

# **4 Weeks of Mindfulness**



**An Eco-Schools Seven Step Guide  
For Primary Schools**

## **'It was good to get out of the classroom and enjoy nature. It made me feel refreshed.'**

Thank you for choosing to participate in Mindfulness Minutes, an eco-project that can be used as evidence for the Healthy Living and Schools Grounds topics when working towards your Eco-Schools Green Flag.

Mindfulness Minutes is a four week long project designed to get pupils and school staff thinking and talking about their mental health and well-being.

### **A quick message from Eco-Schools England:**

'Between our team we have nearly 25 years teaching experience; we have sat, laughed, cried and celebrated with our pupils and colleagues over examination results, we have skipped lunch breaks to run school clubs and we have given up our Sundays and summer holidays to plan and prepare. Therefore the ideas and actions for our Mindfulness Minutes national call to action have not been rigorously assessed by a team of academics, but instead have been tried and tested with our own primary, GCSE and A 'Level students in a 'real' school. Some of our ideas may not work for all your pupils but we hope that Mindfulness Minutes encourages you, hard working Eco-Coordinator and your pupils to STOP for a just minute and chillax - or smell the roses, whatever works best for you!'

***Lee Wray-Davies (Eco-Schools Manager)***

### **Thank You**

The team at Eco-Schools England would like to thank all the young people and staff who piloted the project from: Bayton Primary, Christ the King, Cradle Hill, Market Drayton Infants, New Silkworth Academy, Penhurst Hessel Academy, St Olaves, Torkington School & Woodstone Community Primary School. Thank you for providing us with the wonderful quotes and feedback that have helped us develop the Mindfulness Minutes eco-project. Thank you also for showing us just how important and beneficial taking a minute to be mindful is for all ages!



## Introduction

Many of us live our lives rushing through the day, blink and it's the end of term. Life is happening, but we may not notice due to everything else that is going on in our surroundings, both classroom and at home. Mindfulness has many definitions, put simply it means being more aware of what is going on around us and learning from what we find. To do this we need to pay full attention to all our senses, rather than getting swept up in life and our school routine.

**Quick Task: Stop reading now. Close your eyes and count 5 deep breaths.  
Well done that was first hand experience of mindfulness, easy!**



Like all Eco-Schools projects the Mindfulness Minutes campaign has been designed to be a manageable, multiple topic action that helps your school work towards our international Green Flag, whilst following the Eco-Schools Seven Step framework.

Mindfulness Minutes is a flexible 4 week-long project that can be undertaken at any time during the academic year. Your chosen four weeks can run concurrently or you could choose to carry out one week every month, what ever works best for you and your pupils. **Most importantly please remember to keep a record of the total number of mindfulness minutes achieved at the end of your chosen four weeks in order to set targets to try and achieve even more minutes of mindfulness next academic year!**



## Seven Step Overview

1. **Mindfulness Committee:** Choose group of pupils who are going to lead the four weeks of Mindfulness Minutes in your school.
2. **Mindfulness Review:** Complete a survey designed to get pupils (and staff) thinking about their mental well-being before and after your four weeks of action.
3. **Mindfulness Plan:** Decide when and how you will carry out your four weeks of mindfulness, which year groups will participate and which mindfulness activities will be most appropriate for them?
4. **Mindfulness in the Curriculum:** Incorporate mindfulness in your pastoral and academic curriculum.
5. **Mindfulness Message:** Spread the mindfulness message to your whole school community and beyond.
6. **Mindfulness Monitoring:** Collate your total number of mindfulness minutes and try to increase this total year on year as you involve more people from your wider school community.
7. **Mindfulness Code:** Incorporate mental health and well-being into your Eco-Code.



## **Step 1**

### **Mindfulness Committee**



To begin you will need to appoint a Mindfulness Committee to plan, lead and monitor the four week long project in your school. You can use your existing Eco-Committee/school council or, alternatively, choose to appoint a new group.

