

**Exploring children's experiences of  
participating in a mindfulness  
intervention**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of East London for the  
degree of Professional doctorate in Educational and  
Child Psychology

# Student Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degrees.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. The thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

In recent years there has been a rapid growth in mindfulness practices being applied to improve the health and wellbeing of those who participate. As a result mindfulness-based interventions (MBI's) have been applied in medical and educational settings.

The purpose of this piece of research is to explore children's understanding of mindfulness following their involvement in a 12 week mindfulness based intervention. The research provides an in-depth explorative interpretation of both the pupils and the mindfulness practitioner's experience of mindfulness.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was employed as a method of analysis which resulted in 3 master themes being identified. The themes include 'physiological activities promote mindfulness', 'cognitive elements' and 'states of being'. Interpretation of the findings considered participants experiences in relation to the 7 attitudinal foundations as proposed by Kabat-Zinn (1990). A number of similarities between the participants were evident, as represented in the 3 master themes. However the degree to which each individual participant expressed their awareness and understating of mindfulness varied. Therefore the findings indicated that the participants were in the process of developing their understanding of mindfulness which differed between them on a conceptual level.

This study is considered of relevance for those in the profession of Educational Psychology and those interested in the application of mindfulness-based interventions to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. The research has made a distinctive contribution within the field of mindfulness in light of the findings. Recommendations are made to inform the practices of Educational Psychology Services with reference to the work of Educational Psychologists. Suggestions for further research have also been made to aid the direction of future research.

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## Table of Contents

Student Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Appendices.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures.....	x
List of Abbreviations.....	xi
<b>Chapter One: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction to Chapter.....	1
1.2 Aims and purpose of the research.....	1
1.3 Relevance of research to the profession of Educational Psychology.....	2
1.3.1 The inclusion of the voice of the child.....	2
1.4 The national and local legislative context.....	3
1.5 Distinctive contribution of the research.....	4
1.6 Summary of Chapter.....	5
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Introduction to chapter.....	6
2.2 The development of the literature research.....	6
2.3 The rise of mindfulness within western culture.....	8
2.4 The Definition of mindfulness.....	10
2.5 The benefits of Mindfulness.....	13
2.6 The goal of mindfulness based interventions (MBI's).....	14
2.7 Discussion around the evidence base for MBI's.....	16
2.8 The authenticity of mindfulness based interventions (MBI's).....	19
2.9 A critical review of empirical research carried out with children.....	21
2.9.1 Research examining the effects of mindfulness upon attention.....	21
2.9.2 Research examining the feasibility of MBI's.....	24
2.10 The potential influence of the mindfulness teacher upon the participant's experience.....	28
2.11 Summary of literature review.....	29

<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b> .....	30
3.1 Introduction .....	30
3.2 The purpose of the research .....	30
3.3 The researchers position personally and professionally .....	30
3.4 Research questions .....	31
3.5 Philosophical underpinning of the current research .....	32
3.5.1 Phenomenology .....	33
3.6 Research design .....	34
3.6.1 Overview of Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology .....	35
3.6.2 Research participants .....	36
3.6.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria .....	37
3.6.4 Recruitment of participants .....	38
3.6.5 Sample group.....	40
3.7 Data collection .....	41
3.7.1 The development of the Interview schedule.....	41
3.7.2 Interview Environment.....	43
3.7.3 Interviews for pupil participants.....	43
3.7.4 Interview for Mindfulness practitioner.....	44
3.7.5 Interview tools .....	44
3.7.6 Transcriptions of interviews.....	44
3.8 Ethical considerations .....	45
3.8.1 Ethical approval .....	45
3.8.2 Informed consent .....	45
3.8.3 Confidentiality and data protection .....	46
3.8.4 Protection of participants.....	47
3.8.5 Validity and trustworthiness .....	47
3.8.6 Framework for validity in qualitative research .....	48
3.9 Data analysis .....	49
3.9.1 Approach to analysis.....	49
3.9.2 Stages of analysis.....	50
3.9.3 Data analysis: steps 1 – 5.....	50
3.10 Mindfulness practitioner experience.....	53
3.11 Summary of Methodology .....	54

<b>Chapter Four: Findings</b> .....	55
4.1 Introduction .....	55
4.2 Findings .....	56
4.3 Section 1 – Mindfulness practitioner experience of delivering the MBI in relation to the three themes .....	58
4.3.1 A descriptive pen portrait of the mindfulness practitioner .....	58
4.4 Presentation of Master themes .....	58
4.4.1 Master theme 1: Physiological activities promote mindfulness .....	58
4.4.1.1 Senses .....	59
4.4.1.2 Respiration .....	60
4.4.2 Master theme 2: Cognitive elements .....	62
4.4.2.1 Attentional requirements .....	62
4.4.2.2 Noetic elements .....	63
4.4.3. Master theme 3: States of being .....	66
4.4.3.1 Experiencing and noticing emotions .....	66
4.4.3.2 As a response to dealing with difficulties .....	69
4.4.3.3 Self- awareness .....	71
4.5 Summary for section one .....	74
4.6 Section 2 Pupils experiences of delivering the MBI in relation to the three themes .....	75
4.6.1 A descriptive pen portrait of pupils participants .....	75
4.7 Master themes regarding the pupils experiences .....	77
4.7.1 Master theme 1: Physiological activities promote mindfulness .....	77
4.7.1.1 Senses .....	77
4.7.1.2 Respiration .....	80
4.7.2 Master theme 2: Cognitive elements .....	82
4.7.2.1 Attentional requirements .....	83
4.7.2.2 Noetic elements .....	86
4.7.3. Master theme 3: States of being .....	90
4.7.3.1 Experiencing and noticing emotions .....	91
4.7.3.2 As a response to dealing with difficulties .....	95
4.7.3.3 Self- awareness .....	99
4.8 Summary for section two .....	103
4.9 Summary for the findings chapter .....	104

<b>Chapter Five: Discussion</b> .....	105
5.1 Introduction .....	105
5.2 Aims of research and research questions .....	104
5.3 Summary of main findings.....	106
5.4 Commentary of the findings in relation to the main research question and literature.....	107
5.4.1 Commentary relating to the main research question.....	107
5.4.2 Commentary relating to the subsidiary research questions.....	112
5.5 Impact of the practitioner upon children’s experiences of mindfulness ...	113
5.6 Strengths and limitations of the research .....	115
5.6.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an approach for the research .....	115
5.6.2 Participant recruitment and generalizability of findings .....	116
5.6.3 Homogeneity within the sample group .....	117
5.6.4 Interviews.....	118
5.7 Implications for the profession of Educational Psychology .....	119
5.8 The distinctive contribution made by this research .....	121
5.9 Further areas for potential research.....	121
5.10 Researchers commitment to reflexivity throughout the research .....	123
5.10.1 Reflection upon the overall experience of carrying out the research....	124
5.11 Concluding thoughts .....	125
<b>References</b> .....	126

## Appendices

Appendix 1 Systematic literature review search with Inclusion criteria .....	142
Appendix 2 Information sheet for pupils .....	149
Appendix 3 Information sheet for practitioner .....	150
Appendix 4 Parental consent .....	151
Appendix 5 Participants consent.....	152
Appendix 6 Interview schedule for pupils.....	153
Appendix 7 Interview schedule for practitioner.....	154
Appendix 8 Sample of Initial noting.....	155
Appendix 9 Example image of the clustering process.....	157
Appendix 10 Example image for identifying super-ordinate themes .....	158
Appendix 11 Example image for identifying master themes .....	159
Appendix 12 Research diary excerpts post interview reflections .....	160
Appendix 13 Research diary excerpts process of analysis reflections	163
Appendix 14 Compact Disc (CD) including copies of participant's transcripts (see attached CD on the back cover).	

## **List of Tables**

**Table 1-12** (in appendices) illustrate searches 1-12 showing the terms and inclusion criteria used to identify relevant articles. Page 142

**Table 3.1** illustrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria drawn upon to recruit participants for the research. Page 38

**Table 4.1** shows the master theme 1 'physiological activities promote mindfulness', with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically Page 56

**Table 4.2** shows the master theme 2 'cognitive element', with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically Page 56

**Table 4.3** shows the master theme 3 'states of being', with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically Page 57

## **List of Figures**

**Figure 2.1** Illustrates the space that mindfulness provides to enable a reactionary change. Page 15

**Figure 3.1** The hermeneutic cycle process Page 33

**Figure 3.2** Illustrates steps 1 - 5 of IPA analysis Page 51

**Figure 4.1** Illustration of Master theme 1, with supporting super-ordinate themes Page 58 & 77

**Figure 4.2** Illustration of Master theme 2, with supporting super-ordinate themes Page 62 & 82

**Figure 4.3** Illustration of Master theme 3, with supporting super ordinate themes Page 66 & 90

**Transcripts:** Anonymised transcripts are available on the CD ROM enclosed at end of the appendices

## Table of Abbreviations

ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AAP	The Attention Academy Programme
BPS	British Psychological Society
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CD	Compact Disc
CEPS	Community Educational Psychology Service
CYP	Children and Young People
CYPP	Children and Young Peoples Plan
DBT	Dialectic Behaviour Therapy
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECM	Every Child Matters
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HCPC	Health Care Professionals Council
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
MAPPG	Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group
MBI	Mindfulness Based Intervention
MBCT	Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy
MBCT-C	Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Children
MBSR	Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
MMA	Mindfulness Martial Arts
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute of Clinical Excellence
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
TAMHS	Targeted Mental Health in Schools
UEL	University of East London
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In recent years there has been a rapid growth in mindfulness practices being secularised and simplified to suit western cultures. As a result the application of mindfulness based interventions (MBI's) in medical and educational professions has occurred (Hefferon, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 1996; Lozar-Glenn, 2010; Semple Reid & Miller, 2005; Wall, 2005; Weare, 2010). Psychology has adopted mindfulness as an approach for increasing awareness and responses to physiological and cognitive processes in order to promote psychological wellbeing (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Bishop 2004; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman. 2006). As such MBI's are not considered as religious or esoteric within psychology, (Baer & Krietemeyer, 2006; Grossmann, Neimann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2003), rather mindfulness, in a secular context, is considered purely as a method to promote emotional and physical well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Burke, 2010). Mindfulness can be understood as "*the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment*" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p145). This is thought of as the most utilised westernised definition of mindfulness most commonly drawn upon for research purposes.

### 1.2 Aims and purpose of the research

The purpose of this piece of research is to explore children's understanding of mindfulness. The research aims to contribute to the body of research previously carried out by way of offering an in-depth explorative interpretation of children's experiences of mindfulness following a 12 week mindfulness based intervention (MBI). In order to achieve this, participants include the mindfulness practitioner who delivered the MBI and children who took part in the MBI. In turn this piece of research represents a marginalised population within the current literature as well as representing the child's voice. It is considered that this piece of research is of value to those working with children and young people (CYP) as the findings build upon current understanding of how mindfulness is understood by and helpful to

children. In turn this research can help inform future interventions of mindfulness for CYP to promote health and well-being.

### **1.3 Relevance of research to the profession of Educational Psychology**

The role of an Educational Psychologist (EP) is a supportive one which seeks to “*enhance children’s achievement and well-being*” (Beaver, 2011, p15). According to Frederickson, Cline, & Miller, (2008) EP’s apply their understanding of psychology in a variety of ways in order to promote the well-being and educational success of CYP. Currently mindfulness practices are being adopted within the profession of Educational Psychology due to the positive impact such interventions have been evidenced to have upon mental health and emotional wellbeing (Davis, 2012; Hart, Breton & Reavill 2014; Heffron, 2013; Iyadurai, 2013; Iyadurai, Morris & Dunsmuir., 2014; Stone, 2014). In response to the popularity of MBI’s, the Educational Psychology profession has and continues to consider how EP’s are able to offer effective MBI’s to achieve positive outcomes for CYP (Davis, 2012; Hart et al., 2014; Iyadurai, 2013; Iyadurai et al., 2014; Stone, 2014). As a profession, Educational Psychology is underpinned by ethical and reflective practice (Moore, 2005) and sits within a positive psychological framework promoting positive education (Hefferon, 2013; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). As such mindfulness can be seen as an intervening approach which dovetails nicely together with the spirit of Educational Psychology.

#### **1.3.1**

##### **The inclusion of the voice of the child**

Including and listening to children’s views has been written into legislation since Article 12 & 13 of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) document came into being. Including the child’s voice is encouraged within the field of Educational Psychology to which end the validity has been evidenced (Gersch, Dowling, Panagiotaki & Potton. 2008; Harding & Atkinson, 2009). The value of including children’s views is also noted to facilitate change in a positive way, (Badham & Wade 2008; De Pear & Gardner 1996; Hayes 2004), and aids the triangulation of perspectives such as those given by parents or professionals working with a child. One of the benefits of eliciting,

listening to and including children's views is that the potential for misrepresentation or misunderstanding is minimised (Gersch 1996). In addition Kilkelly, Kilpatrick, Lundy, Moore, Scraton, Davey, Dwyer, & McAlister (2005) identified that children also sought to have their voice heard which highlights the desire for inclusion by children.

#### **1.4 The national and local legislative context**

The emotional health and well-being of young people is positioned with importance within political agendas. A number of educational initiatives such as Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004), the Targeted Mental Health in Schools programme (TaMHS; DCSF, 2008), the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (DfE, 2005) and the updated Special educational needs and disability code of practice (SEND) (DFE, 2015) all share a common theme to promote and highlight the importance of emotional health in relation to children's academic, social and emotional outcomes. According to Layard, Clark, Cornaglia, Powdthavee, & Vernoit (2014) analysis of the British Cohort Study identified that the strongest predictor of a satisfying adult life was the individual's emotional health as a child. As a result there is a call for schools to improve children's emotional wellbeing rather than a focus upon academic attainment.

Parliamentary House of Commons debates held in February 2014 (Parliament UK, 2014) presented the benefits of mindfulness within education. Mindfulness was discussed in relation to the application of MBI's already running within educational settings across the country and referred to as innovative approaches to raise standards of education. In addition '*The mindfulness initiative*' led by the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group (MAPPG) state that "*government should widen access to mindfulness training in key public services where it has the potential to be an effective low cost intervention with a wide range of benefits*" (p 1). The key services include education where mindfulness is thought of as "*popular with children and teachers and could play a significant role in preventing ill health*" (p 3). Over the past few years there has also been also an increase in the number of national and Local Authority (LA) conferences with a specific interest in mindfulness. (Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, 2015; 2013; 2011; Hart et al., 2014).

Alongside the national context around the developing interest in MBI's the LA in which this research was carried out has also been progressive in its interest and uptake of mindfulness. The community and educational psychology service (CEPS) runs a professional mindfulness interest group and workshops have been delivered both locally and to the southern regional EP conference (Hart et al., 2014). EPs within the CEPS, including the researcher, have undertaken MBSR training conducted by the facilitators of the .b programme from the mindfulness in schools organisation (2015). The .b programme is the name for a variety of mindfulness courses which promote the use of mindfulness in schools and can be delivered by those who specifically train in the .b programme. EP's within the CEPS are continually developing their experience of mindfulness and qualifications to run .b courses as well as other MBI programmes within school settings.

### **1.5 The distinctive contribution of the research**

The purpose of this piece of research is to explore children's understanding of mindfulness. The research aims to contribute to the body of research previously carried out by way of offering an in-depth explorative interpretation of children's experiences of mindfulness following a 12 week MBI. This piece of research can be considered as unique for the following reasons;

- The research represents the child's voice which is under represented within the literature
- The research addresses the gap in the literature, in relation to exploring children's experiences, by contributing new knowledge to the field
- The research draws upon Interpretative phenomenological analysis which is little used within the field of mindfulness research

According to Law (2014) more research within the field of mindfulness is needed "*especially for practitioners who are in the profession of coaching, education, and supervision and teaching others on mindfulness*" (p 20). In addition "*making mindfulness in schools a priority for development and research*" (p 1) is

encouraged by MAPPG (2015) which demonstrates the demand for such research in the current climate.

### **1.7 Summary of Chapter**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with an introduction to this piece of research. The chapter has outlined the aims and purpose of the research (1.2), addressing the relevance of research to the profession of Educational Psychology (1.3). The national and legislative context (1.4) of mindfulness has been presented along with the researcher's position personally and professionally (1.5). The distinctive contribution of the research (1.6) with regard to the profession of Educational Psychology and within the field of mindfulness has also been discussed. The next chapter will present an evaluation of the key research relevant to this study with the aim of providing a critical review of the current knowledge and understanding within the field of mindfulness.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review will present an evaluation of the key research relevant to this study with the aim of providing a critical review of the current knowledge and understanding within the field of mindfulness. The literature review will assist in providing and highlighting the significance and importance of the research topic. This chapter will begin by providing an overview of how the literature review was developed (2.2). The review will then move to consider (2.3) the rise of mindfulness within western culture (2.4), the definition of mindfulness (2.5), the benefits of mindfulness (2.6) and the goal of mindfulness based interventions (MBI's). Following this (2.7) a discussion around the evidence base for MBI's and (2.8) the authenticity of mindfulness based interventions is presented. 2.9 provide a critical review of empirical research carried out with children. Finally (2.10) examines the potential influence of the mindfulness teacher upon the participant's experience followed with a concluding summary of the literature review (2.11) to finish.

### **2.2 The development of the literature research**

The purpose of this chapter is to share and offer a critical review of the literature within the context of mindfulness. According to Hart (1998) the purpose of conducting a literature review is the following;

- To distinguish what has been done to what needs to be done [within the researched field]
- To discover important relevant variables
- To gain a new perspective
- To identify relationships between ideas and practice
- To establish the context of the topic
- To rationalise the significance of the topic
- To place research in a historical context

A literature review also acts to critique the current evidence base through exploring whether scientific findings are consistent, examining the generalisability across populations and variations within findings. The methods applied within a systematic literature review are suggested to limit bias and improve the reliability and accuracy of conclusions. In addition carrying out a systematic literature review is considered to reduce information into palatable pieces and seeks to answer a defined research question by collecting and summarising all empirical evidence which fits pre specified eligibility criteria. As such a systematic literature review allows for a good overview of the research topic (Boote & Beile, 2005).

With reference to this research a review of the literature commenced at an early stage and sought to examine the historical and current literature surrounding mindfulness. A further review of the literature was completed following the analysis of research findings in order to identify and review the most up to date relevant publications. Databases were searched via MyAthens accessed through the University of East London (UEL). EBSCOHOST was drawn upon to access literature from Psychinfo. Different search terms and inclusion and exclusion criteria were entered to help narrow the database results for more specific research (see appendix 1 for the inclusion criteria). Many of the key papers found provided links to other relevant research at an international level. As a result of this, literature was viewed from The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Israel, Canada, the United States of America and Australia, although not all of the articles were accessible to view via the UEL database website.

In addition to the database search, internet search engines, (Google) were drawn upon to identify relevant websites and a range of books by key authors within the field. This was helpful in exploring a wide range of information including key research articles with a scholarly basis, and informative pages from websites as well as providing the opportunity to explore the research area in greater detail. It is clear from carrying out the systematic literature review (see appendix 1) that mindfulness is currently a popular emerging area of interest with a vast amount being recently published. However, although growing, at the time of writing, research related to the use of mindfulness with young people and children is limited (Greenburg & Harris 2012; Weare, 2012) and even less exists that has

sought to present individual perspectives upon what mindfulness means or their experience of mindfulness.

One of the challenges that emerged during the literature search related to the variation of what was identified from the search terms. The term 'mindfulness' used by itself within the literature search also identified articles that used the term in a variety of contexts and therefore not all articles which contained the term 'Mindfulness' were relevant to this study. Whilst exploring the literature it became apparent that there were a number of gaps within the research. Firstly, only one paper was identified which sought to explore the experience of mindfulness from a young person's perspective (Dellbridge & Lubbe 2009). This highlighted that children and young people's personal views about their experiences of mindfulness are marginalised within the current research. Hence there is an opportunity to add to the body of research to explore these themes further. In addition, views from mindfulness practitioners about MBI's existed only in relation to rating scales or anecdotal evidence rather forming a main focus of the research.

### **2.3 The rise of mindfulness within western culture**

Mindfulness in origin is an element of Buddhist tradition (Chiesa, 2013; Meiklejohn, Phillips, Freedman, Griffin, Biegel, Roach, Frank, Burke, Pinger, Soloway, Isberg, Sibinga, Grossman, & Saltzman, 2012; Weare, 2013) which is thought of as being practiced through the art of meditation, movement, or by following the breath (Baer, 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, & Carmody, et al. 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Shaprio et al. 2006; Weare, 2010; 2013;).

Over the last 30 plus years, largely due to the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn there has been a growing interest in applying secularised MBI's initially within clinical and, more recently, educational settings (Hefferon, 2013; Kabat-Zinn, 1996; 2003; Lee, Semple, Rosa, & Miller 2008; Lozar-Glenn, 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Semple Reid & Miller, 2005; Wall, 2005; Weare, 2010, 2013). In a commentary, Kabat- Zinn (2003) discusses the original vision and rationale for introducing the first mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) programme in 1979. The

programme was designed for outpatients attending the stress reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre. Kabat-Zinn (2003) states the intention was twofold: firstly offering a program which could support the relief of suffering in patient's health and secondly, to design a model which could support similar patients attending other hospitals and medical centres.

The MBSR programme developed by Kabat-Zinn (1992; 2003; 2011) proved to be both effective and popular. Consequently the use of MBI's has risen and numerous mindfulness based intervention's (MBI's) have been designed. The application of MBI's has been widespread within prisons, hospitals, clinics, school settings and workplaces implementing them (Kabat-Zinn 2003).

There are a number of different types of MBI's which have been designed and adapted from Kabat- Zinn (2003) original programme. According to Burke (2010), the most widely employed secular MBI's reported are Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), interventions originally developed by Kabat-Zinn (1990; 2003); Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002); Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993); and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999 cited in Baer & Krietemeyer, 2006). Further MBI's such as Mindfulness Martial Arts (MMA) have also been developed (Haydickey, Weiner, Badali, Milligan, & Ducharme, 2012) which focus upon mindful movement.

The application of MBI's in the field of psychology has sought to support and promote psychological wellbeing. Psychology has adopted mindfulness as an approach for increasing awareness and responses to physiological and cognitive processes which contribute to physical pain, emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Bishop 2004; Shapiro et al. 2006). As such MBI's are not considered as religious or esoteric within psychology (Baer & Krietemeyer, 2006; Grossmann, Neimann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2003). Rather mindfulness is considered purely as a method to promote emotional and physical well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Burke, 2010).

## **2.4 The Definition of mindfulness**

According to Burnett (2009) the most widely accepted and quoted definition of mindfulness across the clinical world is a definition presented by Kabat-Zinn (2003). Numerous studies of mindfulness based research with children and adolescents have drawn upon Kabat-Zinn's (1994; 2003) definition as a basis for their research illustrating the acceptance and use of the definition within the research community (Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice, 2014; Centre for Mindfulness, 2014; Mindfulness in schools project, 2014; Burke, 2010; Flook, Smalley, Kitil, Galla, Kasier-Greenleand, Locke, Ishijima & Kasari, 2010; Napoli, Krech & Holley 2005; Shapiro et al., 2006; Semple & Lee, 2010; Semple, Reid & Miller, 2005; Semple, Lee & Miller, 2005; Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Wall, 2005; Weare 2010).

According to Kabat-Zinn (2003) mindfulness is;

*“the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”* (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p145).

However according to Kabat-Zinn (2003) fully understanding what mindfulness is does not exist in knowing or accepting the definition that he proposes. Rather Kabat-Zinn (1994; 1999; 2003) suggests that knowing what mindfulness is in its entirety is something that can only be acquired over time through experiential practice. This is a view also echoed elsewhere (Bear, 2006; Crane, 2010; Semple & Lee, 2011) who suggest that mindfulness cannot be learnt from reading the relevant literature but occurs through guided and experiential practice. The reason for such views is due to the abstract and conceptual nature of mindfulness.

Within the literature concerned with unpicking the more conceptual nature of mindfulness there has been an exploration seeking to express the underlying principles and concepts that are core to what mindfulness looks and feels like (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Bishop et al. 2004; Burke, 2010).

According to Huppert & Johnson (2010) mindfulness can be deconstructed into 'feeling good' and 'functioning' well. Within these two domains of mindfulness are constructs of positive emotions of happiness, contentment, interest and affection, which relate to feeling good. Constructs of 'functioning well' consider a sense of autonomy, competence, self-efficacy, resilience, (in the face of adversity through the ability to manage thoughts and feelings) and the capacity to forge and maintain relationships encompassing empathy and kindness, to be core. Semple et al. (2005) suggest that when practicing mindfulness, emphasis is given to one's awareness of internal experiences without distortion from affective, cognitive, or physiological responses influencing those experiences. Similarly, Kabat-Zinn (2003) suggests that mindfulness involves compassion, interest, friendliness, and open heartedness. It is the constructs that relate to the 'attitude' component (Shapiro et al., 2006) or what Bishop et al. (2004) refer to as the 'orientation to experience' which are consciously drawn upon within a moment to moment experience, irrespective of whether the experience is pleasant or aversive (Kabat-Zinn, 1999; 2003). Hence, it is the constructs drawn upon which can be considered as relating to Shapiro et al.'s (2006) component of 'intention' which when practicing mindfulness determine the effective and affective outcomes of mindfulness. Therefore, mindfulness could be considered as a construct underpinned by a variety of positive affective constructs working in unison. In unpicking the nature of what mindfulness is Baer & Hopkins et al. (2006) present five facets of mindfulness. These include:

- 1) Observing one's experiences
- 2) Describing them (experiences)
- 3) Acting with awareness
- 4) Non-judging of inner experience
- 5) Non-reactivity to inner experiences.

In an effort to share the deeper meaning that Kabat-Zinn's (2003) definition of mindfulness has Kabat-Zinn (1990) presents 7 attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice (as listed below.). In addition to the 7 principles Kabat-Zinn (1990) also suggests that there are further qualities of the mind and heart which a mindfulness approach can cultivate. These include non-harming, gratitude and equanimity.

The 7 attitudinal principles as suggested by Kabat-Zinn (1990) are as follows;

1. Non-judging. This is described as the ability to become aware of one's own views and agendas with reference to one's inner and outer experiences and to learn to step back from them without judgement.
2. Patience. This is described as cultivating patience towards our own minds and bodies. Particularly when the mind is wandering or agitated as a reminder that it is not necessary to get caught up the mind's thoughts.
3. Beginners mind. This is described as letting go of what is believed to be known and for all experiences to be viewed as first time experiences.
4. Trust. This is described as the ability to trust one's own thoughts, feelings and intuition despite opposing views.
5. Non-striving. This is described as the ability to be in the present moment with whatever exists in that moment as one experiences it. The purpose of No-striving is to be without any additional purpose, in turn allowing the unfolding of the experience.
6. Acceptance. This is described as the ability to accept and see things as they are in the moment of time one is in. Acceptance avoids imposing ideas about what one thinks one should think or feel, rather gives the opportunity to see what is happening clearly.
7. Letting go. This is described as non-attachment, the idea of letting things be as they are instead of preferring or resisting experiences. It relates to the letting go of mental grasping or pushing in turn enabling one to observe what will happen.

Kabat-Zinn's (1990; 1994; 2003) definition of mindfulness is the most widely accepted and drawn upon within the research world, and is also drawn upon for this piece of research. However it would appear that mindfulness is understood not by definition alone. Rather understanding is cultivated in hand with a conscious awareness of one's experience and positive constructs that help to explore and nurture a mindful attitude, which, in turn can lead someone towards understanding what mindfulness is.

