Still Learning: an examination of Quaker stillness as an active teaching method

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Still learning: an examination of Quaker stillness as an active teaching method

"Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life."
(Advices and Queries 3)

Abstract

The Religious Society of Friends, known as Quakers, administers nine schools within the UK and these generally operate on Quaker beliefs and principles. There are Quaker schools across the globe; however, just as the disciplines within Quakerism vary around the world so too do their schools. This research is conducted at one UK independent Quaker school and is led by their unique 'way' (Advices and Queries 2) of Quakerism. To maintain the anonymity of the school it will be called Fergow School for the purposes of this study. The first observation people often recall when thinking about Quakers is that 'they sit still in silence' and indeed this is one identifying marker of the Quaker faith and also of a Quaker school. However, the understanding of what happens in that stillness and silence, especially in a school setting, is undecided. This research aims to show that while you are being still, you can be still learning.

Collective worship is a compulsory part of the school day in a 'Quaker' faith school setting, but is this time being well spent for and in learning? In a Quaker school, where the vast majority of pupils are not Quakers, this research sought to ascertain whether the stillness and silence of a Quaker Meeting for Worship could be utilised as a space to promote mindfulness, which consequently might enhance the participant's approach to curriculum learning. This action research discerned whether the school could make better use of current Meeting for Worship time; and also ascertained whether it should implement the practice of mindfulness into the school day. Intervention took the form of exposure to mindfulness teaching to establish whether this made a difference to the student experience of Meeting for

Worship. Questionnaires were taken from the intervention group and a control group before and after the intervention sessions took place. Regarding collective worship the focus of the research pertains to the role of collective worship and Meeting for Worship in schools and how Quaker stillness and silence are observed in a Quaker school. Concerning the practice of mindfulness the research considers the type of stillness and silence that are involved in mindfulness and whether this is synonymous with the Quaker form of stillness and silence. In response to these points the main research question is framed: does mindfulness promote learning and is there a way to combine Meeting for Worship with mindfulness in a Quaker school setting.

The findings indicated that when exposed to the teaching of mindfulness and mindfulness practice pupils responded more positively to their time spent in Quaker school Meeting for Worship. This meant that collective worship took on greater significance for them and had a greater impact on their school day and home lives.

This research therefore demonstrates that collective worship in a Quaker school would be enhanced for the participants it they were taught mindfulness at school. They can then choose to utilise this practice while in Meeting for Worship and as a consequence this can benefit both their well-being and exposure to learning. This innovative method of combining these two educational areas has ramifications for schools who may be considering the use of the time and space spent in collective worship or that are attempting to further the provision of well-being in school by introducing the practice of mindfulness.

Relevant key words

Quaker, Meeting for Worship, mindfulness, silence, stilling, collective worship

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1. Introduction

1.1 School Context

The school is a Quaker Independent School with 420 pupils on roll aged between 3-19 years. The school is a day and boarding school, with 70% being day pupils who travel from a forty-mile radius to attend the school. Ethnographically the school is predominantly white British; members of ethnic minority groups are 12% of the population and form the ESOL department intensive English programme, of which none were identified for this study. Nominally pupils are Christian, however, many identify as being atheist. There are three pupils with a Muslim background and one Jewish, but their practice is not traditional. Very few pupils, currently four, identify as being attenders or members of the Religious Society of Friends.

All pupils participate in Meeting for Worship daily: sometimes within year groups, house groups or as a whole school community. The beginning and end of the week is marked by whole school silent Meeting for Worship. Readings from 'The book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain' known more simply as 'Quaker Faith and Practice' may be read. Within this large text is the shorter tract entitled 'Advices and Queries', with which pupils are more familiar, and contains many well know key Quaker phrases to guide one's life. For instance, Quakers believe that there is 'that of God in everyone' (Advices and Queries 17). This principle of faith 'encapsulates the guiding belief of Quaker education' (Lacey, 1998, 3) and provides a religious equality where all are accepted whether from a specific religious faith or none. Quaker Faith and Practice 23.74: 'Quakers and their schools' makes this case quite clearly:

> Quaker emphasis in education is (…) Not to impose the aims of the school on the pupils, but to lead them to their own acceptance of these aims, to a share (however small) in its running, and a pleasure in its successes. To find that of God in every pupil. (…) The school which respects every pupil as an individual

> will try to teach each one what he (or she) needs to learn, to draw out his unique talents, to understand his proper way, whether he is studying or misbehaving.

A Quaker school has a faith stance and ethos at the heart, and because the practice of this faith in action is often conducted in silence rather than by proselytization, many are drawn to the school's ethos: the provision of a faith school without any overstatement of faith or having to be a member to join. This particular Quaker school lives out the Quaker testimony mentioned above by specialising in dyslexia provision for special needs, and thereby provides education for a wide range of ability. Although silence is a main feature of the school that is used in many parts of the school day, such as not having school bells, having a short silence at mealtimes and in Meeting for Worship, it is not used specifically in corridors or in classrooms. More explanation regarding the Quaker silence is required here to provide a background for the purpose of this study.