It is important that your Mindfulness Committee contains a least one pupil from each class; these pupils will need to be available during your Mindfulness Minutes campaign. After the four weeks are over, the same pupils will need to review and evaluate the success of the project in school and submit your total number of Mindfulness Minutes.

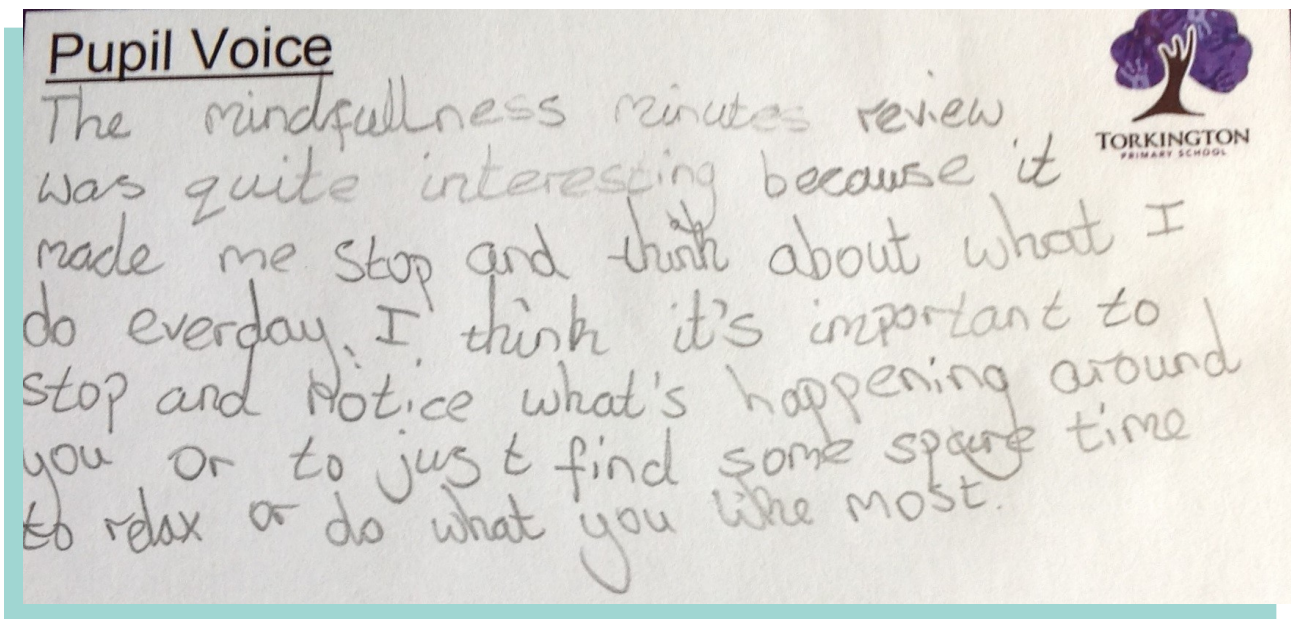


**‘It is so important to be mindful as it helps my mind do something that it needs, to switch off and appreciate all the lovely things around me.’**



## Step 2

### Mindfulness Review



In the Additional Materials section at the back of this handout, you will find a Mindfulness Review that can be used by your Mindfulness Committee.

## Review

When you have a Mindfulness Committee that represents your school it is time to review how your school promotes mental well-being. As well as carrying out our Mindfulness Review, try to find out what actions your school is already carrying out to promote mental health and well-being (e.g. meditation, yoga clubs etc) as these can be incorporated into your four weeks of action too.

Your Mindfulness Committee should aim to survey as many pupils and staff as possible. Don't forget to ask your Mindfulness Committee to leave some copies of the Mindfulness Review in the staff room too for teachers to complete - they are anonymous, so no one needs to be embarrassed about their answers!



## Read

When your Committee have surveyed pupils and staff and researched how your school promotes mental well-being it is time for them to analyse the results. Are their teachers and classmates Mindfulness Beginners or Mindfulness Jedis?