## 2.5 The benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been accredited with improving both body and mind on a variety of levels for adults and children. As previously discussed MBI's were initially designed for adults, with whom the majority of empirical research has been carried out (Weare 2013; Greenburg & Harris 2011). Initially the research with adults focused upon outcomes to alleviate pain and depression (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; 2003). It is suggested that through cultivating a mindfulness state of pausing, being in the moment and experiencing what it contains in a non-judgemental way, that health and well-being benefits may be obtained (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; 2003).

The health and wellbeing benefits identified within the literature are wide-ranging. In an article by Davis & Hayes (2011), empirical research carried out with adults suggests an extensive list of outcomes that mindfulness is linked to. According to Davis & Hayes (2011) these include; decreased rumination, stress reduction, boosts to working memory, focused attention, less emotional reactivity, increased cognitive flexibility, relationship satisfaction, increased immune functioning, reduction in psychological distress, increased information processing speed and improvements to wellbeing. In addition, mindfulness has also been linked to slowing the process of aging (Jacobs et al., 2011). Neuropsychological gains from engaging in MBI have been explored with the suggestion that an increase in myelin (protective tissue around axons) within regions of the brain associated with learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing and perspective taking, may occur as a result (Holzel, Carmody, Vangel, Congleton, Yerramsetti, Gard, & Lazar 2010). Zelazo & Lyons (2012) present mindfulness within an iterative reprocessing model reflecting a neuropsychological perspective. This position holds that the practice of mindfulness strengthens the neurological pathways underlying the process of reflection. It is proposed that within the process of reflection the facilitation of cognitive flexibility, working memory, inhibitory control, emotional regulation, theory of mind and emphatic concern for others occurs.

Similar to the research carried out with adults, outcomes for research conducted with children has looked at benefits to emotional wellbeing, learning, mental

health, and physical health (Weare, 2012). Examples of the range of needs MBI's have been applied to include; pain management for adolescents (Thompson & Gauntlett-Gilbert 2008), depressive relapse prevention with adolescents (Allen 2006), supporting children with executive functioning (Flook, Smalley, Kitiil, & Galla et al., 2010), forging positive relationships with others and developing techniques to overcome existing interpersonal relationship difficulties (McCready & Soloway, 2010). In addition, Hooker & Fodor (2008) suggest that MBI's have the potential to improve children's attention and focus, memory, self-acceptance and self-management skills as well as self-understanding. MBCT interventions have been applied to groups of children and adolescents who have presented with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional and conduct disorders, and autistic spectrum disorders (Bogels, Hoogstaf, Van Dun, Schutter, & Restifo, 2008). In addition children who have experienced anxiety (Semple et al., 2005), depression and eating disorders (Bear, 2006), and aggression (Birnbaum, 2005) have also completed MBCT interventions.

It would seem that the outcomes for MBI's for both children and adults are extensive, varied and have promising results. As a consequence of the research conducted by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) now approves MBI as a treatment for depression (NICE, 2009) available within the National Health Services (NHS) in some counties within England (NHS, 2011). However, these are targeted towards adults rather than children.

## **2.6 The goal of mindfulness based interventions (MBI's)**

Mindfulness is suggested to enable those who practice it to respond, rather than react, to challenges. As stated by Firestone (2013) "*Mindfulness helps to alter our habitual responses by taking pause and choosing how we act*". According to Mindful Schools ([www.mindfulschools.org](http://www.mindfulschools.org)) the goal of cultivating mindfulness relates to the space that it creates. It is within that space that one is then able to change an impulsive reaction into a more thoughtful response. According to Semple & Lee (2011), a primary aim of mindfulness interventions is to support the development of ones relationship with ones thoughts and feelings in order to enable a new way of being in the world to evolve.

**Figure 2.1** Adapted from Mindful Schools ([www.mindfulschools.org](http://www.mindfulschools.org)) illustrates the space that mindfulness provides to enable a reactionary change.

*Without mindfulness*



*With mindfulness*



Mindfulness is therefore thought to help those cultivating the practice to respond more skilfully to situations (Bishop, 2002; Weare 2013). Kuyken (2013) states that the aim of the mindfulness in schools programme (MISP) is to help develop “*young people’s skills to work with mental states, everyday life and stressors*” (p 129). Similarly the goals of the MBCT-C programme presented by Lee et al., (2008) seek to encourage children to become “*more aware of their thoughts feelings and body sensations as separate but inter-related phenomena that interact to influence their perceptions of day to day experiences*” (p 21). In addition, further goals are identified by Lee et al. (2008) which include supporting children to distinguish between judging and describing, as well as recognising past, present and future thinking which nurtures awareness of the present moment. The same sentiment is shared by Greenburg & Harris (2012), who state that a goal of mindfulness is for the mindful student to become “*aware of the moment to moment fluctuations in the stream of consciousness*” (p162). This is thought to help increase focus around concentration, attention, building emotional regulation, managing stress, and gaining self-knowledge. Weare (2010) describes mindfulness as offering the opportunity to experience happiness within a moment without reaction or ruminating over how the moment could be different or wishing to be somewhere or with someone, else. The essence of the goals of MBI’s can be related to Kabat-Zinn’s (1999; 2003) description of mindfulness where deliberate attention is required to be paid in a particular way to the activity,

whilst at the same time any distracted attention is required to be returned to the moment without any judgement being paid to the distraction.

Numerous techniques are employed to guide pupils in learning the qualities of mindfulness including guided meditation practices, teacher-led enquiry, discussion of experiences, as well as psycho-education (including information about the universality of the wandering mind, the role of perception, the mind/body association, stress reactivity and developing inner resources for coping and enhancing health) (Burke, 2010). It is thought that, through the repetition of the practices, that the goals of mindfulness can be realised. Typically the employment of such techniques occurs through MBI's. A review by Meiklejohn et al. (2012) identified 10 MBI programs used within the research evidence base for children and young people that are available to be applied for different populations of children and young people.

It would appear that managing emotional reactivity is one of the main goals of mindfulness. This is considered to occur through the mental space that mindfulness practices create and provides to the individual. These practices can be shared through the implementation of MBI's. However, there are some limitations which can restrict the success of MBI's within school settings which is addressed in 2.7 as follows.

## **2.7 Discussion around the effectiveness of MBI's**

MBI's and mindfulness practice are becoming more widespread within educational settings and research with children and young people is evolving (Broderick and Metz, 2009; Burke, 2010; Burnett, 2009; Flook et al., 2010; Garrison Report, 2005; Greenburg & Harris 2012; Hooker & Fodor 2008; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Lozar-Glenn, 2010; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Semple & Lee 2011; Wall, 2005; Weare 2012; 2013). At present good quality empirical research carried out with children and young people, although growing, is limited and a call for well-designed studies is made within the literature in order to better understand the impact the MBI's may have for children and young people (Greenburg & Harris 2011; Kuyken, Weare, Ukoumunne, Vicary, Motton, Burnett, Cullen, Hennesly, & Huppert 2013; Weare 2013).

The findings from the evidence base for MBI's with children and young people presented so far are considered as promising whilst it is also recognised that there are a number of challenges to overcome with regard to the research design (Weare 2012). According to Greenburg (2011) current enthusiasm for MBI's outweighs the research evidence base and Meiklejohn et al. (2012) share concern over research methodologies lacking sufficient precision therefore limiting the validity of findings. Huppert & Johnson (2010) argue that small samples, a lack of control groups and quantitative data fail to provide reliable findings to endorse the effectiveness of MBI's. This is also touched upon by Weare (2012) who presents a summary of research with a cautionary note regarding the standards of some of the studies.

Meiklejohn et al. (2012) report the challenges that the MBI programmes have encountered which include;

- *“The need for continued development and refinement of the best practices for adapting well established adult mindfulness training for younger populations;*
- *A lack of agreement on the active ingredients of the programs and ways to measure their effectiveness through rigorous scientific research;*
- *Motivating schools to embrace the curricula;*
- *Frequent changes in school's educational policies, budgeting, priorities, proposed solutions, and decision makers;*
- *The need for funding;*
- *Finding trained and experienced mindfulness teachers to teach teachers, students, and parents;*
- *Scheduling teaching in multiple schools, including finding a suitable time within the school curriculum, and finding space conducive to practice within a school” (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p 302).*

According to Semple et al. (2006), one of the limitations of employing MBI's with children and young people relates to the requirement of attention and comprehension levels children need to draw upon to engage with MBI's. Piaget's (1950) theory of cognitive development proposes 4 distinct stages in which cognitive potential develops. The understanding of abstract concepts, which mindfulness can be considered as (Semple & Lee 2010), is according to Piaget

(1950) believed to developed between the third and fourth stage of the concrete operational stage, (which spans from age 7 to 11), and the formal operational stage (which begins in adolescence and spans into adulthood). Considering this, a younger child would not be expected to be able to share their understanding or experience of what mindfulness is in the same way as an older child could. As such there is the view that children need to be of a minimum age to participate in a MBI which Semple & Lee (2010) suggests to be from the age of 9.

Semple & Lee (2010) have designed their own MBI, Mindfulness-based Cognitive therapy for Anxious Children, which follows a 12 week programme for children aged between 9 and 12 years. The programme stems from an acceptance based approach which encourages participants to accept life as it is in turn cultivating a mindful way of being with the purpose of catalysing personal growth, insight and balance. This is achieved through following a series of 12 sessions which involve short child based activities which were adapted from the traditional adult based MBCT programme (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002). Semple & Lee (2010) programme is divided into to three phases as follows;

- Phase 1. The initial phase (sessions 1-3)

This phase offers an orientation to mindfulness and outlines the expectations and purpose of the programme drawing on practical experimental mindfulness practices such as the breath and the body.

- Phase 2. The middle phase (sessions 4-10)

This phase seeks to deepen children's mindful awareness through sensory based activities. Core themes are repeated in different activities to build the children's mindful understanding.

- Phase 3. The termination phase (sessions 11-12)

This phase brings the programme to a close and prompts children to integrate mindful awareness into daily practice and offers reflective opportunities and a celebration of being part of the programme.

The programme is underpinned by Kabat-Zinn's (1994; 2003) definition of mindfulness and session hand-outs are provided for experienced mindfulness practitioners to use with participants when running the group programme.

When considering who would benefit from being part of a MBI there are some considerations that are important to note as MBI's may not be for everyone. Jarrett (2015) highlights some of the more adverse effects that mindfulness has reportedly had upon individuals which include panic attacks and loss of motivation. In particular one paper by Lustyk, Chawla, Nolan & Marlatt (2009) examined the adverse effects of mindfulness meditation that had been reported within the published literature. As a result the authors identified three categories of adverse effects which had been experienced by those who had taken part in a MBI involving mindfulness meditation. These included mental health, physical health and spiritual health. Considering that there is concern around mindfulness meditation having a detrimental effect upon some people it is important ensure that those who may be invited to engage in a MBI's are firstly, suited to participate, and secondly, are withdrawn from a MBI and supported should any negative effects occur whilst taking part. As a result Lustyk et al. (2009) make a call for greater safeguarding of participants by presenting guidelines for the screening of participants and the requirement of trained practitioners who deliver the interventions.

## **2.8 The authenticity of MBI's**

Another concern that exists within the literature is a debate surrounding the authenticity of MBI's. Most noted within the research (Shonin & Van Gordon 2013; Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths, 2014) appears to be concern around the extent of the secularisation of mindfulness which some fear (Shonin et al 2013; 2014) has widened itself so far from its Buddhist origins that it may not be mindfulness which is being taught. In turn this raises the question with regards to what is being learnt by the participants if it is not actually mindfulness. In turn, this then raises the query about the evidence base and if studies are indeed measuring outcomes which have benefited from mindfulness or if outcomes are related to participants learning about something else. Without exploring what it is that participant's feel

they have gained through a mindfulness intervention and or the practitioner's knowledge or belief's about mindfulness it is difficult to explore such a question.

However one such study, conducted by Dellbridge & Lubbe (2009) sought to explore a single participant's subjective experiences of mindfulness. In an exploratory piece of research a female participant aged 17 engaged in 5 mindfulness sessions over 10 weeks. The mindfulness sessions were facilitated by one of the researchers who drew upon Kabat-Zinn's (2006) mindfulness for beginners compact disc (CD) programme. Findings were interpreted within 5 dimensions of mindfulness determined by the researchers based upon the researched literature. The extent to which the participant demonstrated her conceptualisation of mindfulness in relation to the 5 dimensions informed the findings. The 5 dimensions included: present centred attention and awareness, attitude and heart qualities, self-regulation, universalism of mindfulness and mindlessness. Themes were derived from the analysis and ultimately resulted in two conclusions being made that: the participant's subjective experience of mindfulness related to (1) being task-orientated and (2) experiencing personal growth and development.

However there are some limitations to the study. Firstly it's not known what the participant's experience of mindfulness is prior to the MBI. Hence the reader is unaware of the context (beginner, intermediate or experienced) within which the findings can be understood. A participant's length of experience, and therefore understanding, of mindfulness based practices could elicit different findings in relation to the 5 dimensions presented by Dellbridge & Lubbe (2009). As suggested by Meiklejohn et al. (2012) mindfulness takes time to cultivate. Without knowing what the participant's prior experience is, it is not possible to theorise around exposure of mindfulness with experience of mindfulness. There is an indirect indication that the participant had limited experience of mindfulness since the programme employed by the researchers is for beginners, however this is an assumption. As very little is shared about the participant within the study it is therefore not possible to know which context the findings are indicative of.

In addition, there is a question to consider around the use of the 5 dimensions as a framework for representing mindfulness. Since the dimensions were arrived at

by the researchers, without any evidence informing the reliability or validity of the dimensions, they can only be considered as a subjective interpretation by Dellbridge & Lubbe (2009). Hence basing the findings within the 5 dimensions has limited generalizability since further endorsement would need to be required from a research perspective to validate their use.

Despite the limitations of Dellbridge & Lubbe's (2009) research the strengths of the study relate to the unique contribution to the literature made by the inclusion of the participant's subjective experience into how mindfulness was conceptualised and applied. In addition, offering an insight into the subjective experience of a participant was considered to have the potential to generate further understanding around the application of mindfulness for adolescents (Dellbridge & Lubbe 2009).

## **2.9 A critical review of empirical research carried out with children**

In recent years there has been growing interest in the application of MBI's with children and adolescents (Broderick and Metz, 2009; Burke, 2010; Flook et al., 2010; Frank, Reibel, Broderick, Cantrell & Metz 2015; Greenburg & Harris, 2012; Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Semple & Lee 2011; Wall, 2005; Weare, 2012; 2013;). Due to the cognitive and developmental differences between adults and children, MBI's originally designed for adults have been adapted to take into consideration children's differing needs (Baer, 2006; Burke, 2010; Crane, 2010; Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Napoli et al., 2005; Semple et al., 2006; Semple et al. 2010; Semple & Lee, 2011; Weare 2012; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012).

### **2.9.1 Research examining the effects of mindfulness upon attention**

A study by Napoli et al. (2005) sought to consider the outcomes of a 24 week mindfulness based intervention, 'The Attention Academy Programme' (AAP), intended to support pupils with learning to focus and pay attention. The study involved 228 pupils from first, second and third grade classes (aged 5-8 years) who were randomly placed in either the experimental or control group. The experimental group attended bi-monthly 45 minute sessions. Pre and post test

scores were analysed with results suggesting a significant difference between groups. Pupils who received mindfulness training were found to decrease in test anxiety, ADHD behaviours and increase in selective attention. Therefore findings were suggestive that the MBI was a promising approach to apply.

However there are a number of limitations with the study. The instruments employed to measure pupil's attention were traditionally designed for children with ADHD even though participants did not have an ADHD diagnosis. Therefore the reliability of the use of the scale to indicate attentional difficulties accurately for the sample group is brought into question. However, the authors state that the measures were appropriate and also considered as objective measures by Weare (2012).

Another criticism with regards to Napoli et al. (2005) study is a question around the extent to which pupils had an understanding of mindfulness as a concept. Little is shared in the write up about the programme per-se although appended session plans are suggestive of discussion time around mindfulness to help prompt mindfulness thoughts and practice. However whilst the opportunity for pupils to discuss mindfulness was incorporated, it is difficult to know how much the pupils understood the nature and concept of mindfulness. Considering Piaget's (1950) theory of cognitive development, the pupils involved in the study would straddle the intuitive period (4-7 years) of the pre-operation stage (2-7 years) and concrete operational stage (7-12 years). In relation to Piaget's (1950) theory, this would suggest pupils within the Napoli et al. (2005) study may not have reached a point in their development to think abstractly enough to understand the concept of mindfulness, a consideration also raised by Semple & Lee (2011). However, according to Smith, Cowie & Blades (2003), researchers since Piaget (1950) have found that, with appropriate support, children have demonstrated the ability to understand and complete tasks which Piaget's (1950) theory suggests would occur at a later stage. Therefore, considering Smith, Cowie & Blades' (2003) view, pupils may have been able to relate to the more abstract concepts of mindfulness. However, for arguments sake if some pupils, perhaps the youngest who took part, were developmentally too young to develop an understanding of mindfulness conceptually then it could be argued that a question exists around to what the study's findings may be attributed. Did some

pupils understand the concept of mindfulness more than others due to variations in their cognitive development. Perhaps some pupils found benefit from following breathing and movement techniques within their own right rather than having cultivated a mindfulness perspective? Without research or data exploring such questions it is not possible to know.

Another criticism of Napoli et al.'s (2005) study is that very little is shared about pupils' individual needs. Therefore, it is not known if any pupils received support in other ways alongside the MBI for other/additional needs that may also have supported the findings indirectly. Hence again a question exists whether the findings can be solely attributed to the MBI.

Nevertheless, despite the criticisms raised, the study is thought of as having a "*reasonably strong methodology*" (Weare 2012 p 6) and is relevant to schools with regards to outcomes for MBI's (Weare 2012). In addition there are further research studies which have evidenced improved attention as a result of children taking part in MBI as Napoli et al.'s (2005) study is suggestive of. (Semple et al. 2010; Saltzman & Golding; 2008; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Bogels et al., 2008; Zylowska, 2008)

One such study by Semple et al. (2010) sought to consider the outcomes of a 12 week MBI titled Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Children (MBCT-C), which measured attention and reduction for symptoms of anxiety and behaviour problems. The study involved 25 mixed gender pupils aged 9-13 years who were randomly placed in either the experimental or wait-list control group of a cross lagged design. The MBCT-C programme involved weekly 90 minute sessions with pupils attending in small groups of 6 or 7 pupils matched by age and gender. A three month follow up was completed to measure the maintenance of effects for the experimental group.

Pre and post test scores for attention found that pupils who had been clinically referred in the experimental group showed improvements which were maintained at follow up. However this finding was for 5 pupils who had a diagnosis of ADHD and therefore are representative of a small sample of the group. Nevertheless out of those 5 pupils, only 1 pupil did not show any difference at follow up from pre-test which is a promising finding for those within the clinical group. In addition to

increased attention for the clinical group, pre and post test scores found a significant difference for anxiety amongst those children who had elevated pre-test anxiety scores. However there were only 6 children who had clinically elevated anxiety levels and 3 of those showed post-test decrease in anxiety. It is also not clear if these children maintained a decrease at follow up. Promising findings were suggested for improvements in behaviour which related to 3 children with clinically significant behaviour difficulties pre-test and none post-test. However, once again, this is for a small selection of participants and statistically significant differences were not found. In consideration of this the authors (Semple et al. 2010) query the pupil sample who were identified for participation in the MBI. The authors (Semple et al. 2010) note that the sample population were children who had reading difficulties and clinical needs (relating to anxiety) were not measured as a pre requisite for involvement in the MBI. Therefore it could be suggested, although not known, that those children who took part in the study did not have clinical needs hence the employed measures would not be able to identify any difference. In addition, it could be argued that the absence of the provoking difficulty, namely not having to read or be assessed in relation to aspects of reading, influenced the children's behaviours. Therefore this factor in itself may have helped to reduce the children's observed attention, anxiety and behaviour difficulties. Considering these points the findings may not be reflective of the intervention itself. However as a hypothetical argument it is not possible to know if these were factors affecting the findings. Thus far, significant results for Semple et al.'s (2010) study suggest that the intervention is promising for children with clinically elevated levels of attention and anxiety difficulties however it is noted that it's difficult to generalise these findings to the wider population without evidence from larger sample groups.

### **2.9.2 Research examining the feasibility of MBI's**

In an earlier pilot study (Lee et al. 2008) evaluated the feasibility, acceptability, and helpfulness of the MBI MBCT-C programme. Similarly to Semple et al.'s (2010) study, the sample population was drawn from a programme supporting children with reading difficulties. In Lee et al. (2008) study children were aged 9-12 and completed the same 12 week intervention as carried out by Semple et al. (2010). The MBI was delivered at 2 different times with pupils further divided into

2 groups, therefore data was taken for 4 separate MBI group interventions. The findings around helpfulness (which is taken to relate to how helpful the intervention was in reducing participant's symptoms) found a "*small to medium effect size*" (p23) for the MBCT-C programme. The findings for the feasibility of the programme were considered positively with over half of participants attending either 11 or 12 sessions. Acceptability for the programme was also found to be high amongst participants and parents for affective and behavioural outcomes. Qualitative data illustrating the acceptability of the programme suggests that the pupils enjoyed the MBI and wanted to continue. Overall the findings appear to positively reflect the success of the programme in relation to helpfulness, feasibility and acceptability.

However, there are a number of drawbacks when further exploring the findings. The measures used also sought to examine differences for internalising and externalising problems through the child behaviour checklist for the intent-to-treat group and completers. Findings for this appear somewhat complex in that significant differences were found for the intent-to-treat group for internalising factors by parents and participants but this was not sustained with the removal of parental data. Nor were any significant differences found for the completers data. The authors suggest that further examination of these results is necessary to better understand the findings. No significant differences were found for measures of anxiety or depression. However the authors state that the sample population did not experience clinically elevated levels of depression or anxiety and suggest that a replication with children who meet the diagnostic criteria is needed to get a true picture of the potential for the MBI. Considering this is it then unexpected that the authors in their later study (Semple et al. 2010) selected participants from the same source of children as Lee et al. (2008) as neither sample groups presented with clinical needs that the measures employed in the studies were designed to represent. Nevertheless the purpose of Lee et al.'s (2008) study related to the helpfulness, feasibility and acceptability of the MBCT-C programme which was demonstrated as promising for further research and application of the programme.

Overall findings for the feasibility of MBI's are encouraging within the evidence base (Weare 2012). A much larger study than Lee et al. (2008) carried out by

Kuyken et al. (2013) looked at the feasibility within a non-randomised controlled parallel study of 522 young people aged 12-16 who took part in the mindfulness in schools programme (MISP). The programme is suggested to be appropriate for young people across the board whether experiencing mental health difficulties or not. The programme ran for 9 weeks with pupils participating on a whole class level each week. Outcome measures were taken for pre, post and at a 3 month follow-up. Data for the analysis was taken for participants who completed measures at each interval and this was compared to the control group. According to Kuyken et al. (2013) the research provided clear evidence for the benefits of the MISP regarding acceptability, impact upon depressive symptoms as well as efficacy for reducing stress and enhancing well-being.

However, as noted by Kuyken et al. (2013), there are limitations to consider within the study. These include the small set of self-report measures employed rather than ones which can triangulate the outcomes in consideration of classroom, observer, bio-behavioural, stress reactivity or resilience perspectives. Hence the inclusion of self-report measures alone could limit the extent to which the outcomes can be considered as objective. In addition to this limitation the pupils were taught mindfulness by their teachers who had been trained to deliver the MISP; as such pupils may have been more cautious or biased in their responses when completing the measures. Furthermore, whilst the study was one of the largest, the participating schools were intentionally selected rather than schools with broader diversity. Hence the generalizability of the findings is questionable. Despite the criticisms so far of the study there were also a number of strengths. One of these related to the follow up data which sought to identify if pupils continued use of the practices. This identified 80% of pupils stating they continued to use practices at varying levels. Mindful breathing was suggested to be the most used with mindful eating, walking and body stress awareness drawn upon less frequently. Whilst such data is enlightening, the study did not explore to what extent pupils utilised these practices and in what ways or why. Although in consideration Kuyken et al. (2013) did compare the relationship between pupil's mindfulness practice and outcomes. These suggested that those pupils who reported to use mindfulness practices more had higher well-being and lower depression scores post intervention and at follow up. Kuyken et al. (2013) claim that this finding is in line with other studies findings suggestive of higher

mindfulness engagement with better reported outcomes. Kuyken et al.'s (2013) study is also the only study found which sought and obtained data from the mindfulness practitioners who delivered the intervention. The purpose being to examine the practitioner's belief of how well they considered the pupils to have understood mindfulness or as Kuyken et al. (2013) state, "*how much they felt the pupils got it*" (p127). However, this was achieved via a ten-point Likert scale rather than through richer qualitative data collection methods and therefore provides a limited perspective.

According to Kuyken et al. (2013) the study's findings provides "*evidence of acceptability and efficacy*" (p130) for the MISP. The feasibility of the Kuyken et al. (2013) research is promising, as is Lee et al.'s (2008) study. However, whilst the findings in both are encouraging for MBI's there was a vast difference in the findings around the outcomes related to aspects of well-being. Kuyken et al.'s (2013) findings presented a picture whereby well-being is enhanced and mental health (relating to stress and depression) is reduced. Lee et al.'s (2008) did not find statistical differences when measuring anxiety or depression. However the difference in the findings between the studies can be considered in relation to the measures that were employed. Kuyken et al. (2013) drew upon short self-report measures which can be analysed to the extent of means and standard deviations requiring less complex statistical analysis than utilised by Lee et al.. (2008). Also, as previously mentioned, the measures employed in Lee et al.'s (2008) study were not suited to the population since they were clinical measures designed with the intention of identifying clinical needs and the pupils did not have clinical needs. Kuyken et al.'s (2013) measures were appropriate for a more generalised population sample representative of their study. Also the age range of pupils in each study reflected a different developmental age range. Those in Lee et al.'s (2008) study were younger than those in Kuyken et al.'s (2013) study who would have been able to articulate, demonstrate and comprehend more complex and abstract meanings. Despite the limitations of the studies the feasibility in relation to how acceptable, helpful and liked MBI's are by participants suggests that they are promising approaches that warrant further research.

Whilst the findings from the research and evidence base for mindfulness are considered as promising (Weare 2012; 2013), there are clear limitations to both

the robustness of the research and the application of MBI that the research is dependent upon. These constraints, as discussed, would need to be addressed within future research to further test the extent to which MBI can be found to have positive and promising outcomes for children and young people.

## **2.10 The potential influence of the mindfulness teacher upon the participant's experience**

Another feature within the literature reviewed relates to the frequent reference to experienced and qualified mindfulness teachers/practitioner running MBI programmes (Bogels et al., Broderick & Metz, 2009; Burke, 2010; 2008; Flook et al. 2010; Haydicky et al., 2012; Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Kuyken et al. 2013; Lee et al., 2008; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Napoli et al., 2005; Semple et al., 2010; Wall, 2005; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). In their review Meiklejohn et al. (2012) state one of the limitations considered within the MBI research is *"Finding trained and experienced mindfulness teachers to teach teachers, students, and parents"* (p 302). In an article by Crane et al. (2012) there is a call to ensure that the 'integrity' of MBI's are maintained through a level of teacher competence. A caution of a polarity developing between those whom have immersed themselves in the teaching of mindfulness and those whose interest is considered more pragmatic is voiced. Kabat-Zinn (2011) proposes that a teacher of a MBI needs to have a personal mindfulness practice which is deep rooted. In addition, Kabat Zinn et al. (2014) list 6 non-exclusive principles for teachers of mindfulness in order to adhere to professional standards of practice. Whilst the researched literature reflects an importance of the mindfulness practitioner/teacher being experienced and or qualified there is little research which explores a practitioner's views directly upon this. Nor was there any research identified which evidences less experienced practitioners or unqualified teachers of mindfulness impacting negatively upon the outcome for participants who complete MBI's. However, considered in the light of social learning theory (Bandura, 1965; 1977), whereby the modelling of behaviour is considered to influence the behaviour of the observer, it is reasonable to suggest that the experience and understanding of mindfulness had by participants would be shaped by the teachers modelling of mindfulness.

