gives will be used solely for the purposes of this research project.

I **do not** want my son/daughter to participate in the above research.

.....

(Signature of parent / guardian)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of parent / guardian)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

**Please return this signed form to XXXX in the school office at XXXX by Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 if you do not wish for your child to participate in a focus group interview for the above research project.**

**Data Protection Notice**

The data collected is purely for the use of this research project and will form part of a thesis to be submitted to the University of Exeter in 2016. Recordings of interviews and transcripts of these interviews will be stored electronically on a password protected computer. Any written information collected will be anonymous and your child will not be able to be identified by the information provided in any interviews. Your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

## Appendix 7

### Letter inviting parents to attend a focus group



Dear Parent/carer,

The University of Exeter, along with XXXX, are undertaking a research project to explore the views of children and young people, their parents and carers, and school staff about social and emotional wellbeing.

Part of this research aims to:

- Explore children and young people, parent and carers, and school staff's understanding of social and emotional wellbeing
- Explore what children and young people, their parents and carers, and school staff think children and young people at school need support with in regards to their social and emotional wellbeing
- Explore how schools support children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing

To help achieve the above aims Andrew Mearns, a trainee educational psychologist from the University of Exeter, is wishing to run some focus group sessions with children and young people, their parents and carers, and school staff.

### **YOU CAN HELP!**

It would be greatly appreciated if you would be willing to give up 1 hour of your time to attend a parent focus group. The group session will take place in school and will be attended only by parents and carers. The focus group is an opportunity for parents to:

- Discuss what social and emotional wellbeing means to you
- Find out and discuss about children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing needs
- Contribute to research understanding about how social and emotional wellbeing is supported in schools.

### **There will be free coffee/tea and cake!**

If you feel that you are able to participate in a focus group session then please contact Andrew at [arm231@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:arm231@exeter.ac.uk) or XXXX at XXXX by Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September. It is anticipated that the focus group sessions will be held in school in the first two weeks of October.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated and will form part of a research project. If you have any further questions about the project then please contact Andrew Mearns at [arm231@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:arm231@exeter.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

Andrew Mearns

## Appendix 8

### Presentation to school staff at INSET day

Research Presentation  
Andrew Mearns - Trainee Educational Psychologist

**WHAT CAN MINDFULNESS BASED APPROACHES OFFER IN RELATION TO THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF A SCHOOL COMMUNITY?**

Initial idea for research came from reading research on mindfulness and its impact upon a range of factors such as anxiety, depression and stress. Research on mindfulness with adults is well documented but research with children is relatively new.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are CBT, ACT, and Mindfulness based approaches and how do they differ from each other?
2. What are the benefits and limitations of each approach?
3. How can these approaches be used in a school setting?
4. How can these approaches be used to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?

**RESEARCH METHODS**

1. A range of CBT, ACT, and Mindfulness based approaches will be used.
2. A range of CBT, ACT, and Mindfulness based approaches will be used.
3. A range of CBT, ACT, and Mindfulness based approaches will be used.
4. A range of CBT, ACT, and Mindfulness based approaches will be used.

**RESEARCH TOPIC**

The benefits and limitations of the research methods used in the research.

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The benefits and limitations of the research methods used in the research.

Prezi

**WHAT CAN MINDFULNESS BASED APPROACHES OFFER IN RELATION TO THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF A SCHOOL COMMUNITY?**

Initial idea for research came from reading research on mindfulness and its impact upon a range of factors such as anxiety, depression and stress. Research on mindfulness with adults is well documented but research with children is relatively new.

Prezi

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do CYP, parents and teachers understand by the term 'social and emotional wellbeing'?
2. What do CYP, parents and school staff identify as the SEW needs of CYP in their school?
3. What support do CYP, parents and teachers feel is currently supporting the SEW needs of CYP in their school?
4. How do MBA address the SEW needs of CYP in a school?
5. How are MBA received and perceived by CYP, parents and school staff?
6. How can EPs work with a school community to promote SEW?



## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design consists of two linked studies.

Study one addresses RQs 1-3 and study two RQs 4-6.



## STUDY ONE

### The plan!

**Focus Group interviews with children, parents and staff exploring research questions 1-3.**



## STUDY TWO

- Use of mindfulness based approaches with a group of pupils
- Pre and post intervention measures for CYP group
- Semi-structured interviews with CYP, parents and staff.



## Appendix 9

### Focus group PowerPoint presentation

# Focus Group

ANDREW MEARNS

Thank you for being part of this focus group.

- What am I doing here?
  - Who are you?
- What is a focus group?
  - CONFIDENTIALITY!
    - Recording
    - Consent



# Introductions



What makes you happy?



## Social and emotional wellbeing – what is it?

social wellbeing – has good relationships with others and does not have behavioural problems, that is, they are not disruptive, violent or a bully.

emotional wellbeing – this includes being happy and confident and not anxious or depressed

Keeping socially and emotionally well

Times when children are having  
difficulties with their social and  
emotional wellbeing

## Appendix 10

### Structure of focus groups

Adapted from Finch, H., Lewis, J., & Turley, C. (2014)

Task	Details	Time
Scene Setting and Ground Rules	Thanks for coming – refreshments – introduce myself – outline of research topic (visual resources?) – confidentiality – discuss nature of focus groups e.g. no right/wrong answers, interaction and discussion – reference to audio recording	10 minutes
Introductions	Round the group e.g. name, age, class, favourite type of food, three words to describe yourself – highlight speaking and listening skills	5 minutes
Opening topic	Aim to promote discussion – not directly addressing RQs – What is life at XXXX like?	5 – 10 minutes
Discussion	Initial questions to promote discussions – <b>RQ1: What do the words social and emotional wellbeing mean to you?</b> (will need some intro – e.g. you might not know the meaning of the following words but I would like you to think if you have heard them before and what they might mean) – will be recorded on flipchart/SMART Board	10 minutes
	<b>RQ2: What factors contribute to children’s social and emotional wellbeing?</b> can give specific examples without naming – groups of children – own example – what do children do to support their wellbeing?	15 minutes
	<b>RQ3: When might children experience difficulties with their social and emotional wellbeing?</b> Specific times - examples – other children or own – what happened – how did it make you feel	10 minutes
Ending the discussion	Anything important to say that hasn’t been said? Opportunities for questions, further comments. Explain what will happen next (with data) Thank you and good bye	5 minutes or as required

## Appendix 11

### Certificate of ethical approval – phase one



**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

St Luke's Campus  
Heavitree Road  
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

#### CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?

Researcher(s) name: Andrew Mearns

Supervisor(s): Martin Levinson/Andrew Richards

This project has been approved for the period

From: 16 June 2015  
To: 1 September 2015

Ethics Committee approval reference: D/14/15/51

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Durrant'.

Signature: (Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)

Date: 23 June 2015

## **Appendix 12**

### **Thematic analysis**

The thematic analysis of the data followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases. Initially I listened to the audio recordings and made notes. These notes were organised into three main areas corresponding to the three research questions (see Appendix 13). Transcripts were then produced of the group interviews (see Appendix 14 for transcription example). The transcripts were then read through several times and manual coding of the data undertaken (an example of this manual coding is given in Appendix 15). Repeated exposure to the transcripts lead to the refinement of the codes (see Appendix 16). These codes were then manually sorted into themes to produce an initial thematic map (see Appendices 17 and 18). The themes identified were refined with codes being checked to ensure they should be included in a particular theme and also for coherence across the identified themes. The refinement of the themes enabled a final thematic map to be produced (see Appendices 19-21).

## Appendix 13

### Initial note taking whilst listening to focus group recording

Yr 8 contd.

(203) times you are not feeling socially + emotionally well | (202) → what do you do to help yourselves

take deep breaths - if you're crying take deep breaths think through it before you do anything bad  
if I feel tired - I lay in bed + watch YouTube - yesterday I went to bed at 7:30 (204) - that about taking your mind off things → I was just knocked out

I find it helps if you phone a friend + say how much you hate that person (who has upset you) also eating + listening to music  
(205) - what do you think it is about eating that helps? - just if you're stressed you get hungry - just stuff your mouth with whatever you see  
whenever I'm feeling down I just try + prove myself wrong about it (example of low score on test + then going through it to realise just made lots of silly mistakes) [rationalisation] (206)

when I'm angry I punch a pillow + then I feel way better

(207) → times when things are not going so well (example given of Yr 6 SATs) - what help do CYI need ~~with~~ with SEN.  
breakfast club at SATs - you go there + you get to talk to people you wouldn't normally  
lots of teachers gave me morale support (when stressed) - that helped (208) - sad, angry

(209) → talking to teachers - can become a massive deal - all the teachers know - it kind of helped me but I didn't want it  
there should be more Yr 7s + Yr 8s talking to them [children - instead of teachers] - good to talk to someone nearer their age group (210) - like a peer buddy.  
better to talk to people they know, their own age

(211) - things you've learnt in school to help when upset, stressed, angry?  
if you tell someone it works it makes you believe it works [placebo effect?] just tell someone, your teacher, friend, head of year

I do art - because I really enjoy art - you can get a pencil + paper + attach the paper - draw your feelings

(212) - any lessons or groups in school about SEN (such as PSHS) - do you think about SEN? how you would look at things  
we sort of think about it - we look at religious aspects - but we look at other things - about Ψ about ourselves

## Appendix 14

### Example of focus group transcript

Participants are identified by a letter and number.