1.2 Quaker Stilling and Silence

In a Quaker school stillness and silence are two aspects of school life that are vital to uphold the Quaker ethos of the school. Having so few members or attenders within the school means that this act distinguishes the school as a Quaker school and defines in a practical noticeable way the underpinning ideology. The background of the Quaker use of silence as a form of worship and as a spiritual discipline began in the very early stages of the dissenting group that went on to become The Religious Society of Friends. Formally established as a Society in 1652, Ranters and Seekers had been meeting in a similar format for some years during the religious unrest that had established itself in the atmosphere of the English Civil War. Meeting for Worship was both a form of worship in itself and also an outward manifesto to the

Established Church that no one needed a priest to mediate information from the Divine, and that outward signs of religious piety were to be regarded as human made frivolities (Johns, 2013, 261). It soon became cemented as the formal method of worship, but whilst 'in Britain, silence is still central to Quaker worship in 500 local meetings. Globally, it is a very different story, and Ben Pink Dandelion estimates that only 15 per cent of Quakers around the world now meet entirely in silence' (Turner, 2014, 153).

Unprogrammed worship, where silence is the main form of worship, is something regarded these days as a traditional British phenomenon. Quaker communities around the world often use programmed worship, where music and a sermon may be heard and twenty minutes of silence is a feature of the hour long programmed session. An unprogrammed silence conventionally lasts for one hour and it is in this setting that the 'gathered stillness' is more readily met as it takes time to 'centre down' and become accustomed to the quiet. All members of the Meeting should be able to see one another and, this is why in the early 20th Century, a circle or square seating arrangement became the preferred arrangement for all who are gathered. If someone stands to minister to the gathering all are able to see who is speaking. Ministry should be borne from the silence rather than planned (Copley, 1992, 75), but a time for 'afterwards' is open for more free speech that may have been planned or considered important during the Meeting, but not quite ministry. Quaker schools in Britain follow the unprogrammed method of worship, although ministry mainly comes from the Head and the staff.

The absence of formality in the shape of prayers, singing, being led through incantations and rites of passage means that "What Quakers gain from silence is critically important because, liturgically speaking it is all they have apart from

'ministry'" (Turner, 2014, 150). The room itself is quite plain and, therefore, it is only the 'deep and gentle stillness' (Gardner, 2012, 30) that separates it from any random room in any given building. Silent worship is not natural to everyone and it would be a mistake to think that in every single Meeting for Worship every Quaker in the room is in deep stillness and ruminating on Divine thoughts. Gardner reflects on this and suggests that 'Some people find silent worship as natural as breathing while others find it impossible' (2012, 9). It is certainly a state to practice and not one that is readily accessible to everyone, unless they wish to try. Advices and Queries 3 sets this out as an undertaking that needs to be trained within the self:

> 'Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength. Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself and in others a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day? Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God' (Advices and Queries 3).

Advices and Queries 8 reminds Quakers that the call to go to Meeting for Worship is a 'response to an awareness of God' and although it can be done alone it is thought that 'when we join with others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence.' This means that joining with others in a similar state creates a more sustained silence and in the 'gathered stillness in our meetings for worship … all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us' (Advices and Queries 8). Being together means that there is 'collective discernment' and it is a time for 'shared community practice' (Muers, 2015, 79). The silence is not a passive time, but a time to be led from within. This may be the reason why Quakers are able to discuss the 'sense of the Meeting' once it has finished and may comment particularly on the quality of the silence. It is quite acceptable to 'discuss whether it had been a generative silence or a dull one' (Turner, 2014, 149) and it is also acceptable to hear lots of ministry or none at all. Once you have experienced lots of

silence you can make the claim, as Copley says 'As words are varied, so is silence' (1992, 78). The silence is supposed to lift the spirits and be the entry point to both private and collective worship. Advices and Queries 9 says:

> "In worship we enter with reverence into communion with God and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared. Yield yourself and all your outward concerns to God's guidance so that you may find 'the evil weakening in you and the good raised up'" (Advices and Queries 9).

In this way the gathered stillness and silence therein is a positive silence and bears little or no resemblance to the dictionary definition of it being an 'absence' or 'lack' of something. It is true that people generally don't speak much in Meeting for Worship, but this is so that the awareness of self and the Divine can turn inward (Copley, 1992, 75) more fully than when flooded with routine sound. If we consider silence positively that it is 'not an end in itself but a framework providing space for a range of activities' (Johns, 2013, 267) then there is no need for unnecessary noise. The Quaker use of stillness and silence could also be seen as an outward action of their inward testimony to 'live simply' and retain simplicity in everything that they do (Advices and Queries 41). In a Quaker school where many do not ascribe to this testimony the outward act of worship may be considered redundant in this theological sense. Could there be an educational value to worship for non-Quakers taking part? It is here that this study begins.

1.3 Rationale

In the context of my working environment I daily attend a gathering of 250 pupils for school Meeting for Worship. Here I have often pondered, for the duration of the worship time, how many might be engaged in the 'gathered stillness' at that moment. I considered whether it would matter if they were or were not engaged

with the worship. From this stemmed the notion that this was an opportunity for further engagement for pupil awareness of themselves as learners, an opportunity for enriching not only the soul but also the mind, to make this space within the school day live out the meaning of Advices and Queries 10 'Let meeting for worship nourish your whole life.' Meeting for worship in a school setting should prepare the learner for the day ahead of learning.