## Repeat

After your four weeks of mindfulness, we strongly recommend that your committee complete a second Mindfulness Review to evaluate the success of your project (are their classmates now all Mindfulness Jedis?), this will help your committee decide if they should carry out further weeks of mindfulness in the future. We will not ask you to submit the results of your Mindfulness Review at the end of the project only the total number of mindfulness minutes achieved.

**‘Although it can be hard to sometimes switch off, if you are alone or just silent for a minute, you can hear all the nice sounds like the birds tweeting and it really helps you use all your senses.’**



## Step 3 Mindfulness Plan



There are several things that your Mindfulness Committee will need to consider when planning their four weeks of mindfulness:

1. When will they carry out their weeks of mindfulness?
2. How many minutes of mindfulness will they aim for each week?
3. What will they do during their minutes of mindfulness? We have some ideas on the next pages to help with this.
4. How will they let the rest of the school know about their weeks of mindfulness (See Step 5: informing and involving) - assembly, letters home to parents, school newsletter etc?

## When

The Mindfulness Committee should think about when would be the best time to carry out their mindfulness weeks during the school year. They should also consider when during the school day Mindfulness Minutes should be carried out. Many schools who have previously taken part in the project found that completing Mindfulness Minutes after break and lunch times helped pupils relax and focus for their next lesson.

Make sure that there is someone to start and end your mindfulness minutes with a stop watch, but please don't sound an alarm when your minutes are up: we don't want to spoil the relaxed atmosphere by giving anyone a shock!

**'After lunch my emotions were a deep red, as I'd been running around playing football and not had a minute to relax, but once I started my Mindfulness Art I could slowly feel myself become an orange. That's when I knew mindfulness was a really positive thing, as I wouldn't have relaxed that quickly had I not had time to stop, find calm and reflect. I realise now, why reflection is so important.'**

## Where

The great thing about Mindfulness activities is that they can be carried out anywhere outside, inside or even queuing for lunch! Any spare minute is the perfect time to be mindful—just make sure to record them all!

## How Many?

The total amount of Mindfulness Minutes each pupil or member of staff carries out during every action is up to the Mindfulness Committee—they should aim to do enough to help create a more mindful school to benefit their learning environment. At the back of this handout you will find a Mindfulness Minutes Tally Template, which you can use to record the total number of minutes completed each week.

**For example if a class of 20 carry out just 2 minutes of mindfulness every day during week one that's 200 minutes. Over the four weeks that 800 minutes!!!**





## What

This is the fun part. What are you going to do during your mindfulness minutes?

Easy, absolutely nothing if you wish! Mindfulness can be as simple as: closing your eyes and listening to the noises around you or looking out of a window and watching the world go by. There are no rules to mindfulness - just stop and notice what is happening around you.

At first you might find it difficult to 'clear your mind' and 'stop thinking,' don't worry about it - simply come back to the moment and 'swoosh' those thoughts away. Try focusing your attention on an item. Look down at a pencil in your hand: How does it feel? Do different parts of the pencil feel different? What does it smell like?

Remember being mindful does not mean you have to sit in the lotus position for hours (but you can if you want) it is simply acknowledging what is happening right now and learning from it. Slowly, you will start to find it easier to become more mindful and learn to appreciate small things around you. Mindfulness is a great skill to have no matter your age, especially if you are finding yourself stressed about things in school and your mind is racing thinking about all the work you have to do - this applies to teachers too.