R – Researcher

[ ] are used for non-verbal communication or for sounds not transcribed

\*\*\*\* - replaces names and places for confidentiality

E4	When I'm with my best friend
R	OK, say a little bit more about that
E4	Well at [name of previous school] I made friends with this really cool girl called ****. She's very similar to me, erm and we have a lot of fun together and we know everything about everything about each other, and so I feel comfortable and happy around her.
R	Thank you that's really nice
C4	Whenever me and my brother get along because me and my brother fight quite a lot...and we're not that...well we are close but whenever we fight I get really upset but whenever we get along we get along for quite a long time until something bad happens
R	So getting along with your brother makes you feel happy?
C4	Yeah
D4	How old's our brother?
C4	5
R	Yeah ****
B4	Doing what you like. So for instance for me I like building a lot of things, because for instance we had an English project, which I am sure quite a few people know about, I mean lots of people were probably making posters I made a gigantic 3D cross out of cardboard. Like for Spanish day I bought a gigantic cardboard boat costume. I like making sort of really big things.
R	Ok. You enjoy building things, doing things with your hands. Are you able to think or have any of you ever thought what it is about that that is making you happy?
B4	I think it's just 'cause I just look... I just seek pleasure in doing it
R	Ok, thank you
B4	Being creative
D4	I like when I go to St. John's Ambulance. Because I am doing the thing I like and I've got all my friends around me and there I can kind of be like myself because I've all met these people before and I kinda know them all the time and when people come to see what's going on you can kinda show them what you do. So you make more friends just showing them what you are doing
R	Thank you.
E4	I like drawing fashion designs and I have done for about a year and so I've got this massive folder full of them – I've got two actually; one of not very good designs and one of good ones – and so I like doing it and my mum's an artist so when I show them to her I feel happy because she likes them –yeah

R	Ok, so pleasing other people as well
C4	I feel really happy when I go to cheerleading, especially when we go to tournaments because I can remember since the first day I started, which was quite a few years ago, until the moment of a competition, how I progressed and ...yeah
D4	I am also like really happy when I am playing my music. 'cause I listen to some kind of really like funny music videos and it kinda makes me happy 'cause like some of them I can kind of relate to so yeah, it makes me happy when I listen to music
R	[looks at A4 in hope of response but A4 is not keen to say anything at this point] It's ok you don't have to it's fine. I have said this to all the groups that when there's silence it's ok. I am just giving you more time to think about things. Thinking like when you come to school, I am thinking most of the time you are probably feeling ok about being at school so what is it about coming into school, what are those kind of things that happen at school that help you to feel socially and emotionally ok? What kind of things are going on? Perhaps you wouldn't describe having 4 or 5 lessons a day as being happy, but it maybe that there is something about being in that environment, in school?
A4	Well sometimes you can see your friends that live in different villages and towns around that you can't meet up with at the weekend. It's quite nice and seeing friends in general.
R	I hadn't thought of that. That's good
B4	Same as A4 sort of getting to see more people because if you didn't go to school then you would never really meet people and as well doing lessons you find out what other people like in comparison to you which can help relationships
R	Can you say a bit more about that?
B4	Sort of because if two people like the same thing that means that that can assist them in becoming friends
R	That's a nice idea
D4	I like that as soon as you walk in the gate all your friends come running towards you. It's like really happy because all of your friends are kind of there. As soon as you walk in that gate, even though you've got to work and stuff, you always have your friends there so
R	I think you are all talking a lot really about groups and friendships and that kind of shows how these are linked together and that's why we often talk about social and emotional wellbeing together as one thing because they are quite closely linked to each other. Erm, are there other things that you do o help you keep erm, you know, keep yourself happy, keep yourself kind of not stressed, to have the more positive feelings, to help you feel relaxed and confident, calm, yeah
B4	Eating and listening to music
R	Does that have to be at the same time?
B4	Erm...kind of.



## Appendix 15

### Manual coding of data

	our friends? Are we getting on with groups of people? Are we feeling good about ourselves? Ok. Thinking about what we just spoke about and I'll leave that up there ( <i>referring to flipchart notes</i> ) to help you is when are you happy and when do you feel kind of confident in yourself and when do you feel that you have good social and emotional wellbeing. Can you talk about those times? What makes you happy? Those kinds of things. Yeah ( <i>child's name</i> )	What makes you happy?
E4	When I'm with my best friend	- with best friend
I	OK, say a little bit more about that	
E4	Well at ( <i>name of previous school</i> ) I made friends with this really cool girl called E_____. She's very similar to me, erm and we have a lot of fun together and we know everything about everything about each other, and so I feel comfortable and happy around her.	fun with friends
I	Thank you that's really nice	
C4	Whenever me and my brother get along because me and my brother fight quite a lot...and we're not that....well we are close but whenever we fight I get really upset but whenever we get along we get along for quite a long time until something bad happens	- getting along with sibling
I	So getting along with your brother makes you feel happy?	
C4	Yeah	
D4	How old's our brother?	
C4	5	
I	Yeah B4	
B4	Doing what you like. So for instance for me I like building a lot of things, because for instance we had an English project, which I am sure quite a few people know about, I mean lots of people were probably making posters I made a gigantic 3D cross out of cardboard. Like for Spanish day I bought a gigantic cardboard boat costume. I like making sort of really big things.	- making building things
I	Ok. You enjoy building things, doing things with your hands. Are you able to think or have any of you ever thought what it is about that that is making you happy?	
B4	I think it's just 'cause I just look... I just seek pleasure in doing it	- seeking pleasure
I	Ok, thank you	
B4	Being creative	- creativity
D4	I like when I go to St. John's Ambulance. Because I am doing the thing I like and I've got all my friends around me and there I can kind of be like myself because I've all met these people before and I kinda know them all the time and when people come to see what's going on you can kinda show them what you do. So you make more friends just showing them what you are doing	- friends - doing things I like
I	Thank you.	
E4	I like drawing fashion designs and I have done for about a year and so I've got this massive folder full of them - I've got two actually; one of not very good designs and one of good ones - and so I like doing it and my mum's an artist so when I show them to her I feel happy because she likes them -yeah	- drawing - designing - pleasing others
I	Ok, so pleasing other people as well	
C4	I feel really happy when I go to cheerleading, especially when we go to tournaments because I can remember since the first day I started, which was quite a few years ago, until the moment of a competition, how I progressed and ...yeah	- achievement
D4	I am also like really happy when I am playing my music. 'cause I listen to some kind of really like funny music videos and it kinda makes me happy 'cause like some of them I can kind of relate to so yeah, it makes me happy when I listen to music	- listening to music

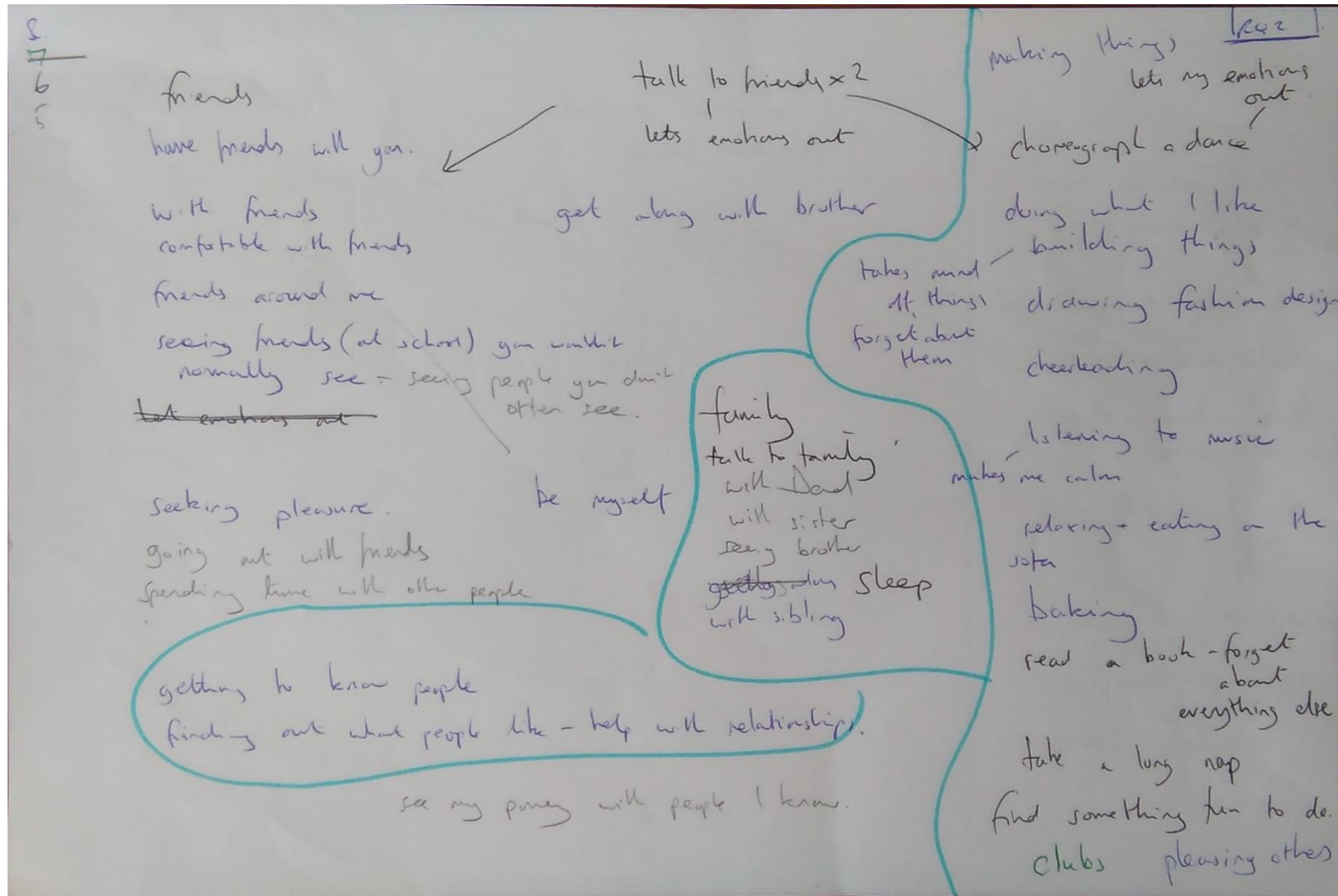
## Appendix 16

### Further refinement of codes

	our friends? Are we getting on with groups of people? Are we feeling good about ourselves? .Ok Thinking about what we just spoke about and I'll leave that up there ( <i>referring to flipchart notes</i> ) to help you is when are you happy and when do you feel kind of confident in yourself and when do you feel that you have good social and emotional wellbeing. Can you talk about those times? What makes you happy? Those kinds of things. Yeah ( <i>child's name</i> )	
E4	When I'm with my best friend	with friends
I	OK, say a little bit more about that	
E4	Well at ( <i>name of previous school</i> ) I made friends with this really cool girl called E_____. She's very similar to me, erm and we have a lot of fun together and we know everything about everything about each other, and so I feel comfortable and happy around her.	having fun with friends comfortable with friends
I	Thank you that's really nice	
C4	Whenever me and my brother get along because me and my brother fight quite a lot...and we're not that...well we are close but whenever we fight I get really upset but whenever we get along we get along for quite a long time until something bad happens	get along with brother
I	So getting along with your brother makes you feel happy?	
C4	Yeah	
D4	How old's our brother?	
C4	5	
I	Yeah B4	
B4	Doing what you like. So for instance for me I like building a lot of things, because for instance we had an English project, which I am sure quite a few people know about, I mean lots of people were probably making posters I made a gigantic 3D cross out of cardboard. Like for Spanish day I bought a gigantic cardboard boat costume. I like making sort of really big things.	building things - being creative
I	Ok. You enjoy building things, doing things with your hands. Are you able to think or have any of you ever thought what it is about that that is making you happy?	
B4	I think it's just 'cause I just look... I just seek pleasure in doing it	enjoy activity
I	Ok, thank you	
B4	Being creative	being creative
D4	I like when I go to St. John's Ambulance. Because I am doing the thing I like and I've got all my friends around me and there I can kind of be like myself because I've all met these people before and I kinda know them all the time and when people come to see what's going on you can kinda show them what you do. So you make more friends just showing them what you are doing	with friends comfortable with friends
I	Thank you.	
E4	I like drawing fashion designs and I have done for about a year and so I've got this massive folder full of them - I've got two actually; one of not very good designs and one of good ones - and so I like doing it and my mum's an artist so when I show them to her I feel happy because she likes them -yeah	drawing - being creative sharing things with family
I	Ok, so pleasing other people as well	
C4	I feel really happy when I go to cheerleading, especially when we go to tournaments because I can remember since the first day I started, which was quite a few years ago, until the moment of a competition, how I progressed and ...yeah	cheerleading - activity
D4	I am also like really happy when I am playing my music. 'cause I listen to some kind of really like funny music videos and it kinda makes me happy 'cause like some of them I can kind of relate to so yeah, it makes me happy when I listen to music	playing music - activity