The MLT made this researcher think about the spaces in which learning can take place juxtaposed with new insights into improving learning performance. There are contradictions in the collective worship space: it is taking place in a centre of learning, but there is no specific curriculum lesson taking place; it is a religious act, but most taking part are not of that religion or religious at all.

The act of collective worship, even in a school with a distinct faith heritage, is in need of being better focused on the role of learning and teaching rather than solely upon faith as it is located in the space of an educational setting. So can you learn when being still and can learning still be taking place in spaces within school that have not previously been recognised as being relevant for academic study? What are we learning when we are in this space that is relevant and educational to the learner in a school context? The study needed to identify what pupils do during collective worship and how aware they were of themselves when in this school space. This is a faith school, but the vast majority do not have a faith, so this study investigates whether Quaker collective worship can have a dual function: faith and education.

Advices and Queries 9 tells Quakers to 'Come to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared' with the focus being on developing a spiritual awareness of self. Similarly, the goal of education is to provide a decent platform for learning, which can only begin if children come to school with their heart and mind prepared

to learn. Learning takes place in different spaces in life: in classrooms, playgrounds, at home, alone or in social situations. These spaces have been documented as spaces of learning; however, collective worship has not been identified in this way. With collective worship being at the start of every school day, using this period of time mindfully to prepare learners could get 'heart and mind prepared'.

This action research is relevant for colleagues in the school to engage with because collective worship is a compulsory part of the school day, which some find intrusive to the educational framework. There is an obligation for pupils and staff to attend, both because it is a legal requirement and because it is a faith school. By innovatively maximising the learning potential of this space both those with faith and those without can value this time spent in stillness and silence. Hence, the research title: is it possible to learn when we are being still and can Quaker stillness also be an active teaching method?

1.4 Aims

In this piece of action research I aim to answer the question above by analysing whether the time spent in collective worship can be explicitly used for an educational purpose rather than solely as an act of faith. To this end, I focus on (1) the place and role of collective worship, (known as Meeting for Worship in a Quaker school) and whether it works in an educational setting. Recently this statutory requirement has been evaluated in an AHRC Network Report, which highlights the concerns regarding this legislation:

> 'The statutory duty to provide an act of collective worship/religious observance in schools has been controversial for decades. Issues include: disagreement about the appropriateness of such acts in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural UK; the degree to which the current system properly affords respect for the rights of individuals and minority groups, including those with no religious faith; and concerns that the present arrangements do not adequately develop the

spiritual/moral education of pupils, or promote a community spirit and shared values in schools' (AHRC, 2015, 1).

Collective worship also often catches media attention as being archaic and a breach of human rights (BBC, 2011). Copley suggests that the reason collective worship lacks support within schools is because 'it is under-funded and not liked by those staff having to prepare for it and present it' (2005, 129). However, although disliked by many, it can be considered an important element of education: an opportunity to explore diversity and share in moments of global happiness and express global regret (Wilkins, 2005). The nature of collective worship in a Quaker school setting provides an interesting caveat to this discussion given that these sessions are held in stillness and silence and, therefore, the aforementioned controversial issues do not apply.

Therefore, further examination (2) of Quaker stillness and silence will be made and consideration of this as a suitable medium for collective worship in school will be explored. Quakers consider the stillness and silence to be worship, that in the simplest sense of the word is when 'we enter with reverence into communion with God and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit' (Advices and Queries 9). Whether this can be gauged in the school shall be discussed, but also more significantly whether Meeting for Worship can be reinvented in a Quaker school to meet an educational function. Quaker stilling or silence has recently been brought into non-Quaker schools to support assembly type collective worship to bring a modern approach to this area of provision (Naish, 2011). It has also been used as part of collective worship in primary schools for several years (Levete, 2001, 30). However, this research seeks to ascertain whether Quaker schools can move forward even more with this idea and bring Meeting for Worship into the domain of the curriculum agenda and support learning more explicitly.

There are many pressure points on curriculum time, which Thompson suggests are the result of 25 years of a profession that has 'been dominated by the introduction and implementation of government national strategies…that focus on product and external examinations rather than process and student development' (2015, 3). Consequently, this action research is concerned with (3) whether the experience of silence in schools can be enhanced for those participating in it, in order to provide pupils with a valuable learning and teaching experience.

An analysis of (4) the practice of mindfulness will be examined to see whether there is any benefit to the practice of mindfulness. The meaning behind mindfulness has been explained succinctly by Jon Kabat-Zinn who says that 'mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally' (2004, 4). This form of meditative awareness has been practiced by religious traditions for thousands of years, but in the past forty years has been secularised by medical professionals seeking to address concerns regarding mental health.

Ultimately for consideration in this context is (5) whether mindfulness promotes learning in schools. The Mindful Nation Report (2015, 34) recommends that education is a target area for the promotion of mindfulness intervention. There is also a sense in fashionable literature that many feel that 'It should be compulsory that mindfulness is taught in schools' (Wax, 2016).

