



## Executive summary

Mindfulness involves learning to direct our attention to our experience as it is unfolding, moment by moment, with open-minded curiosity and acceptance. It is a skill that can be learned by practices, akin to meditations, that focus on immediate felt experience in the breath, body and mind.

Interventions which teach mindfulness are proliferating in all sectors, including most recently in education for students and staff. Conclusions here about the benefits of mindfulness for school staff are based on solid evidence of the impact of mindfulness on adults, and a growing and promising evidence base on the impact on children and young people. Randomised control trials (RCTs) with adults and young people have shown moderate impacts on mental and physical health, social and emotional competences, and performance of various kinds, and on many indicators of quality of life and wellbeing. MRI (brain scan) studies suggest that mindfulness meditation reliably and profoundly alters the structure and function of the brain to improve the quality of both thought and feeling.

Specific mindfulness interventions for school staff are now developing, some connected to existing school based programmes, others within teacher education.

There are currently 13 studies published in peer reviewed journals of mindfulness with school staff. They include 5 RCTs, 7 control studies, 3 before and after, and one qualitative study. They mostly use self-report methodology, but increasingly include tests of real world performance. Their findings echo the wider adult and workplace literature on the impacts of mindfulness, and show:

- **reductions in stress**, burnout and anxiety, including a reduction in days off work and feelings of task and time pressure, improved ability to manage thoughts and behaviour, an increase in coping skills, motivation, planning and problem solving, and taking more time to relax.
- **better mental health** including less distress, negative emotion, depression and anxiety.
- **greater wellbeing**, including life satisfaction, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-compassion and sense of personal growth.
- **increased kindness and compassion** to others, including greater empathy, tolerance, forgiveness and patience, and less anger and hostility.
- **better physical health**, including lower blood pressure, declines in cortisol (a stress hormone) and fewer reported physical health problems.
- **increased cognitive performance**, including the ability to pay attention and focus, make decisions and respond flexibly to challenges.
- **enhanced job performance**, including better classroom management and organisation, greater ability to prioritise, to see the whole picture, to be more self-motivated and autonomous, to show greater attunement to students' needs, and achieve more supportive relationships with them.