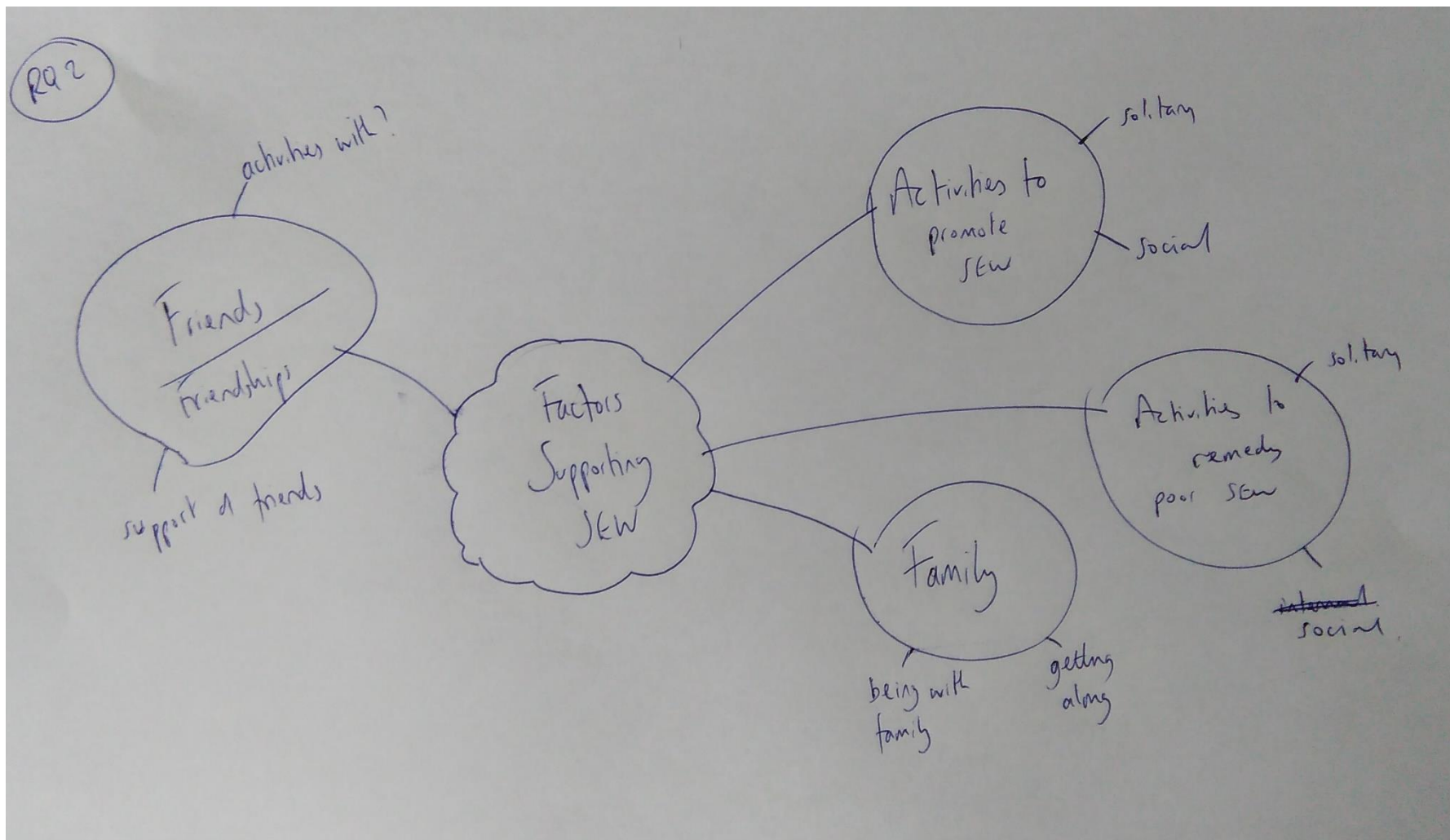
## Appendix 17

### Initial sorting of codes into themes

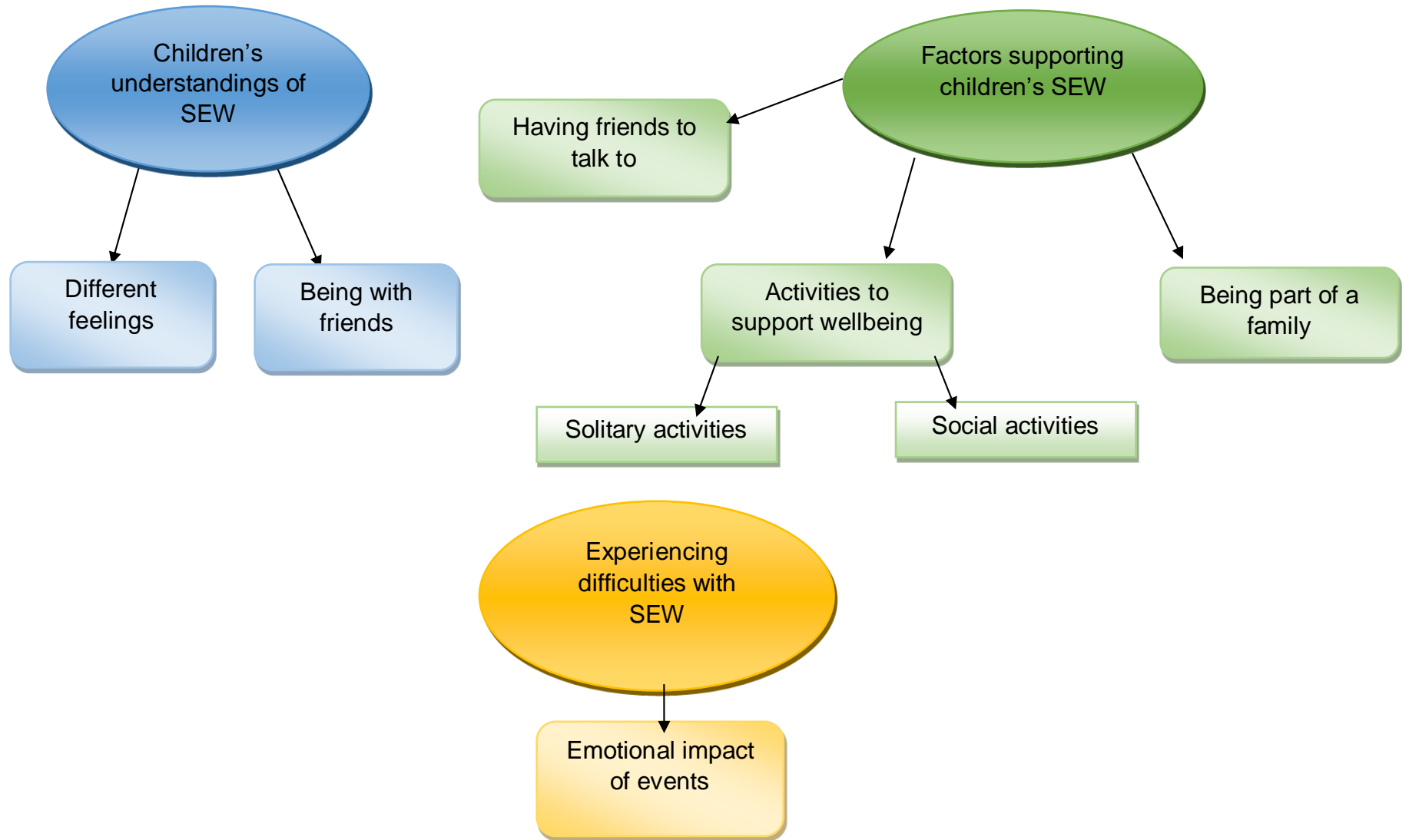


Appendix 18

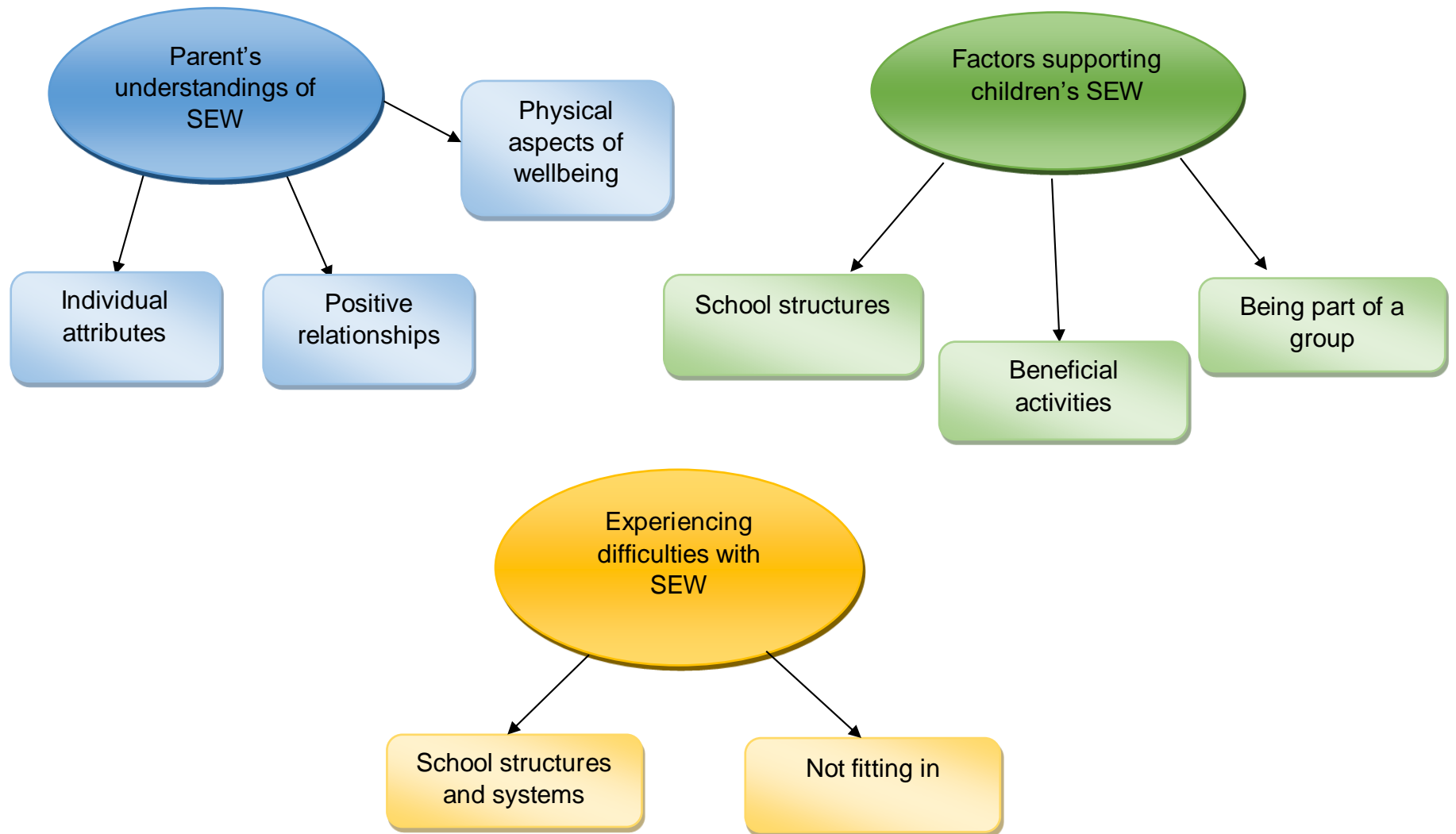
Initial thematic map for factors supporting children's SEW