## **2.11. Summary of literature review**

This literature review sought to explore and present key research relevant to this study with the aim of providing a critical review of the current knowledge and understanding within the field of mindfulness. Historically the majority of research has been conducted with adults and more recently research has extended to include children and young people (CYP). Feasibility and acceptability studies have been promising and some more robust methodological pieces of research have been carried out with promising outcomes to support and develop health and well-being. However there are gaps within research and a number of methodological concerns with regards to the current evidence base.

With this in mind this piece of research will build upon the current body of existing research to explore children's experiences of mindfulness following a MBI. Considering the marginalised voice of the child and exploration of children's views and their lived experiences of MBI's, this piece of research will also be addressing a gap within the evidence base.

The next chapter will present the methodology employed to address the aims and purpose of this piece of research.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will present the methodology employed for this piece of research. The purpose of the research (3.2), the researchers position personally and professionally (3.3) the research questions (3.4) and the philosophical underpinning of the current research (3.5) will be presented. Following from this the research design (3.6), data collection (3.7) ethical considerations (3.8) used for the research is discussed. The data analysis (3.9) and practitioner experience (3.10) is followed with a final summary (3.11).

### **3.2 The purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is exploratory and seeks to better understand mindfulness as experienced by pupils who have been involved in a 12 week mindfulness based intervention (MBI). According to Robson (2002), exploratory research is about a detailed discovery around a specific event or experience. Conducting exploratory research enables the researcher to access an individual's views, ideas, thoughts and beliefs about a particular phenomenon. This research adds to a body of research and literature which is an emerging area of interest and until recently, predominantly focused upon research with adults as rather than with children (Weare 2012). As such this piece of research represents a marginalised group within the current literature concerned with mindfulness as well as representing the child's voice. To fully explore children's experiences of mindfulness the practitioner (who facilitated the MBI with participants) views are also explored enriching the research with an additional perspective.

### **3.3 The researcher's position personally and professionally**

As a Trainee Child and Educational Psychologist this research is conducted as part of the requirement of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology as stipulated by the University of East London (UEL) which, at the time of writing, the researcher attends. The inspiration of the research is derived from the reviewed literature but also born out of the researcher's interest and

experience within the field of mindfulness. The British Psychological Society (BPS, 2002) states that “Educational and Child Psychologists will be aware of the impact of their own belief systems and attitudes on assessment practice” (p 25). In light of this a brief account of the researcher-practitioner’s professional background and motivations for the study is presented as follows.

Previously as an Assistant Psychologist, working within an Educational Psychology Service, and as, at the time of writing this research, a Trainee Child and Educational Psychologist the researcher has been motivated by and drawn to holistic approaches which seek to enhance the whole of an individual’s psychology to which mindfulness subscribes. Influenced from a humanistic philosophical position on a personal level and affiliated with the concepts of flourishing and flow (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011) the researcher recognises how mindfulness sits within and compliments these principles and concepts as an intervening approach. The researcher has applied mindfulness on a personal and professional basis recognising the benefits to both.

### **3.4 Research Questions**

The proposed research will focus upon exploring the main question as follows;

*‘What is children’s understanding of mindfulness after participating in a mindfulness intervention?’*

The research question is asked in the context of children having been involved in a twelve week MBI delivered by a mindfulness practitioner. The programme the employed by the mindfulness practitioner was that of Semple & Lee (2011) Mindfulness–based Cognitive therapy of anxious children which is discussed in the literature review. In order to address this area of research subsidiary questions will seek to explore the following questions;

- What does mindfulness mean to children?
- How has mindfulness been used by children?

- What are the benefits of using mindfulness for children?

### **3.5 Philosophical underpinning of the current research**

It is widely accepted that understanding the philosophical position taken within a research design is important as it influences the decisions made about the approaches taken. According to Creswell (2009), the decision made around which research design should be employed for a piece of research needs to be informed by the researcher's worldview assumptions. Guba (1990) defines a worldview as "*a basic set of beliefs that guide action*" (p17). Guba (1990) suggests that a person's ontology (which questions what 'reality'/'being' is) and epistemology (which asks how something is known) influences the methodology and design of a piece of research due to the assumptions a person makes about the world.

Fox, Martin & Green (2010) present three research worlds, that of the objective world, the socially constructed world and the individually constructed world. As the researcher my approach to this piece of research has been shaped through my worldview belief of reality being constructed and understood through one's own personal perspective and experience of the world, thus my position would sit within an individually constructed worldview. As such the philosophical position for this study pertains to a phenomenological perspective, defined by Fox, Martin & Green (2010) as "*reality is how the individual makes sense of and constructs his or her own world*" (p 11). It is considered that this is an appropriate position to take as the aims of this research are to understand the subjective lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2009; Merterns, 2010) from a individually constructed world view (Fox, Martin & Green, 2010). According to Merterns (2010), phenomenology can be considered as a philosophical approach to research whilst at the same time is also considered as a strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 2009). As such the approach made by the researcher towards Mindfulness for this research is positioned towards Mindfulness being an individual construction.

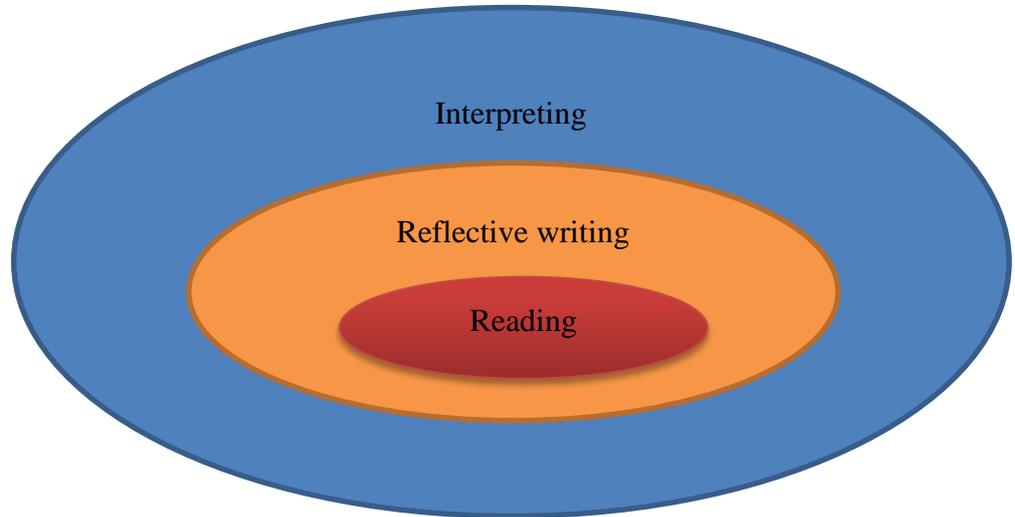
### 3.5.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology can be thought of as an umbrella term which includes a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches (Kafle, 2011). It is a “*philosophical approach to the study of experience*” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2011, p11) and when applied in a research context phenomenology is the study of a phenomena (Finlay, 2009). According to Smith et al. (2011) phenomenologists share specific interest in what it is like to be human, curious about what matters and is important to individuals within the world. Husserl was the first to propose phenomenological inquiry which he suggested should examine experience in the way it occurs (Smith et al. 2011). According to Smith et al (2011) Heidegger built upon Husserl theory and proposed that every form of human awareness is interpretative; therefore all descriptions of experience (provided by others) are interpretative. This movement within phenomenology is known as Hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology “*Is focused on subjective experience of individuals and groups. It is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life and world stories*” (Kafle, 2011, p 186).

In order to explore how to unveil another person’s world from stories of their experience the hermeneutic cycle was introduced. The hermeneutic cycle is the method of data analysis for hermeneutic phenomenological research and follows a rigorous process of reading, reflective writing and interpretation (Kafle; 2011). According to Kafle (2011), the crucial aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological research is to maintain the quality and product of the process. Smith et al. (2011) have incorporated the hermeneutic cycle in the process of IPA analysis, (which is evident in steps 1- 5 of IPA analysis and outlined later within this chapter). Figure 3.1 below illustrates the hermeneutic cycle process which is thought of as a “*dynamic, non-linear style of thinking*” (Smith et al. 2011, p 28) and enables the analysis of data to occur.

**Figure 3.1 The hermeneutic cycle process.**

Adapted from Kafle (2011, p 195). The reading of the data is at the heart of the process which leads to reflective writing and in turn interpretation.



Within this piece of research the hermeneutic cycle is applied in a double and triple context. The double hermeneutic is with reference to the researcher's interpretation of the children's interviews. The triple hermeneutic is with reference to the researcher's interpretation of the mindfulness practitioner's interview. The inclusion of the triple hermeneutic is in recognition of the position that the children's experience of mindfulness are shaped by the mindfulness practitioner's modelling and teaching of mindfulness, as discussed within the literature review. Therefore the mindfulness practitioner is considered to offer a perspective of the children's experiences and their understanding of mindfulness. Since the mindfulness practitioner views stem from her perspective of the children's perspective they are removed from the research in a triple hermeneutic context.

### **3.6 Research design**

The main aim of this research is to explore children's understanding of mindfulness following their involvement in a twelve week MBI. As such the purpose of this piece of research is exploratory and draws upon an inductive,

idiographic, qualitative research design to which phenomenological research pertains to (Fox, Martin & Green, 2010; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2011).

Characteristics of the research include the following;

- Inductive approach – The research works within a bottom up rather than top down framework to identify theory from the data (Greig, Taylor & Mackay, 2007).
- Idiographic – An idiographic approach was taken as the research seeks to understand the meaning of the unique and subjective phenomena whilst attending to the uniqueness of the individual (Allport, 1962, Smith, 2004; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2011).
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – Data analysis emphasises trying to understand the lived experience and how participants themselves make sense of their experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2011).
- Reflexivity – In order to manage bias responses and encourage as much of a true response as possible from the participants the researcher maintained a reflexive approach to the study. This helped the researcher to maintain a conscious awareness of how participants may be affected by characteristics of the researcher whilst also supporting the researcher's position of a non-judgemental and neutral approach to participants and what they chose to share during interviews.

### **3.6.1 Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach which explores how people make sense of their individual experiences (Smith et al., 2011). Although a relatively new approach being founded during the 1990's (Smith et al. 2011), IPA is thought of as a dominant approach within the field of qualitative research (Willig, 2008) and has become popular internationally (Smith et al. 2011).

According to Reid (2005), IPA is suggested to offer psychologists the opportunity to engage with the research question at an idiographic level whilst also explicitly promoting the subjective and reflective process of interpretation. As such the opportunity of acquiring a deeper understanding of the phenomena being explored in comparison to traditional psychological methods is made available through IPA.

The qualitative method of analysis used for this piece of research is IPA. As an interpretative phenomenological based strategy (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000; Lyons & Coyle 2007; Smith 2004; Smith, et al. 2011) it was considered as best positioned out of the qualitative methods of analysis for achieving the aims of this exploratory study.

### **3.6.2 Research participants**

#### **Sampling**

According to Smith et al. (2011) homogeneity is a prerequisite for the use of IPA as a method of investigation and analysis. This is to ensure that the participants are experienced with the phenomenon being explored by the researcher. Therefore the sample for this research stemmed from a non-probability purposive sample.

The participants required for this research were;

- **Pupils** within a mainstream school setting who had completed a 12 week Mindfulness based intervention delivered by a Mindfulness practitioner.
- **Mindfulness practitioner** who carried out and delivered the Mindfulness intervention

### **3.6.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The participant inclusion and exclusion criteria considered of a number of factors to ensure that the purpose of the research could be captured during interviews. These included the following;

- Participants within the research met the requirements of an IPA study which needs to be purposeful and homogenous with regard to social and theoretical factors (Smith et al. 2011). As such the children who were invited to participate within this research had completed a mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) course (Semple & Lee, 2011) which they had attended together.
- To further ensure the research met the IPA requirements, for purpose and homogeneity with regard to social and theoretical factors (Smith et al. 2011), the practitioner invited to participate within this research was the same practitioner who delivered the MBI to participants involved within this research. This ensured that both the children's and the practitioner views related to a shared experience of the MBI.
- Participants were required to have appropriate experience of mindfulness. Developing an understanding of mindfulness occurs over time and is something that is nurtured. Recommendations for children participating in MBI's suggest courses which span over a period of 10 - 12 weeks (Semple & Lee, 2011). As such participants who were invited to participate within this research had completed at least 10 if not more weeks out of 12.
- As discussed by Mertens (2005) in order to be able to engage in an interview participants language skills needed to be appropriately developed to be able to provide the information-rich data required for the research. As such participants who were invited to participate within this research were not known to experience speech, language or communication needs which would restrict them from sharing their views.
- Participants who are invited to complete the MBI compiled by Semple & Lee (2011) are recommended to be between the ages of 9-12. This is due

to the level of cognitive development that is required to conceptualise mindfulness during the intervention. As such participants who were invited to participate within this research were within the age range of 9-10 years as recommended.

The table below presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria in a quick glance format as detailed above.

**Table 3.1** Illustrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria drawn upon to recruit participants for the research.

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
Primary aged pupil aged 9 years and above	Primary aged children below 9 years of age
Pupil completed a 12 week MBI attending at least 10 or more sessions	Pupil not involved or did not complete 10 or more sessions of a 12 week MBI
Informed consent obtained from pupil parent and school to take part in the study	Informed consent not provided by either the pupil parent or school
Pupil has no known speech language or communication needs which would restrict them from sharing their views	Pupil has speech language or communication needs which would restrict them from sharing their views
Mindfulness practitioner who delivered the MBI to pupils involved within the research over the 12 weeks	Mindfulness practitioner who did not deliver the MBI to pupils involved within the research over the 12 week

### **3.6.4 Recruitment of participants**

The path of recruiting participants for the purpose of this research is outlined as follows;

1. A discussion between the researcher and the Mindfulness practitioner, who was an Educational Psychologist working within the Suffolk Community Educational Psychology Service (CEPS), took place to identify pupils who had completed a 12 week MBI.

2. Once pupils were identified contact was made with the head of the school via telephone call where pupils attended. The research was proposed and verbal permission obtained for the researcher to proceed with study.
3. Upon the agreement from the head of the school contact was made with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to share the purpose of the research and seek permission to contact parents of the children who took part in the intervention for consent.
4. Information about the research was sent via email to the SENCo who then contacted parents and passed this information on. The SENCo shared the information sheet (see appendix 2) parental consent (see appendix 4) participants consent (see appendix 5) with parents and sought parental permission for parents contact details to be provided to the researcher.
5. Once parental permission for contact details to be passed on to the researcher was obtained the researcher contacted each parent by phone individually to discuss the research and provide the opportunity for parents to ask any questions. The researcher spoke to 4 out of 5 parents and left an answer phone message with the researchers contact details for the one parent who was not available at the time of calling.
6. Written signed parental and participant consent was returned to the school and the SENCo passed the paperwork on to the researcher.
7. Participant consent was further ensured through a meeting with all of the pupils together two weeks prior to the interviews taking place. This meeting took place with the SENCo present and offered the opportunity for pupils to meet the researcher, ask any questions and to ensure they were happy to take part.

8. Once pupils had consented with written agreement and verbally, when meeting the researcher, arrangements for individual interviews within school were made.
9. The mindfulness practitioner was invited to participate within the research via individual interview. The mindfulness practitioner was given participant information (see appendix 3) and provided written consent to take part.

### **3.6.5 Sample group**

Smith et al. (2011) state that using “*small, purposively-selected and carefully-situated samples*” (p29) is important in order to ensure that detailed accounts of the individuals experience can be obtained. This condition was met within this study since all of the children took part in the same group intervention, thus making their experience of the delivery and instruction in mindfulness as homogenous as possible. Participants were of similar age, aged 9 or 10, and attending in either year 5 or year 6 classes within the same primary school which further ensures homogeneity.

Smith et al. (2011) suggest that between 3 and 6 participants is a reasonable sample size for IPA research. Smith et al. (2011) make further recommendations that for doctoral students between four and ten interviews are carried out with the view that IPA is concerned with detailed accounts of individual experiences and smaller samples yielding more thorough and complete analyses. Caution about larger sample sizes is made by Collins & Nicolson (2002) who suggest that “*potentially subtle inflections of meaning*” (p 626) can be lost in larger data samples.

Participants involved within this research attended a state funded primary school supported by the Local Authority (LA) Community Educational Psychology Service (CEPS) where the researcher was on placement whilst completing Doctoral training in Educational and Child Psychology. A group of six children who took part in a twelve week MBI identified by the mindfulness practitioner were invited to take part. The selection of participants for involvement in the MBI occurred through qualitative discussion. The school Senco, through discussion

with the pupil's class teacher and observation of the pupils, was aware of the pupils experiencing anxiety and sought EP involvement. As a result of further discussion between the school SENCo and the school's link EP a MBI was agreed as an appropriate intervention for the children. (The EP was trained as a mindfulness practitioner and agreed to deliver the MBI).

All of the pupils involved within the research had attended ten or more sessions of the MBI. Of those six children invited to participate one parent declined to consent leaving five remaining invited participants. One further participant gave consent and then withdrew leaving four remaining pupil participants who took part in the research. In addition to the pupil's participation the mindfulness practitioner was also invited to take part and provided verbal and written consent to be interviewed. The total sample group for the research was 5 participants. The adult was the school link EP and mindfulness practitioner who delivered the MBI.

### **3.7 Data collection**

#### **3.7.1 The development of the Interview schedule**

Two semi structure interview schedules were developed to elicit participant's experiences of mindfulness. One schedule was for pupil participants (see appendix 6) and another for the mindfulness practitioner participant (see appendix 7). Robson (2002) proposes that the difference between interview designs (i.e. structured, semi structured and unstructured) is the "*'depth' of response sought by the researcher*" (p 269). Semi structured interviews are widely used in flexible research designs and are described as having the potential to provide "*rich and highly illuminating material*" (Robson, 2002, p273). Semi structured interviews are also the favoured choice for IPA research due to the view that participants have the opportunity to "*speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length*" (Smith et al. 2009, p56) Furthermore, semi structured interviews are a preferred choice for working with children and appropriate for use with adults (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007).

When designing the interview schedules each question was considered to scaffold and enhance the richness of the content of the responses that

participants chose to share. The objective of structuring the questions in such a way was to elicit a more holistic understanding in response to exploring children's understanding of mindfulness. The design of the schedules incorporated the research questions to ensure that the schedule was relevant and appropriate to the subject of exploring children's understanding of mindfulness. The interview schedules consisted of a number of open ended questions which allowed for flexibility, depth and detail of response (Robson, 2002). The flexibility of the semi structured interviews enabled the researcher to enter into a dialogue, whereby initial questions could be modified and followed up in light of the responses given (Smith et al. 2009). The same interview schedule was used for each of the pupil participants. However it is important to note that the wording and structure of the questions was adapted during the interviews based on the researcher's judgement of what was fitting for individual participants. An hour was allowed for each of the interviews. Each pupil interview lasted on average for approximately 30 minutes and the mindfulness Practitioner interview lasted for 80 minutes. Prior to conducting interviews the researcher referred to guidance on delivering questions provided by Robson (2002) and Smith et al. (2009).

In order to ensure the fidelity of the semi structured interview questions the interview schedule was reviewed for transparency, simplicity and appropriateness. For the pupil participant interview schedule this was achieved through an IPA research group at the University of East London. Fellow IPA researchers within the group agreed that the questions were appropriate for IPA research being open ended, subject based and age appropriate allowing for flexible responses.

For the Mindfulness practitioner the fidelity of questions was achieved via presenting them to a Mindfulness interest group held at the University of East London. Members of the interest group were also familiar with IPA research and were able to draw upon their knowledge of both IPA and Mindfulness to offer suggestions to ensure questions appropriate for a Mindfulness practitioner, related to research questions and open ended to allow for a flexible response.

### **3.7.2 Interview Environment**

In order to elicit participant's individual experiences and to enable each participant's personal experience to be represented individual one to one interviews were drawn upon. According to Smith et al. (2011) one to one interviews provide an opportunity for a greater rapport and trust building between the interviewer and interviewee whilst also being "*well suited to in depth and personal discussion*" (p 57). This is considered an important aspect within the interview process especially when participants are required to reflect or interviews are of a sensitive or personal nature. Interviews for the pupil participants were held over the course of two weeks and prior to the Mindfulness practitioner interview. Interviews for pupils and the Mindfulness Practitioner were held in different places as follows;

### **3.7.3 Interviews for pupil participants**

Interviews were carried out at the pupil's primary school. Interviews were held in a room known to the pupils in a familiar part of the school. Participant's classrooms were nearby as was the SENCo office. The room was a good size with a large table which the participants and researcher sat at during the interviews. The room was bright having two windows, one which looked through to the corridor and another which looked outside. The room was well ventilated and a window was slightly open as was the door. Participants had a drink of water available to them throughout the interview and were offered a biscuit. Ensuring the participants were in a comfortable environment was thought to be helpful in making participants feel at ease during interviews, which in turn would enable them to talk more freely and thoughtfully.

### **3.7.4 Interview for Mindfulness practitioner**

The Mindfulness practitioner interview took place at the Community Educational Psychology Services (CEPS) office base, a place familiar to both the practitioner and the researcher. The room was a good size with a table which the participant and researcher sat at during the interview. The room was bright having two glass walls, one which looked through to the open plan office and another which looked outside. The room was well ventilated with air conditioning. The participant had a drink available to them throughout the interview.

### **3.7.5 Interview tools**

All interviews were recorded. This enabled the researcher to give full attention to the participant which sought to further build a safe and trusting rapport, an important aspect of interviewing (Willig, 2001). Recording also enabled the interview to be captured verbatim, including pauses, utterances, and emotions which are essential for IPA analysis (Smith et al. 2011).

A pen and paper was available to use and drawn upon when the researcher felt it was appropriate. The purpose of having such a tool during the interview was to support participants to further explore their views which would add to the richness of the interview and also help to check the researchers understanding and interpretation of what was being said by the participant. This was the case in 3 interviews where the researcher used a scaling technique and drew a number line from 1-10 to explore participants experiences further. Such techniques are considered to be child friendly (Laerhoven, Zaag-Loonen & Derkx, 2004) and often found within psychological research (Tipladx, Jackson, Maskrpi & swift 1998).

### **3.7.6 Transcriptions of interviews**

Interviews were transcribed in line with the format outlined by Smith et al.. (2011) who state that IPA *“requires a semantic record of the interview...a transcript showing all the words that are spoken by everyone who is present”* (p 74). Therefore as suggested by Smith et al. (2011) all transcriptions were verbatim records and included non-verbal utterances, such as laughs and pauses as they arose. Number lining and space for interpretation were also utilised in the format suggested by Smith et al. (2011). (For transcripts please view the CD enclosed)

## **3.8 Ethical considerations**

### **3.8.1 Ethical approval**

Ethical approval was agreed by the University of East London (UEL) school of Psychology on the 28.01.14. The ethical considerations for this research were guided and informed by The British Psychological Society's (BPS, 2009) 'Code of Ethics and Conduct', and the BPS (2011) 'Code of Human Research Ethics', The Health Professional Council's (HPC, 2009) 'Standards of proficiency' and the HPC guidance for conduct and ethics for students (HPC, 2009).

### **3.8.2 Informed consent**

All participants provided informed consent to participate within the research. This was ensured through written and verbal consent. As pupil participants were minors parental and participant consent was obtained prior to the interviews being conducted. The process for this was as follows;

- The school Senco contacted each parent to ask if they would like their child to participate and provide consent for their child to take part in the research. When this was agreed the Senco requested consent for parental contact details to be provided to the researcher. The Senco then sent consent forms home for the parent and child to sign (see appendix 4 & 5).
- When the researcher obtained parental contact details the researcher then telephone called each parent. The purpose of the research and consent was shared over the telephone and parents were reminded that they could contact the researcher at any point.
- Completed written consent forms from parents were returned to the school which the Senco passed onto the researcher.
- During the introductory meeting with pupil participants and the mindfulness practitioner the researcher discussed the purpose of the research, participant consent and the participant's right to withdraw at any time.
- Consent was again obtained again at the start of interviews to ensure that participants were still happy to be involved at that particular point in time and had not changed their minds since agreeing to participate.

### **3.8.3 Confidentiality and data protection**

This research was carried out in line with the Data protection Act (1998). All participants were made fully aware of their rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at 3 different points. This was achieved in both written and verbal form. Firstly within the information letter provided to each participant (see appendix 2 & 3). Secondly at the point when participants met with the researcher prior to interviews taking place and thirdly again at the time of the interviews being held. For pupils this information was explained at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development.

All data provided by consenting participants was anonymised. Whilst interviews were discussed with academic and professional supervisors and presented within the findings section of this research, all individual identities have been protected throughout the research. Participants' real names and identifying features have been replaced by pseudonyms. Data was stored in password protected data files and hard copies of data (i.e. paper notes) were kept in a locked cabinet in the Community Educational Psychology Service (CEPS) to avoid inadvertent disclosure.

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants the limits to confidentiality and anonymity were shared in written and verbal form. The limits, in line with BPS ethical guidelines, to confidentiality and anonymity would have only been breached in exceptional circumstances where there was evidence to raise serious concern about the safety or wellbeing of a participant.

### **3.8.4 Protection of participants**

Carrying out research ethically involves drawing upon and incorporating codes of conduct designed to ensure that the participants are safeguarded (Robson, 2002). As previously mentioned The British Psychological Society's (BPS, 2009) 'Code of Ethics and Conduct', the BPS (2011) 'Code of Human Research Ethics', The Health Professional Council's (HPC, 2009) 'Standards of proficiency' and the HPC guidance for conduct and ethics for students (HPC, 2009) guided this

research. It is considered that the researcher is responsible for safeguarding the interests of those involved ensuring that the physical and psychological well-being of participants is maintained throughout the research (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; Willig 2008). In line with this guidance all participants' wellbeing needs were considered throughout the research. This included ensuring consent was fully informed prior, during and after participant's involvement in the research. After the interviews all participants were debriefed and were given the opportunity to ask any questions and share their views about being part of the research. Interview questions were considered for sensitivity and if participants were to become upset at any point support for them was available. Participant's right to withdraw was reiterated throughout their involvement and supervision was sought from academic and professional tutors prior to interviews which discussed managing ethical issues and the protection of participants.

### **3.8.5 Validity and trustworthiness**

Producing quality research which is trustworthy is considered important in order to evaluate the worth of the contribution that the findings of the research share (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Meterns 2005). Fundamental to ensuring research is trustworthy are the principles of validity and reliability. According to Silverman (2005) it is the researcher's responsibility to demonstrate that the procedures used are reliable, and in turn, the conclusions made from the findings are valid. According to Long & Johnson (2000) validity is '*the quintessential element of qualitative research* (p 35). Due to the variable and diverse nature of qualitative research Yardley, (2008) suggests that flexible measures need to be drawn upon in order to demonstrate research validity, and in turn trustworthiness.

### **3.8.6 Framework for validity in qualitative research**

Demonstrating validity within IPA research is suggested to be a difficult task, (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Traditional methods of ensuring validity are more appropriately designed to support quantitative research as oppose to qualitative research (Yardley, 2000). In an effort to support the validity of qualitative research, Yardley (2000) suggests four types of characteristics which can be drawn upon to direct the validity of qualitative research. Utilising Yardley's (2000) characterisation approach to validity the following

essential qualities under each of the characterisation headings were drawn upon for this research as follows;

- **Sensitivity to context:**

It is considered that the appropriate methodology for eliciting participant views fits with the epistemological basis of the study. Relevant research and literature has been drawn upon to support the design of this research. In turn the methodology drawn upon fits appropriately with the epistemological basis of the research.