Finally (6) the study seeks to ascertain whether Quaker silence can be brought together with mindfulness practice in Quaker school collective worship to provide an educational benefit. Whilst Thompson says that within teaching it is important that 'both knowledge about subject and knowledge about how to learn the subject' are involved, and that the learners must be active in sourcing the knowledge alongside

their teacher (2015, 5); in addition to this I would incorporate an intrinsic awareness of self as a learner, and that a mindful view on the proceedings of the practice of education is equally essential. I agree that too much time in schools is spent on gathering knowledge and (whether this is done didactically or actively) there is too little time spent reflecting on how that impacts on internally changing the awareness of the learner as a learner. If collective worship time can enable a space on the curriculum to access a greater awareness of the self as a learner then this should be sought.

This contributes to the wider literature on the nuances of Quaker education, the role of collective worship and the practice of mindfulness in an educational setting. Framing Quaker school collective worship in this innovative way has previously not been researched and it is therefore hoped that the outcomes of this MLT study will find wider interest (Menter et al., 2011, 12) in the areas of education, mindfulness and Quaker interest and research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Does Collective Worship in Schools Work?

The practicality of what actually happens in the space of the day used for collective worship is not often considered (Cheetham, 2006, 165). Rather, the theoretical question regarding whether it should even be a feature of the school day has been controversial for decades (AHRC, 2015, 1). This is both before and since it was made compulsory in the 1944 Education Act (25.1) to have collective worship at the start of every school day. It remained as a policy in the 1988 Education Reform Act moving under the heading 'Religious Education' modifying in 7:1 that collective worship should 'be broadly Christian in character'. It is distinct from Religious

Education as a curriculum subject, but at this time was brought under the same guise as it was thought this would make the requirement to provide it more secure. That the 1988 Education Reform Act insists on a daily act of worship affirms that 'young people can gain much from having to stop their busy-ness at least once a day' (Beesley, 2001, 71). More recently Circular 1/94 guides school provision on collective worship, even though this may be carried out in a casual or perfunctory way, called assembly. Collective worship in the independent school sector is even more ambiguous as it is not governed by an Education Act, but is usually governed by their foundation deeds or their boards of governors (BHA online). Of relevance for all schools, however, is recent research that states 'uncertainty surrounds the extent to which schools should make reference to the Circular in complying with their legal obligations to provide acts of collective worship' (AHRC, 2015, 8). In any school setting there are concerns about whether collective worship works.

The issue that Thatcher has with collective worship in general terms is that the 'worship' proposed in Circular 1/94, 59 anticipates, indeed expects, that there would be some 'taking part' involved (1997, 11). Pupils can be withdrawn from collective worship at parental request if they do not wish to take part. However, as there is little guidance on the grounds for this (Louden, 2004, 273) Head teachers are seldom approached on the matter. Pupils are generally receptive to the more secular assembly style of collective worship (Gill, 2004, 187) and will be inattentively compliant during more explicitly religious content (Gill, 2004, 188), regardless of what policy dictates they should be doing.

The Cumper report (2015) suggests that the term collective worship should be replaced with 'Time for Reflection' where a 'collective gathering' is held that has 'a moral and spiritual basis, but are not underpinned by a formal…religious component'

(AHRC, 11). This would be more suitable terminology for many schools and would remove the difficult job of holding together the 'triangle of tension', which Copley considers most troublesome regarding collective worship: 'the requirements of the law, the aspiration and needs of schools as communities of education and the need to protect the integrity of teachers and their pupils' (2005, 130). Schools could make collective worship work within their own school setting and relevant to the ethos of the school and the beliefs of the pupils therein. The Woolf report agrees that alternative provision along such guidelines needs to be found (Butler-Sloss, 2015, 4.17).

There is some agreement that the space for collective worship can be beneficial and does work as a space for reflection. Parffrey believes that there should be provision and shaping to 'develop inwardness' (1997, 37). That within the school day space should be given for the 'opportunity just to Be, to experience peacefulness and quiet amongst the busyness of doing' (1997, 37). Schools tend to be extremely busy places, where pupils and staff spend most of their time engaged in physical and intellectual activity and collective worship permits a space away from this. Conversely, there are those that consider the time spent in collective worship/reflection should contribute to the intellectual development of pupils (Gearon, 1997, 70); however, its current position of functionality is within spiritual education.

Collective worship also works because of the promotion of spiritual moral social cultural (SMSC) development within the legislation for British Values in 2014. This has provided collective worship with a valid reason to remain despite those who consider that the Trojan Horse Affair questioned the validity of it's place in representing the character of British religion (Brighouse, 2014, 16). In response to

the 2015 (Cumper) report 'The Department for Education said the daily act of collective worship encourages children to reflect on belief, and helps shape fundamental British values of tolerance, respect and understanding for others' (Richardson, 2015). This compounds the complexity of the concerns raised by Cumper (et al.) about the feasibility of collective worship. However, as Parffrey suggests 'If we define worship in schools as an opportunity for collective spirituality, we should have no difficulty at all envisaging either its desirability or feasibility' (1997, 39). A recent study by Mogra among trainee teachers confirms this, as it illustrates that they considered collective worship works and should remain in schools because it contributes significantly to the cultural, moral spiritual, social, emotional and intellectual needs of pupils (2016, 183).