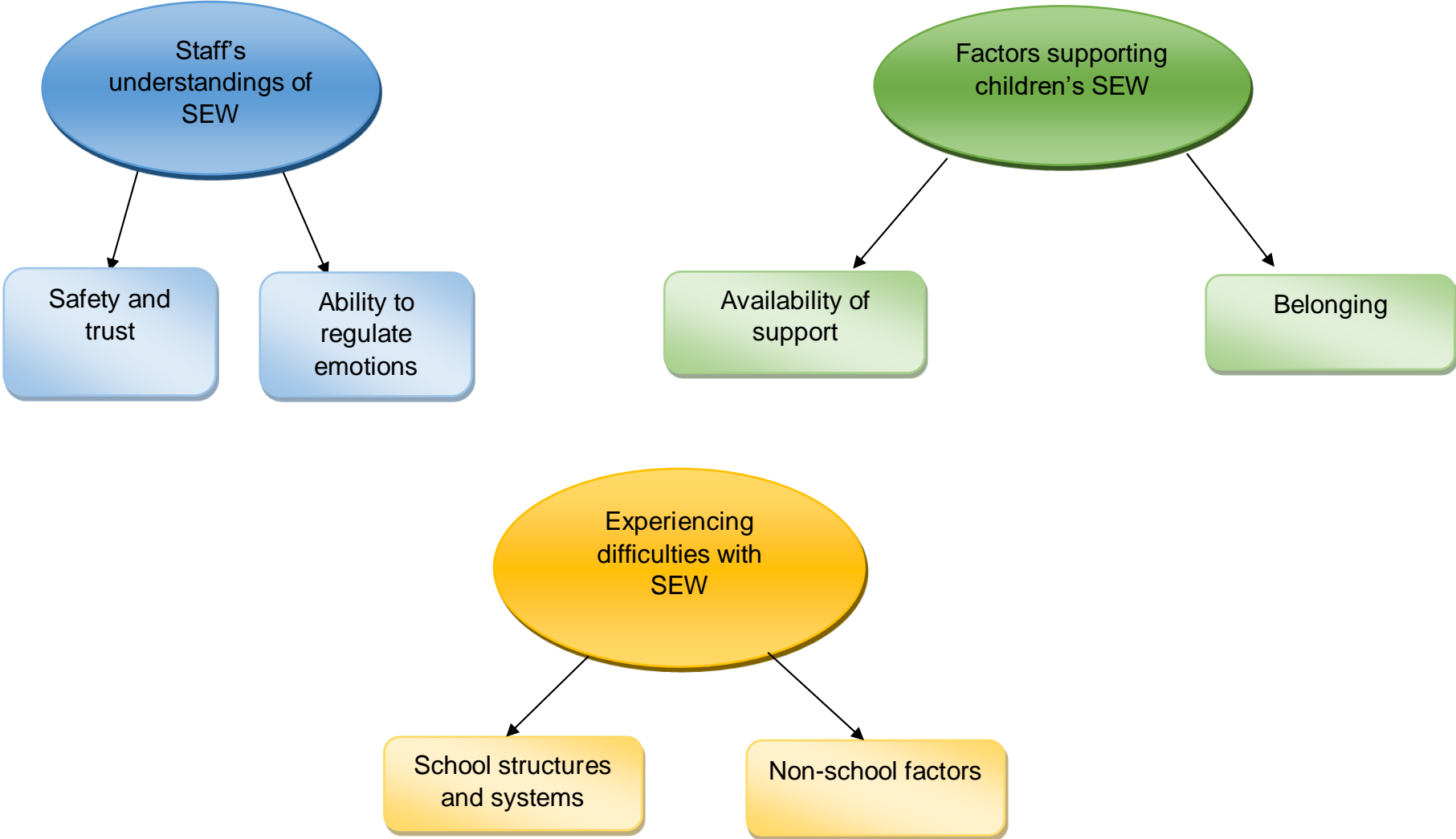
**Appendix 19: Final thematic analysis of children's focus groups' data**



## Appendix 20: Final thematic analysis of parent's focus group data



**Appendix 21: Final thematic analysis of school staff's focus group data**



## **Appendix 22.**

### **Opt-out consent form for parents for the PME**

**Information sheet – please keep for reference**

#### **What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?**

My name is Andrew Mearns and I am Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently in the third and final year of my doctorate and this research is being conducted as part of my thesis. I am currently on placement with Somerset Educational Psychology Service and have a full and clear DBS certificate. My doctorate is being completed at the Exeter University.

#### **Details of Project**

The project is being run in two stages and aims to gain insight into how children and young people, their parents and school staff think about social and emotional wellbeing and then explore what mindfulness based approaches (for example, sitting still and focussing on one thing at a time) can offer in relation to social and emotional wellbeing (for example, helping with friendships).

In the first stage the views of children and young people, their parents and school staff regarding social and emotional wellbeing were explored.

The second phase of the project will commence shortly and we would like your child, along with their classmates, to participate in a 6 week programme of short daily mindfulness sessions. The sessions themselves will last for approximately 10 minutes and involve such exercises as concentrating on breathing, directing attention to the senses and what our body is doing. The sessions planned for this 6 week programme are non-religious and the exercises are taken from best-selling mindfulness books designed for use with children. The purpose of these sessions is to explore if the children taking part perceive any benefits to their own social and emotional wellbeing and whether or not they have enjoyed the experience. For example, one of the claimed benefits of regular mindfulness practice is an increase in attention. In order to quantify any affects across a range of outcomes (such as attention and peer relationships) a short questionnaire will be completed by your child and their tutor group teacher both before and after the 6 week programme. In order to ascertain if your child has enjoyed the programme there will also be short interviews with selected children to gather their views of the programme and the exercises they have participated in.

#### **Contact Details**

For further information about the research please contact:

Name: Andrew Mearns

Postal address: Graduate School of Education, St. Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU. Telephone: 01392 722238 Email: arm231@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact: *Dr Andrew Richards, Director of Postgraduate Research (address and contact number as above)*



**OPT-OUT**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU ONLY NEED TO SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. UNLESS THIS FORM IS RETURNED BY (DATE HERE) IT WILL BE ASSUMED THAT YOU ARE CONSENTING TO YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT OUTLINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- all information my daughter / son gives will be treated as confidential;
- any data collected will be anonymous and any reporting of data and results will be anonymous (e.g. in the final thesis)
- there is no requirement for my daughter / son to participate in this research project and, if s/he does choose to participate, s/he may withdraw their participation at any stage;
- any information which my daughter / son gives will be used solely for the purposes of this research project.

**Having been informed of the above I DO NOT want my child to participate in the research project described above.**

.....  
(Signature of parent / guardian)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of parent / guardian)

.....  
(Printed name of child)

**Data Protection Notice**

The data collected is purely for the use of this research project and will form part of a thesis to be submitted to the University of Exeter in 2016. Recordings of interviews and transcripts of these interviews will be stored electronically on a password protected computer. Any written information collected (e.g. surveys) will be anonymous and your child will not be able to be identified by the information provided in these surveys. Your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

## Appendix 23

### Invite for parents' group interview

#### **What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?**

My name is Andrew Mearns and I am Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently in the third and final year of my doctorate and this research is being conducted as part of my thesis. I am currently on placement with Somerset Educational Psychology Service and have a full and clear DBS certificate. My doctorate is being completed at the Exeter University.

#### **Details of Project**

The project is being run in two stages and aims to gain insight into how children and young people, their parents and school staff think about social and emotional wellbeing and then explore what mindfulness exercises (for example, sitting still and focussing on one thing at a time) can offer in relation to social and emotional wellbeing (for example, helping with friendships).

In the first stage the views of children and young people, their parents and school staff regarding social and emotional wellbeing were explored.

The second phase of the project, which consisted of a six week programme of short daily mindfulness exercises, will finish shortly.

***To enable further exploration of the mindfulness programme I would like to invite the parents of children who participated to take part in a short (30 minutes) group interview to feedback any thoughts and observations they have about the mindfulness programme. If you feel you would like to be part of this small group then please could you email me (arm231@exeter.ac.uk) to express your interest. I will then arrange a time and date for everyone to meet (at XXXX).***

If you would like to discuss the mindfulness programme, its content, or the research project in general then I am more than happy to discuss these over the phone or by email.

#### **Contact Details**

For further information about the research please contact:

Name: Andrew Mearns

Postal address: Graduate School of Education, St. Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Telephone: 01392 722238

Email: arm231@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact: *Dr Andrew Richards, Director of Postgraduate Research (address and contact number as above)*

## Appendix 24

### Strengths and difficulties questionnaire – child rated

#### Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of how things have been for you over the last six months.

Your Name .....

Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people. I care about their feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get very angry and often lose my temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am usually on my own. I generally play alone or keep to myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I usually do as I am told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worry a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have one good friend or more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I fight a lot. I can make other people do what I want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people my age generally like me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am nervous in new situations. I easily lose confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often accused of lying or cheating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think before I do things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get on better with adults than with people my own age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many fears, I am easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your signature .....

Today's date .....

**Thank you very much for your help**

© Robert Goodman, 2005

## Appendix 25

### Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale

Statements	Never	Not Much of the time	Some of the time	Quite a lot of the time	All of the time
I think good things will happen in my life					
I have always told the truth					
I've been able to make choices easily					
I can find lots of fun things to do					
I feel that I am good at some things					
I think lots of people care about me					
I like everyone I have met					
I think there are many things I can be proud of					
I've been feeling calm					
I've been in a good mood					
I enjoy what each new day brings					
I've been getting on well with people					
I always share my sweets					
I've been cheerful about things					
I've been feeling relaxed					

## Appendix 26

### Interview schedule used with children

The questions asked during the interview explore two main areas:

- How did the children perceive and experience the mindfulness exercises
- Have the children noticed any differences since starting the exercises

### Introduction and opening questions

- Tell me a little bit about what you enjoy doing in school?
- Tell me a little bit about what it's like to be a pupil at \*\*\*\* school?
- How do you find being at middle school?