- **Commitment and rigour**

The commitment to the research has ensured that the research is rigorous which is demonstrated in a number of ways. This includes; having ensured that the exploration of the data is thorough and in-depth by carefully planning time to allow rigorous analysis to take place and that the appropriate participant sample was drawn upon. In addition support through supervision to ensure competence when collecting and analysing data was sought. The researcher has also adhered carefully to the parameters set out for IPA research which have been followed. In addition the researcher is aware of the limitations of IPA with regard to how much of a true picture the results can represent, which is discussed later within this research.

- **Transparency and coherence**

The IPA methodology drawn upon has been made as transparent as possible with examples of data drawn into the write up. The researcher has maintained a reflective approach which supports the process of reflexivity throughout the research.

- **Impact and importance**

The impact and importance of the proposed research seeks further develop the understanding of how Mindfulness can be used to support Children. The research also offers professionals an insight into the child's world which is hoped can help direct an understanding of the application of Mindfulness.

Guidance on ensuring validity was also taken from Greig, Taylor & MacKay (2007) whereby the importance of the delivery of questions and interactions with the child

appropriate to the child's age and ability was considered. Care was also taken when interpreting children's responses to consider that they are suggestive of appropriate understanding (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007).

### **3.9 Data analysis**

#### **3.9.1 Approach to analysis**

As previously discussed IPA was considered the most appropriate approach of data analysis for this research. Smith et al. (2011) consider IPA to be “a *qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of life experiences*” (p1). Such an idiographic approach was deemed essential for this research since the purpose is to understand and explore children's experiences of Mindfulness. Furthermore due to the subjective nature of Mindfulness itself it was felt that one to one interviews, common to IPA, were most appropriate to draw upon allowing the researcher the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the experience from the participants view. As IPA analysis involves the researcher moving from the descriptive to the interpretative for each of the participants data, commonalities and differences can then be identified across the data which allow “*fine grained accounts of patterns of meaning for participants reflecting upon a shared experience*” (Smith et al. 2011, p38) to be uncovered by the researcher.

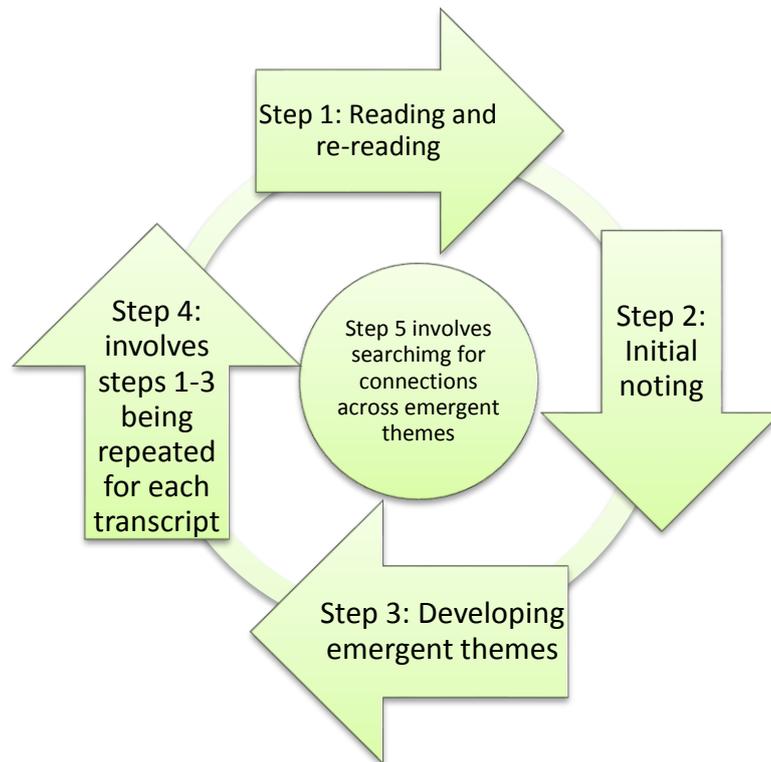
#### **3.9.2 Stages of analysis**

In order to achieve a rich understanding of the lived experience of participants the process of analysing the data follows the guidance set out by Smith et al. (2011). Although it is recognised by the researcher that IPA analysis does not necessarily subscribe a step by step process it is considered that as this methodology is new to the researcher following such guidance is beneficial to developing the researchers skills leading to analysis which is considered as ‘good enough’ (Smith et al. 2011). In total 6 steps of analysis are proposed by Smith et al. (2011) which were followed in this piece of research. They are presented as follows;

#### **3.9.3 Data analysis: steps 1 – 5**

Steps 1- 5 relate to the in depth exploration of the transcripts in order for immersion within the participants experiences to occur. Figure 3.2 illustrates the repetitive process which took place during steps 1 - 5 as suggested by Smith et al. (2011). Step 4 and 5 were reversed from Smith et al. (2011) suggestion since the analysis included a number of participants and therefore each individual participant transcript needed to be completed prior to searching for connections across themes. The realisation of the hermeneutic cycle came into play during steps 1-6 where original whole becomes a set of parts which then become a whole again (Smith et al. 2011).

**Figure 3.2** illustrates steps 1 - 5 of IPA analysis as suggested by Smith et al. (2011).



- **Step 1** Reading and re-reading

This step involved the researcher’s immersion in the data one transcript at a time. To actively engage with the participants experience involved listening to the recording and reading the transcript simultaneously. The researcher recorded recollections to help ‘bracket’ them off and ensure that the participant remained the focus of the process.

**Step 2** Initial noting

Considered the most detailed part of the IPA analysis process (Smith et al. 2011), this step involved the researcher exploring the semantic content and language used in interviews. This step helped to “*identify specific ways... the participant talks about, understands and thinks about an issue*” (Smith et al. p 83). From engaging with step 1 interesting points, including descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were recorded and noted on the transcript and recorded in a table. Free association (Smith et al. 2011) as an approach to making notes was drawn upon as was colour coding the type of notes made which ensured they could be easily

identified during the analysis process. (See appendix 8 for an example of the initial noting).

- **Step 3** Developing emergent themes

This step involves turning previous initial notes from step 2 into themes. This required breaking up the 'narrative flow' of the interview so that the researcher could interpret the participant's experience. The themes generated were reflective of the participant's original words and thoughts but also the researcher's interpretation which captures and reflects an understanding from an idiographic position. Hence the themes are reflective of a synergistic process of description and interpretation.

A list of emerging themes was created and printed off for each participant. The themes were then cut out and clustered together and placed in envelopes in order to track the data for each theme (see appendix 9 for an image of the clustering process). This process was repeated for each individual case.

- **Step 4** Moving to the next case

Steps 1 - 3 were repeated for the 5 individual participant transcripts. The Idiographic commitment of the researcher was maintained by bracketing off previous analysed transcripts through the process of recording a research diary. This process also allowed new themes to emerge for individual cases.

- **Step 5** Searching for connections across emergent themes

This step involved exploring how emerging themes fit together and is considered as a means of drawing emerging themes together to inform super-ordinate themes. This process involved spreading the themes out on a table and exploring for patterns and connections which served to develop super-ordinate themes (see appendix 10 for an image of this process). Approaches for exploring patterns and connections between emergent

themes as suggested by Smith et al. (2011) were utilised. For example, abstraction (which identifies like with like and explores a new term for the theme) subsumption (where a number of emerging themes are brought together and an emerging theme acquires a super-ordinate status) polarization (where oppositional relationships have emerged within a theme) and numeration (the frequency in which a theme occurs) were all approaches that helped to identify super-ordinate themes. The research question was referred to during this step in order to guide identification of those themes most related to the purpose of the research.

- **Step 6** Looking for patterns across cases

Once each of the individual transcripts had been completed up to the point of step 5 overarching master themes were then identified. This process enabled further creative exploration of the analysis process and as a result some themes were reconfigured and re-labelled to better represent the data, which is representative of the fluid nature of the analysis process (Smith et al. 2011). Frequent reference was made back to the original data to ensure that the interpretation remained inspired by, and arose from, the participants rather than outside influences as recommended by Smith et al. (2011). Three final master themes were identified as a result of the in depth analysis carried out within the IPA process. (See chapter 4 for the findings and tables 3.2, 3.3 & 3.4 for the table of themes). (See appendix 11 for an image of the result of the process of developing master themes).

### **3.10 Mindfulness practitioner experience**

The group intervention was delivered by an Educational Psychologist (EP) who drew upon Semple & Lee's (2011) mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) for anxious children. The MBCT for children with anxiety programme was facilitated by a qualified EP who had completed a MBCT course and practiced mindfulness themselves. The EP had completed a MBSR course and practiced mindfulness meditation along with yoga. The experience held by the mindfulness practitioner corresponds with the views that to carry out a MBI the practitioner facilitating the programme should have their own practice and course experience

(Crane, Kuyken, Williams, Hastings, Cooper & Fennell, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2011; 2013; Semple & Lee, 2011).

### **3.11 Summary of Methodology**

This chapter offers the reader an account of the methodology used for this research which seeks to explore children's understanding of mindfulness following their involvement in a 12 week MBI. In doing so, this chapter has presented the purpose of the research (3.2), the researchers position personally and professionally (3.3) the research questions (3.4) and the philosophical underpinning of the current research (3.5). Following from this the research design (3.6), data collection (3.7) ethical considerations (3.8) used for the research were discussed. The data analysis (3.9) and practitioner experience (3.10) was followed with this final summary (3.11). The following chapter presents the main findings of this piece of research.

## Chapter 4 Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the main findings for this piece of research and is divided into two main sections. The first section (4.3) presents the practitioners experiences of delivering the MBI. The second section (4.6) represents the pupil's experiences of the MBI. Prior to the two sections a table is presented which illustrates findings in relation to how they fit within the master theme, the super-ordinate theme and emerging themes hierarchically (a definition of each of the theme terms is given below). Initially within each of the sections, a descriptive pen portrait of participants and their interviews is given (4.3.1 & 4.6.1) in order to further represent the idiographic element of IPA. Following on from this the findings are presented for the mindfulness practitioner experiences (4.4) and for the pupils experiences (4.7) with each of the master themes being presented and discussed individually. The use of a diagram to illustrate the relationship between the master theme and the super-ordinate themes is also presented. The diagrams are duplicated in each section for the ease of reference when reading the findings. Quotes from the transcripts are used to illustrate the development of hierarchical themes from the emerging themes throughout. Quotes from the mindfulness practitioner which specifically refer to the pupil's experiences were presented in the section with the pupil's experiences. A summary for section one (4.5) and section two (4.8) is given with a summary for the findings chapter overall (4.9) at the end.

The hierarchical themes are defined as follows;

- **Master themes:** These are overarching themes which permeate through super-ordinate and emerging themes through patterns which have been identified across cases.
- **Super-ordinate themes:** These are themes which are considered as “a construct which usually applies to each participant within a corpus which can manifest in different ways” (Smith et al. 2011, p.166). Super-ordinate themes build upon and contain clusters of emerging themes.

- **Emerging themes:** These are themes which are identified from the first stage of analysis and have captured the crucial psychological essence of what is shared in the transcripts. Emerging themes are the reflection of the participant’s original words and the analyst’s interpretation (Smith et al. 2011).

The chapter concludes with a final summary of findings (4.4).

## 4.2 Findings

As a result of the analysis, a total of 3 master themes were identified from the process of IPA as outlined by Smith et al. (2011) (see chapter 3). Smith et al. (2011) suggest that recurrent emerging and super-ordinate themes across cases are drawn upon to inform master themes.

**Table 4.1** shows the master theme 1 ‘physiological activities promote mindfulness’, with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically.

<b>Master Theme:</b> <b>Physiological activities promote mindfulness</b>	
<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>	
Senses	Respiration
<b>Emerging themes</b>	
Being aware of and using one’s senses	Breathing performs an important role in mindfulness

**Table 4.2** shows the master theme 2 ‘cognitive element’, with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically.

<b>Master Theme:</b>
----------------------

<b>Cognitive element</b>	
<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>	
Attentional requirements	Noetic elements
<b>Emerging themes</b>	
<p>Focused attention</p> <p>Being in the moment</p>	<p>Thinking and Reflection</p> <p>Clearing the mind</p> <p>A shift in perspective</p>

**Table 4.3** shows the master theme 3 ‘states of being’, with super-ordinate and emerging themes represented hierarchically.

<b>Master Theme:</b>		
<b>States of being</b>		
<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>		
Experiencing and noticing emotions	As a response to dealing with difficulties	Self-awareness
<b>Emerging themes</b>		
<p>Provokes a range of emotional states</p> <p>Emotionally supportive experiences</p>	<p>Dealing with negative emotions</p> <p>Coping strategy</p>	<p>Union of mind and body</p> <p>Positive personal experience</p> <p>Independent governance</p>

### **4.3 Section 1 - Mindfulness Practitioner experience of delivering the MBI in relation to the three themes**

#### **4.3.1 A descriptive pen portrait of the mindfulness practitioner**

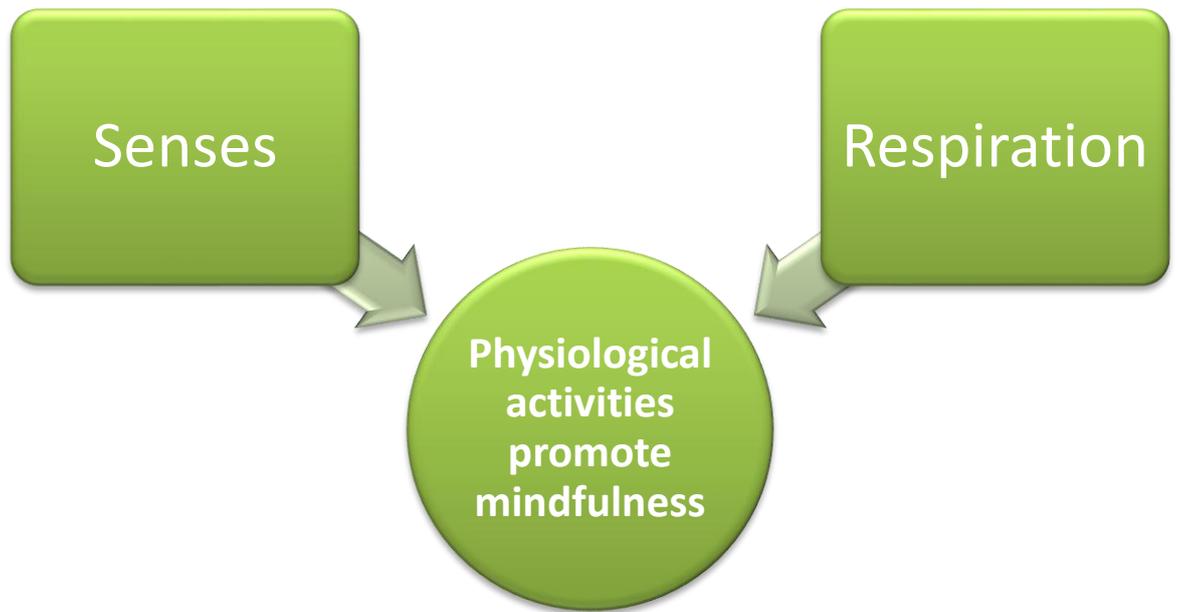
The practitioner who ran the mindfulness based intervention (MBI) had completed a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course and had previously been the link Educational Psychologist (EP) for the school where the MBI took place. The practitioner personally practiced yoga and mindfulness and was professionally involved in a mindfulness interest group. This was the first MBI that the practitioner had run with a group of pupils. The practitioner drew upon a MBI by Semple & Lee (2011) which informed the structure and content of the course.

The practitioner's interview was deeply reflective and rooted in her belief about the positive impacts that mindfulness can have for people and in particular the pupils that were involved in this research. There was a sense that the practitioner was emotionally involved in the outcomes for the pupils and that she was aware of her influence when running the MBI. This came across in the sense that she sought to create a space where she was equal with the pupils and the time was protected; her authentic and genuine belief in the potential that the group experience provided her and the pupils was apparent throughout the interview.

### **4.4 Presentation of Master themes**

#### **4.4.1 Master theme 1: Physiological activities promote mindfulness**

**Figure 4.1** Illustration of Master theme 1, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### **4.4.1.1 Senses**

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to the use of one's senses in mindfulness. The theme 'senses' captured the emerging themes 'being aware of and using one's senses' which included: mindful eating; mindful listening; and the idea that the 5 senses are drawn upon when being mindful. The different aspects of using one's senses and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Being aware of and using one's senses**

'Being aware of and using one's senses' refers to the interpreted narrative around how senses such as listening, touch, and taste were drawn upon to convey the concepts of mindfulness.

The practitioner talks about how she drew upon and explored the use of the 5 senses within the group and how she believed the pupils responded to this conceptually. She holds the belief that the children would themselves have made the connection that using their senses was linked to mindfulness. Interestingly, she uses the term 'really' and 'focus' to emphasise how a sense would be used mindfully, suggesting this is different to how a sense may be used otherwise.

**Practitioner** “we did 2, so theoretically you’d 2 weeks, on mindful looking and mindful seeing, and then another 2 on listening, tasting, and touch, erm...and I think they got that, they, they’d recognised... that, we were exploring our 5 senses and so they may have been able to... verbalise something around that, about mindfulness is about you know, learning how to really look and listen and taste and focus on your 5 senses” (436-444)

#### **4.4.1.2 Respiration**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data regarded ‘respiration’. The theme ‘respiration’ refers to the interpreted narrative around the use of the breath, and captured the emerging themes ‘breathing holds an important role in mindfulness’, breathing being enjoyable and as a use for anger. The different aspects of ‘respiration’ and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Breathing holds an important role in mindfulness;**

The practitioner shares how each week the MBI starts with a breathing activity, and reflects upon how the children engaged. The use of ‘ground’ and ‘prepare mentally’ illustrates how the MBI was thought of as requiring an approach which establishes itself as unique. A mindful breathing activity was selected to achieve this. The term ‘habit’ (in relation to the breathing activity) is also used which is interpreted as a deliberate act by the practitioner in order to guide the children towards developing mindful skills. The use of ‘simplicity’ suggests that the practitioner wanted to support the children to use a technique that was accessible while also encouraging a mindfulness based experience that they could develop with ease. The practitioner recalls the children telling her that the breathing activity ‘helped them’ which seems to reinforce her belief that the approach was beneficial.

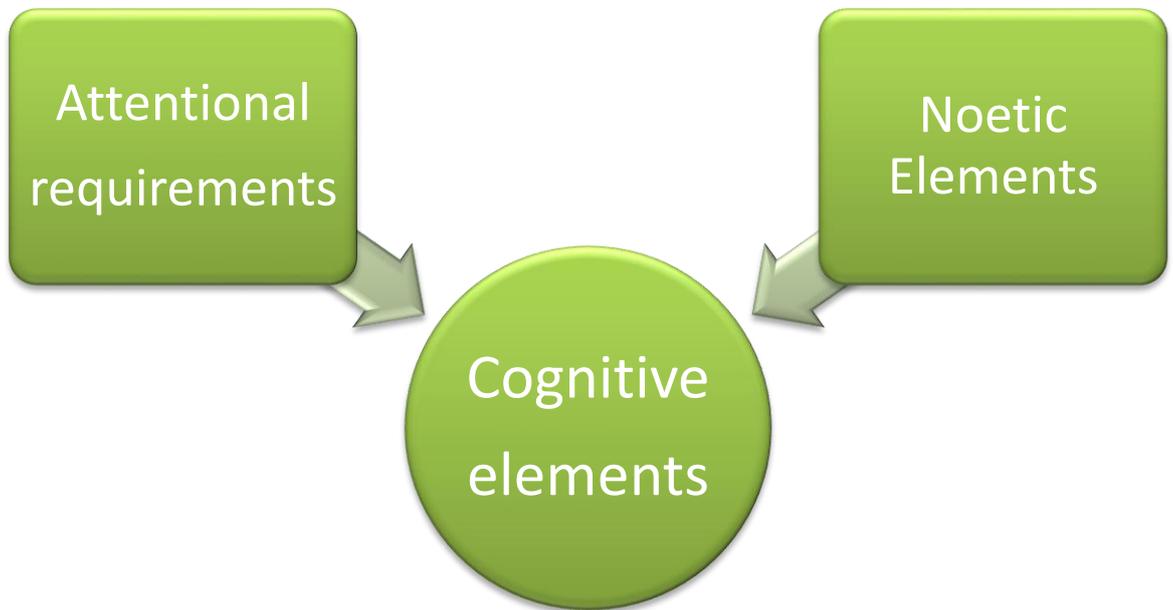
**Practitioner** “you kind of ground yourself in the group and prepare [pause] mentally for the group by engaging in a, 3 [pause] ah I think its erm [pause] 3 mindful breaths, I think it is [pause] erm so er ... that’s a habit that we got into, [pause] and I think that really help’s when it becomes a habit [high pitch] (555-558) ... and er really kind of focusing on nothing but your breath for 3 full breaths, erm and I think the simplicity of that appealed to them [the pupils] erm and certainty in the comments anecdotally they made to me at the end of the course, about what was helpful [high pitch] to them...they said using 3 mindful breaths had helped them.” (560-570)

The practitioner reflects upon breathing as a tool to support coping with situations ‘better’. ‘Ability’ is used twice which is interpreted as the practitioner acquiring a skill that offers something more. In this instance the something more is thought of being related to personal growth and development, with breathing representing a way to achieve a form of personal progression.

**Practitioner** “I wonder what that’s about, how can I manage that better, how, can, and breathing through it, it’s cultivating that ability to breathe through it, isn’t it? and just kind of, that ability to press the pause button,” (179-181)

#### 4.4.2 Master theme 2: Cognitive elements

**Figure 4.2** Illustration of Master theme 2, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### **4.4.2.1 Attentional requirements**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to 'attentional requirements'. The theme 'attentional requirements' captured the emerging themes of 'focused attention' and 'being in the moment.' Paying attention and being focused is talked about as a functional aspect of mindfulness with varying benefits. The different aspects of 'attentional requirements' and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Focused attention**

Focusing one's attention was also considered to encourage seeing things more clearly. The practitioner shares an example of an activity which illustrated the concept behind focusing attention. The use of the word 'power' illustrates the extent to which she believes focused attention can impact on perspective.

**Practitioner** "then we spent a good 5 minutes, properly mindfully looking at the sea shell, which I think, really what I meant was trying to focus all out attention, erm, exploring it through the 5 senses....trying to really erm give 100% of our attention to just

looking at something, erm, and once we, had done that, we then drew it, er and then compared the before and after, and, and then had a really nice discussion about... er, the power of really focusing our attention and seeing something for what it actually is” (397-403)

- **Being in the moment**

‘Being in the moment’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared which suggest that awareness of the present moment of an experience is a feature of mindfulness.

Being in the present moment was alluded to as a characteristic of mindfulness.

The practitioner promotes being in the moment through the discipline of ‘self-awareness’. The present moment is referred to twice. This is interpreted as a point of being in and as a place to return to when one becomes aware of not being present within it.

**Practitioner** “and I think it’s about using that self-awareness to... help you to live more in the moment, [pause] erm, and being aware of when you stray from that” (49-51)

#### **4.4.2.2 Noetic elements**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data regarded ‘noetic elements’. The theme ‘noetic elements’ captured the emerging themes of ‘thinking and reflection’, ‘clearing the mind’ and ‘a shift in perspective’. These included capturing a view from a mindful perspective and the experience of having a clear mind. The different aspects of noetic-elements and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Thinking and Reflection**

'Thinking and reflection' refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that when mindfully aware thoughts are noticed and reflected upon this encourages a different way of considering the motivation of a thought.

The practitioner shares how adopting a thoughtful and reflective attitude was aspired to as a hope for the pupils to develop. The use of 'cognitively' promotes the development of 'self-awareness' as something that requires active thought. The use of 'adopt' indicates that self-awareness is something that she feels the children need to acquire. There is a sense that the practitioner wants to help the children learn to overcome something, and this relates to 'acceptance of self' and 'differences'. To do this cognition is required.

**Practitioner** "Erm I guess er.... in terms of building the children's self-awareness I guess I was hoping that, erm, [long pause] That [pause] the children would, erm be able to adopt, like, that the rest of the children in the group, would be able to adopt an attitude whereby they were more accepting of themselves, but also more accepting of differences, so that they might [pause] be able to kinda cognitively think [pause] this child needs to behave like that for whatever reason right now, and that's ok, I don't need to be annoyed by that I don't need to let his behaviour impact on me I can still contribute, I can still do what I need to do, and this is ok for me and that is ok for him" (146-152)

- **Clearing the mind**

The narratives for the practitioner which relate to 'clearing the mind' are found within section two and presented with the pupils experiences.

- **A shift in perspective**

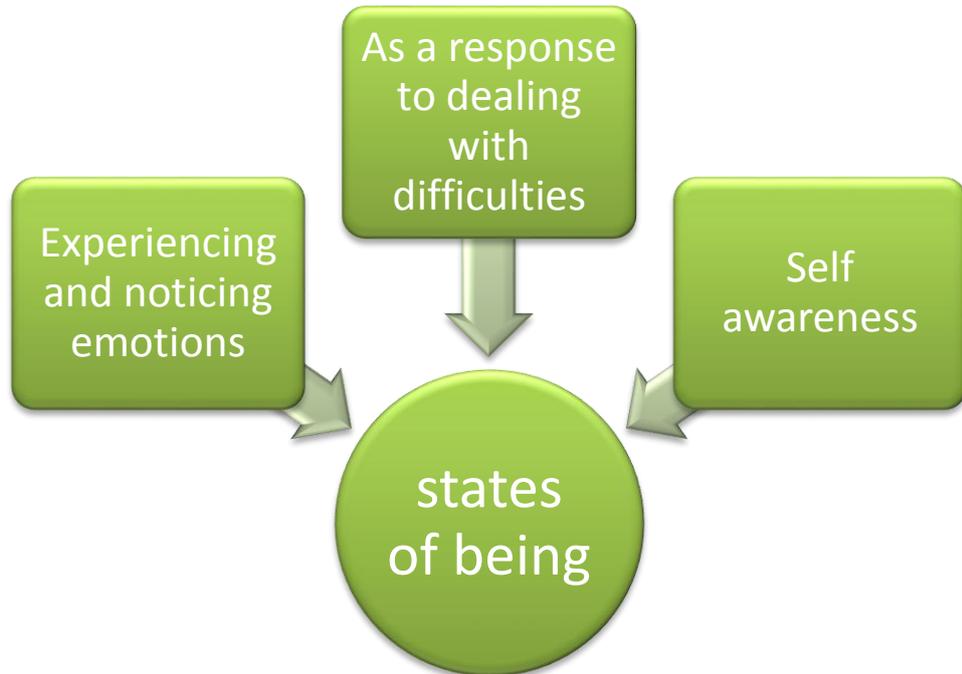
'A shift in perspective' refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that situations were responded to from multiple perspectives, as a result of learning about and engaging in mindfulness based activities.

The idea that a 'truth' can be misinterpreted was presented by the practitioner during the course. This was thought to be a new perspective for the pupils to be developing an awareness of. The use of 'a lot of time' and 'quite a lot' suggests that this was something the practitioner saw as being important to reiterate over the course. The use of 'explicitly' illustrates how this concept was brought to the fore and believed to be something significant for the children through the use of 'big leap'. The transference of developing new perspectives outside of the group context is also proposed in 'I think they began to see the possibilities of, of using that way of thinking in other circumstances maybe'. There is however an air of doubt in the practitioner's narrative, indicating that she was not sure to what extent the pupils fully developed their shift in understanding multiple perspectives, as is evident in the use of 'I think' 'maybe' 'may have known' and 'hopefully'.