Finally, if it falls to the responsibility of individual schools to manage collective worship/time for refection effectively then collective worship will only work when each school considers how they express their values and engage with conveying spirituality with the school. Ultimately, this must be done in a coherent manner (Copley, 1997, 68) for pupils to be willing to participate in it and to gain educationally from it. Those in a Quaker school setting need to understand the purpose of the largely undirected time spent in silence as their medium for collective worship and use it effectively so that the time and space allocated to this silence works, so attention now turns to this specific setting for collective worship.

2.2 Does Quaker Collective Worship Work?

In Quaker Schools it is considered that 'Short daily Meetings for Worship allow a time for reflection, and a stillness and peace which draw us together' (Fergow School Handbook, A3). A Quaker school without Meeting for Worship would be

inconsistent with the school Quaker foundation and Quaker testimonies. If Quaker schools are in existence to live out Quaker values then collective worship is going to be an integral aspect of this. The ISI report in 2015 said that at Fergow School it 'seeks for each member a stillness and a peace that enable all to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone' (1.1). The value of stillness is part of the packaging of Quaker education, which is best sought in Meeting for Worship. For this reason collective worship is a compulsory part of the school day for pupils and staff and follows, in essence, Circular 1/94. However, it is not readily measurable to know whether silent Quaker Meeting for Worship can be said to be providing an

> 'opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes' (Circular 1/94, 50).

It certainly does take a different character from ordinary school activities and, when done properly, Meeting for Worship is concerned with a divine being or power (Circular 1/94, 57). Therefore, Meeting for Worship does work as it fulfils the requirement of the law on collective worship, though some of the pupils may not be able to actively identify with the act of worship taking place (Circular 1/94, 59). There is very limited wider literature in the field of Quaker collective worship, so what follows is based heavily on teacher expertise and practice in this area.

In an attempt to ensure that pupils understand the tradition and purpose of Quaker school collective worship pupils are inducted into Meeting for Worship at the beginning of the Autumn Term when passages from Faith and Practice or Advices and Queries will be read to them. They will have explained that 'there are four simple movements or stages: gathering, settling into silence, expectant waiting, and closing' (Johns, 2013, 3) and are told that any of them can enter into vocal ministry (Advices

and Queries 11) or can spend their time in personal reflection. Whilst this seems to be living in the spirit of Quaker teaching that 'we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome' (Advices and Queries 18), in reality it is very rare indeed that any student would minister in school Meeting for Worship. The Head will often guide the collective worship in a Quaker school, but in this way Meeting for Worship becomes something of an assembly of 'trying to be' silent persons, all just considering whatever comes to mind. The rubrics of an assembled Quaker gathering might take place, but in reality seldom is a 'gathered stillness' felt. This is not to say that it does not have some function and is not without importance in the school day. It could be suggested that because there is a low representation of Quakers (Johnson, 2001, 206) among the students and staff that having daily collective worship that takes the form of Quaker Meeting for Worship extends the most externally verifiable indication that the school is a Quaker faith school and by having this period of stillness and silence the Quaker testimonies are being put into action. Therefore, collective worship in a Quaker school works as an outward action of an historical educational foundation.

Quakers are sometimes 'perceived by outsiders to be spiritual giants' (Copley, 2005, 58), although they do not lay claim to a universal *truth* as such. Rather, the stillness represents a kind of spiritual openness. The stillness of Quaker Meeting for Worship is therefore accessible to all those who participate, or indeed (as is the case in Quaker schools) those who do not wish to participate merely have to remain still and be silent. To an outsider contemplating the idea of sitting for an hour in silence would be hard (Copley, 2005, 58), but the time spent in apparent quiet may be considered to be simply a time of private contemplation. For those taking part they are seeking, within the spirit of the Meeting, 'a gathered stillness…so that all may feel

the power of God's love drawing us and leading us' (Advices and Queries 8). We are all guiding our thoughts to an openness and awareness of the Divine, so that corporately we are sharing in the silence. This is not just being silent, but is seeking out silence to 'keep it' in an engaging way (Muers, 2015, 335). In a school setting silence is being done, but it is not usually being 'kept' because the majority have no connection with Quaker Meeting or a desire to join in worship in this way. In this respect Quaker school collective worship does not work.

In Quaker worship though, anyone could be doing anything within his or her mind in the silence and not seeking a gathered stillness at all. To take an active involvement in stillness can go as unnoticed as inactivity. There is some evidence that silence in school worship is worth seeking (Copley, 1992, 78), as it allows you to 'attend to what love requires, which may not be great busyness (Advices and Queries 28). Stillness and silence are, nevertheless, worthwhile activities to pursue, as 'periods of silence helps in terms of integrity, for in silence one can meditate, pray to a God or simply daydream' (Copley, 2005, 130). The recognition that stillness is of value does little, however, to support the non-Quaker pupil sitting in the silence to understand what they are doing and why.

The confusion may also arise for those participating because Quaker Meeting for Worship in schools is not without certain interventions: often becoming more like an assembly with a short silence tagged on to the beginning or end. This mixing together of collective worship and a collective assembly is a pattern that is seen across the country. There are times when celebrations and sharing has to happen and the only time for this is that time in the school the day when everyone is gathered together in one space. Really though the intention of worship and assembly are distinct and ought not be attempted in that form (Hull, 1975, 118). In a Quaker

school setting though this does happen and the learned silence becomes a metaphorical control for occasions of remembrance or ceremonial events (Bruneau, 1973, 42). Collective worship has become, in part, a form of societal control for the pupils: conditioning them to respond well to particular social dynamics. This may well be a useful by-product of their exposure to Quaker school collective worship, but it does not assist to expose whether there is deeper meaning to Quaker school collective worship.