### Perception of Mindfulness intervention

- Tell me about the mindfulness exercises you have been doing with your class?
  - Had you ever done anything like mindfulness before?
  - had you ever heard of mindfulness before?
- Where there any parts of the mindfulness that you enjoyed?
  - What were they?
  - How come?
- What parts didn't you like?
  - What were they?
  - How come?
- Where there any things about the mindfulness that you found difficult?
- What would have made the mindfulness exercises better?
  - Are there any exercises you liked more than others?
- What did you think about doing mindfulness in your tutor time?
  - Would it be better at another time?

- Did you ever not take part in some of the exercises?
  - Why was this?

### **Impact of Mindfulness Intervention**

- How would you describe mindfulness to somebody who doesn't know anything about it?
- Tell me what it felt like when you were doing the mindfulness exercises?
- Have you noticed anything different about yourself since starting to do mindfulness with your class?
  - In terms of the way you think?
  - in terms of the way you behave?
  - In terms of the way you feel?
  - in terms of getting on with others
  - in terms of your concentration
- Have you noticed anything different about the other children in your class since starting mindfulness exercises?
- Tell me about times when you think mindfulness might be useful for you?
  - for others?
- Would you like to carry on doing mindfulness in school?
  - Why?
- Do you think you will use any of the exercises you have learnt outside of school?
  - What is it about that exercise that you liked?

### **Closing Questions**

- Can you use three words to describe the mindfulness you did with your class?
- Do you think your teacher enjoyed doing the sessions with you?
- Is there anything else you would like to say or that I haven't asked you?
- Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

## **Appendix 27**

### **Interview schedule used with teachers**

The questions asked during the interview explore three main areas:

- How did the teachers perceive and experience the PME
- Have the teachers noticed any impacts of the PME
- The role of the EP in implementing programmes and promoting SEW

### **Introduction – background information**

- So to begin with I wonder if you could both tell me a bit about yourselves in terms of your teaching.
  - How long?
  - Where?
  - Year 5 before?
- In terms of addressing the needs of the SEW of your students can you think of anything that the school does, or that you in particular do, that you feel contributes towards the SEW of the children you teach?
  - whole class?
  - group?
  - individual?
- In terms of running a programme like mindfulness exercises have you ever been involved with anything like this before?
- Have you any personal interest in mindfulness?
  - Prior knowledge
  - Practice?

### **Perception and experiences of Mindfulness Intervention**

- Overall what were your feelings about the mindfulness programme?
  - a) What it involved?
  - b) time commitments?
  - c) quality of the materials?
  - d) planning of the intervention?
  - e) What aspects of the intervention worked best?

- f) What aspects didn't work as well as they could have?
- g) What would you like to see done differently if you had to run the intervention again?
  - h) Where there any parts of the mindfulness that you enjoyed?
    - i) What were they?
    - ii) How come?
  - j) What parts didn't you like?
    - i) What were they?
    - ii) How come?
- What would you say were the most important aspects of the programme?
- What were the least important aspects of the programme?
- What kinds of comments have the children made to you about the mindfulness exercises?
  - a) in terms of the content?
  - b) in terms of any effects on themselves?

### **Impact on SEW**

- What would you say has been the biggest impact on your class as a whole since beginning the programme?
  - In terms of children's SEW?
  - In terms of your teaching?
  - In terms of classroom dynamics – organisation
  - Any unintended effects?
- What changes have you noticed since the mindfulness exercises started?
  - a) In terms of individual children?
  - b) in terms of the class??
  - c) In terms of yourself?
- Has taking part in the mindfulness exercises had any wider impact on your teaching?
  - In thinking about children's SEW?
  - In thinking about your own SEW?
- Do you think mindfulness should be part of the school curriculum?



## **EP involvement**

- In terms of supporting the SEW of children and the wider school community how might EPs be involved?
- Is using EP time to develop and implement mindfulness interventions a good use of time?
  - Could other professionals do this?
  - If so could an EP be used to support further?
- Is supporting the SEW of children and the wider school community a role for the EP?
  - Who else would do it?
  -

## **Closing Questions**

- Would you consider running a mindfulness intervention again?
- Would you like to carry on mindfulness exercises with your class?
- Anything I haven't asked or that you would like to add?

## Appendix 28. Evaluation questionnaire

### Mindfulness Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in the mindfulness exercises over the last two months. To help understand what children in Year 5 thought and felt about the mindfulness exercises it would be really helpful if you could answer some questions. For each question please answer as truthfully as you can – there are no right or wrong answers. All of your answers will only be read by Andrew and your answers will be made anonymous. This means that the answers you give will be written up without the use of your name. Your teachers will not see what you have answered.

What did you like about the mindfulness exercises?

Did you find any of the mindfulness exercises helpful? (Please tick)

Yes

No

If yes please can you write a little bit about which exercises you found helpful?

Can you think of a time when you might use one of the mindfulness exercises? (Please write about it in the box below if you can think of a time)

What would you change about the mindfulness exercises?

Roughly how often did you join in the mindfulness exercise? (Please tick)

Every day

most days

one or two days a week

never

How likely are you to carry on with mindfulness exercises once you stop doing them in class?  
(Please tick)

Very likely                  Likely                  Not likely

Did you stop taking part in the mindfulness exercises? (Please tick)

Yes                          No                          Sometimes

If Yes or Sometimes - what made you stop taking part?

Would you recommend mindfulness to a friend? (Please tick)

Yes                          No

Any other comments?

Name:

Class:

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

## **Appendix 29**

### **Consent form for children for participation in the PME**

#### **Mindfulness Programme**

I agree to participate in a mindfulness programme, which has been described to me by my tutor, as part of a research project exploring the impact of mindfulness exercises on the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

I agree to complete a short questionnaire (before and after the 6 week programme) which will ask me about my feelings and emotions.

I also agree that I may be chosen to be interviewed after the mindfulness programme has finished to talk about my experiences.

I understand that I do not need to take part in the mindfulness programme or complete the questionnaire and that I can stop taking part at any point.

Name:

Date of Birth:

Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 30

### Strengths and difficulties questionnaire teacher rated

#### Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

T 4-17

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months or this school year.

Child's Name .....

Male/Female

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many worries, often seems worried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has at least one good friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often fights with other children or bullies them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally liked by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often lies or cheats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Picked on or bullied by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thinks things out before acting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gets on better with adults than with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many fears, easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any other comments or concerns?

## **Appendix 31**

### **Parental opt-in consent forms for interviews with children**

**Information sheet – please keep for reference**

#### **What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?**

My name is Andrew Mearns and I am Trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently in the third and final year of my doctorate and this research is being conducted as part of my thesis. I am currently on placement with Somerset Educational Psychology Service and have a full and clear DBS certificate. My doctorate is being completed at the Exeter University.

#### **Details of Project**

The project is being run in two stages and aims to gain insight into how children and young people, their parents and school staff think about social and emotional wellbeing and then explore what mindfulness based approaches (for example, sitting still and focussing on one thing at a time) can offer in relation to social and emotional wellbeing (for example, helping with friendships).

Your child, along with their classmates has recently participated in a 6 week programme involving short mindfulness exercises. The purpose of these sessions was to explore if the children taking part perceived any benefits to their own social and emotional wellbeing and whether or not they had enjoyed the experience. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to your child about their experience of the programme and if they feel the programme has had any impact on their social or emotional wellbeing.

If you are happy for your child to participate in a short interview with me then please sign the form below. If you would like to discuss the mindfulness programme, its content, or the research project in general then I am more than happy to discuss these over the phone or by email.

#### **Contact Details**

For further information about the research please contact:

Name: Andrew Mearns

Postal address: Graduate School of Education, St. Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Telephone: 01392 722238

Email: arm231@exeter.ac.uk

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

*Dr Andrew Richards, Director of Postgraduate Research (address and contact number as above)*

## Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- It is not compulsory for my daughter / son to participate in this research project and, if s/he does choose to participate, s/he may at any stage withdraw\* their participation;
- If my daughter/son decides not to take part in the research, any information from them will be removed from the research. However, once the data has been made anonymous, it will no longer be possible to remove their data.
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about my daughter / son;
- any information which my daughter / son gives will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- if applicable, the information, which my daughter / son gives, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form;
- all information my daughter / son gives will be treated as confidential;
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my daughter's / son's anonymity.

*Note: \* when research takes place in a school, the right to withdraw from the research does NOT usually mean that pupils or students may withdraw from lessons in which the research takes place.*

***Please could this form be returned as soon as possible***

I agree to my child participating in a short interview about their experiences of being part of a mindfulness programme.

---

(Signature of parent / guardian) (Date)

---

(Printed name of parent / guardian)

---

(Printed name of child) (Date of birth of child) (Year group)

## Data Protection Notice

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

**Appendix 32**  
**Certificate of ethical approval - phase two**



**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

St Luke's Campus  
Havitree Road  
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

**CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL**

**Title of Project:** What can mindfulness based approaches offer in relation to the social and emotional wellbeing of a school community?

**Researcher(s) name:** Andrew Mearns

**Supervisor(s):** Martin Levinson  
Andrew Richards

**This project has been approved for the period**

From: 28.10.2015  
To: 01.09.2016

**Ethics Committee approval reference:** D/15/16/12

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Durrant'.