Taking just a few minutes a day to 'switch off your auto pilot' has been proven by lots of clever people with lots of qualifications (we won't bore you with the stats!) to help strengthen your mental resilience and improve grades. Below are just a few ideas for activities your Mindfulness Committee could introduce during your Mindfulness Minutes project:

- Take 2 minutes to list all the positive things that have happened during your school day.
- During one of the weeks focus on different parts of the body- on Monday bring full attention to your hands - how do they feel, cold or warm? Any tingling sensations? What does the surface they are resting on feel like? Tuesday - legs, Wednesday - back, Thursday - face, Friday - the whole body.
- On your way to and from school pick an object to focus on and count how many times you see this object, such as dogs or cats. The amount of mindfulness minutes for this activity is how long your journey takes. Every week you could swap the item you are focusing on, this is also a great way to get parents involved too.
- Grow a plant and every day look at it for 1 minute to see if anything has changed.
- During break look at the sky for a few minutes, notice the different colours that you see. Record these on a sheet of paper in your class room as a cloud chart. If you carry this out over the course of the year how do the colours on your cloud chart change?
- After sitting quietly for 2 minutes outside make a note of all the different smells, sounds and sights you see. Keep a record of this and create a Scentsation Diary. Try being mindful in different parts of your school grounds how does your Scentsation Diary vary?

**'Our favourite activities were sketching in the nature reserve and lying down and watching the baby seagulls on the nursery roof.'**

## **... and one for the staff room:**

Stop marking and planning during your 'break', have a tea/ coffee tasting session instead. Try a different brand each week- how do they taste? Rank the brands and maybe even who makes the best cuppa!



## Step 4

# Mindfulness in the Curriculum



Here are some of our ideas for how you can incorporate Mindfulness Minutes into your school curriculum:

- In PE try having yoga themed sessions.
- In science focus on plants identify them, grow them, draw and label them.
- In computing create a mindfulness PowerPoint with images of nature that will help classmates to relax during their Mindfulness Minutes.
- In music lessons research great composers and musicians who have created music that can help you relax.
- In English create a 'How to' set of instructions for mindfulness.
- In art go outside and sketch or paint natural objects.



- In maths count calculate how many minutes of mindfulness have been achieved over your four weeks of action!

**"It made us calm."**





## Step 5

### Mindfulness Message



Your Mindfulness Committee should aim to involve the whole school community, however, this may be difficult at first. In the first week, you may only have one class taking part in Mindfulness Minutes whilst you introduce mindfulness techniques, but that's a great place to start. Over the following weeks, you might get three more classes involved and continue expanding until the whole school is participating.

### Informing

The first thing your Mindfulness Committee will need to do is let the whole school know what mindfulness means (keep this message simple) and how they plan to introduce Mindfulness Minutes to your school. We recommend delivering an introductory school assembly in week one and adding lots of information to your school's Eco-Board. You should also consider letting the wider school community know about your Mindfulness Minutes project through: school newsletters, school website and school social media if your school has an account. One of the best things about working for Eco-Schools is hearing positive stories from schools across England, so make sure you share your #MindfulnessMinutes with us on our [\*\*website\*\*](#), [\*\*Twitter\*\*](#), [\*\*Instagram\*\*](#) or [\*\*Facebook\*\*](#).

### Involving

Involving pupils in your Mindfulness Minutes project is easy if there is someone from every year group on your Mindfulness Committee, simply ask each pupil to lead this in their class and let their classmates choose which mindfulness action(s) they want to carry out throughout the four weeks. You could even kick start your mindfulness project with a full 2 minute mindfulness session in assembly or on the playground after a break or lunchtime.



## **Step 6**

### **Mindfulness Monitoring**



Amazingly in 2021 between January and July 30,566 young people and 2453 school staff took part in the project, collectively achieving 1,000,696 minutes of mindfulness!

To showcase the impact of your school's Mindfulness Minutes we recommend you record the following sets of data:

**The number of minutes of mindfulness carried out in total across your school during weeks 1, 2, 3 and 4.** This is the number of mindfulness minutes multiplied by the number of participants (staff and pupils) for all mindfulness actions that you carried out during these weeks.

**How many pupils from your school were involved in your Mindfulness Minutes actions during weeks 1, 2, 3 and 4.** If you did more than one action each week, indicate the average number of pupils involved.

**How many staff from your school were involved in your Mindfulness Minutes action during weeks 1, 2, 3 and 4.** If you did more than one action each week, please indicate the average number of staff involved.