Another problem for those attending silent Meeting for Worship in school is that it being early morning or late afternoon when the Meeting is taking place, students will often fidget and even drift off to sleep (Copley, 2000, 94). Although Quaker worship espouses 'that we all share responsibility for the meeting for worship whether our ministry is in silence or through the spoken word' (Advices and Queries 12) sometimes the silence overwhelms fatigued pupils. This also happens to adolescents who are voluntarily attending Quaker worship (Best, 2010, 56), so perhaps this is within normal parameters, however, fidgeting and sleep surely demonstrate that Quaker school collective worship does not work for everyone.

Whether Meeting for Worship as a form of collective worship works is, finally, at the edict of the Inspectors, who it seems are able to measure the effectiveness of the scene set before them, and state that

> 'The spiritual development of the pupils is excellent. Quaker values are central to the life of the school. Pupils respond with reverence and respect for the Meetings for Worship and their time for sustained silent reflection and contemplation. They show a strong sense of spiritual awareness and empathy for others.' (Fergow ISI report 2015, 4.3)

On this occasion Quaker collective worship clearly did work, but the reality is that more often than not it is falling short of what a member of the Religious Society of Friends would term Meeting for Worship. The silence within it though does seem to

bring some benefit to those assembled, so to further analysis of this concept we now turn.

2.3 Is Silence in Schools Beneficial to Learning?

The words associated with the meaning of silence and stillness themselves imply negativity. The dictionary defines silence and stillness using terms such as 'absence' or 'omission of sound', a 'state of being forgotten', to 'put to rest doubts' and the 'absence of motion'. Likewise, in a school setting the meaning and expression of silence is often granted attention in a negative way: what Helen Lees terms 'weak silence' (2012, 60). This is because the silence is usually imposed on pupils by the teacher (Schultz, 2010, 2834) and is used to bring order by means of power (Jaworski, 1998, 286). This type of silence is detrimental to school life and has a negative impact on the school environment, as it is used as a form of control (Lees, 2012, 61). Unfortunately for many pupils this is the understanding of silence that they learn in schools. This negative use of silence in schools means that very early on pupils are conditioned to find being silent negative, as it is a call to attention or the exposure of failure.

When faced with a silent classroom some might consider that not much participation with the work was going on (Ollin, 2008, 268), that there was an absence of learning, an omission of teacher intervention leading to the 'neglect of the learners' (Ollin, 2008, 271). Within learning and teaching the weight placed on pupils to use verbal communication to express their learning is often instigated by working with others in pairs and groups in the classroom to provide this level of spoken interaction. It is thought that this is beneficial to the learners taking part because they are accessing different areas of the brain in the cognitive learning process.

Vygotsky's pedagogy also posits that 'active participation through social negotiation' should be a main feature of learning (Daniels, 2001, 61). Verbal communication is, therefore, a fundamental aspect of learning in this respect, but it creates sound, not silence. Yet, silence fills classrooms (Schultz, 2010, 2846) but the recognition of the value of silence has received less pedagogical interest than it's counterpart.

In 1973 Bruneau recognised that because of the growth and focus on non-verbal communication, silence would generate intensive interest (1973, 18). However, it has not been as extensive as he might have initially conceived. Rowe suggested in 1974 that pupil performance in lesson time could be improved by allowing adequate 'wait-time' between teacher and pupil discourse (1974, 214). This type of silence is what Bruneau called 'slow-time' (1973, 233) and is a processing time to reflect and comprehend the subject matter internally for each participant involved. More recent studies have shown that incorporating periods of silence called 'wait-time' into discourse in lessons facilitate the learning (Jaworski, 1998, 287) and can effect the quality of the interactions taking place (Ingram, 2015, 49). It is regrettable that silence, as a powerful form of communication, (Jaworski, 1998, 286) can be ignored and misinterpreted (Kenny, 2011, 49). All learners need thinking time and when teachers recognise that both the silent and spoken spaces belong to the learner then in the silence new learning can evolve (Saylag, 2014, 531). Carfana suggests that the new learning from silence is that students are taught 'not only to think logically or critically or rationally, but also to see and to feel the whole of things' (2004, 227). This interpretation identifies that within silence there is more creative potential for the learner to open up their senses to their thoughts and feelings (2004, 230).

A reason why educational establishments have not seized silence as a vehicle for educational discourse is because since the first Education Act learning has been concerned primarily with the dissemination of knowledge to ensure preparation for the work place (Lane, 2006, 57). In turn this has meant that contemplative silence does not feature in the curriculum in the majority of schools (Lane, 2006, 58). There is much that can be learned by educational establishments from religious traditions with regards to the use of silence. Here is it used as a personal and collective discipline to engage more fully with the Divine, both through prayer and contemplation. Throughout history monastic life has not lost its appeal to those searching for a deeper connection and awareness of the Divine. The connection to something other than self, which can be found in stillness and silence, is also the ally of poets, artists, writers and visionaries. Many of those who use spiritual silence do so to actively compose music from this 'divine source' (Haste, 2013, 279). Not only does silence provide a topic for their discourse, but it also provides the space in which to be creative, imaginative and inspired. Spiritual silence, therefore, has a restorative effect and thereby can enhance the creative element of a person; to harness this as a tool in schools would certainly be beneficial to learners.