**Signature:** **Date:** 28.10.2015  
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)



### Appendix 33

#### Frequency distribution for SDQ before and after (child rated)

		TotalDifficultiesBefore			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	3	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
	7	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
	8	2	3.6	3.7	7.4
	9	1	1.8	1.9	9.3
	10	2	3.6	3.7	13.0
	11	6	10.7	11.1	24.1
	12	2	3.6	3.7	27.8
	13	3	5.4	5.6	33.3
	14	3	5.4	5.6	38.9
	15	2	3.6	3.7	42.6
	16	6	10.7	11.1	53.7
Valid	17	1	1.8	1.9	55.6
	18	6	10.7	11.1	66.7
	19	1	1.8	1.9	68.5
	20	3	5.4	5.6	74.1
	21	3	5.4	5.6	79.6
	22	2	3.6	3.7	83.3
	23	2	3.6	3.7	87.0
	24	1	1.8	1.9	88.9
	26	2	3.6	3.7	92.6
	28	2	3.6	3.7	96.3
	29	1	1.8	1.9	98.1
	30	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.6		
Total		56	100.0		

**TotalDifficultiesAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
7	2	3.6	3.7	5.6
8	4	7.1	7.4	13.0
9	2	3.6	3.7	16.7
10	4	7.1	7.4	24.1
11	1	1.8	1.9	25.9
12	4	7.1	7.4	33.3
13	3	5.4	5.6	38.9
14	2	3.6	3.7	42.6
16	7	12.5	13.0	55.6
17	2	3.6	3.7	59.3
Valid 18	6	10.7	11.1	70.4
19	4	7.1	7.4	77.8
20	2	3.6	3.7	81.5
22	1	1.8	1.9	83.3
23	1	1.8	1.9	85.2
24	1	1.8	1.9	87.0
25	2	3.6	3.7	90.7
26	2	3.6	3.7	94.4
28	1	1.8	1.9	96.3
29	1	1.8	1.9	98.1
30	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**ProSocialBefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
4	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
5	4	7.1	7.4	11.1
6	9	16.1	16.7	27.8
Valid 7	11	19.6	20.4	48.1
8	10	17.9	18.5	66.7
9	16	28.6	29.6	96.3
10	2	3.6	3.7	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**ProSocialAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
4	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
5	3	5.4	5.6	9.3
6	7	12.5	13.0	22.2
Valid 7	7	12.5	13.0	35.2
8	13	23.2	24.1	59.3
9	13	23.2	24.1	83.3
10	9	16.1	16.7	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**EmotionalProblemsBefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	2	3.6	3.7	3.7
1	2	3.6	3.7	7.4
2	7	12.5	13.0	20.4
3	6	10.7	11.1	31.5
4	7	12.5	13.0	44.4
Valid 5	12	21.4	22.2	66.7
6	9	16.1	16.7	83.3
7	4	7.1	7.4	90.7
8	5	8.9	9.3	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**EmotionalProblemsAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	2	3.6	3.7	3.7
1	1	1.8	1.9	5.6
2	6	10.7	11.1	16.7
3	6	10.7	11.1	27.8
4	11	19.6	20.4	48.1
Valid 5	5	8.9	9.3	57.4
6	12	21.4	22.2	79.6
7	6	10.7	11.1	90.7
8	3	5.4	5.6	96.3
9	2	3.6	3.7	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**ConductProbsBefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
1	8	14.3	14.8	16.7
2	9	16.1	16.7	33.3
3	8	14.3	14.8	48.1
4	11	19.6	20.4	68.5
Valid 5	7	12.5	13.0	81.5
6	4	7.1	7.4	88.9
7	4	7.1	7.4	96.3
8	2	3.6	3.7	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**ConductProbsAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	5	8.9	9.3	9.3
1	13	23.2	24.1	33.3
2	8	14.3	14.8	48.1
3	6	10.7	11.1	59.3
Valid 4	9	16.1	16.7	75.9
5	4	7.1	7.4	83.3
6	6	10.7	11.1	94.4
7	3	5.4	5.6	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**HyperBefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
1	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
2	4	7.1	7.4	11.1
3	6	10.7	11.1	22.2
4	6	10.7	11.1	33.3
5	8	14.3	14.8	48.1
6	14	25.0	25.9	74.1
7	2	3.6	3.7	77.8
8	9	16.1	16.7	94.4
9	2	3.6	3.7	98.1
10	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**HyperAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
1	3	5.4	5.6	7.4
2	5	8.9	9.3	16.7
3	9	16.1	16.7	33.3
4	7	12.5	13.0	46.3
5	9	16.1	16.7	63.0
6	3	5.4	5.6	68.5
7	6	10.7	11.1	79.6
8	7	12.5	13.0	92.6
9	3	5.4	5.6	98.1
10	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**PeerProbsBefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
1	12	21.4	22.2	24.1
2	10	17.9	18.5	42.6
3	9	16.1	16.7	59.3
4	11	19.6	20.4	79.6
Valid 5	5	8.9	9.3	88.9
6	2	3.6	3.7	92.6
7	2	3.6	3.7	96.3
8	2	3.6	3.7	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**PeerProbsAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	5	8.9	9.3	9.3
1	7	12.5	13.0	22.2
2	10	17.9	18.5	40.7
3	8	14.3	14.8	55.6
4	9	16.1	16.7	72.2
Valid 5	5	8.9	9.3	81.5
6	7	12.5	13.0	94.4
7	1	1.8	1.9	96.3
8	1	1.8	1.9	98.1
9	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**Externalisingbefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
2	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
3	2	3.6	3.7	7.4
4	3	5.4	5.6	13.0
5	2	3.6	3.7	16.7
6	3	5.4	5.6	22.2
7	6	10.7	11.1	33.3
8	10	17.9	18.5	51.9
Valid 9	4	7.1	7.4	59.3
10	3	5.4	5.6	64.8
11	3	5.4	5.6	70.4
12	7	12.5	13.0	83.3
13	2	3.6	3.7	87.0
14	1	1.8	1.9	88.9
15	5	8.9	9.3	98.1
17	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		



**Externalisingafter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
2	3	5.4	5.6	7.4
3	4	7.1	7.4	14.8
4	2	3.6	3.7	18.5
5	6	10.7	11.1	29.6
6	8	14.3	14.8	44.4
7	5	8.9	9.3	53.7
8	1	1.8	1.9	55.6
Valid 9	6	10.7	11.1	66.7
10	3	5.4	5.6	72.2
11	5	8.9	9.3	81.5
12	2	3.6	3.7	85.2
13	3	5.4	5.6	90.7
14	1	1.8	1.9	92.6
15	1	1.8	1.9	94.4
16	3	5.4	5.6	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**Internalisingbefore**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1	1.8	1.9	1.9
2	1	1.8	1.9	3.7
3	4	7.1	7.4	11.1
4	2	3.6	3.7	14.8
5	8	14.3	14.8	29.6
6	7	12.5	13.0	42.6
7	6	10.7	11.1	53.7
8	3	5.4	5.6	59.3
9	5	8.9	9.3	68.5
10	6	10.7	11.1	79.6
11	3	5.4	5.6	85.2
12	3	5.4	5.6	90.7
13	3	5.4	5.6	96.3
14	1	1.8	1.9	98.1
16	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

**Internalisingafter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	4	7.1	7.4	7.4
3	2	3.6	3.7	11.1
4	2	3.6	3.7	14.8
5	10	17.9	18.5	33.3
6	3	5.4	5.6	38.9
7	6	10.7	11.1	50.0
8	5	8.9	9.3	59.3
9	1	1.8	1.9	61.1
10	5	8.9	9.3	70.4
11	3	5.4	5.6	75.9
12	6	10.7	11.1	87.0
13	4	7.1	7.4	94.4
14	1	1.8	1.9	96.3
15	1	1.8	1.9	98.1
17	1	1.8	1.9	100.0
Total	54	96.4	100.0	
Missing System	2	3.6		
Total	56	100.0		

### Appendix 34

#### Descriptive statistics for SDQ child rated (including all sub-scales)

**Statistics**

		TotalDifficultiesBefore	TotalDifficultiesAfter	ProSocialBefore	ProSocialAfter	EmotionalProblemsBefore	EmotionalProblemsAfter	ConductProblemsBefore	ConductProblemsAfter
N	Valid	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
	Missing	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mean		16.67	15.93	7.43	7.83	4.52	4.74	3.65	2.96
Std. Deviation		6.053	6.285	1.632	1.746	2.099	2.156	2.020	2.092
Variance		36.642	39.504	2.664	3.047	4.405	4.648	4.081	4.376
Range		27	28	8	8	8	9	8	7
Minimum		3	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Maximum		30	30	10	10	8	9	8	7

**Statistics**

		HyperBefore	HyperAfter	PeerProbsBefore	PeerProbsAfter	Externalisingbefore	Externalisingafter	Internalisingbefore	Internalisingafter
N	Valid	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
	Missing	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mean		5.35	4.93	3.15	3.30	9.00	7.89	7.67	8.04
Std. Deviation		2.216	2.471	1.927	2.160	3.716	3.984	3.353	3.747
Variance		4.912	6.108	3.713	4.665	13.811	15.874	11.245	14.036
Range		10	10	8	9	16	16	15	15
Minimum		0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Maximum		10	10	8	9	17	16	16	17

### Appendix 35

#### Descriptive statistics for SDQ teacher rated (including all sub-scales)

**Statistics**

		TotalDiffsBefore	TotalDiffsAfter	EmotionProbsBefore	EmotionProbsAfter	ConductProbsBefore	ConductProbsAfter	HyperBefore	HyperAfter
N	Valid	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		11.09	9.36	2.27	2.09	1.45	.73	5.45	4.64
Std. Deviation		4.230	3.957	1.191	1.700	1.695	1.555	3.236	2.942
Variance		17.891	15.655	1.418	2.891	2.873	2.418	10.473	8.655
Range		14	14	4	6	5	5	9	10
Minimum		5	4	1	0	0	0	1	0
Maximum		19	18	5	6	5	5	10	10

**Statistics**

		PeerProbsBefore	ProSocialBefore	PeerProbsAfter	ProSocialAfter	ExternalisingBefore	InternalisingBefore	ExternalisingAfter	InternalisingAfter
N	Valid	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.91	6.36	1.73	6.73	6.91	4.18	5.36	3.82
Std. Deviation		1.375	2.541	1.421	2.453	4.549	1.401	4.081	2.183
Variance		1.891	6.455	2.018	6.018	20.691	1.964	16.655	4.764
Range		4	7	5	6	14	4	15	7
Minimum		0	3	0	4	1	2	0	1
Maximum		4	10	5	10	15	6	15	8

## Appendix 36

### Shapiro-Wilk test results for child rated SDQs

#### Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
TotalDifficultiesBefore	.081	54	.200*	.981	54	.562
TotalDifficultiesAfter	.090	54	.200*	.975	54	.307
ProSocialBefore	.166	54	.001	.912	54	.001
ProSocialAfter	.186	54	.000	.908	54	.001
EmotionalProblemsBefore	.146	54	.006	.959	54	.060
EmotionalProblemsAfter	.146	54	.006	.969	54	.166
ConductProbsBefore	.126	54	.032	.952	54	.030
ConductProbsAfter	.159	54	.002	.923	54	.002
HyperBefore	.134	54	.018	.967	54	.144
HyperAfter	.118	54	.060	.962	54	.084
PeerProbsBefore	.150	54	.004	.923	54	.002
PeerProbsAfter	.133	54	.018	.955	54	.041
Externalisingbefore	.125	54	.036	.977	54	.390
Externalisingafter	.127	54	.030	.968	54	.153
Internalisingbefore	.116	54	.066	.977	54	.379
Internalisingafter	.125	54	.036	.959	54	.065

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

### Appendix 37

#### Dependent *t*-tests for child rated SDQ

##### Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	TotalDifficultiesBefore - TotalDifficultiesAfter	.741	5.274	.718	-.699	2.180	1.032	53	.307
Pair 2	EmotionalProblemsBefore - EmotionalProblemsAfter	-.222	1.987	.270	-.765	.320	-.822	53	.415
Pair 3	HyperBefore - HyperAfter	.426	2.279	.310	-.196	1.048	1.374	53	.175
Pair 4	Externalisingbefore - Externalisingafter	1.111	3.658	.498	.113	2.110	2.232	53	.030
Pair 5	Internalisingbefore - Internalisingafter	-.370	3.042	.414	-1.201	.460	-.895	53	.375

## Appendix 38

### Non-parametric tests for SDQ child rated

**Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>**

	ProSocialAfter - ProSocialBefore	ConductProbsAfter - ConductProbsBefore	PeerProbsAfter - PeerProbsBefore
Z	-1.941 <sup>b</sup>	-2.144 <sup>c</sup>	-.964 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.032	.335

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

c. Based on positive ranks.



