

## **Guided Relaxation in the Classroom**

**Carly Weir**

**Group: 2I**

### ***Rationale***

The Scottish Attainment Challenge launched in 2015 aims to support all children reach their full potential with the initiative focused on children living in areas of deprivation around Scotland. Within this enquiry, there is a substantial number of children in the subject class living in SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) 1 and 2. It is the responsibility of the practitioner therefore to find ways to help these children reach their full potential.

Black and Fernando (2013) reported on a study undertaken within a school where guided relaxation activities were introduced into the classrooms. The findings showed that over a five week period, the engagement of most children in the classrooms, especially those from low income families, improved. This research suggests therefore that introducing guided relaxation into the subject class may benefit the children. If the children are more engaged, they will get more from their learning and be better equipped to reach their full potential supporting the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

### ***Aims***

The aim of this enquiry is to look at guided relaxation in the classroom and its impact upon the pupils' views of themselves as learners. The question of how ready they feel to learn after a period of time away from learning, such as playtimes or lunchtimes, will be put to the learners over the four week period. Within the subject class, behaviours and situations which arise within the playground often spill over into classroom time. This has a negative effect upon the teaching and learning as it reduces the amount of teaching time. The children themselves are not in the correct mind set to begin learning. It is predicted that the guided relaxation methods introduced into the classroom, will have a positive impact on teaching and learning by changing the learner's views of themselves in that they will feel more ready to learn and be aware of this change.

### ***Methodology***

The research was conducted over a time frame of four weeks within a composite Primary One/Two class. Prior to beginning the guided relaxation activities, the jotter work of a group of children, completed after playtimes or lunchtimes, was studied to be used as a comparable. The chosen method of guided relaxation was mindful colouring whilst listening to relaxing music. Starting from week one, a questionnaire was conducted, prior to the guided relaxation activities, which asked the children how ready they felt to engage with learning. They were given the options of feeling either; ready, ok or not to learn after a break from learning. The

children were then given a mindful colouring sheet whilst relaxing music played around the class. This activity lasted for around fifteen to twenty minutes each time, and was completed after the children returned from playtime or lunchtime. Each time after the children had engaged in guided relaxation, they were then asked to complete a post relaxation questionnaire which asked the same question of how ready they now felt to learn. At the end of the four week research, the jotter work of the same group of children was again studied. This was used to analyse whether there had been any improvement in the quality of work from the children to assess their engagement after taking part in the activity. Teacher judgment was also used to assess the engagement of the children before and after the mindfulness activities through discussion with the pupils.

### ***Findings***

The findings showed that largely, after taking part in the mindfulness activities the children within the subject class felt more ready to engage with learning. On the first week a pre questionnaire showed that only 37% of children felt ready to learn. This rose to 68% after the children had taken part in the activity. The jotter work showed little improvement in week one. This is possibly due to the excitement of a new activity being introduced. Dialogue with the children showed that most had enjoyed the activity with some commenting that they felt more relaxed.

The second week's pre questionnaire showed a jump in the percentage of children feeling ready to learn with 50% choosing the option *ready*. After engaging in the mindful colouring, this rose to 63% of children, in their opinion, feeling ready to engage with learning. There was however a marked improvement in the jotter work of the focus group of children. The majority of the children were able to complete the task to a higher standard than before, showing they were more engaged when listening to the task being explained and then again when completing it. During conversation with the children in the focus group, all of them self-assessed their work green meaning they too thought they had completed it to a high standard.

Week three was conducted after the children had had a holiday from school. Only 26.3% of children reported feeling ready to learn in the pre activity questionnaire. Showing the most success, this number then increased to 84.2% feeling ready to learn after taking part in the activity. As this was the third week of using the relaxation methods, the children were well established at collecting the resources and beginning their mindful colouring. Many children also commented that they liked listening to the music as it made them feel calm and happy. The children again reported that they felt their work was completed to a high standard. The children also appeared happier and pleased that they had completed their work to this standard.

During week four, the children were given the opportunity to create their own mindful colouring sheet by drawing it first, then colouring. Prior to beginning, only 21.3% of children reported that they felt ready to learn. After taking part in the relaxation activity this had risen to 58% of the children reporting that they were ready to engage in learning. Although this

was an improvement, week four did not enjoy the same successful rise as week three. The jotter work from the children, although still showing improvement from week one, was not as good as what was observed in week three. During dialogue with the children, they stated that creating their own sheet had been too difficult and they were worried about not doing it correctly. Therefore changing the activity in this way negated some of the positive effects of introducing guided relaxation methods to the children in the subject class.

### ***Conclusions***

It can therefore be concluded that largely, introducing guided relaxation within the subject class, had a positive impact by helping the children to feel more ready to engage with their learning. By week three, the children understood how to participate in the activity better and were able to access the resources easily to take part. Week three showed the most benefit for the children both in their own opinion and from teacher judgement hence had the activity stayed consistent, week four may have showed further improvement on the children's readiness to learn. Changing the activity was not beneficial for the children in week four as was shown by the dialogue with children and their jotter work.

Introducing guided relaxation within the classroom, as predicted, has had a positive impact on how the children view themselves as learners. Each week, after taking part in the relaxation activity, more children felt ready to learn than not. This included children in SIMD 1 and 2. Should the guided relaxation activities be introduced on a more consistent basis therefore, these children may feel more ready to learn, engage better in their work and ultimately better reach their full potential.

### ***Implications for Future Practice***

Moreton (2012) shows that introducing guided relaxation within the classroom creates optimum learning conditions for the children within the class. This research is supported by the findings from this enquiry. Therefore, each subject class within the enquiry will continue to implement a minimum of one mindful activity per week into the classroom in an attempt to keep up with the positive impact already experienced.

Due to the benefits of introducing relaxation methods into the classroom, this is something which could be introduced into future classrooms. There is much research available showcasing a range of activities which fall under the category of guided relaxation. Therefore, this could be introduced to a range of stages throughout the primary setting as it was within the enquiry. This could benefit many children by enabling them to feel more ready to learn, and ultimately reach their full potential.

### ***Bibliography***

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