The religious silence experienced during Meeting for Worship in a Quaker school is not 'pure silence' (Patten, 2011, 377), as there are external sounds and movement (Fennell, 2012, 563) from the daily routines in the school. The silence is punctuated with the sound of footsteps in the corridor outside or the chatter of people passing by (Patten, 2011, 377), but this is the same experience as many city-based Meeting Houses. Some may in fact argue that Quaker worship is not silent in itself, but that 'silence is the starting point' for the worship proper (Muers, 2015, 334). The new pupils, just like in a religious order, have to learn how to behave in the

silence, by watching the behaviours of other participants (Fennell, 2012, 564). They learn the practice of silence, but it will only be beneficial if they engage with it as a discipline, and if it has no spiritual resonance for them they can at least focus their attention.

The position on the role of silence in schools is gradually shifting, with the acknowledgement that a move to the use of 'strong' silence, the term favoured by Lees for positive silence (2012, 67), should be adopted by educational establishments to promote and enhance learning therein. Drawing on research from the Oxford Mindfulness Centre Lewin affirms this view, and says that a narrow conception of education cannot be beneficial (2014, 362). He believes that there is a need to embrace silence in order to ensure that pupils are willingly attentive, rather than forced. The use of 'psycho-technologies' has seen many children and adults finding it more and more difficult to concentrate the attention. This is because the mind is unable to cope with the growing amount of technologies that are so demanding of our attention (O'Donnell, 2015, 190). Lewin continues that by advocating the practice of positive silence we can help to generate the correct space for the development of attention (2014, 361, 367). Lees suggests that the inclusion of silence in schools offers a firm experience to all those content to be in the silent spaces (2012, 69). Furthermore, she conjectures that silence has the power to 'reshape education' (2012, 109) and that in schools where silence is a feature rather than the exertion of power 'good results emerge' (2012, 36). Silence and stillness can develop a sense of calm if used during the school day (Levete, 2001, 31) and is, therefore, beneficial in schools. However, can the silence as practiced in mindfulness work in a school setting? It is to this question that attention now turns.

2.4 What is the Practice of Mindfulness?

There is a growing literature on mindfulness framed in a wide range of disciplines. Although the practice of mindfulness is most familiar to Buddhist religious practice, since the 1970's it has also been scientifically established in the field of psychotherapy and neuroscience. Jon Kabat Zinn, the founder of this new understanding of the meaning of mindfulness, says that mindfulness 'means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally' (2004, 4). The function of mindfulness practice is to learn how to bring awareness to aspects of your self and life that we do not often consider. This is practiced through the process of awareness meditation, which is generally performed in an upright sitting position and awareness is brought to the feeling of bodily sensations. Mindfulness is when you knowingly centre this awareness and bring it back into alignment when it wanders, which it will. Mindfulness is the acceptance of this process and the observance of the meandering mind. It is different to other forms of meditation because the process is not concerned specifically with emptying or stilling the mind, but on allowing the mind to 'just be' and having awareness of it within that moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2004, 33).

For some there is a tension between this 'programmatic' understanding of mindfulness and the ancient 'pedagogical' religious traditions in which it was originally formulated and practiced (O'Donnell, 2015, 188). Within Buddhism mindfulness is synonymous with a search for the causes of suffering and to then alleviate that suffering for others by showing kindness. It is not an internal journey, rather a desire to solve *dukkha* (suffering) and free everyone from the cycle of *samsara* (rebirth) in order to reach *nirvana* (cessation). The scientific interpretation of meditation is not comparable to this religious practice, which some identify as a

distortion of Buddhist mindfulness with a focus on self-absorption rather than fostering compassion for others (O'Donnell, 2015, 192). Others consider meditation itself to be 'doing nothing', however, clinical trials have discovered that the practice of awareness or mindfulness meditation can change the physical structure of the brain, specifically in the prefrontal cortex (Davidson in Paulson et al., 2013, 88, 92). This is different to the parts of the brain that are highlighted in the testing of a practicing Buddhist or the brains of those practicing other forms of meditation (Davidson in Paulson et al., 2013, 92). This demonstrates from a neuroscientific perspective that any tension between religious practices and secular practices of mindfulness are redundant. It is best to consider school based mindfulness as 'beginner practices' (O'Donnell, 2015, 196) which are not profoundly Buddhist in origin; rather Buddhism is an 'inspiration' (O'Donnell, 2015, 198) for the secular technique being employed by schools.