**Practitioner** "we spent a lot of time talking about that [scenario] and how that [scenario] would make us feel and what we may be thinking about that person and how that makes us think ourselves, and we eluded to that anecdote quite a lot over consecutive weeks, erm, and hope, hopefully, kinda built up an understanding of the fact that the way people behave around us, we can only, make assumptions about that behaviour, we don't know for sure what has erm influenced that behaviour what has made that person behave in that way, we can only guess at it. Erm, and therefore our mind makes assumptions and fills in the details, it fills in the gaps, because that's what erm, our minds do, but they might not be right and I think recognising that was quite a big leap for them [the children] perhaps something that they may have known but not explicitly talked about before erm and when they reconsidered the other ways of thinking about...something, such as that scenario, erm, I think they began to see the possibilities of, of using that way of thinking in other circumstances maybe" (216-227)

#### **4.4.3. Master theme 3: States of being**

**Figure 4.3** Illustration of Master theme 3, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### **4.4.3.1 Experiencing and noticing emotions**

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to ‘experiencing and noticing emotions’. The theme captured the emerging themes of ‘provokes a range of emotional states’ and ‘emotionally supportive experiences’. The different aspects of each of the super-ordinate themes and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Provokes a range of emotional states**

‘Provokes a range of emotions’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that engaging in mindfulness can induce and help to manage emotions.

The practitioner shares one of the ‘aims’ of the course which can be understood in the context of noticing emotions and responding to them as opposed to reacting or rejecting emotions. The use of ‘sit with’ is interpreted as the ability to develop the skill of understanding and observing the emotion, without experiencing it as

an intense personal experience. The use of 'not to deny' 'accept feelings' and 'not kind of push them away' corroborates this interpretation.

**Practitioner** "one of the aims of the course was to try and help children accept feelings, and erm, to not deny them and to not, kind of push them away but to allow the feelings to kinda sit there and accept them" (508-510)

- **Emotionally supportive experience**

The theme 'emotionally supportive experience' refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that engaging in the MBI and learning about mindfulness was experienced as supportive. Positive emotions were experienced and attributed to the MBI, and mindfulness was recommended for others.

The practitioner alluded to a feeling of unity between everybody in the MBI, implicitly understood by all present without explicitly verbalising this experience. The use of 'collaborative' indicates a joint and equal effort. 'Shared understanding' suggests a sense of togetherness that existed between all members of the group. The practitioner struggles to verbalise what it is she is trying to say and summarises the experience as something intangible by saying 'I don't think we named what that was'. There is a sense of support within the text which is presented with an air of affection.

**Practitioner** "it felt more like a collaborative experience that there weren't any particular goals, er, at the end of, it was just a way of [pause] erm [pause] I don't know, I don't know how to finish that sentence, I, I think it was er, a erm [pause] er [pause] I think it was a shared understanding that we were going to get something out of it, but I don't think we named what that was" (321-325)

A further sense of unity is illustrated by the practitioner. The use of 'learning journey' in conjunction with 'together' is interpreted as the whole group being in equal partnership, growing their individual understanding alongside each other with regards to where their understanding of mindfulness took them.

**Practitioner** “it felt a bit more like we were on a learning journey together” (334-335)

The MBI was in itself felt to be a supportive experience for the group. The practitioner shares her personal view about the opportunity of being able to be part of the MBI. The use of ‘it’s a real privilege to be honest’ is not only demonstrative of the personal appreciation she feels about being within the group but also reflects the emotional attachment she feels towards the experience. The sense conveyed in this text is that it feels like it is important to her, the use of ‘having a discussion about life and, and about ourselves and about our place in it, and about, erm just things that seems to matter’ illustrates the sense of uniqueness that she felt existed within the group. Sharing conversations about personal and meaningful beliefs in a safe ‘space’ without ‘pressure’ or ‘being assessed’ is highlighted as part of the experience that is meaningful. She believes that the opportunity was ‘appreciated by the children’ that it was a ‘really nice’ experience which is interpreted as something she recognised as being equally valued by the children and herself.

**Practitioner** “so I feel as if, it’s a real privilege to be honest, it’s a real privilege to be able to spend, 12 hours with a group of children, just erm, er [pause] having a discussion about life and, and about ourselves and about our place in it, and about, erm just things that seems to matter, do you know what I mean, so, and I, I really think that they enjoyed having that time and space to do that too because it’s not something there’s room for in the curriculum, doesn’t seem to be anyway, so to have that space just to talk about how they feel what they think, erm and not have any pressure to recall that, or read or write it or and there was no sense of them being assessed or there being a right or wrong answer for anything, so erm, er, I think the space it creates, it was, it was really nice, erm, and seemed to be appreciated by the children, er .[long pause] yeah” (284-293)

#### **4.4.3.2 As a response to dealing with difficulties**

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to 'as a response to dealing with difficulties'. The theme captured the emerging themes of 'dealing with negative emotions' and 'coping strategy'. The different aspects of each of the themes and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Dealing with negative emotions**

'Dealing with negative emotions' referred to the interpretation of narratives around ways in which mindfulness was drawn upon in to manage negative emotions in various situations.

The practitioner shares examples of times when pupils discussed using mindfulness as a direct result of being in a situation which was felt to have given rise to negative emotions within them. The relationship between feeling 'panic', and as a result of that feeling 'they took 3 mindful breaths', illustrates the stage the children's developing understanding of mindfulness was at in regard to using mindfulness when experiencing negative feelings. Mindfulness was again referred to as a way of reaching a 'calm' state. Mindful breathing is referred to as an 'easy tool' and this is interpreted as the practitioner believing the children viewed mindful breathing that way.

**Practitioner** "And they gave me some examples of when it had helped them... so they talked about doing a test... in school...erm... and they said that when they felt that sense of panic they took 3 mindful breaths and it helped [high pitch] and another one talked about doing a er some kind of assembly or school performance on a stage in front of the rest of the school ...and they used 3 mindful breaths to kind of calm themselves down before they did it. So [pause] it felt like er it was a very easy tool, and, and, and erm ...er... they erm... they'd told me they'd used (564-570)

- **Coping strategy**

The theme 'coping strategy' referred to the interpretation of narratives which suggested that mindfulness was thought of flexibly and as something that could be utilised for a variety of purposes.

The practitioner talks about anxiety being believed to be an issue for pupils in schools and how mindfulness is thought of as a solution for coping with childhood anxiety. The use of 'that's a feeling that I have' and 'but it's just a hunch' suggests that this is something she has observed experientially. Mindfulness is referenced as something that 'seems to fit that bill' in regards to a need being fulfilled. The inclusiveness of mindfulness is also shared through the use of 'so it doesn't have to be for children, just within the special needs bracket, it can be to the benefit to everybody'. In its totality, this is interpreted as mindfulness being considered as an approach or strategy that can be drawn upon to help children cope with the 'anxiety' they experience.

**Practitioner** "Erm, I guess I have come across, anxiety quite a lot in my day to day work, er, and, the people I have spoken to in schools appear to be of the opinion that anxiety in children is increasing, and [pause] erm I guess that's a feeling that I have, and I don't have any evidence to prove that, but it's just a hunch that I have that that's the case, erm, and erm, I think erm [pause] what schools are always wanting of course is a practical solution, a way of, a way of, helping on the ground erm, and mindfulness seems to fit that bill for me, erm [pause] I like that fact that it [pause] erm, is something which can be practised at a whole school level, so it doesn't have to be for children, just within the special needs bracket, it can be to the benefit to everybody" (275-282)

Mindfulness is thought of as something to draw upon during heightened emotional challenges to reach a calmer state of being. The use of 'method' is interpreted as mindfulness being seen as a strategy, while the use of 'managing' indicates that 'anxiety' is the experience that needs to be coped with.

**Practitioner** “I feel it [mindfulness] works as a method of managing anxiety” (60)

The practitioner also alludes to the versatility of mindfulness. The use of ‘carry’ suggests that it can be picked up and put down as needed. The use of ‘inspires’ suggests this is a motivating factor for her, while the use of ‘me’ implies that this is a personal belief.

**Practitioner** “that’s what really inspires me about it, and I think you can carry around with you” (67-68)

#### **4.4.3.3 Self- awareness**

The super-ordinate theme ‘self-awareness’ captured the emerging themes of ‘union of mind and body’, ‘positive personal experience’ and ‘independent governance’.

- **Union of mind and body**

The theme ‘union of mind and body’ relates to the interpretation of narratives around the sentiments that were shared with regards to the intimate personal relationship that was alluded to, and which appeared to encompass the whole of the individual self.

The idea was shared that mindfulness practice enables a union between one’s physiology and cognition which feeds into an evolving self-awareness. ‘Awareness’ is repeated 5 times within the extract and is used in relation to understanding what mindfulness is. The use of ‘bringing mind and body together’ is a clear illustration of belief around the unity that exists. The individual nature of this is evident in the use of ‘in terms of your own experience’. ‘Physiology’ and ‘mind’ are related to further explain how the unity occurs.

**Practitioner** “Er, it’s to do, I think, with, for me, it’s mostly to do with an awareness and there’s lots of different facets to that

awareness and I think it's to do with kinda bringing mind and body together, erm... so you, by becoming more mindful you develop a better awareness of yourself and what's going on with you physiologically, and... you're also developing an awareness of what's going on in your mind, so your thought processes, erm and... I think you can broaden that out to a general awareness of what's going on in any one time...in terms of your own experience" (39-45)

A clear interpretation of the extent that mindfulness appears to present a unity on a personal level is illustrated in the use of 'bringing together of mind and body', 'mutually cultivating', 'the link' and 'both'. All imply a union between 'thoughts and feelings'.

**Practitioner** "I guess it's, erm [long pause] I guess it's a, really an awareness of your, erm, of your, thought processes, and, [pause] I think, I think just kinda, kind of a, a er, bringing together of mind and body and, a, a, mutually cultivating an awareness of both, so it's, yeah, being aware of the link between your, your thoughts and feelings, and being aware of how both of those things have a kind of physiological reaction within you" (690-695)

The use of 'embodiment' indicates the extent to which the practitioner wants to model her understanding of mindfulness with the children. It an interesting choice of word as it represents the personification of a way of being in order to set an example.

**Practitioner** "you have to try and kinda be the embodiment of mindfulness when you are teaching the group of children". (107-108)

The use of 'spiritual' is interpreted to illustrate a transcendent element. The use of need in conjunction with this exemplifies the personal aspect. The notion of mindfulness being helpful in this way demonstrates how broadly and intimately the practitioner considers mindfulness. The use of 'more aware' is suggestive of

an increase in awareness which is expanded to encompass 'how you are living your life'. The interpretation is thought of as being profound with a deep personal impact.

**Practitioner** "erm I think it [mindfulness] [pause] er [sigh] almost fulfils a spiritual need in a way, it helps you to tap into erm [pause] life in a broader sense so as well as making you more aware of yourself I think it makes you more aware of how you are living your life" (60-63)

- **Positive personal experience**

'Positive personal experience' referred to the interpretation of narratives around the occurrence that something positive had occurred on a personal level as a result of being in the MBI and learning about mindfulness.

The practitioner shares how the pupils changed in their attitudes towards themselves positively as the course progressed. The shift from 'no negative comments' to 'enjoy the experience without worrying' demonstrates what the practitioner observed. The period of time given suggests that this took time to progress and develop.

**Practitioner** "you know, the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> week there were no negative comments anymore they were just able to do it [the activity] mindfully and enjoy the experience without worrying" (261-263)

- **Independent governance**

'Independent governance' referred to the interpreted narratives that were apparent with regards to mindfulness being thought of as something that requires an active autonomous choice to engage in.

It is thought that those who choose to engage in mindfulness practices are believed to then experience positive changes for themselves. The use of 'subscribed' is

evocative of choice, which is used in 'when you chose to let it'. The use of 'I've seen it' relates the personal experience observed. 'Impact' and 'influence' are interpreted as the powerful effect that mindfulness is believed to have potential for.

**Practitioner** "it can have an impact upon your life when you chose to let it, you know, it's quite a positive influence in life and I've seen it having a positive impact upon everyone else whose kinda subscribed to it, if you'd like [pause] hum" (68-71)

#### **4.5 Summary for the master themes related to the mindfulness practitioner**

This section of the findings chapter has presented the main findings in relation to the practitioner's experience of delivering the MBI. In addition the findings illustrate the practitioner beliefs around what she felt the pupil's experiences and understanding of mindfulness was having taken part in the MBI. The following section will present the main findings in relation to the pupil's experiences of mindfulness following the MBI.

## **4.6 Section 2 - Pupil's experiences of the MBI in relation to the three themes**

This section presents the pupil's experience of the mindfulness intervention.

### **4.6.1 A descriptive pen portrait summary of participants**

All names of participants have been substituted with pseudonyms to retain anonymity for participants.

#### **Jake**

At the time of the research being carried out, Jake was a 10 year old boy who lived at home with both parents. Jake was invited to be part of the MBI to help aid his concentration and support him with developing his confidence. Jake did not have any previous experience of mindfulness prior to being involved with the MBI. Jake's interview about his experience of the MBI was more pragmatic in nature than emotive. Jake promoted the benefits of mindfulness in a practical way, seeing the strategies as useful in specific circumstances rather than in daily life. Jake's understanding of the more abstract and conceptual elements of mindfulness appeared to be at a basic level.

#### **Mary**

At the time of the research being carried out, Mary was a 10 year old girl who lived at home with her parents. Mary was invited to be part of the MBI to help her develop the skills to manage her anxiety as she was recognised to worry easily about things. Mary did not have any previous experience of mindfulness prior to being involved with the MBI.

Mary's interview about her experience of the MBI was excitable and her enthusiasm for mindfulness was present throughout the interview. Mary appeared to have internalised more abstract concepts of mindfulness on a higher level and independently transferred the application of mindfulness to her life in other ways. Mary shared her thoughts around the practical uses of mindfulness and how she found them to be enjoyable and helpful to her personally.

## **Walter**

At the time of the research being carried out, Walter was a 9 year old boy who lived at home with his parents. Walter was invited to be part of the MBI to help him develop the skills to manage his anxiety and behaviour. Walter did not have any previous experience of mindfulness prior to being involved with the MBI.

Walter's interview about his experience of the MBI was unassuming. For Walter, mindfulness was contained to being within the group. His understanding presents on a basic level, with mindfulness being about activities to engage in when upset. Walter didn't appear to independently transfer any mindfulness practices outside the group sessions or further within his life, except when given activities which explicitly required this. Walter saw mindfulness as an experience of doing fun activities and his recommendations for engaging with mindfulness were on the basis of enjoyment.

## **David**

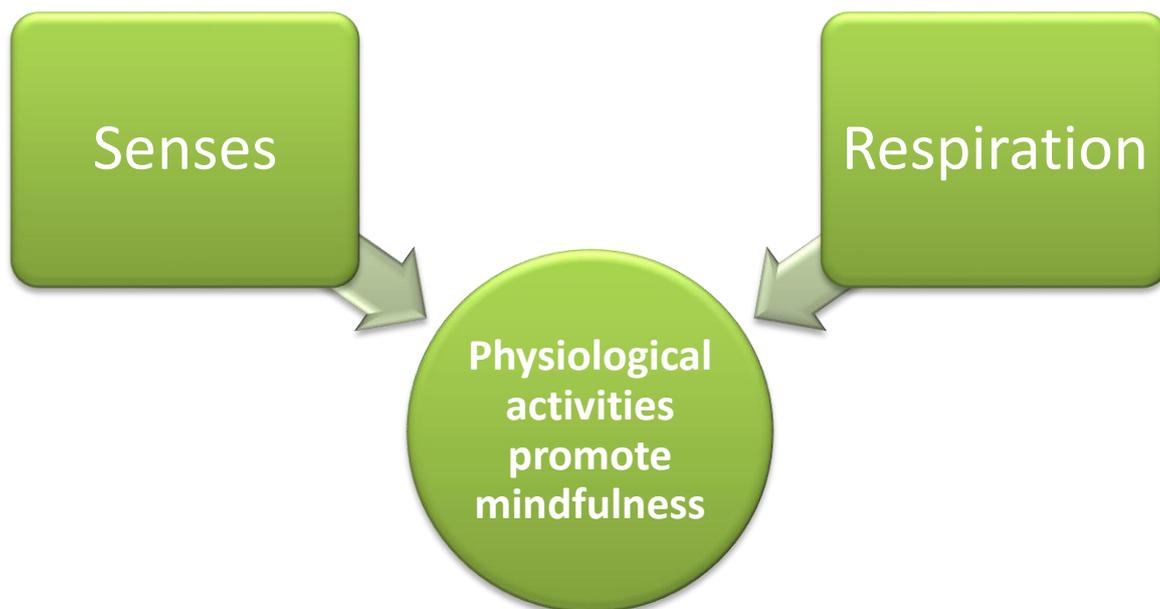
At the time of the research being carried out, David was a 10 year old boy who lived at home with his parents. David was invited to be part of the MBI to help him develop skills to pay attention, concentrate and manage his underlying anxiety which was thought to be a catalyst for his behaviour. David had some limited previous understanding and experience of mindfulness through a family member, prior to being involved with the MBI.

David was an enthusiastic believer in mindfulness. He saw mindfulness as something that he drew upon for personal benefits, helping him to view situations differently and to feel differently. David advocated mindfulness for others, children and adults alike, with the belief that mindfulness would be a positive influence. David's conceptual understanding around mindfulness presented more as a way of living than as a practical tool although he did indicate that mindfulness is of particular benefit when he finds situations challenging.

## 4.7 Master themes regarding the pupil's experiences

### 4.7.1 Master theme 1: Physiological activities promote mindfulness

**Figure 4.1** Illustration of Master theme 1, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### 4.7.1.1 Senses

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to the use of one's senses in mindfulness. The theme 'senses' captured the emerging themes 'being aware of and using one's senses' which included: mindful eating; mindful listening; and the idea that the 5 senses are drawn upon when being mindful. The different aspects of using one's senses and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Being aware of and using one's senses**

'Being aware of and using one's senses' refers to the interpreted narrative around how senses such as listening, touch, and taste were drawn upon to convey the concepts of mindfulness.

Mindful listening provides an example of the children demonstrating their awareness of the effect that mindfulness has on the link between their senses, affirming the practitioner's belief that the pupils understand this aspect of mindfulness. The use of 'actually' again emphasises something different and unique about what the pupil experienced. The unusual nature of the activity is highlighted with the use of 'strange', which is tempered with an enthusiastic intonation indicating her enjoyable but unfamiliar experience of listening mindfully.

**Mary** "But we...we actually listened to our food too [enthusiastically spoken]. So we erm...We actually...I know [laughs] it sounds really strange, but we've had up against our ear, and you could just squidge around in your hands and you could hear like things moving inside out, like you'd hear like tiny squelching sounds [enthusiastically spoken]". (271-276)

Another pupil recalls eating mindfully and alludes to noticing the taste as something additional to what would usually occur when eating. He relates the experience to life, suggesting an association between the experience of the eating activity and life in a broader sense. He then relates this to feeling calmer and therefore links the experience of the activity to something that helps him feel good.

**David** "Erm, we had to like put it in your mouth and just like see how it erm feel, erm tasted like.... Erm, it helps you with like, food's quite similar to life so that helped calm you down. (229-234)

The same sentiment of noticing a difference when using one's senses mindfully is shared through the experience of mindful eating. The difference between typical and mindful eating behaviour is referred to by 'thinking' about and 'savouring' the taste when being mindful, rather than 'just' eating as a mindless activity when hungry.

**Mary** “Some people really eat quickly. [Softly laughs] I eat really quickly so X [the practitioner] said, "Do you do mindful eating?"

I wouldn't laugh, but we had raisins. I always have that and...but they had orange too, and they had to eat the raisins...and we had to eat the raisins, and we didn't...you could do it quickly, but I guess you had to think about what you were eating...and savour the taste 'cause with food I'm just hungry, so I just eat really quickly [softly laughs].” *I: Oh, okay. So when you were eating the raisin, what did you find different about doing it to how you would normally eat?*

“Do you really think about the taste when you're eating it really? You just...I know...if you like them, you don't...you know, but you like them so you don't really think about the taste.....so you just eat them.” (267-271)

Touch is also commented upon and referred to as being of ‘help’. Although not expanded on, the interpretation is that the pupil had not yet conceptualised how the activity could help her individually, other than it being related to learning how to be mindful.

**Mary** “Sometimes we took our shoes off, it has to touch the ground see how that was feeling, go up our legs, erm, shoulders, and then head. How well that was feeling...and hands and knees, arms, and stuff [softly laughs]. *I: And how did you find that exercise?* I think that helped a bit. Yeah, it did help. *I: What did you learn from that [softly spoken]?* How to be mindful.” (225-231)

Using senses more generally is also conveyed. Interestingly, while no specific sense nor how to use senses is mentioned, there is the indication that using senses (mindfully) has purpose, which alludes to influencing affect.

**Jake** “You could do, like, erm, (.....), you, like, could do senses

and stuff of, like, how, [pause], you know you would feel at (.....)  
and things like how you would like (.....), just ma-, then there  
are like senses you could do after the breathing”. (250-253)

‘Being aware of and using one’s senses’ refers to the interpreted narrative around using senses in a mindful way that was drawn upon to convey the concepts of mindfulness. The text extracts demonstrate that the pupils understood this to varying degrees on an individual level, which was predicted by the practitioner.

#### **4.7.1.2 Respiration**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data regarded ‘respiration’. The theme ‘respiration’ refers to the interpreted narrative around the use of the breath, and captured the emerging themes ‘breathing holds an important role in mindfulness’, breathing being enjoyable and as a use for anger. The different aspects of ‘respiration’ and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Breathing holds an important role in mindfulness;**

A pupil shares his thoughts on breathing being a ‘main part’ of learning about mindfulness, which is interpreted as breathing being considered as a core function of mindfulness. The reference to breathing as something to work on also indicates that breathing would be one of the first things to learn about in mindfulness. This makes sense when related to the practitioner’s comments of how the breathing activity occurred at the beginning of each session.

**Jake** “Erm, [pause], the main thing I would say would be like,  
[pause], the breathing would be a part of it, what would, that would  
be quite a good start and then from that you, [pause], you would,  
like, work from the breathing.” (248-250)

A description of how to breathe is also offered which suggests recognition that there is a specific way to breathe mindfully. The use of ‘you become’ suggests that it is thought that something changes when breathing mindfully. Although

what is thought to change is not specifically shared, the importance of breathing in relation to mindfulness is reiterated in the belief that breathing has a key 'role'.

**Jake** "Erm, like [Pause], kind of [pause], steady kind of, erm, [pause], breathing. When you do that it, erm, [pause], you can, you definitely become, it definitely has a role in mindfulness."  
(204-205)

Breathing mindfully is also recognised as having a particular beneficial purpose, being referred to as something to use when experiencing anger. Breathing is found to be helpful in transforming the experience of anger to calmness. Again a description is given of how to breathe mindfully, as different from regular breathing. This is interpreted as mindful breathing being seen as a specific action.

**Walter** "Cause then when I got angry I did the breathing and it helped me calm down...you had to do three big breaths...with your eyes closed or looking down" (61-65)

The action involved in breathing is again shared and related to having a particular use when experiencing anger, in order to expel the negative emotion. In contrast to the previous pupil, anger is not suggested to be replaced but rather 'goes away'.

**David** "*Well*, erm er, well you do it for 3 minutes, an you breathe in and then out."/: "*Okay, and what does that help with?*" "Erm, controlling your anger. You just breathe in like this [pause] then you breathe out [pause] you normally allow 10 times. ....Erm your anger suddenly goes away." (377-393)

Another pupil refers to 'mindful breathing' and uses the term as if it is something unto itself, again different to breathing in its usual form. The pupil does not describe the difference between the types of breathing and seems to use the phrase as if it's known what is meant without cause for explanation. This is interpreted as the pupil being confident in their understanding of mindful breathing. Mindful breathing is also linked to 'blocking out' which is interpreted as

giving focus to the act when engaging in the activity, although it is possible to divide attention with something else and still maintain the breathing.

**Mary** “I guess when you still do mindful breathing, but I guess it would be a bit different if you're getting a bit frustrated and someone trying to calm you down, you just do a bit of mindful breathing, but don't block them out”...(414-416)

Breathing is also referred to as something that was liked over and above all other activities.

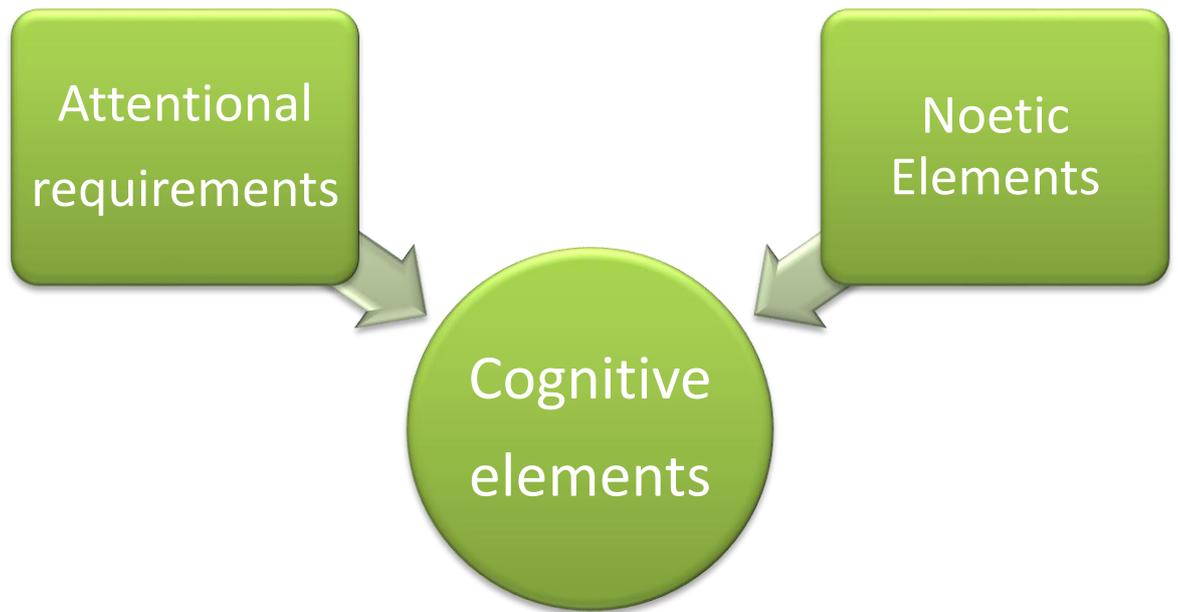
**Mary** “The breathing. That's what I enjoyed most.” (400)

The practitioner also picks up on breathing activities being something she felt all the children ‘liked’. She reflects on how the pupils managed with the activity, and appears to attribute the breathing being ‘liked’ with successful participation in the breathing activity. In addition the suggestion that the breathing ‘worked’ and was ‘something they respond to well’ is interpreted as a belief that the children not only took enjoyment from the activity but also an understanding around breathing being a way of developing a mindful approach.

**Practitioner** “I think that the children quite liked the 3 minute breathing space, worked, that kinda, that worked quite well for them, and they, they were able to, and er do the 3 mindful breaths ok, so that's something they respond to well I think” (531-535)

#### **4.7.2 Master theme 2: Cognitive elements**

**Figure 4.2** Illustration of Master theme 2, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### **4.7.2.1 Attentional requirements**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to ‘attentional requirements’. The theme ‘attentional requirements’ captured the emerging themes of ‘focused attention’ and ‘being in the moment.’ Paying attention and being focused is talked about as a functional aspect of mindfulness with varying benefits. The different aspects of ‘attentional requirements’ and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Focused attention**

‘Focused attention’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that mindfulness practice involves deliberate efforts to pay attention and focus upon an experience. This is applied to subsequent benefits for concentration and clarity.