## Appendix 39

### Nonparametric tests for SDQ teacher rated

Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>

	TotalDiffsAfter – TotalDiffs Before	EmotionProbs After – EmotionProbs Before	ConductProbs After – ConductProbs Before	HyperAfter - HyperBefore	PeerProbsAfter – PeerProbs Before	ProSocialAfter – ProSocial Before	Externalising After – Externalising Before	Internalising After – Internalising Before
Z	-2.157 <sup>b</sup>	-.312 <sup>b</sup>	-1.725 <sup>b</sup>	-1.411 <sup>b</sup>	-.318 <sup>b</sup>	-.412 <sup>c</sup>	-1.975 <sup>b</sup>	-.426 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.755	.084	.158	.751	.680	.048	.670

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on positive ranks.

c. Based on negative ranks.

## Appendix 40

### Frequency distribution SCWBS

TotalWBBefore				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
21	2	4.3	4.3	4.3
26	1	2.2	2.2	6.5
27	1	2.2	2.2	8.7
28	1	2.2	2.2	10.9
29	1	2.2	2.2	13.0
30	1	2.2	2.2	15.2
32	1	2.2	2.2	17.4
33	1	2.2	2.2	19.6
35	2	4.3	4.3	23.9
36	1	2.2	2.2	26.1
37	2	4.3	4.3	30.4
38	1	2.2	2.2	32.6
39	2	4.3	4.3	37.0
Valid 40	1	2.2	2.2	39.1
41	7	15.2	15.2	54.3
42	1	2.2	2.2	56.5
43	5	10.9	10.9	67.4
44	1	2.2	2.2	69.6
45	1	2.2	2.2	71.7
46	3	6.5	6.5	78.3
47	1	2.2	2.2	80.4
49	2	4.3	4.3	84.8
50	2	4.3	4.3	89.1
51	3	6.5	6.5	95.7
53	1	2.2	2.2	97.8
54	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

**TotalWBAfter**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
17	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
22	2	4.3	4.3	6.5
27	1	2.2	2.2	8.7
29	2	4.3	4.3	13.0
30	1	2.2	2.2	15.2
31	1	2.2	2.2	17.4
32	1	2.2	2.2	19.6
33	3	6.5	6.5	26.1
34	1	2.2	2.2	28.3
35	2	4.3	4.3	32.6
36	4	8.7	8.7	41.3
37	2	4.3	4.3	45.7
Valid 38	1	2.2	2.2	47.8
39	1	2.2	2.2	50.0
40	2	4.3	4.3	54.3
42	4	8.7	8.7	63.0
43	2	4.3	4.3	67.4
45	5	10.9	10.9	78.3
46	1	2.2	2.2	80.4
47	2	4.3	4.3	84.8
48	4	8.7	8.7	93.5
51	1	2.2	2.2	95.7
52	1	2.2	2.2	97.8
53	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	46	100.0	100.0	

## Appendix 41

### Descriptive statistics SCWBS

		<b>Statistics</b>	
		TotaWBBefore	TotaWBAfter
N	Valid	46	46
	Missing	0	0
Mean		40.41	38.78
Std. Deviation		8.153	8.257
Variance		66.470	68.174
Range		33	36
Minimum		21	17
Maximum		54	53

## Appendix 42

### Dependent *t*-test for SCWBS

#### Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 TotalWBScoreBefore - TotalWBAfter	1.630	7.585	1.118	-.622	3.883	1.458	45	.152

### Appendix 43

#### Correlations between SCWBS and SDQ (including sub-scales)

Correlations

		TotalWBScoreBefore	TotalDifficultiesBefore
TotalWBScoreBefore	Pearson Correlation	1	-.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
TotalDifficultiesBefore	Pearson Correlation	-.656**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		TotalWBScoreBefore	Externalisingbefore
TotalWBScoreBefore	Pearson Correlation	1	-.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
Externalisingbefore	Pearson Correlation	-.690**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		TotalWBScoreBefore	ConductProbsBefore
TotalWBScoreBefore	Pearson Correlation	1	-.650**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
ConductProbsBefore	Pearson Correlation	-.650**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Non-parametric correlations used as normality not-assumed for conduct problems scores.

**Correlations**

		TotalDifficulties After	TotalWBAfter
TotalDifficultiesAfter	Pearson Correlation	1	-.726**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
TotalWBAfter	Pearson Correlation	-.726**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlations**

		TotalWBAfter	Externalisingafter
TotalWBAfter	Pearson Correlation	1	-.570**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
Externalisingafter	Pearson Correlation	-.570**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Correlations**

			TotalWBAfter	ConductProbsAfter
Kendall's tau_b	TotalWBAfter	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.416**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	46	46
Spearman's rho	ConductProbsAfter	Correlation Coefficient	-.416**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	46	46
	TotalWBAfter	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.525**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	46	46
	ConductProbsAfter	Correlation Coefficient	-.525**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Non-parametric correlations used as normality not-assumed for conduct problems scores.

## Appendix 44

### Excerpt of transcript – interview with child

P = participant

I = interviewer

\*\*\*\* = replacement for name or place

[ ] = for inaudible or not transcribed sounds

P: Yeah, I found sitting still quite difficult because that's like a whole new level of meditating or more like the meditating is a new level. Mr \*\*\*\* said if you've done mindfulness and you're a pro at it try meditating.

I: Ok

P: And you've done all of the exercises.

I: Have you got any thoughts about what would have made the mindfulness exercises better?

P: Mmm, well, not really. I thought maybe add in a like exercises for like exercises number 31 or 32 where you could like pay attention to your lungs and your inside of your body and just, just don't think of much at all. You can maybe like think of what's happened in the past if you've told like a lie and you want to undo it or something. I think that should be an exercise.

I: Mmm, I think there may be some like that but we just did a few of them. Erm, ok. What about doing the mindfulness in your tutor time? Do you think that was a good time to do it or...

P: We do it in the morning before registration. Yeah I think it's a good time to do it.

I: What is it about that time that's good? Why is that a good time to do it do you think?

P: Because in the morning we erm, we're all quite tired and it's easy for us to close our eyes and it gives us, I don't know, it just gives us a little bit of time to rest. I think in the morning or the end of the day because if it was in the end of the day you'd know what you've had and done in the school day but if it's in the morning you know what you have done yesterday before and you'll be a bit sleepy so you could easily just close your eyes and think of nothing.

I: Ah, ok. Did you, erm, because I know some people didn't take part in some of the exercises and some people stopped, did you not take part in any of them?

P: No I took part in all of them

I: Did you? Really? OK



P: As long as I didn't go to \*\*\*\*, that was usually on a day we didn't do mindfulness, I took part in probably all of them

I: Fantastic. OK we've just got a few more questions. If you had to describe what you had done, the mindfulness exercises, to somebody else who doesn't know anything about mindfulness how would you describe it?

P: I'd describe it like mindfulness is a really peace...say in my house my brother, he's not in Year 4 but if he was in Year 4 if he was in erm, [long pause] the month before September, erm, I forgot what the month was, er, I'd tell him if you're gonna do mindfulness, if you're gonna be in my class and you do mindfulness if it's still around what you need to do is just be really calm, still, frozen and don't be too lazy

I: I like that description. Erm, what sorry?

P: August.

I: Ah ok

P: I just realised

I: And when you were doing the mindfulness exercises, I know they were all different, but when you were doing them what did it feel like to you?

P: Some of them felt, th... to me they all had like a different, erm, calmness and maybe the first one you might have to be calm breathing in easily and maybe the Conveyor Belt of Worries you have to just be calm and forget lots of stuff. Maybe for a few of them you might have to be strong and brave. I'm not sure.

I: Ok. Thank you. And since you've been doing the mindfulness exercises I wondered have you noticed anything different about yourself?

P: I've noticed much about myself. I've noticed I'm being a bit less cowardly, if I can say it like that. I'm being a bit less scared and I'm not afraid of spiders anymore at least for a bit the big massive ones are, not big ones, I'm scared of big ones. Tiny ones I'm fine with now.

I: Ok. And what about in terms of the way that you act or behave. Have you noticed any differences? You may not have done

P: Yeah, I've noticed a couple of differences. Maybe I'm listening a bit better and I'm learning a bit better. I don't have to keep going to my neighbour "What did she say? I couldn't hear it very well." I don't have to keep doing that anymore

## Appendix 45

### Transcript and initial coding

Participant	Question	Answer	Initial Coding
P:	yeah it did but I just kind of blocked out the noise and I just listened to the track		blocked out the noise + listened to the track
I:	Good for you. Erm, do you have any thoughts about what might have made the mindfulness exercises any better for you? What would have helped?		
P:	I can't think of anything that could have actually made it better		can't think of anything that would have made it better
I:	ok, erm, the mindfulness exercises, most of them, were done on the tutor time. do you think that was a good time to do the exercises?		tutor time good time to do exercises
P:	Yeah because it's not really in a rush every morning and in tutor time you just don't do anything we just listen to the track in normal tutor time we would normally just talk about our day or read and then that's a good place to do the mindfulness in the morning when you first get into school		not in a rush - don't do anything in tutor time good place to put mindfulness
I:	Did you take part in all of the exercises or...		took part in all the exercises
P:	Yeah		
I:	Did you? Because some people didn't and that's fine. How would you describe mindfulness to somebody who doesn't know anything about it?		
P:	Erm I would just say that I think you would like it because I have this friend who just loves listening to tracks and like sitting still. I would have said you'll love it because you like to sit still. You're just listening and you're getting calmer and just sitting there and just listening and I think you would like it.		friend would like it - loves listening to tracks + sitting still just listening + you're getting calmer
I:	What did it feel like for you when you were doing some of the mindfulness exercises?		
P:	The first time we ever did it it felt like weird but when I, as the, as I done it lots more I just feel normal because I've got used to it but before I hadn't		1st time was weird - felt normal - got used to it
I:	So it doesn't feel weird now?		doesn't feel weird now
P:	No		
I:	Have you noticed anything different about yourself since you started doing the mindfulness exercises?		
P:	Yeah I've been more calmer because I used to get like really hyper but now I'm just normal and I just don't do as much as I normally used to. I do exercise but I don't do what I used to do like just run around screaming		been calmer - used to get hyper - got normal now - still exercise but don't run around screaming anymore.
I:	Do you think that mindfulness has helped with that?		think mindfulness helped with that
P:	Yeah		
I:	How do you think it's helped?		
P:	I just think because it's got me more calmer I don't do it. I just don't run around any more		got me calmer - don't run around anymore
I:	That's interesting. Were there any negative things about the mindfulness at all do you think?		
P:	No		nothing negative.
I:	Nothing that made you feel uncomfortable or strange?		
P:	No		

