

Case Study: Evaluating Mind Education in Secondary Schools



Schools

Heathside School, Weybridge and Guildford High School.

Participants

Heathside School is a co-educational secondary state school. Guildford High School is an academically selective independent girls' school. The sample was as follows:

326 students – 220 Year 10 pupils at Heathside and 106 Year 9 pupils at Guildford High.

At Heathside, nine tutors delivered the material across five 50-minute sessions.

At Guildford High, five tutors delivered the material across 7–9 30-minute sessions.

The Challenge

Can schools provide universal, preventative mental-health education that gives young people both an understanding of how their minds work and practical skills they can use in everyday life?

The Intervention

Students received the Mind Education programme through their PSHE curriculum, delivered by their own teachers following training from Mind Education. The lesson programme combined neuroscience-based understanding of emotion regulation with 5 core practical, compassion-focused wellbeing skills.

The Evaluation

The programme was evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, with research guidance and support from the University of Surrey's Department of Psychological Interventions. The evaluation included pre- and post-programme wellbeing and mindfulness measures, student focus groups, teacher confidence measures and teacher interviews.

What Students Told Us

Students described using the skills in real situations including managing exam stress, challenging self-critical thinking, dealing with problems within and outside of their control, using their values to guide their actions and navigating personal boundaries. Students at both schools valued understanding the neuroscience behind their emotional responses.

What Teachers Observed

Teachers reported students referring back to and using the skills after the lessons. At Guildford High, one teacher reported that students appeared to be "coping better and referring to the 3-systems and the skills". The school created posters to reinforce the learning in the Year 9 area.

What the Study Showed

There were early indications of improved wellbeing for some students, although the quantitative results did not reach statistical significance: the evaluation identified practical difficulties in collecting consistent pre- and post-intervention data within normal

school timetables, as well as the fact that skills take time to learn, leading to a cautious interpretation of the findings.

Both reports concluded that a larger formal academic study would require greater adherence to the research protocol; in particular conducting a longer-term follow-up evaluation to see if the skills had been retained over time and, if so, how accurately.

The qualitative findings, however, provided clear evidence that students were understanding, remembering and applying the skills during and outside of the lessons.

One of the strongest themes across both schools was the value of understanding the neuroscience behind emotions. Students reported that learning *why* they experienced stress and other difficult emotions helped them see these reactions as natural rather than as personal failings. At Guildford High, one student described the most valuable element as:

“One of most valuable things was the Science, just knowing that it’s normal.”

The evaluation concluded that this understanding helped students reframe their stress responses and foster greater self-compassion.

At Heathside students also described the lessons as providing valuable time for reflection and connection. Some reported feeling more cared for by their form tutors and better supported for the school day ahead, suggesting potential benefits beyond individual skill development for the wider pastoral environment.

What We Learned

Feedback from students and teachers directly informed the further development of Mind Education. Recommendations included: increasing practical and interactive activities, simplifying lesson structure, strengthening teacher preparation, supplying lesson plans and providing visual reminders of the skills.

The Outcome

Across the two contrasting school settings, the evaluation demonstrated that students could understand the neuroscience underpinning Mind Education, learn the practical skills and apply them to situations in their everyday lives. It also established a clear framework for refining the programme and strengthening future evaluation.

*“Really useful – I use the skills in every aspect of my life.”
“I liked seeing what was behind it, why I was feeling that.”*

— Students

*“Mind Education is a valuable and thoughtful resource
that supports students’ mental health education.”
“I loved teaching the series and use the skills myself.”*

— Teachers