For one pupil, a purpose of mindfulness was to facilitate better concentration. The use of it “It [mindfulness] lets you” is interpreted as the pupil attributing some additional control to mindfulness which is not otherwise held. The pupil generalises this more broadly to encompass a variety of things that he would attempt, suggesting that mindfulness is seen as a universal approach.

**Jake** “It [mindfulness] lets you like, erm, concentrate better on, erm, [pause] what, [pause] like, what like subject you're doing and just basically what you're trying to do really.” (127-128)

Another pupil describes how an activity helped him learn about mindfulness being about focusing attention and not being distracted. The pupil appears to recall more about the actual activity than about the concept it intended to teach. This is interpreted as the pupil's attention being guided by enjoyment of the activity. His subsequent explanation of 'you focus' relates to the external environment and how he could become involved in other tasks or thoughts which might detract from the task at hand. This suggests a basic level of understanding in noticing thoughts that come in and attending to them has not been conceptualised.

**Walter** “We did get a lucky stone at one point. We got to take it home and we had to look at the colours and to see how many colours there were on the stone.” *I: And what was that like doing that? What did that help you do?* “Fun as well because we got to take it home and then we got to keep on using it. Well I used it for like a few days [laughs] then I lost it.” *I: So what does that help you do when you're looking at the colours on a stone?* “You focus. [not] Looking around and thinking about different stuff.” (162-176)

Focusing one's attention on one task, rather than multiple tasks, was also highlighted as a mindfulness practice. As with the previous pupil, focused attention is described and attributed to one task at hand. There is a resistance to dividing one's attention or multi-tasking. In an attempt to describe what she means, she relates the process back to an example of focusing attention on mindful breathing as if other tasks would require the same level of attention that she had practiced when learning mindful breathing. This is interpreted as focused attention being seen as something that would be quite high maintenance if applied to real time and therefore would most likely be applied to specific tasks which would be deemed as needing one's full attention.

**Mary** “When I'm being mindful, I try not to focus on anything else. So I just try to focus on one thing. It's kind...it's, it's kind, I guess it's hard to focus on two things at once so we erm, kind of have to focus on one thing.” (160-162) “I just think it means like, erm, (...) taking time to like just focus on this one thing and not focusing, focusing on anything else...Just focusing on what you're doing, like we [did] for breathing” (105-108)

- **Being in the moment**

‘Being in the moment’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared which suggest that awareness of the present moment of an experience is a feature of mindfulness.

Being in the present moment was alluded to as a characteristic of mindfulness.

One pupil states clearly that his view of mindfulness is about being based in the here and now. He describes what this means in terms of the past and future, and how noticing ‘what’s around you’ is a goal of mindfulness. This is interpreted as relating to the definition of mindfulness and suggests that the pupil understood that aspect of mindfulness fully.

**Jake** “I think mindfulness means, erm, [pause], thinking about the present, not so much the future. Thinking like what's around you [pause] and [pause], what you've [pause], mainly, like, what's [pause] here now”. (93-97)

Another pupil shares an activity to describe what being in the moment meant to him. The use of ‘not to be scared’ and ‘like to have fun’ are interpreted as experiences that he would be able to bring about through the use of mindfulness practice. Though he does not share what things he might be scared of or what he’d prefer to experience, he attributes the potential of change as being in the moment, free of projections. The use of ‘after’ is interpreted as the projection of consequences as a result of engaging in something that he might do and then not following through because of future worry.

**Walter** “She [the practitioner] read us a story, [pause] I think it was a monkey that was thinking ahead, not about the way he was doing now. So he was thinking about what he was going to do rather than what he was doing.” *I: Okay, and what does that mean? What was that telling us?* “We need to think about what we’re doing now, not to be scared of what we’re doing after. But to like have fun for what we’re doing now.” (79-87)

#### **4.7.2.2 Noetic elements**

Another super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data regarded ‘noetic elements’. The theme ‘noetic elements’ captured the emerging themes of ‘thinking and reflection’, ‘clearing the mind’ and ‘a shift in perspective’. These included capturing a view from a mindful perspective and the experience of having a clear mind. The different aspects of noetic-elements and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Thinking and Reflection**

‘Thinking and reflection’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that when mindfully aware thoughts are noticed and reflected upon this encourages a different way of considering the motivation of a thought.

Becoming aware of thinking about situations and reflecting upon them is described by a pupil who captures a viewpoint through a mindful lens. When reciting a story she learnt during the group she describes a way of thinking and reflecting upon a situation which was new to her. The use of ‘never done that before’ represents the development in perspective that the activity brought about. The pupil relates the experience of learning about this reflective activity to something in her life that makes sense, which is the recycling cycle. The process of recycling appears to be a cognitive anchor for assimilating what she has just learnt into her reasoning. The frequent use of ‘maybe’ also illustrates how many options of the reality might exist, not just one or the other but a variety of meaning may lie behind a behaviour which is not understood.

**Mary** “Erm, [pause] I guess I have to think about it again. I guess I have to think about what we're doing [pause]. How, about acting 'cause we did this thing when there was a girl or someone and they saw their friends on the other side of the street and they waved [pause] and then the person looked at them so they didn't wave back [pause] and then it went round to having what the person that waved was thinking, because the person had walked away was saying, "Aw, why didn't they wave at me aw, they hate me, blah blah blah, I'm very angry" and then it went on to what that person is doing. Maybe [pause] they can, they didn't see them. Maybe they just looked over there, but they didn't realise it was them [pause] And maybe they were doing it 'cause of a reason?"  
*I: Mm-hm. So it was about trying to understand? [Softly spoken]*  
“Yeah and they went round in circle. And those huge things like uh, one of those nature things [*laughs*] like one of those hmm, [*contemplates on her thoughts*] like one of those recycling things [pause] 'cause you can get plastic melt up; this, then that happens... and then it goes all the way around again. So it went like that [pause] but with people, [pause] and feelings [pause] Yeah, I have never done that before.” (355-387)

The same reflective sentiment, as presented by the above pupil's extract, is further shared by the practitioner. Although recollection is illustrated through a different activity held during the group, the use of 'reinforcing' suggests that developing active thinking and reflective processes was a deliberate effort of the practitioner achieved in a variety of ways.

**Practitioner** “and I remember a quite a lot of activities that we did because er, I really enjoyed them too, and there was an activity for example where, erm... I had to print off a lot of optical illusions, and... I shared them amongst the group and they loved it, you

know they loved kinda looking at the optical illusions and trying to see different things in it with the objective being that, you know, reinforcing that idea that you know everyone sees something different” (376-381)

- **Clearing the mind**

‘Clearing the mind’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that mindfulness is experienced when in a state that has the feeling of one’s mind being clear of all thoughts.

Mindfulness was considered as being experienced when the mind is clear of thoughts, as conveyed by the practitioner with the use of an analogy. The idea that pupils could ‘watch the thoughts going past’ rather than actively experiencing them is interpreted as the practitioner conveying the idea of consciously responding to thoughts, rather than reacting. The use of ‘choose’ relates the responsibility of acting on thoughts as something an individual has control over rather than automatic reactions.

**Practitioner** “I used the analogy that talks about our thoughts being like train carriages going through a station, and we can choose to get on the carriage and go with it on a long journey somewhere, er, or we can just choose to stay on the platform and watch the thoughts going past and I asked them to try and do that” (499-503)

Considering the practitioner’s extract around letting thoughts pass by it is interpreted by the researcher that pupils may have related this aspect of mindfulness practice to the mind being cleared.

One pupil relates mindfulness to ‘not worrying’, indicating that she is free of negative feelings when being mindful. Mindfulness is further expanded upon by her description of how the mind is ‘clear’ and ‘emptied’. The use of ‘emptied’ in the past tense and context of the sentence is taken to be suggestive of the pupil attributing mindfulness to the empty state of mind. This is interpreted as

mindfulness being viewed as having additional power or control over thoughts, compared to being non mindful.

**Mary** “I think it [being mindful] just feels like [pause] not worrying about anything so you're just [pause] your mind is clear, it's emptied.” (219-220)

Interestingly another pupil appears to maintain the control of clearing the mind within the realm of the person evident through the use of ‘you’. There is simplicity of how the pupil suggests he tries to make his ‘mind go blank’ seen within the use of ‘goes out of your mind’. The ‘blank’ aspect suggests that all thoughts of experience are expelled which are negative, evident through the use of ‘problem’. Hence for this pupil, experiencing mindfulness relates to clearing the mind of negative experiences.

**Walter** “You try to make your mind just go blank so then the problem goes out of your mind” (67)

This pupil refers to the process of clearing the mind as something that is allowed to happen in collaboration with mindfulness. This is interpreted through the use of ‘you let it’. The use of ‘out of your mind’ indicates that he is referring to the mind being clear of thoughts. The inclusion of ‘get’ suggests that something is being taken away, namely the thought.

**David** “You let it [thoughts] get wiped right out your mind” (401)

- **A shift in perspective**

‘A shift in perspective’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that situations were responded to from multiple perspectives, as a result of learning about and engaging in mindfulness based activities.

Putting oneself in someone else’s position in order to consider differing perspectives was shared.

One pupil reflects upon how she can ‘think about two points of view’, suggestive of the ability to consider situations from differing perspectives. The pupil relates how she is able to achieve this in her life through the reference made to ‘In fact, with my little brother, I have to do that’. This then confirms that she has transferred her understanding into practice in real life outside of the group.

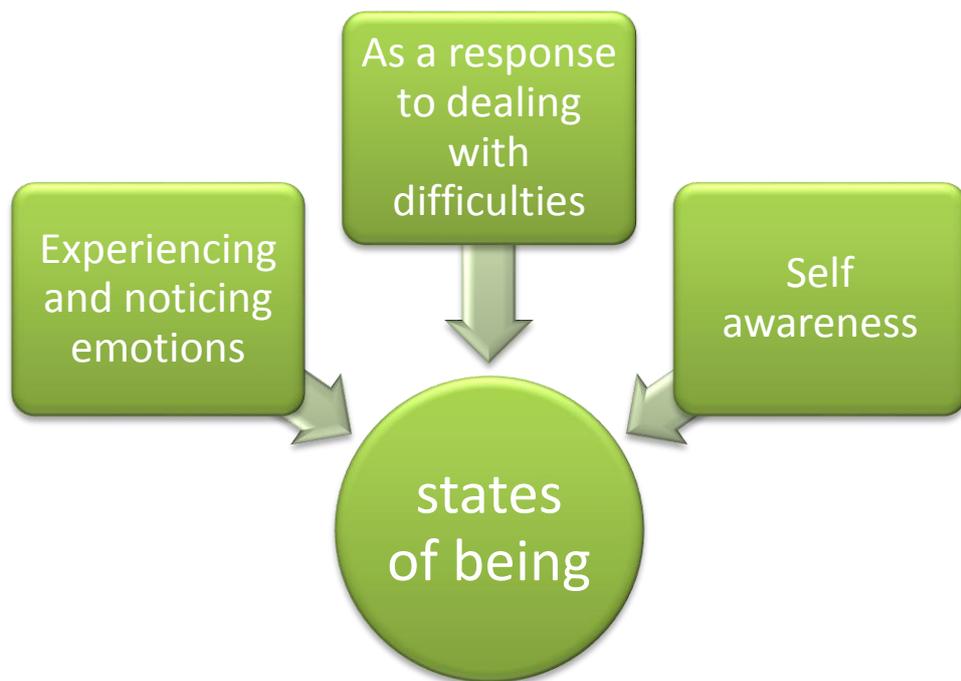
**Mary** “I think about two points of view 'cause some person...one person doing...sort of getting like really angry saying "This person did this, this person did this" and then you could think about the other person. They're not angry, so you can say, "Okay, what, what, what did you do, what happened?" In fact, with my little brother, I have to do that [softly laughs]”. (297-300)

The practitioner recalls observations made when the pupils nonverbally conveyed their developing shift in perspectives. The children’s understanding was conveyed to her through ‘facial expressions’, utterances of confirmation and expressions of realisation. The use of ‘but you could see’ demonstrates her confidence in what was being communicated.

**Practitioner** “I guess you might have seen those facial expressions of recognition. Like ‘oh yeah, yeah I say that kind of thing to myself all the time’ [animated tone] erm... so they didn’t, they didn’t necessarily share any more examples of, of them, themselves doing that but you could see [pause] that there was a recognition that  
‘oh yeah I think I do that quite a lot’, and then there was lots of nodding, and oh yeah me too, and that kind of response to it.”  
(255-260)

#### **4.7.3. Master theme 3: States of being**

**Figure 4.3** Illustration of Master theme 3, with supporting super-ordinate themes



#### **4.7.3.1 Experiencing and noticing emotions**

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to ‘experiencing and noticing emotions’. The theme captured the emerging themes of ‘provokes a range of emotional states’ and ‘emotionally supportive experiences’. The different aspects of each of the super-ordinate themes and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Provokes a range of emotional states**

‘Provokes a range of emotions’ refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that engaging in mindfulness can induce and help to manage emotions.

In a broader sense, emotions were evident in the narratives of the pupils in a variety of ways through the involvement of engaging in different activities. The following extract from a pupil illustrates how excitable she becomes when recalling an experience from the group. She goes on to describe the emotions of others in the group evoked by the activity. This is conveyed by the use of ‘some people happy some people bit sad’. The use of ‘memories’ as a prompt for the

emotion suggests that they were harboured emotions, provoked and brought to the fore by the mindfulness based activity.

**Mary** “Yeah, Oh! We did a mindfully, erm, listening....We listen to music....And it wasn't singing. Pretty much it was just erm, instrumental. So we had a piece of music and we had one specific type of music and it...some people remembered about phone, erm, call ringtones 'cause they go like tweets, bird tweets, and stuff.... it reminded them of the beach and stuff like waves crashing and stuff, and memories. *So it was able to?* Bring back memories that made some people happy, some people bit sad.”  
(497-508)

Another pupil recalls his own experience as an opportunity to be ‘completely honest about yourself’. The use of this phrase suggests that the mindfulness based activity provided him with an opportunity be unusually open about himself. This is interpreted as alluding to the non-judgemental aspect of mindfulness. In feeling this sense of non-judgement he suggests he is able to feel ‘calmer’, and that his ‘struggle’ with anger is alleviated through engaging with the activity. The impact is thought to be significant to him, as he emphasises ‘lot’ prior to sharing how his emotion changed for the better.

**David** “Erm well, if you wanted to write in it about how you feel you could write something completely honest about yourself.”  
*I: Okay, and was that, er how helpful was that for you?*  
“Erm, it was very helpful. Yes. Because before I kept, I struggled quite a lot.” *I: Did you?* “Hmm....” *So it helped you, what did it help you do?* “Erm control my anger....Erm it kinda made me a lot lot calmer.” (180-207)

In contrast with previous pupil extracts that evidenced engaging in mindfulness to reduce or manage negative emotions, engaging in mindful practice was also found to provoke a negative emotion. Another pupil found trying to engage in mindfulness ‘also makes you angry’. The statement ‘when you’re already angry about doing it’ suggests that pre-existing anger can be exacerbated when having

to think about engaging in mindfulness practice. The use of 'I've' relates this to his own personal experience, rather than one that he feels is shared by others.

**Jake** "what I've kind of found as well it [mindfulness] also makes you angry thinking about trying to like, erm, [pause], yeah, it'll make you angry just like when you're already angry about doing it, and yeah." (327-329)

Engaging in mindfulness was also considered as having a positive influence, whereby a pupil moved from feeling 'angry' and acting out 'then I shouted and screamed and started punching', to being able to manage his response completely differently. The change in his emotional response is thought of as making him a 'better person'.

**David** "It [mindfulness] would make you a lot better person, because, erm, I used to get angry when people talked over me... an I kept, then I shouted and screamed and started punching. But now I don't, I just let them wait for the other person to finish talking and then I continue what I was saying." (786-789)

- **Emotionally supportive experience**

The theme 'emotionally supportive experience' refers to the interpreted narratives shared suggesting that engaging in the MBI and learning about mindfulness was experienced as supportive. Positive emotions were experienced and attributed to the MBI, and mindfulness was recommended for others.

The emotionally supportive benefits of engaging with mindfulness were also considered to be extendable to other people. The use of 'really help them' illustrates the view of support being shared outwards towards other people. An explanation is given that mindfulness could help with anger by inducing 'calm'. The use of 'open up people's hearts' is interpreted as being highly significant for the pupil who views mindfulness as a deeply personal and potentially intimate influence on his life as he projects such sentiments outwards for others. The

substitution of anger for happiness is presented as a gain of engaging with mindfulness.

**David** “Erm, because I think it’d [mindfulness would] really help them...Cos erm, it could calm them, they could see that it’s not all, that you shouldn’t always be erm angry.” (734-739)...“It [mindfulness] would like open up people’s hearts to see if there’s more to anger than just being angry, you can be happy as well.” (871-872)

Another pupil shares her challenge of ‘worry’ and how she recognises that other children also experience the same ‘worry’ and how mindfulness ‘will help a lot’. The use of ‘focus’ is interesting and is interpreted to relate to the aspect of mindfulness which harnesses attention upon focusing as presented earlier in the findings. It’s thought that through focusing other children will be able to achieve a mindfulness state and therefore reduce the feeling of worry.

**Mary** “Some children worry a lot. I used [pause] I worry a lot too. Erm, they just have to focus. I think it [mindfulness] will help a lot.” (457-458)

The sentiment that ‘other people around the world’ would benefit from mindfulness is demonstrative of the extent to which mindfulness is thought of as being beneficial to others. The use of ‘fully believe’ leaves no room for doubt in his conviction that all people could use mindfulness. This is also confirmed by the rating of ‘100 out of 100’.

**David** “Erm, that Mindfulness was a very good thing that you should try out, we recommend it and on the scale of out of a 100 we put 100...Because we fully believe it would be good for other people to use it as well. School, other people around the world.” (894-905)

#### **4.7.3.2 As a response to dealing with difficulties**

A super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to 'as a response to dealing with difficulties'. The theme captured the emerging themes of 'dealing with negative emotions' and 'coping strategy'. The different aspects of each of the themes and how they relate to mindfulness are shown within the text.

- **Dealing with negative emotions**

'Dealing with negative emotions' referred to the interpretation of narratives around ways in which mindfulness was drawn upon in to manage negative emotions in various situations.

A pupil shares how she found mindfulness helped her and how it could help others that may experience emotional challenges. The pupil relates using mindful breathing with a negative experience of 'trying to hurt someone' around something that 'isn't right'. This is interpreted as her view perceiving mindfulness as something to use during a negative experience. She relates the example back to herself through the use of 'when I did it' and indicates it was helpful to her when saying 'so it's kind of like everything was gone after you finished it'.

**Mary** "If someone felt like [pause] [breathes softly] trying to hurt someone for saying something that might [pause] isn't right, they can just take out...it doesn't...in just two minutes or even less and just relax and focus on their breathing 'cause then I guess [pause] when I did it, I wasn't focusing on anything so it's kind of like everything was gone after you finished it [pause] so, [softly laughs]" I: "Okay. So everything's...so all of the, the emotions that you were feeling when, when being angry, they were gone? Is that what you mean [softly spoken]?" "Yeah, If I was worried then that would go too." (245-252)

Mindfulness was specifically thought of as something that could help with anger. Anger has been previously alluded to by participants during the findings as something they would use mindfulness to manage. This sentiment is made explicit in the following extracts. The use of 'it would be needed for me' is interpreted to refer to the extent to which he believes and has conviction in how

mindfulness could help him with his anger. The specific reference to 'control my anger' indicates that he recognises anger as something he wants to experience less of and in a different way.

**David** "Because as soon as I started learning about it [Mindfulness] I just felt that it would be needed for me to actually control my anger." (477-478)

Another pupil is also explicit in his reference to how mindfulness has helped him manage his experience of anger. The use of past tense in 'helped' is interpreted to indicate that he has indeed applied mindfulness and found it bettered his 'problems' with 'anger'.

**Walter** "It [mindfulness] helped me with my anger problems" (59)

Mindfulness was also conveyed as a tool for developing different responses to situations which had the potential to arouse difficult emotions. The use of 'rescript' suggests that looking at the situation another way can produce a different emotion 'in a more positive way'. The use of 'positive' reiterates how the practitioner sees the purpose of mindfulness as an approach for alleviating negative emotions. The use of 'cultivate' indicates that mindfulness is seen as something that grows and develops rather than something that is acquired in its entirety quickly. The use of 'recognise' is interpreted as mindfulness being something that can be identified and distinguished in some way. This is related back to the idea of mindfulness being less of a reflective experience but rather about all of those processes occurring within that moment in time. In achieving this, it is interpreted that the practitioner believes mindfulness has the potential help name negative thoughts or experiences as they occur, in order to then manage them. This is evident in the sentence 'in that particular moment to think actually I'm feeling a bit irritated right now'.

**Practitioner** "So, for example, if they are feeling irritated what are they thinking that's making them feel that way...erm, and then maybe trying to... re-script that, that thought... in a more positive way, which in turn has a more positive effect upon how they feel

and therefore had an impact upon how they behave. So I guess, erm ....although that in it's, kind of, pure form is cognitive behaviour therapy, mindfulness is about trying to cultivate, that ability to recognise, I think, what's going on with you in the moment, so rather than doing it retrospectively, being able in that, in that particular moment to think actually I'm feeling a bit irritated right now" (172-178)

- **Coping strategy**

The theme 'coping strategy' referred to the interpretation of narratives which suggested that mindfulness was thought of flexibly and as something that could be utilised for a variety of purposes.

One of the pupils shares how he considers mindfulness as appropriate for times when he needs to 'cool down'. The specific reference to when mindfulness can be drawn upon is evident in how he defines when to use mindfulness. The use of 'I wouldn't do mindfulness', 'it isn't meant to be, like, used so much' and 'used for them moments' is interpreted as conveying that mindfulness has a particular purpose i.e. to cope.

**Jake** "Erm, [pause] only because really I wouldn't do mindfulness [pause] for a number ten, like, like, as an everyday, as a complete, like, everyday thing really. It's [mindfulness] mainly kind of, I think, used for them moments where you just, erm, need to kind of, erm [pause], erm, like, cool down or something like that. It's, [pause], it isn't meant to be, like, used so much. But... that."  
(294-297)

Another pupil also has a specific purpose for mindfulness in order to cope with 'anger'.

**Walter** "[use mindfulness] When you're angry... Because it [mindfulness] calms you down" (212-215)

This same sentiment is shared within the practitioner's experience of the specific applications the children appear to use mindfulness for. The use of 'definitely' leaves little doubt in her understanding that children use mindfulness for 'managing that kinda worry and anxiety'. Interestingly it's shared that 'the work' carried out is specifically to 'address' coping with negative emotions.

**Practitioner** "so I've, the work that I've done so far has, has been to address anxiety, er...and where children have made comments about...how mindfulness has helped them it definitely been to do with managing that kinda worry and anxiety" (78-80)

Conversely, mindfulness is also thought of as being applied to oneself in a broader sense, expanding to one's whole 'life'. The use of 'really good' is interpreted to indicate how much mindfulness is valued. The extent that mindfulness can 'help' is interpreted as generously attributable within one's whole existence, without boundaries.

**David** "Because it's [mindfulness] really good and it can really help you with your life." (808)

The interpretation of the sentence below is taken to demonstrate the extent of the pupil's certainty that mindfulness will aid him as a strategy.

**David** "Ever since it [the MBI] ended I kept on using it." (288)

Mindfulness is also thought of as an aid for concentration, avoiding distraction in order to maintain concentration. The use of 'better working environment' is interpreted as an illustration of the way in which the pupil perceives mindfulness as influential: through improvements, better outcomes can emerge.

**Jake** "They could, like, [pause], erm, use, like, mindfulness to help them concentrate better on whatever they're trying to do. But, they would like, do the mindfulness and then it would give them a more [pause], better working environment, erm, [pause], so yeah." (236-238).

Mindfulness is thought of as something that can be drawn upon in times of need even when not at the forefront of one's mind. The use of 'hoping' when projecting that the children will recall 'this thing called mindfulness' in times when 'they encounter a period of, you know particular worry or anxiety' demonstrates the practitioner's wish for the children to use mindfulness in this way in the future. The use of 'depths' is suggestive of mindfulness being buried, and, in conjunction with 'memory', indicates that recall can occur when needed. Together it is interpreted that the sentiment is suggestive of mindfulness being a strategy that can be taken out when needed, even if forgotten in the meantime.

**Practitioner** "because it was a 12 week intervention, I think that length of time perhaps was long enough, for some of it to stick, as an experience in their memory, so I'm hoping [high pitch] that if at some point they encounter a period of, you know particular worry or anxiety, that somewhere in the depths of their memory they'll, they'll remember that there's this thing called mindfulness, erm and that although they may need more help to reengage with it, that they'll... recognise it as a potential way of kinda managing that anxiety, erm, yeah... yeah, that's what I'm hoping! [laughs] (629-635)

#### **4.7.3.3 Self- awareness**

The super-ordinate theme 'self-awareness' captured the emerging themes of 'union of mind and body', 'positive personal experience' and 'independent governance'.

- **Union of mind and body**

The theme 'union of mind and body' relates to the interpretation around the sentiments that were shared with regards to the intimate personal relationship that was alluded to, and which appeared to encompass the whole of the individual self.

The sentiment of mindfulness having a deep personal effect is further alluded to through the intimate way in which mindfulness is related to. The use of 'it's part of me' implies the unison of mindfulness within the individual. There is a sense of harmony interpreted in the acceptance of mindfulness being taken into his existence.

**David** "Because now I know what it is [mindfulness] it's just like it's part of me." (469)

The idea that mindfulness fills a 'gap' is interpreted as something that is fulfilling to the pupil. The extent to which mindfulness fills the gap is deeply personal, as interpreted through the use of 'heart'.

**David** "[uses mindfulness because] Erm, probably the gap that mindfulness has got in my heart." (607)

- **Positive personal experience**

'Positive personal experience' referred to the interpretation of narratives around the occurrence that something positive had occurred on a personal level as a result of being in the MBI and learning about mindfulness.

The practitioner shares the positive effect that being part of the MBI had upon the pupils. The behaviours conveyed by the children reinforced to the practitioner the positive personal experience felt by the children. The use of 'desperate' when wanting to continue the sessions implies an emotive and eager response. Comparisons are given for competing activities which the children may have also enjoyed but the practitioners implies that these were rated as secondary to the mindfulness group through the use of 'good indicator'. This is interpreted as illustrating the high personal regard that the children had for the MBI.

**Practitioner** "there was a change in the school timetable one week and it meant that our usual slot for mindfulness would have been forfeited... and they all [the pupils] said no, no, no we don't want, we can't do that, we will have to reschedule, or can't the

other thing wait, you know they were really desperate to keep it ...every week, erm, so I, I know, I had to find another way of rescheduling it because, and I think a couple of times they had visiting speakers in for book week or something and they still [emphasised] wanted to come along for the mindfulness session, erm, so yeah that was, that was a good indicator that they were getting something out of it, but I don't know they could articulate exactly what" (299-308)

This view is echoed through one of the pupils trying to convey what it was like for him. The inability to articulate what it is that induces the 'good' feeling is interpreted through 'you can't really explain it'.

**Jake** you, [pause], you can't really explain it [doing mindfulness], you just feel, erm, good after, I guess." (226)

The pupils express their experience of what being mindful was like through examples of feeling relaxed. Again the struggle for words to communicate what is experienced is evident in the use of 'I don't know what relaxing feels like' after stating that 'it just feels like [pause] relaxing'. This contradiction is interpreted to illustrate how the pupil is trying to make sense of and share her experience which is 'relaxing'.