Please do not worry if you are not able to carry out the Mindfulness Minutes project for the full four weeks, you should still keep a record of your results for however many weeks of mindfulness action your schools was able to take part in. This helps set a benchmark and new target to aim for (and break) next time your school takes part in Mindfulness Minutes!



## **Step 7**

### **Mindfulness Code**



**‘The class has been so wonderfully calm and peaceful during our daily breathing exercises.’**

Your Mindfulness Committee should have organised, completed and evaluated their four week long Mindfulness Minutes project - now it's time to celebrate your success by adding a section on mindfulness and mental health to your Eco-Code. Remember your Eco-Code can take any format it likes (poster, poem, song, statement, pledge etc.), but it should be valued and reflect what Eco-Schools topics and projects you are working on. Here are a few of our ideas for an additional statement on mindfulness that could easily fit into many Eco-Codes (but we're sure you could do better).

- In our school, taking a minute to be mindful is important.
- Mindfulness helps us be friends with ourselves.
- Almost everything works if you unplug it for a few minutes (this includes us).
- We appreciate that each moment is filled with joy and wonder.
- Healthy world, healthy body, healthy mind.

**‘Pupils developed the ability to focus on one thing and notice the small things/changes around them.’**





## Step 2

### Mindfulness Review



Question	Yes	No
When I'm walking to school and pass a flower along the way, I regularly stop to smell and appreciate it.		
When I eat my school lunch I take time to think about the different tastes and textures of the food instead of just wolfing it down as quickly as possible.		
I notice what my body feels like when I am upset or angry.		
I am happy to just sit down and relax without a mobile phone or any form of electronics and watch the clouds drift by.		
I think about the nice things that have happened in school when I get home.		
I listen to what I can hear when in the school grounds at break time and lunch.		
I try not to worry too much about things that I can't control.		
When I travel to school I look around me and notice even the smallest changes on my journey.		
When my friend or teacher talks to me I think about nothing else and concentrate on them.		
After I fall out with friends, I find it easy to put the argument behind me and be friends again.		
I am patient with my friends, family and teachers.		
If I make a mistake in class I learn from it and move on quickly.		
I often take a few minutes to just stop and think.		
I regularly take the time to stop and think about how amazing nature is.		
I think about each of my five senses everyday.		



## Mindfulness Review Scores



### Give one point for every yes ticked

**Score 0-5 Mindfulness Beginner:** You are probably not thinking about what is going on around you and could be missing out on lots of exciting things - don't worry Mindfulness Minutes will help you with this.

**Score 6-12 Mindfulness Mostly:** You do have some moments of mindfulness during your school day, great! You're well on your way to becoming a Mindfulness Jedi.

**Score 12-13 Mindfulness Jedi:** Wow, you are taking the time to appreciate everything going on around you, spread the word and help others become as mindfully magnificent as you.





## Step 6

### Mindfulness Monitoring



<b>Class:</b>	
<b>Number of pupils participating:</b>	
<b>Number of staff participating:</b>	
Week 1	Number of Mindfulness Minutes
<b>Monday</b>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	
<b>Friday</b>	
<b>Week 1 Total</b>	





## Step 6

### Mindfulness Monitoring



<b>Class:</b>	
<b>Number of pupils participating:</b>	
<b>Number of staff participating:</b>	
Week 2	Number of Mindfulness Minutes
<b>Monday</b>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	
<b>Friday</b>	
<b>Week 2 Total</b>	



## Step 6

### Mindfulness Monitoring



<b>Class:</b>	
<b>Number of pupils participating:</b>	
<b>Number of staff participating:</b>	
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Number of Mindfulness Minutes</b>
<b>Monday</b>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	
<b>Friday</b>	
<b>Week 3 Total</b>	



## Step 6

### Mindfulness Monitoring



<b>Class:</b>	
<b>Number of pupils participating:</b>	
<b>Number of staff participating:</b>	
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Number of Mindfulness Minutes</b>
<b>Monday</b>	
<b>Tuesday</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	
<b>Friday</b>	
<b>Week 4 Total</b>	