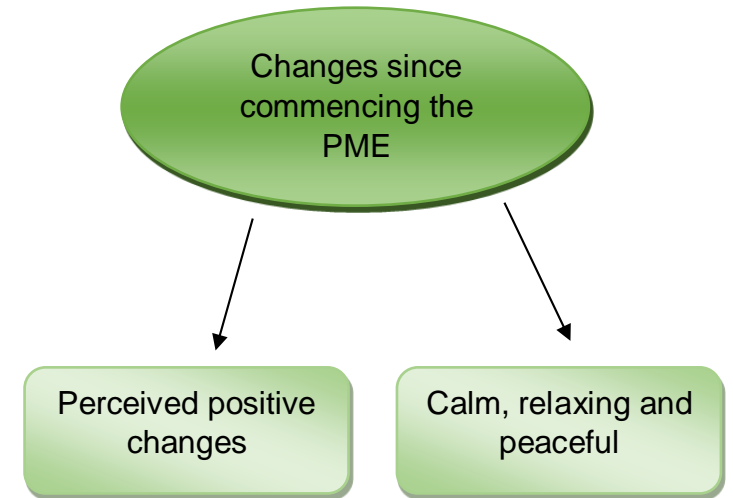
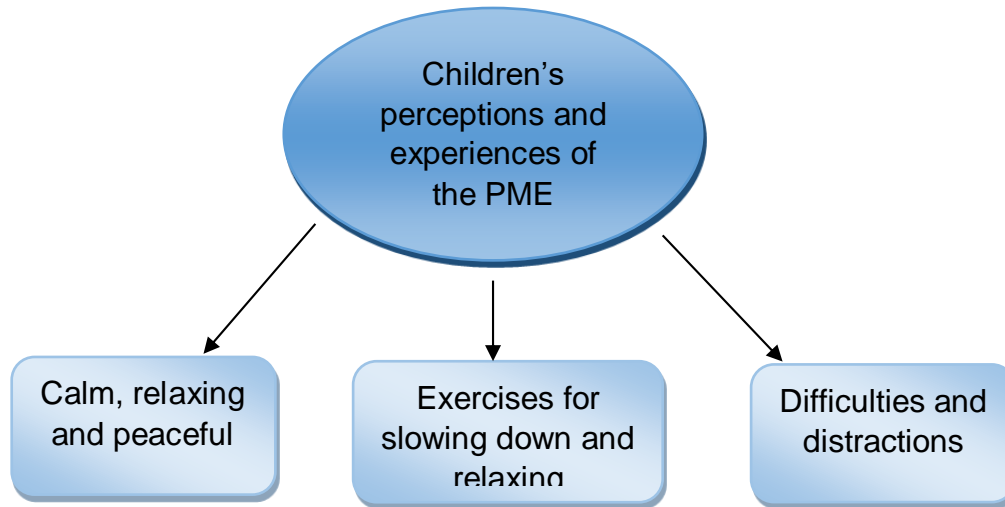
Appendix 46

Sorting codes into themes

conveyed belt of worries  
not shill like a frog  
not done mt before  
not heard before  
sitting still, keeping calm  
relaxing and calm  
peace/calm/still/frozen  
being peaceful  
different  
not like raising / back of them  
repeating sessions  
can get anxious  
calmer  
jogged  
relax/concentrate  
helps you keep calm, don't worry about stuff  
not worry about anything around you  
like being calm / it calmed me down  
quite relaxing  
good way of calming down  
peaceful + calm  
attention to breath  
calmness  
to keep me calm  
made me feel calm  
helped me be to be calm  
for calming amazing  
liberated  
calm/peaceful  
helps you focus  
enjoyed trying one  
enjoyed doing them  
calm start  
afterwards feel calm  
helps you focus  
not noticed changes in other CPP  
Some calm  
Some no difference  
CPP calm when doing then return to normal  
days no change / me + 2/3 marks  
have calmed down

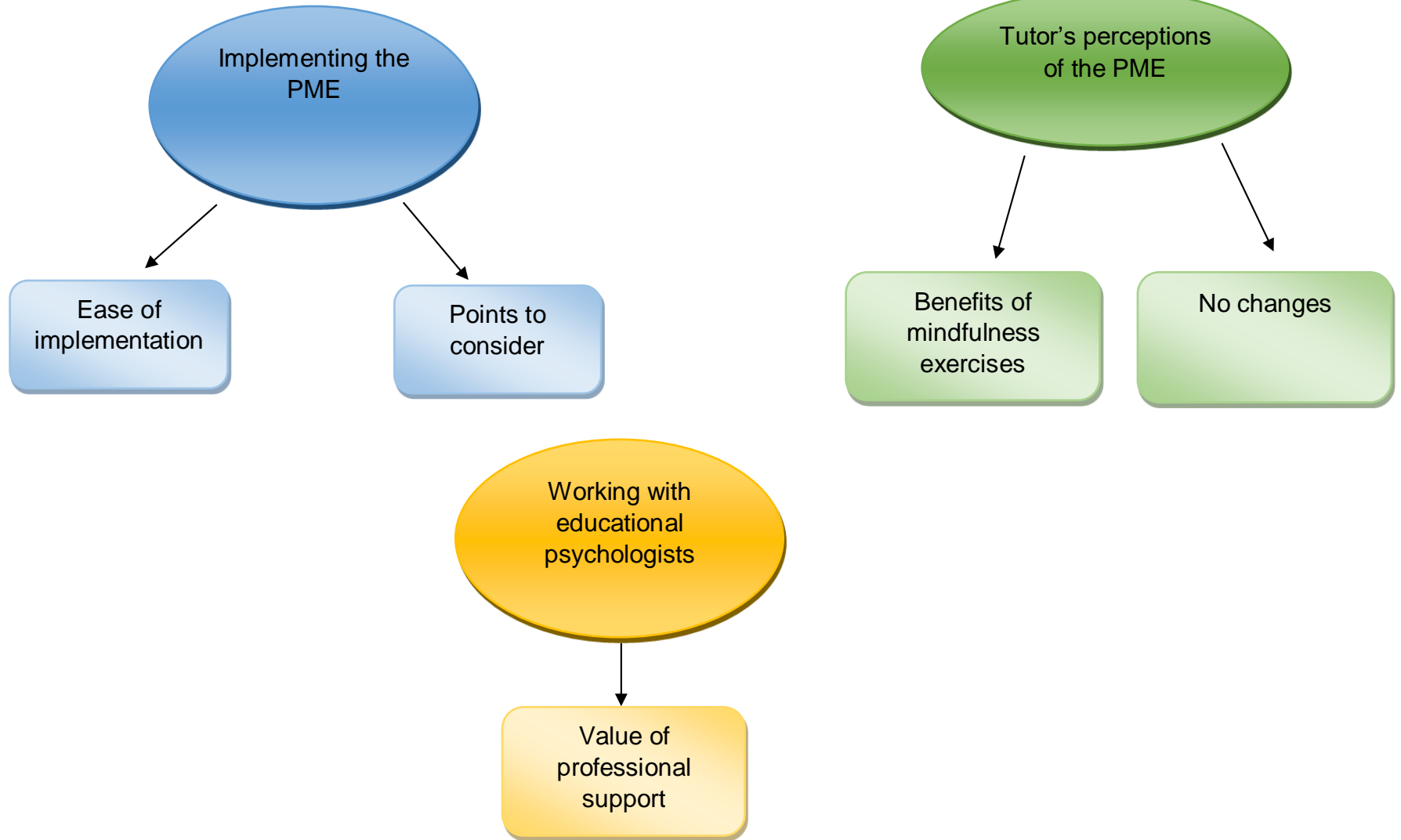
Appendix 47

Thematic map of children's interview data



Appendix 48

Thematic map of tutor's interview data



## Appendix 49

### **Researcher's reflections of working with school staff to implement the PME.**

Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) presented strategies for organisational change which I have used here to reflect on my role as a TEP and a researcher in working with a school's staff to implement a programme of mindfulness exercises. Georgiades and Phillimore offer six guidelines for implementing change.

**1. Work with the forces within an organisation which are supportive of change.** Both of the tutor teachers volunteered to run mindfulness exercises with their classes. The tutors' willingness to participate as well as the interest they expressed in using mindfulness exercises with children were important factors in maintaining their involvement over the months of the research. Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) argue that working with those who support change is better for achieving goals.

**2. Aim to produce a team of self-sustaining team of workers.** By working together I hoped that the two tutors could rely on each other for support and encouragement. I met with them weekly throughout the research and encouraged them to reflect on the process. In order to develop this further I would suggest that regular supervision would be beneficial in building individual and team competencies to continue to deliver programmes such as the one in this study.

**3. Work with the 'healthy' part of the system.** The two tutors who participated were experienced teachers who generally had good relationships

with the children in their class. There were no concerns about the children or the teachers who participated in discussions with the senior leadership team. Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) advise against implementing change with individuals or groups who are already having difficulty coping with things as they are, due to the added pressure and energy required to adjust to change.

**4. Work with people who have the authority to carry out change.** The two tutors had the authority within their respective classrooms to run the PME with the children once this had been agreed with the senior leadership team.

Problem solving models for EP work stress the importance of working with the 'problem owners' or the person who can affect change (Woolfson, Whaling, Stewart, & Monsen, 2003). In much the same way EPs should work with those who have the authority to bring about change otherwise time is wasted (Georgiades & Phillimore, 1975).

**5. Gain permission from managers.** Initially agreement was reached with the senior leadership team to collaborate on the research. The importance of EPs working with individuals in schools who have the power to affect change is important as without approval from senior leadership, programmes, such as the one in this research, would not be possible.

**6. Work with small groups or pairs.** Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) suggest working in pairs for mutual support and learning. The two tutors were able to meet regularly and I met with them every week. Informal conversations with both tutors suggested that they were able to offer support and advice to one another during the course of the PME, particularly when decisions were made about postponing sessions due to extra-curricular activities.

Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) state that “organisational change that is to be permanent is a lengthy business” (p. 315). The PME finished in February 2016 and although one of the tutors expressed an interest in carrying on mindfulness exercises with her tutor group there are currently no daily mindfulness exercises taking place in the school. Implementation support is one way in which EPs can work with schools to support behaviour change in practice (Patel, 2013). In order to develop programmes such as the PME into whole school approaches EPs need to work with school staff over a sustained period of time to offer supervision and encouragement. One way in which EP involvement has successfully maintained changes in practice is the training and regular supervision of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (Osborne & Burton, 2014). Findings from the tutor’s interview suggest that ongoing regular EP involvement would be welcomed and this could be used to support whole school changes and facilitate programmes and interventions aimed at supporting the SEW of children.