**Mary** "It [mindfulness] doesn't feel like anything for me actually. It just feels like [pause] relaxing, relaxing. I don't know what relaxing feels like. I think it just like nothing [softly laughs]." (218-219)

'Relaxed' is reiterated by another pupil. The use of 'the momentum of things kind of slow down' is suggestive of a sense of calm and ease. 'Slowed down' is used again and taken to be a reference to the experience of a peaceful state.

**Jake** "You feel, [thoughtful] [pause], when you do mindfulness you

feel quite relaxed. Erm, [pause], everything's [pause], the momentum of things kind of slow down and it's, yeah, it's, [pause] it is basically a slowed down kind of thing." (120-123)

The use of 'really down' and in relationship to 'feel everything in your body clearly' is interpreted together and to indicate that sense of peace and stillness that the pupil experiences mindfulness as. The reference to 'nothing in your mind's bothering you' is interpreted as this state existing in specific contexts.

**David** " When nothing in your mind's bothering you and you're just like really down.*I*: "Yes, *what does your body feel like?*" "Erm, er nothing you, it feels like you can feel everything through your body clearly." (250-254)

The state of being relaxed is also reiterated by another pupil;

**Jake** "Erm, [pause], yeah you do kind of feel, [pause], you do feel relaxed and you just, [pause]... (225)

Calmness is also referenced as a state that is experienced;

**David** "Erm it kinda made me a lot lot calmer" (207)

There were also positive changes in behaviour towards other people suggested to occur as a result of learning about mindfulness. Self regulatory behaviour is interpreted to have developed in the change described by the pupil around how to manage a situation in a more mindful way;

**David** "If somebody does something you don't like, you can just say please can you not do that because I don't really like that." (739-740)

- **Independent governance**

'Independent governance' referred to the interpreted narratives that were apparent with regards to mindfulness being thought of as something that requires an active autonomous choice to engage in.

Mindfulness was considered as a conscious choice to engage with and something that only the individual has influence over. The use of 'your decision to do it', 'it's only really you that can' and 'can't really think of anything what could, like, make you', are all clear indicators of how the pupil explored the possibilities of challenging his view in his mind, without changing his opinion.

**Jake** "Erm, er, I [pause] I can't really think of anything what could, like, make you mindfulness. It's just kind of [pause], it's kind of more or less like you're kind of, erm, [pause], it's kind of [pause], your decision more like to do it really. [Spoken slowly] And, [pause], there is probably some things that could make you [do] mindfulness but I just, like, [pause] I think you can't, it's only really you that can do mindfulness really. I don't think anything else can, like, I think could make you actually do it." (195-201)

The same sentiment is repeated by another pupil. There is also a sense of responsibility that is linked to behaviour in relation to mindfulness, interpreted from 'You control how you act and how you can be mindful'. The use of 'control' is seen three times, illustrating an importance to the pupil and interpreted in the sense of self management.

**Mary** "I guess you control being mindful. I don't think, I don't think anything can stop you from being mindful. You control how you act and how you can be mindful. I don't think anyone could come up to you and say "Stop being mindful". They can't control you." (347-349)

#### **4.8 Summary for section two**

This section of the findings chapter has presented the main findings in relation to the pupil's experience of the MBI. The findings illustrate the pupil's beliefs around

what their experiences and understanding of mindfulness was after having taken part in the MBI.

#### **4.9 Summary of findings chapter**

This chapter has presented the main findings for this piece of research. The findings are presented in two sections illustrating the mindfulness practitioner and the pupil's experiences. To reinforce the idiographic element of IPA, a pen portrait was provided of all participants and their interviews (4.3.1 & 4.6.1). Three master themes were identified through the application of IPA (see Chapter 3), namely: 'Physiological activities promote mindfulness', 'Cognitive elements' and 'States of being'. Each master theme has been individually presented and discussed to illustrate the development of hierarchical themes.

'Physiological activities promote mindfulness' incorporated the super-ordinate themes of 'Senses' and 'Respiration'. Within this master theme, interpreted narratives around awareness and use of one's senses, together with the role of breathing in mindfulness were discussed and illustrated with individual transcript quotes. 'Cognitive elements' incorporated the two super-ordinate themes of 'Attentional requirements' and 'Noetic elements'. Discussion of this master theme centred around focused attention, being in the moment, thinking and reflecting, clearing the mind and a shift in perspective. 'States of being' incorporated the super-ordinate themes of 'Experiencing and noticing emotions' 'As a response to dealing with difficulties', and 'Self-awareness'. Interpreted narratives were discussed in relation to provoking emotional states, emotionally supportive experiences, and using mindfulness as a coping strategy and deal with negative emotions.

The following chapter will present a discussion of the findings in relation to the research.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings of this study. This chapter will discuss the findings within the context of the research questions and the researched literature. Initially the aims of the research and research questions are outlined (5.2) followed with a brief summary of the main findings (5.3). A commentary of the findings in relation to the research questions is given (5.4) with a focus upon the main research question asked (5.4.1) and the subsidiary research questions (5.4.2). The Impact of the practitioner upon children's experiences of mindfulness is then discussed (5.5). The strengths and limitations of the research are presented (5.6) and include considering Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an approach for the research (5.6.1), the Participant recruitment and generalizability of findings (5.6.2), the homogeneity of the sample group (5.6.3) and interviews (5.6.4) also feature here. Following on from this point the Implications for the profession of Educational Psychology (5.7), the distinctive contribution made by this study (5.8) and further areas for potential research (5.9) are presented. The Researchers commitment to reflexivity throughout the research (5.10) and reflections upon the overall experience of carrying out the research (5.10.1) along with the concluding thoughts (5.11) which will bring the chapter to an end.

Due to the scope of this thesis it is not possible to discuss all of the findings presented in chapter 4. Therefore, as suggested by Smith et al. (2011), the discussion will represent what was considered most noticeably as interesting or contradictory to the researcher. This chapter will conclude this piece of research as a whole.

### **5.2 Aims of research and research questions**

The aim of this piece of research is to explore children's understanding of mindfulness. The research sought to contribute to the body of research previously carried out by providing an in-depth explorative interpretation of children's experiences of mindfulness using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

(IPA) (Smith et al. 2011). To capture the experiences of children analysis took place after the participants, who included the mindfulness practitioner and children, completed a 12 week mindfulness based intervention (MBI). In order to address the aims of the research primary and subsidiary research questions were as follows;

The primary research question asked;

‘What is children’s understanding of mindfulness after participating in a mindfulness intervention?’

To help inform the primary question subsidiary research questions sought to consider;

- What does mindfulness mean to children?
- How has mindfulness been used by children?
- What are the benefits of using mindfulness for children?

### **5.3 Summary of main findings**

Three master themes were identified through the method of IPA (Smith et al. 2011) (see Chapter 3), namely: (1) ‘Physiological activities promote mindfulness’, (2) ‘Cognitive elements’ and (3) ‘States of being’. Each master theme incorporated super-ordinate themes born out of emerging themes. These were as follows:

- The first master theme ‘Physiological activities promote mindfulness’ incorporated the super-ordinate themes of ‘Senses’ and ‘Respiration’. Within these themes emerging themes interpreted from the narratives were ‘being aware of and ‘use of one’s senses’ and ‘the role of breathing in mindfulness’.
- The second master theme ‘Cognitive elements’ incorporated the two super-ordinate themes of ‘Attentional requirements’ and ‘Noetic elements’. The development of these themes bore from ‘focused attention’ ‘being in

the moment' 'thinking and reflection' 'clearing the mind' and 'a shift in perspective'.

- The third master theme 'States of being' incorporated the super-ordinate themes of 'Experiencing and noticing emotions', 'As a response to dealing with difficulties', and 'Self-awareness'. Interpreted narratives were discussed in relation to the emerging themes of 'provoking a range of emotional states', 'emotionally supportive experiences', 'dealing with negative emotions' and 'coping strategy'. Union of mind and body' positive personal experience' and Independent governance concluded all of the emerging themes.

#### **5.4 Commentary of the findings in relation to the main research question and literature**

The findings generated by the IPA process (as discussed in detail in chapter 4) are now discussed in relation to the research questions and in the context of the researched literature. At this point a discussion around what the researcher found interesting and contradictory within the findings is presented.

The research questions are addressed in the context of those children who took part in this piece of research. The reader is prompted to bear in mind that the findings are born from the researcher's interpretations of the narrative accounts given by the mindfulness practitioner and children who took part in this study. Therefore the findings, and discussion of the findings, are considered as the result of a collaborative effort between the participants and researcher (Smith et al. 2011).

##### **5.4.1. Commentary relating to the main research question**

The main question asked by this piece of research is;

“What is children's understanding of mindfulness after participating in a mindfulness intervention?”

In efforts to explore what children's understanding of mindfulness is the 7 attitudinal foundations as proposed by Kabat-Zinn (1990) are drawn upon. This is considered as a fitting framework in which to base the discussion within as the programme used for the MBI was Semple & Lee's (2011) '*Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Anxious Children*'. The programme draws upon Kabat-Zinn (2003) definition of mindfulness, which is; "*the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment*" (p145). As presented in the literature review, the 7 attitudinal foundations of mindfulness are outlined below along with the degree to which the children were thought to develop their understanding of mindfulness within.

- 1 Non-judging.** This is described as the ability to become aware of one's own views and agendas with reference to one's inner and outer experiences and to learn to step back from them without judgement. Whilst non-judging is considered to feature within the findings it was not explicitly referred to and not present for all participants. Rather the sentiment of being able to be honest without caution was alluded to.
- 2 Patience.** This is described as cultivating patience towards our own minds and bodies. Particularly when the mind is wandering or agitated as a reminder that it is not necessary to get caught up the mind's thoughts. The principle of patience was thought to appear implicitly within the views that focused attention is given to one's thoughts. However this was only presented in relation to when negative emotions were experienced rather than a practice which would be applied to any thoughts.
- 3 Beginners mind.** This is described as letting go of what is believed to be known and for all experiences to be viewed as first time experiences. The principle of having a beginners mind did not appear to be a concept or view that the children held around mindfulness. It was not apparent to the researcher within the narratives during analysis and not in the themes which were generated.

- 4 Trust.** This is described as the ability to trust one's own thoughts, feelings and intuition despite opposing views.

The principle of trust was considered to appear within the participants narratives. It was interpreted from the sentiments whereby views were shared with regards to the use of thinking about different perspectives. The idea that there could be more than one truth and different ways to look at things was felt to allude to this idea. In addition trust was also considered to be present in the views of being able to stay within the present moment rather than allowing concern around the past or future experiences to dominate thoughts.

- 5 Non-striving.** This is described as the ability to be in the present moment with whatever exists in that moment as one experiences it. The purpose of Non-striving is to be without any additional purpose, in turn allowing the unfolding of the experience.

The principle of non-striving was also interpreted to be apparent within participant's narratives. However this appeared to be an emerging practice which participants were at different points in developing. The sentiment related to having a clear mind and allowing negative thoughts to leave. This then enabled a mental 'blank space' which could be resided within. Whilst this is not thought to appreciate the principle of non-striving in full it's considered that maintaining the mental 'blank space' free from intruding thoughts alludes to this principle.

- 6 Acceptance.** This is described as the ability to accept and see things as they are in the moment of time one is in. Acceptance avoids imposing ideas about what one thinks one should think or feel, rather gives the opportunity to see what is happening clearly.

The principle of acceptance wasn't considered to appear within the participant's narratives. Rather more contradictory there appeared to be more of an indication that positive feelings were preferred and negative feelings should be dealt with through mindful practice in order to change the experience to a positive one.

**7 Letting go.** This is described as non-attachment, the idea of letting things be as they are instead of preferring or resisting experiences. It relates to letting go of mental grasping or pushing in turn enabling one to observe what will happen.

The final principle of letting go was observed to appear within the mindfulness practitioner's narrative but not the pupil's narratives. Interestingly the pupil's narratives seemed to be suggestive of pursuing mental states, such as concentration or calmness which is somewhat contradictory to the principle.

Considering the observations made in relation to how participants demonstrated the 7 attitudinal foundations (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) within the main findings it appears that some principles were evident, whilst others were developing, and some had yet to be acquired. As a concept, mindfulness is considered to be something that develops over time and under guided practice (Bear, 2006; Kabat-Zinn 2003). Therefore it is possible that there may be some aspects of the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness which are achieved and understood with more time and experience available than the 12 weeks which pupils attended the MBI for.

Typically the narrative observations of the 7 attitudinal foundations were intertwined within the findings amongst all participants. However the degree to which each individual participant demonstrated their awareness and understating varied. This was interesting as each individual participant appeared to be on their own personal journey in their understanding and practice of mindfulness. Whilst they all shared the same group experience over 12 weeks, and many similarities of their evolving understanding of mindfulness are apparent within the themes presented in this research, what they each took away individually appears to vary. An example to illustrate this point can be seen in the super-ordinate theme 'senses'. All participants recognised the use of senses in mindfulness practices. However the extent of their individual understanding around how and why the senses help to cultivate mindfulness varied greatly. One child's understanding of how and why the senses could be used appeared very basic with little offered to indicate anything other than they were part of mindfulness. For others activities based upon using the senses helped them to feel calm and develop their skills in mindfulness.

This example captures the varying individual degree to which participants internalised the concept of mindfulness through the activities promoting the exploration of senses mindfully.

Another notable point evident in the findings is the underlying purpose children perceive mindfulness for. Shonin et al. (2014) suggest that within the secularisation of mindfulness from its original Buddhist roots mindfulness is misleadingly being presented as a solution to target 'problems' rather than facilitate an individual's full human potential. In consideration of the findings and how children have applied mindfulness it would appear that children may perceive mindfulness in such a way. Observed within the findings was that anger in particular was commented upon frequently as a motivator for engaging in mindfulness practice. Mindfulness was also viewed as a diversion from negative experiences which could relieve them of negative thoughts. From this point it would appear that the children's understanding may be misguided since the purpose of mindfulness is not to avoid or change thoughts but to "*watch thought itself*" (Hefferon, 2013, p 170). However, these findings are a snapshot of a particular period in time. Namely when the MBI had been completed and as previously suggested the pupils understanding of mindfulness may develop further with the practice of mindfulness (Bear, 2006; Kabat-Zinn 2003).

A further interesting point observed by the researcher was that within the findings the children shared their views of their experience of mindfulness most commonly in terms of practical activities rather than abstractly or conceptually. Breathing mindfully was talked about most by each of the participants featuring throughout the interviews. Mindful breathing is one of the most common practices within meditative techniques through which mindfulness is cultivated (Siegel et al. 2008). Breathing is noted as "*a valuable practice for developing mindfulness*" (p 116) by Semple & Lee (2011), authors of the MBI that participants followed. Considering this, it would be expected that the children would have experienced breathing mindfully and a concept of the role that the breath has in developing mindfulness. However, the underlying purpose of breathing mindfully was less apparent in the participant's narratives than the act of breathing mindfully.

## 5.4.2 Commentary relating to the subsidiary research questions

There were 3 subsidiary questions which sought to inform the children's understanding of mindfulness. To illustrate the answer to these questions the main findings were examined for views which indicated the ways in which participants shared their views. These are presented in a list form due to the scope of this research and the priority given to the response in the commentary to the main research question previously discussed.

The first subsidiary research question asked 'What does mindfulness mean to children?' Based upon the main findings of this research, and as interpreted by the researcher, children perceived mindfulness to mean the following;

- Mindfulness means engaging with breathing practices
- Mindfulness means experiencing a sense of calm
- Mindfulness means being able to experience an individual moment
- Mindfulness means non-judging
- Mindfulness means engaging with activities promoting mindfulness

The second subsidiary research question asked 'How has mindfulness been used by children?' Based upon the main findings of this research, and as interpreted by the researcher, children used mindfulness for the following;

- Mindfulness has been used to manage personal anger
- Mindfulness has been used autonomously
- Mindfulness has been used to diffuse external challenges
- Mindfulness has been used to maintain attention to tasks

The third subsidiary research question asked 'What are the benefits of using mindfulness for children?' Based upon the main findings of this research, and as interpreted by the researcher, children perceived the benefits of mindfulness as the following;

- Mindfulness benefits by relieving worry
- Mindfulness benefits by aiding concentration

- Mindfulness benefits by linking thoughts and feelings
- Mindfulness benefits by enabling differing perspectives to be considered
- Mindfulness benefits by having a clear mind
- Mindfulness benefits by relaxing

The goal of cultivating mindfulness is thought to relate to the mental space that it creates (Firestone 2013). It is within that mental space that one is then able to change an impulsive reaction into a more thoughtful response. According to Semple & Lee (2011) a primary aim of mindfulness based interventions (MBI) are to support the development of one's relationship with one's thoughts and feelings in order to "*adopt a new way of being in the world to evolve*" (p78). Overall participants appeared to enjoy the MBI which supports the research considering the feasibility and acceptability of MBI in schools (Kuyken et al., 2013; Semple et al., 2010; Weare, 2012). Some participants indicated that they had continued to practice mindfulness independently since the end of the MBI. This suggests that those children had developed the skills enough in order to be able to transfer them into the real world. However this was not the case for all participants. One child indicated that he found engaging in mindfulness as something that could potentially make him feel angrier. Clearly for this child the process of developing a new relationship with his thoughts and feelings was in the early stages.

- **Summary of main findings in regards to the research questions**

Through discussion of the main findings it would appear that the children were in the process of developing their understanding of mindfulness. The point at which the children were at individually with regards to their understanding of mindfulness conceptually varied between them. Despite this there were commonalities within the children experiences as expressed and evidenced within the themes generated from the data.

## **5.5 Impact of the practitioner upon children's experiences of mindfulness**

As discussed within the literature review there is frequent reference within the literature around experienced and qualified mindfulness teachers/practitioner

running MBI programmes (Bogels et al., Broderick & Metz, 2009; Burke, 2010; 2008; Flook et al. 2010; Haydicky et al., 2012; Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Kuyken et al. 2013; Lee et al., 2008; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Napoli et al., 2005; Semple et al., 2010; Wall, 2005; Zelazo & Lyons, 2012). Meiklejohn et al. (2012) suggest that one of the limitations of delivering MBI's relates to "*Finding trained and experienced mindfulness teachers to teach teachers, students, and parents*" (p 302). Crane et al. (2012) suggest that the 'integrity' of mindfulness should be maintained by teachers through a level of teacher competence acquired over time and by qualifications.

This argument for experienced and qualified mindfulness teachers exists due to the belief that the modelling of mindfulness by a teacher during a MBI has a great influence upon the learning of the student. According to Semple & Lee (2011) "*to teach mindful awareness is to embody mindful awareness*" (p 95). The use of embodiment is also referenced by the mindfulness practitioner within her narrative (see chapter 4 page 90) around how she tried to convey mindfulness when teaching. Considering this point in relation to Bandura, (1965; 1977), social learning theory, which proposes that the modelling of behaviour influences the behaviour of the observer, it is reasonable to suggest that a student's experience of mindfulness is shaped by the teachers modelling of mindfulness.

Considering this point in relation to the findings from this research it could be suggested that the children's understanding and approach to mindfulness was linked with the practitioners' understanding and approach. Evidence of this is suggested through the accounts given by both the mindfulness practitioner and the pupils where perspectives were interpreted to relate to each other. However, due to the scope of this piece of research it is not possible to highlight and comment upon each of these. Rather a flavour of the links interpreted is noted below to share with the reader.

An example, with reference to the findings, within the emerging theme 'being aware of and using one's senses' illustrates how the practitioner and pupils both recall and share similar aspects of using senses to conceptualise mindfulness (see chapter 4 page 60-63). The practitioner also comments upon her view of how the children responded to the activities and what they would have taken

away from them which is interpreted to marry with the children views. The influence of the practitioner was also noticed in the super-ordinate theme 'breathing holds and important role in mindfulness' (see chapter 4 page 63-66) with the similar air of understanding shared by the pupils and practitioner. Such similarities between the practitioner and pupils perspectives exist throughout the findings.

However, it is important to comment that these are interpretations and whilst the researcher maintained a strong commitment to ensuring the idiographic nature of the IPA approach, through 'bracketing' and reflexivity, such processes are not full proof can only be considered as "*partially achievable*" (Smith et al., 2011, p 25) in avoiding preceding thoughts influencing subsequent ones. Nevertheless, IPA is an interpretative process and the links between the practitioner accounts and the pupil's accounts are considered as reliable and valid in research terms. In addition, it is important to mention that it was not the purpose of this research to explore the relationship of the impact of the practitioner upon the pupil's experiences. This became apparent to the researcher during the analysis process and in consideration of how the practitioner experience is strongly referenced within the researched literature it was considered noteworthy to comment upon.

## **5.6 Strengths and limitations of the research**

There are a number of strengths and limitations for this piece of research which are important to comment upon as follows;

### **5.6.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an approach for the research**

One of the strengths of the research is considered in relation to the quality of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) presented within this study. Smith et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of "*rich, transparent and contextualised analysis*" (p 51) within IPA research which can be considered as indicators of quality research. These qualities are also echoed by Yardley (2008) who suggests that the researcher's commitment to transparent analysis through

the inclusion of reflection and reflexivity, when interpreting data, and the grounding of analysis and interpretation within theoretical knowledge and literature are fundamental to good research. The use of Yardley's (2000; 2008) framework for IPA research is recommended for ensuring quality research (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). These qualities can be considered as a marker of good research and are evidenced within the methodology and findings of this research.

As a piece of research underpinned by phenomenology, in terms of its philosophical approach and methodology, it sits within hermeneutic phenomenology and draws upon the hermeneutic cycle as an approach to the interpretation of experience (Kafle, 2011; Smith et al. 2011). Hermeneutics "*is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life and world stories*" (Kafle 2011, p 186). With regard to this piece of research it is noted that the interpretation of participant's experiences of mindfulness exists within a double and triple hermeneutic. That is as far as pupil participants are concerned the interpretation of their experience was between the individual and the researcher. This is considered as a double hermeneutic. With regards to the mindfulness practitioner the child's experiences were interpreted through her interpretation of the child's experience which was then interpreted by the researcher. Hence this is considered as a triple hermeneutic. As such the findings are considered within the subjective context of interpretation which stem from the different positions of the pupil and mindfulness practitioner.

### **5.6.2 Participant recruitment and generalizability of findings**

Due to the purpose of this research, namely to explore children's understanding of mindfulness, pupils needed to have relevant experience of mindfulness to participate. This in itself was a challenge as MBI's for pupils were new to the local authority (LA) where this research was carried out. Therefore the opportunity to invite participants to take part was limited to a sample of pupils who had completed a MBI. At the time of carrying out the research there were 6 pupils from 1 school known to be invited to participate in a MBI. Due to the limited population from which to select pupils for this piece of research the researcher did not have an influence upon the background, demographic, age range, gender,

or experience of mindfulness of the pupils (other than having been part of one particular MBI). According to Robson (2002) the generalizability of findings to further populations needs to be reflective of any individual within a sample population, which is not the case for this research. However Smith et al. (2011) suggests that findings from IPA research can be generalised to wider populations in term of “*theoretical transferability*” (p 51) which is born from the researchers “*rich, transparent and contextualised analysis of the accounts of participants*” (p 51). To this end the findings can be considered as generalizable to the wider population in the context of the extant literature and personal and professional experience of the researcher within the field of mindfulness (Smith et al. 2011).

### **5.6.3 Homogeneity within the sample group**

Another consideration is the inclusion of the practitioner and pupils together within the data. One of the pre-requisites of IPA relates to the homogeneity of participants. It could be argued that the practitioner and pupils have little homogeneity due to their different positions held within the group. The mindfulness practitioner may be seen as a leader, someone with more power and influence amongst the group. Also the mindfulness practitioner’s motivations may be different to the pupils as age, individual roles and responsibilities between the two can be considered quite differently. However Smith et al. (2011) emphasize that defining homogeneity within IPA research is dependent upon the study aims. In addition, participants are suggested to be selected on the basis that they can “*grant access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study*” (p 49). With this in mind the homogeneity of the participants as a whole group of pupils and the mindfulness practitioner together are considered as fitting for the aims of this research. The experience of all participants is considered to be shaped by each and every one of them having participated in the experience together, whilst also recognising that each individual member will have their own personal subjective perspective upon the experience. Without including the mindfulness practitioner it would not have been possible to illicit the mindfulness practitioner’s views of the children’s experience, nor would the relationship which existed between the mindfulness practitioner and the pupils been as transparent within the analysis.

- **5.6.4 Interviews**

The design for this research included semi-structured interviews which were well suited to the purpose of this study (Smith et al. 2011). However whilst semi-structured interviews have many strengths (Greig Taylor & MacKay, 2007; Robson, 2002; Smith et al. 2011) they also have their limitations. This was the case when it became apparent that some children needed more prompting during interviews in order to share their experiences. Short responses may have been a reflection of the child not being able to access more abstract concepts or that they were reluctant to open up with an unfamiliar adult. In order to support a child during an interview when responses to open ended questions were limited the researcher prompted with interviewer led questions in order to encourage and help the child. As such some of the information which was shared in these instances may have been influenced by the researcher rather than the child. Therefore it is prudent to keep this in mind when considering the findings.

Pre interviews the researcher met with all of the pupils as a group with the school SENCo present. This was arranged in order to develop and build a relationship with the children. This ensured that the children knew what to expect and had the opportunity to ask any questions prior to interviews. Whilst this clearly was of benefit to those pupils who were more confident and responded eagerly to open ended questions in interviews those whom were less assured may have benefitted from more visits and contact with the researcher to build a rapport over time. However, due to time constraints set around the study it was not possible to achieve this.

## 5.7 Implications for the profession of Educational Psychology

The role of an educational psychologist (EP) is wide and varied providing the opportunity to support children both directly (individually or in groups) and indirectly (through the school system with teachers, and/or with parents) as determined by the child's needs. MBI's lend themselves to be applied to schools, families and groups of children (Dumas, 2005; Semple et al., 2005; Weare, 2012; 2013).

MBI's offer a holistic approach which has the potential to support children and young people's wellbeing through the application and practice of mindfulness based techniques. MBI's have clearly caught the interest of the Educational Psychology profession (Hart et al., 2014; Hefferon, 2013; Iyadurai, 2013; Iyadurai et al., 2014; Stone, 2014). This is not without surprise, since the outcomes evidenced from research conducted with children and young people have found mindfulness approaches to support emotional wellbeing, learning, mental health, and physical health (Weare, 2012) and are therefore pertinent to the practice of Educational Psychology for securing positive outcomes for children and young people. The function of mindfulness is thought to help those cultivating the practice to respond more skilfully to situations (Bishop, 2002; Weare 2013) which in turn enables them to deal with life stressors through responding rather than reacting to situations (Firestone, 2013; Kuyken, 2013). According to Iyadurai et al. (2014) the EP's are well placed to deliver MBI's. It is thought that with appropriate training and regard for professional standards (including the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009), code of ethics and conduct, the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2012), standards of conduct performance and ethics, and guidance around standards of practice set out by the UK network for Mindfulness-Based Teacher Trainers) ([www.mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk](http://www.mindfulnesssteachersuk.org.uk)) that EP's can enable schools to access MBI's for their staff, pupils and families. However as discussed by Iyadurai et al. (2014) there are a number of barriers which may prevent EP's delivering effective MBI's. These include the following:

- The completion of accredited MBSR or MBCT courses to train as a mindfulness practitioner

- The continued commitment to mindfulness based practice personally and professional on a regular basis
- The opportunity of regular supervision with a qualified mindfulness based practitioner
- The time to commit to delivering a MBI (which is recommended to be 12 weeks for children (Semple & Lee 2011)).

In considering the barriers presented above it would be prudent for any Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to approach the inclusion of MBI's within their remit with a commitment to support educational Psychologists (EP's) in fulfilling the requirements to deliver MBI's.

To summarise the implications from this piece of research upon the practice of educational psychology the following points are made;

- There is clearly a belief that mindfulness is a beneficial approach to apply. Within this study all participants shared their views that mindfulness would be of benefit to those people who wished to take it up. This highlights mindfulness as a popular approach (also recognised by the mindfulness al-part parliamentary group, MAPPG).
- Within this study children responded descriptively when sharing their experiences of the MBI. The evaluation of any MBI would need to bear children's developmental age in mind in order to mitigate any difficulty children would have in sharing the abstract concepts of mindfulness.
- Within this study participants were engaged in a 12 week MBI. The length of MBI's would need to be long enough to support children in embedding mindfulness based practices. This may include developing whole school approaches which encourage mindful based practices or opportunities during the day for mindfulness based discussions.

## **5.8 The distinctive contribution made by this research**

This research was carried out in order to explore children's understanding of mindfulness. Research looking at the use of mindfulness with young people and children, although growing is limited at this point in time (Greenburg & Harris 2012; Weare, 2012). The literature review carried out for this research identified one paper which explored adolescent's experiences of mindfulness following a mindfulness based intervention (Dellbridge & Lubbe 2009). Such research with children or young people is not evident within the literature. In turn it is clear that the child's voice is marginalised within the evidence base and therefore warrants inclusion. This piece of research contributes to a body of research previously carried out by offering an in-depth explorative interpretation of children's experiences of mindfulness following a 12 week MBI. This piece of research can be considered as distinctive for the following reasons;

- The research represents the child's voice which is under represented within the literature
- The research addresses the gap in the literature by contributing new knowledge to the field
- The research draws upon Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is little used within the field of mindfulness research

## **5.9 Further areas for potential research**

This piece of research offers insight into how children experienced a MBI and in turn offers a better understanding with regards to how children perceive and internalise the teachings of mindfulness having completed a 12 week MBI. Understanding how children and young people consider applying mindfulness, how they conceptualise mindfulness, how helpful mindfulness is thought to be, can all provide helpful insight which in turn can determine the future directions of, and inform mindfulness based interventions. Therefore future research could seek to include the following;

- This study included pupils between the ages of 9 and 10 years of age. Exploring a wider age range within the sample population age range could

provide further insight into how children understand and apply mindfulness at different ages. This may be useful in exploring the how children's developmental age effects their understanding and application of mindfulness.

- Mindfulness is considered to be 'dose related' which refers to principle that the more one engages with mindfulness based techniques the greater the benefits (Lazar et al. 2005). Therefore longitudinal studies could explore children's understanding of mindfulness at different point as they engage in mindfulness practices over time in order to examine any changes or developments.
- As discussed in the literature review there are a number of different MBI's which have been adapted for children (Meiklejohn et al. 2012). Exploring pupil's views of different MBI's to better identify what aspects of MBI's work for children could shed light upon the outcomes of differing approaches.
- Much in the literature promotes the view that the mindfulness practitioner/teacher delivering a MBI requires experience and is qualified to deliver MBI's. However there is little research which explores a practitioner's views directly upon this and neither was there any research which evidenced less experienced practitioners of mindfulness impacting negatively upon the outcome for participants who complete MBI's. Therefore future research could consider both of these areas.
- Lastly future research may also consider exploring whether whole school approaches of mindfulness play a role in supporting children to develop and maintain mindfulness practices and if so what the consequences of sustained engagement looks like.

## **5.10 Researchers commitment to reflexivity throughout the research**

According to Creswell (2009) reflexivity relates to how “*researchers reflect about how their bias, values and personal background, such as gender history, culture and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during a study*” (p 233). The process of reflexivity is considered to be of “*central importance in interpretative qualitative research*” (Fox et al. 2010, p 186). Fox et al. (2010) suggests different types of reflexive positions are thought to relate to different types of perspectives taken within a research design. Reflexivity within a phenomenological perspective, as this piece of research sits within, is considered to regard “*understanding oneself and one's impact on the research experience*” (p 186). In order for the researcher to capture and demonstrate the development of reflexivity research diaries are recommended as aids for this process (Fox et al. 2010). To this end in recognition of the importance of reflexivity throughout this piece of research the researcher kept a research diary. To demonstrate this diary excerpts from the research diary can be viewed in appendix 12 & 13. These excerpts are reflective of different times during the research process which capture the researcher's different experiences. In addition the following section includes reflexive notes relating to the researcher's experience of carrying out the study.

### **5.10.1 Reflection upon the overall experience of carrying out the research**

The following headings present summaries of some key points that the researcher noted upon during the research.

- **Challenges in real world context**

Whilst every effort was made to ensure this research followed a path set out and planned at an early stage with targets to be met by certain points this was not always possible to achieve. Unexpected events outside of the researcher's control meant that timelines needed to be re arranged and discrete parts of the research attended to at different points to what was originally planned. This was frustrating due to the researcher being concerned about ensuring that the research was completed within a time frame. Also the researcher wanted to avoid any

disruption to the flow of the due to changes in when the researcher could dedicate the appropriate time. Navigating the research through such circumstances proved successful and the commitment ensured the success of the research.

- **Participant recruitment**

The hope and expectation by the researcher was that all 6 pupils invited to take part in the research would do so. However one child withdrew and another did not wish to be included. At the time this was surprising and disappointing for the researcher. The personal investment involved in planning and organising such a piece of research contributed to the notable disappointment felt by the researcher. In addition this created doubt and concern in the researcher's mind where worry took over that more participants might also choose not to be involved. In hindsight there was no cause for concern and a sense of relief was experienced once all the interviews took place. This helped the researcher to continue to feel motivated and positive about the research.

- **Completion of the research**

Despite setbacks and unforeseen events which navigated this piece of research along the path it took, the researcher's motivation to reach the point at which the study could represent its completed form was led by interest and determination. The commitment to ensure the rigor and quality was retained throughout the process was achieved in multiple ways. These included engaging in supervision, where challenges and achievements could be recognised and shared. The maintenance of a research diary helped to 'bracket' researcher bias and enable a high level of analysis to develop. Much time and effort went into the completion of this research and commitment on the part of the researcher participants and those in supervisory roles (academic and professional supervisors, peers and colleagues) has enabled the aims of the research to be realised and the research questions to be answered.

## **5.11 Concluding thoughts**

As with any research, the findings of this piece of research are situated within the strengths and limitations of the methodology which is a reality of real world research. The findings from this research are considered to contribute to the wider body of research in the context of what mindfulness means to children. This study is considered of relevance for those in profession of Educational Psychology and those interested in the application of MBI to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. The research has made a distinctive contribution within the field of mindfulness in light of the findings. Recommendations are made to inform the practices of EPS with reference to the work of EP's and suggestions for further research have also been made to aid the direction of future research.

In summary, this research has presented the experience of participants who took part in a MBI. The aim of this piece of research was to explore children's understanding of mindfulness. The research sought to contribute to the body of research previously carried out by providing an in-depth explorative interpretation of children's experiences of mindfulness using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 2011). It is considered that this piece of research is of value to those working with children and young people (CYP) as the findings build upon current understanding of how mindfulness is understood by and helpful to children and can therefore inform future practice.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 Systematic literature review search with Inclusion criteria .....	142
Appendix 2 Information sheet for pupils .....	149
Appendix 3 Information sheet for practitioner .....	150
Appendix 4 Parental consent .....	151
Appendix 5 Participants consent.....	152
Appendix 6 Interview schedule for pupils.....	153
Appendix 7 Interview schedule for practitioner.....	154
Appendix 8 Sample of Initial noting.....	155
Appendix 9 Example image of the clustering process.....	157
Appendix 10 Example image for identifying super-ordinate themes .....	158
Appendix 11 Example image for identifying master themes .....	159
Appendix 12 Research diary excerpts post interview reflections .....	160
Appendix 13 Research diary excerpts process of analysis reflections.....	163
Appendix 14 Compact Disc (CD) including copies of participant's transcripts (see attached CD on the back cover).	

## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Systematic literature review search

For the purpose of this piece of research a systematic review was carried out to elicit published journal articles which were drawn upon to carry out a critical review of the previous research. A systematic review is one route employed to identify research surrounding a particular topic using databases. EBSCOHOST was used as a search engine to scan numerous databases with key words to direct the journal results. The criteria and results of these searches are detailed in the following tables.

An additional search was carried out at a later date in order to identify any further relevant articles.

- **Inclusion criteria for literature searches**

Tables 1-12 represent searches 1-12 illustrating the terms and inclusion criteria used to identify relevant articles. This was done in order to reduce the number of results identified and to refine the content of the articles for relevancy to the thesis subject area.

**Table 1**

<b>Search 1</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	Full text English Human References available Peer reviewed
<b>Results</b>	N = 851
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N = 1032

**Table 2** Search two illustrates the addition of two further inclusion criteria which were added to further refine the content of the articles

<b>Search 2</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	Full text English Human References available Peer reviewed Childhood(0-12) School ages(6-12)
<b>Results</b>	N = 29
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N= 36

**Table 3** Removed age included MBCT (Boolean)

<b>Search 3</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	mindfulness-based cognitive therapy
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	Full text English Human References available Peer reviewed Childhood(0-12)
<b>Results</b>	N=2
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N = 3

**Table 4** Removed full text included adolescence

<b>Search 4</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo

<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Peer reviewed Adolescence (13-17)
<b>Results</b>	N=139
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N= 173

**Table 5** Included school

<b>Search 5</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' School
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Peer reviewed adolescences (13-17)
<b>Results</b>	N=11
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N= 16

**Table 6** Removed adolescence

<b>Search 6</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' School
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Peer reviewed
<b>Results</b>	N=48

<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N= 50
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**Table 7** Included Childhood birth – 12 years, School age 6-12 years, Adolescences 13-17

<b>Search 7</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' School
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Peer reviewed Childhood (birth – 12 years) School age (6-12 years) Adolescences (13-17)
<b>Results</b>	N = 22
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N = 22

**Table 8** Removed peer reviewed

<b>Search 8</b>	
<b>Date 14.02.14</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' School
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Childhood birth – 12 years School age 6-12 years Adolescences 13-17
<b>Results</b>	N=27
<b>Search replicated a year later</b>	N = 27

Throughout the literature search articles were reviewed for their relevance to the subject area. Those articles which were not considered as appropriate were

removed from the results based upon the categories they fell into. These are outlined in the following list;

- Medical
- Offenders
- Mindedness
- Sleep
- spirituality
- Parenting
- Veterans
- Athletic happiness
- Self-harm gestalt therapy
- Adult population
- Physiological outcomes

The remaining articles were considered for suitability and relevance. Those considered most relevant were included within the literature review. Articles and books of relevance were obtained from the references used within the articles and sourced where possible.

### **Additional searches**

Further searches were conducted with different key terms to explore and narrow the literature results. This was done to identify any research with a focus upon representing children and young people’s views about their experiences of mindfulness.

**Table 9**

<b>New search 1</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness ‘AND ‘ children AND’ Views
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human Peer reviewed

	References available Childhood birth – 12 years School age 6-12 years Adolescences 13-17
<b>Results</b>	N=69

**Table 10**

<b>New search 2</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND' children 'AND' exploring
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human References available Childhood birth – 12 years School age 6-12 years Adolescences 13-17
<b>Results</b>	N=3

**Table 11**

<b>New search 3</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' children 'AND' experiences
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human Peer reviewed References available Childhood birth – 12 years School age 6-12 years Adolescences 13-17
<b>Results</b>	N= 12

**Table 12**

<b>New search 3</b>	
<b>Database searches</b>	Psychinfo
<b>Keywords entered into</b>	Mindfulness 'AND ' practitioner 'AND' experiences
<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	English Human Peer reviewed References available
<b>Results</b>	N= 7

## Appendix 2

### Participant information sheet (pupil)

Hello

My name is Zoe Reavill and I am a student training at the University of East London to be a Child and Educational Psychologist.

Educational Psychologists are interested in children's education as well as their social and emotional development. In schools, they work with children and teachers to explore children's learning and ways to support them.

As part of my studies I am interested in learning more about what children think mindfulness is. To do this I would like to talk to children who have already learnt about mindfulness so that they can share their views and experiences.

- **Becoming involved**

Anyone who joins in as a participant would meet with me for around one hour at school. When we meet we would talk about what you think mindfulness is all about.

The conversation would be recorded so that I can remember what it is that you have told me. The conversation would also be kept private. The only time that what we talk about won't be kept private is if you say something which means that you or someone else is in danger.

To be involved you will need to sign another form and answer a few questions to say that you would like to be part of the study.

If you have any questions you can ask me at any time

Thank you

Zoe

## Appendix 3

### Participant information sheet (practitioner)

Hello

My name is Zoe Reavill and I am a Trainee Child and Educational Psychologist studying at the University of East London.

As part of my training I am completing a piece of research for my thesis. The research seeks to better understand more about what children think mindfulness is. To explore this subject I would like to invite you to share your thoughts about the Mindfulness based intervention you ran for pupils.

- **Becoming involved**

If you would like to share your thoughts with me we would meet for around one hour. When we meet we would talk about what you believe the pupils understanding of mindfulness is.

The conversation would be recorded so that I can remember what you will have shared with me and the conversation will be kept private. The only time that what we talk about won't be kept private is if you say something which means that you or someone else is in danger.

To be involved you will need to sign another form and answer a few questions to say that you would like to be part of the study.

If you have any questions you can ask me at any time

Thank you

Zoe

## Appendix 4

Parental consent form completed for permission of involvement in the research

Dear Parents

My name is Zoe Reavill and I am a student training at the University of East London to be a Child and Educational Psychologist.

Educational Psychologists are interested in children's education as well as their social and emotional development. In schools, they work with children and teachers to explore children's learning and ways to support them.

As part of my studies I completing a piece of research which seeks to learn more about what children think mindfulness is. To do this I would like to talk to children who have already learnt about mindfulness so that they can share their views and experiences.

As your child recently took part in a mindfulness intervention at school I would like to invite.....to be involved in my research.

The research is about exploring children's understanding of mindfulness and will involve having a conversation with ..... for around an hour at school about what they think mindfulness is.

If you have any questions please contact me via email: xxx or on my mobile: 000000000000.

Many thanks

Zoe Reavill

Trainee educational Psychologist

**Please complete the following information;**

**I (name).....consent to my child  
(name).....  
taking part in the mindfulness research.**

**Signed.....Parent/guardian**

**Date.....**

## Appendix 5

### Participant consent form (pupils and practitioner)

This is a consent form which you need to complete if you would like to take part in the study. To complete this form you will need to have read the research information sheet

- 1) I have read the information about the study and I understand what it is about

Yes/No

- 2) I understand that I can stop talking about something if I want to

Yes/No

- 3) I understand that I do not need to answer any questions that I don't want to

Yes/No

- 4) I understand that when we talk we will be recorded on audio

Yes/No

- 5) I understand that I can choose to change my mind about taking part at any time

Yes/No

- 6) I understand that what I say will be kept private and only shared when my name and personal details have been changed. The only time that what we talk about won't be kept private is if I say something which means that me or someone else is getting hurt. Yes / No

**I agree to take part in the Mindfulness research study**

**Participant signature**.....

**Participant Name**.....

**Date**.....

Thank you!

## **Appendix 6**

### **Semi structured interview schedule for pupils**

- Tell me a little about yourself, what do you like/enjoy doing at home/school
- Can you tell me what mindfulness means?
- What do you do when you are being mindful?
- When are you mindful?
- How do you feel when you are mindful?
- What do you think of mindfulness?
- Are there benefits of being/using mindfulness? /What can mindfulness help you with?
- Can anything stop you from being Mindful?
- What helps you to be Mindful? / What might help you to be mindful in school/at home?
- Do you think other children could use mindfulness?

## **Appendix 7**

## **Semi structured interview schedule for mindfulness practitioner**

How would you describe mindfulness?

What inspires you to practice mindfulness?

What is it like for you doing mindfulness?

What did you become aware of when delivering the group Mindfulness intervention?

Can you tell me more about your experience of delivering the mindfulness group?

- What do you feel the children learnt during the group?
- What was your relationship like with the children?
- Are there any particular memories of delivering the intervention that stand out for you?

How would you describe the children's experience of mindfulness?

## **Appendix 8**

## Example of initial noting

Example of initial noting carried out in step 2 of the IPA analysis process. The following is an extract from one of the participants

Table of data analysis for initial noting: interview 3

Descriptive comments = blue. Key words, phrases, explanations, key experiences events

Linguistic comments = brown. Specific use of language. How is content and meaning presented?

Conceptual comments = green. Question what the participant is saying? What do they mean?

Look for similarities, differences, echoes, amplifications, contradictions

Exploratory comments	Original transcript	Emergent themes
<p>'Cause I guess, I guess you can do it, but I don't think it'll be really polite to do it when someone's trying to talk to you 'cause I guess you kind of block them out, so they'll be like "Hello?" and you'll be like <i>[seems to describe, through actions, her response towards the specified situation]</i>. So you'll be...it'll be different. See's mindful breathing as a practical thing to do, requires an environment and opportunity to be separate from other things. Different to the concept of mindfulness.</p> <p>If you get <i>[breathes deeply]</i> to like... (...) I guess sometimes if we can get angry, it relaxes you. Has purposes can change how we feel</p> <p>If you get a bit agitated and a bit like worried, I think that would help.-helpful, change emotions</p>	<p>I: Okay.</p> <p>R: 'Cause I guess, I guess you can do it, but I don't think it'll be really polite to do it when someone's trying to talk to you 'cause I guess you kind of block them out, so they'll be like "Hello?" and you'll be like <i>[seems to describe, through actions, her response towards the specified situation]</i>. So you'll be...it'll be different.</p> <p>I: What sort of things erm, would you want to use mindfulness for? What kind of things?</p> <p>R: If you get <i>[breathes deeply]</i> to like... (...) I guess sometimes if we can get angry, it relaxes you.</p> <p>I: Okay.</p> <p>R: If you get a bit agitated and a bit like worried, I think that would help.</p> <p>I: Yeah? Okay. (...) How do you feel when you're mindful? What's it</p>	<p>Mindfulness=practice done at certain times</p> <p>Blocking out distractions</p> <p>Change emotions</p> <p>Helps with anger-relaxes you Helps manage/change negative emotions</p> <p>Positive influence</p>

<p>It doesn't feel like anything for me actually. It just feels like (...) relaxing, relaxing. I don't know what relaxing feels like. I think it just like nothing <i>[softly laughs]</i>. I think it just feels like (...) not worrying about anything so you're just...your mind is clear, it's emptied. Hard to describe the state that she experiences when doing mindfulness, is different to how she may feel otherwise in other situations, recognises that her attention is free and that her state is a relaxed one-positive for her</p>	<p><b>feel like to do it <i>[softly spoken]</i>?</b>  R: It doesn't feel like anything for me actually. It just feels like (...) relaxing, relaxing. I don't know what relaxing feels like. I think it just like nothing <i>[softly laughs]</i>. I think it just feels like (...) not worrying about anything so you're just...your mind is clear, it's emptied.  <b>I: So is it about what's in your mind, or what's in your body, or both?</b>  R: Both. 'Cause erm, we focused. We went all the way up our bodies sometimes, so we focused our feet.  <b>I: Uh-huh.</b>  R: Sometimes we took our shoes off, it has to touch the grounds see how that was feeling go up our legs, erm, shoulders, and then head. How</p>	<p>Relaxing not worrying clear mind-mind and body both in a harmonious state</p> <p>Mindfulness =feels like nothing  Free to direct attention where she wants not where it is taken</p> <p>Mind and body</p> <p>Uses senses to explore</p>
---	---	--

## Appendix 9

This image portrays the clustering of emerging themes from an individual participant's transcript. These emerging themes were grouped together and a name was given for each cluster of themes identified.



## Appendix 10

This image illustrates the result of the process in order to develop the superordinate themes. The envelopes represent each theme that emerged from the clustering process across all participants.



## Appendix 11

This image illustrates the result of the process in order to identify the master themes. The large envelopes are named to represent the themes they contain which emerged from the previous steps in identifying the sub and super-ordinate themes.



## **Appendix 12**

### **Research Diary – post Interview reflections**

#### **Interview 1**

Today I carried out my first interview for my research. I felt nervous excitement prior to, and at the start of the interview, I guess I'm keen for everything to pan out well. The child I interviewed today was quite calm relaxed, seemed happy enough. I think he viewed the mindfulness group experience as something practical rather than taking it further or beyond his time in the group. It was interesting how he responded to my questions; he seemed to reflect at a surface level. He didn't come across as someone who pondered the more meaningful things in life but rather likes things to perform a function. I guess understanding his experience of mindfulness is about how he saw the usefulness of the group, how he felt it worked as a tool for him rather than anything more. I suppose part of me had hoped that they children may have taken more away with them than that but I am aware my role is a neutral one and what their experience is what it is and that's what I am here to find out. It's important that I park my own ideas and allow what is being shared with me to be shared without thinking too much about what I believe the potential could be. By writing this I can keep myself 'bracketed' and know that I have a space to explore my own reactions and where they come from during the interviews.

#### **Interview 2**

Today I had my second interview with a child who withdrew. It was a very surprising experience for me as when I met previously with all of the children she had been very keen and interested, however she chose to withdraw. I don't know why this happened. I didn't want her to feel bad about it or to come across as though there is an expectation so I didn't pursue a reason. But I am somewhat curious as to what she thought we might be doing. I do feel a bit disappointed as I had hoped to add some more to my data with this interview. Never mind, I have more children to interview.

#### **Interview 3**

Had a very enjoyable experience today, feeling really good about the interview and how it went especially after the last child withdrew. This child was really keen to share what she thought and explore her reasoning and comprehension, world view etc. It's interesting how different she was to the first 2 children in her approach to being interviewed and her experience of the group and how she viewed things. She was much more reflective than the last child had been, internalised mindfulness more, or it seemed to be that way from listening to what she was saying. Looking forward to seeing what else will come forth during my data collection. It seems like a mix at the moment which is interesting in itself.

#### **Interview 4**

I think I feel much more at home doing the interviews, the nervous excitement has passed. I am quite enjoying the interviews and feel as if I am setting into a way of interviewing, perhaps developing style which is working well for me. Though I am mindful of how I am and aware of not wanting to influence the children, of how I come across. Today's interview was more tricky than the previous child's as in there seemed to be lots that the child didn't want to or couldn't share with me. It was difficult to dig deeper and explore more about how he viewed mindfulness. He came across more shy, perhaps this was why, maybe he was unsure of talking to unfamiliar people, biscuits seemed to help. I managed to gather an idea of where he came from but the experience for me was different to the rest of the interviews, and whilst yes that is to be expected as each person is different this was more noticeable or rather I felt it to be. Maybe that's because my expectations are around gaining more details and experiences from the children are greater than what they necessarily have to say. It was more challenging today despite the reasons and I am definitely more confident in navigating such challenges successfully. So it's fine, all is good.

#### **Interview 5**

Today I interviewed the last child who took part in the group. Really interesting how much he shared and how enthused he was about mindfulness. I was touched when he said there was a place in his heart for mindfulness. The group seemed to have a profound effect upon him. I think I enjoyed this interview the most. This is interesting as that suggests to me how I feel about what the children are sharing during the interviews. His enthusiasm must have rubbed off on me! Again it was

quite different to the previous interviews, which is interesting as there is a spectrum of experience even though they were all attending the same group and were together throughout it. I guess that's the individual nature of perspective and how people view things.

### **Practitioner interview**

Today was really interesting. The practitioner was very reflective and I could really see the difference in how she articulated her views and approach to the group and what she thought the children took away with them, what their experience was about. I can already see some connections /influences from what the children shared with me as coming from her perspective. I guess this is about exposure and taking away from what others share. I didn't need to prompt as much or explore what she was saying in the same way as I did with the children. She was happy to go on allowing her thoughts to be voiced as they came to her. One thing I think I could have done differently was to interview her first...I could have then developed different questions for the children's interview based upon what she was saying, I could have explored their experience of the activities more specifically as I would have known more about what they had done. But then again having interviewed the children first has meant that I've ascertained what they recall and what they find to be important to them without me prompting specific things, I've gathered more of a true picture of them as individuals and what they took away with them.

## **Appendix 13**

### **Research diary - Process of analysis reflections**

#### **Stage 1**

I chose to start the process with the practitioner interview. The reading alongside listening to the recording simultaneously was good, and felt like it gave me a good rendition of the experience. I found recording my initial thoughts afterwards helpful as I had many things in mind during listening and re reading which I was worried about losing. Although it was difficult not to jot down anything initially I found that when I listened subsequently I think I could unpick more from the practitioner. I've found the process to be much lengthier than I thought, but feel as though I really have got to grips with the idiographic nature of the process.

#### **Stage 2**

The initial noting has been really interesting for me to do, and I feel as though I have been able to go quite deeply into what she was experiencing and perceiving. My notes are quite comprehensive and it has taken me days upon days to go through, in fact I have now got a table of 68 pages which have my notes on. I think I must have gone over the transcript about 5 times but really felt a pull to do so as lots of things started to pop up and I could see links and contradictions in what was being shared. Slightly nervous about the time it has taken though, but hopefully having done such a thorough job now will mean the rest of the process will fit together nicely. I have my finger and toes crossed for myself.

#### **Stage 3 Developing emergent themes**

Developing emergent themes occurred over time and I found that as I made the notes and went back and back over the text that the theme came forward. A lot my themes summed up what was being shared and also came across directly. For example self-awareness is used frequently throughout by the practitioner. It seemed to be a direct theme for her and identified by her so it made sense to me to name it as an emerging theme but I think that a lot resides within such a theme and therefore feels as though this may be more of a higher level theme. I have used the table that I have used for the comments and emerging themes as my

record of emerging themes which although I think might be a bit more time consuming it feels better to do it this way.

#### **Stage 4 Searching for connections across emergent themes (identifying super-ordinate themes)**

This has been the most enjoyable but also incredibly challenging part for me. I prefer working with something physically for such tasks and so opted for the route of printing out and cutting up all the emerging themes to identify connections across them. This was a clustering process, a way of grouping them together. I found the most challenging part of this process was actually coming up with a new name for the cluster to become a super-ordinate theme. Many seemed to fit well into the term I had already used and so I feel at some level my initial noting was so in-depth that I have been making associations all along without realising that I was doing a different stage of the analysis process. Going back over the transcripts emerging themes and clusters has been important in order to help me come up with a super ordinate theme. I've revisited the themes and widened the title of the super ordinate theme, I have a better understanding of the process now and how it's fits together. I think the names I given the super-ordinate themes having left them alone and then gone back work well.

#### **Stage 5 Repetition of stage 1-4 with each case**

I found that with each subsequent case I analysed it was easier to identify themes and see how they fit together. I'm glad I did the practitioner interview first as I think it really grounded me within the process of carrying out the analysis. I can see the hermeneutic cycle happening...the part and the whole. This has been about the 'part' and my interpretation whilst immersed within the participant's transcript. I am confident with my themes now for all of them.

#### **Stage 6 looking for patterns across cases**

Reaching this stage has a sense of relief about it for me. I feel excited that I have achieved this, it was hard work getting to this point but I feel like I have done such a thorough job that my master themes are solid and I am confident in them. Though having said that I am aware that over the time my ideas have developed and changed so my final master themes are only a reflection of the point at which I reached and felt ok about moving on with the rest of the study. Had I spent more

time or even less time it is likely that they would be different as I myself would be different with different thoughts and influences coming into my thinking. I guess that's the beauty of interpretation there is always subjectivity influencing it no matter how much one brackets oneself.