In October 2015 The Mindful Nation Report was published; this was the outcome of a one-year All-Party Parliamentary Group commissioned inquiry to evaluate to what extent mindfulness might be able to support a variety of issues on the government agenda. One of the areas specified was education; the other three being health, workplace and the criminal justice system. Jon Kabat Zinn provided the forward to this report, where he said that mindfulness is 'becoming a global phenomenon supported by increasingly rigorous scientific research' (10). The Report recommends that mindfulness be piloted in schools and funding be provided to train teachers. The aim is to promote 'character and resilience' in pupils (9). This is founded in research as mindfulness practice is known to 'lead to faster recovery of the amygdala, which is the key attribute of resilience' (Davidson in Paulson et al., 2013, 88, 94). This is especially true of persons practising mindfulness for long

periods, where studies have demonstrated that growth in the frontal cortexes, which are the areas of the brain specifically required for 'executive functioning' (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 33). The more resilient learner can avoid distraction and have the capacity to 'pay better attention in class, regulate their emotions, and develop stronger social fluency' (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 33).

Whether colleagues and governors of schools will agree that mindfulness is a worthwhile pursuit within an educational setting requires consideration. Pring says that 'different people have different views of what learning is worthwhile' (2015, 24) and I am sure this also will apply to the introduction of mindfulness into schools. In agreement with Pring's fourth consideration of what makes education worthwhile, if the practice of mindfulness makes a worthwhile contribution to the development of the whole child and changes the perception of self-awareness then it contains the transformative virtues of education (2015, 24-25). To consider whether mindfulness works in schools is, therefore, the next focus of this review.

2.5 Does Mindfulness in Schools Work?

This study is based on the preliminary findings of research gathered by psychological and scientific professionals. Although there are several current studies into the use of mindfulness in schools, whether it works will not be known until these studies reach their conclusion (Torjesen, 2015; Steward Lawlor, 2014, 92). In the UK in 2009 the Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) successfully established the '.b programme'. This project has become the basis for the 2015 Myriad (Mindfulness and Resilience in Adolescence) Project researched by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC). Both are concerned with the well-being of young people and are 'based on the knowledge that adolescence is a vulnerable time for the onset of mental illness: 75%

of mental disorders begin before the age of 24, and half by age 15' (Department of Health, 2011, quoted on Myriad, OMC, Online). The 2015 Mindful Nation Report identifies education as one of four areas to target the application of mindfulness practice. However, it will only work in any of these areas if teaching professionals are trained to the required standard (62) before a programme is implemented. The report highlights that this will be within the region of £2000 per teacher for their initial training (62). There is a lot of investment being made into mindfulness in schools in order to ensure a high probability of success.

The use of mindfulness within schools has many functions including 'resilience, well-being, self-regulation, and attention' (Steward Lawlor, 2014, 88). It can be used in an isolated or integrated programme. For example, the *Peaceful Schools* initiative encourages the use of mindfulness as one of a range of techniques that enable an individual to become more peace-centered. One of the aims of the project is to encourage schools to become spaces where peace at the individual level overflows into the classroom, then the home and then to have a global impact. Training in mindfulness to promote peacefulness at school enables 'pupils (and teachers) [to] develop their self-worth, resilience and ability to access and develop inner peace' (Lubelska, 189). The project is not affiliated to any belief system and Lubelska, therefore, stresses that 'These activities can be undertaken in different places within the curriculum, not just in Personal Social, and Health Education and Religious Education lessons' (190). This approach to mindfulness demonstrates that mindfulness in schools is considered a secular practice and can work for pupils of any or no religious persuasion. It also opens the practice to the space used for collective worship or assembly.

The popularity of mindfulness as a technique within schools has been brought

to the attention of the government because of the success that it has had on pupils optimism at the schools where studies have been conducted and the curriculum developed to feature mindfulness techniques (Steward Lawlor, 2014, 87). The importance of school based training, with the caveat that this must be supplemented with home based practice, is shown by Zenner et al., who found from extensive research that 'taken from a bird's eye view, mindfulness-based training in a school context has effects that are seen mostly in the cognitive domain, but also in psychological measures of stress, coping, and resilience' (2014, 16). The popularly of mindfulness may also be being driven by the cost effectiveness of the intervention: when weighed against the significant improvement to the resilience of pupils and their well-being (Volanen et al., 2015, 54) one teacher trained to teach mindfulness can have a positive impact upon as many pupils as they are given access to teach.

The pastoral purpose for the use of mindfulness is concerned with raising the positive feelings of pupils; whilst the academic purpose for the use of mindfulness is concerned with ensuring that pupils can function to the best of their ability and reach their potential. Combined, these two aims sum up the term 'well-being', which 'is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively' (Huppert, 2009, 137). The psychological research undertaken by Huppert and Johnson in 2010 led to further analysis of the use of mindfulness within schools and gave rise to the Mindfulness in Schools Project. The promotion of well-being means that mindfulness works in schools as a tool to enable participants to overcome challenges in many areas of work and play situations. Within the classroom this clearly has benefits for pupils who struggle with the many facets of school life. The academic aspects of school life run in parallel with the pastoral aspect and it is only when educating the whole child that success can be equally found and measured. This measurement, however, may not be

detected immediately or empirically, as 'Mindfulness education has great potential for helping to cultivate healthy habits in children over time' (Parker et al., 187). The difficulties in assessing, in the short-term, the impact of mindfulness in schools may incur the view by some educationalists that it is unsubstantiated as a learning and teaching tool. If mindfulness is to be employed as an appropriate activity within schools it should stand up to scrutiny. Thompson says that it is essential that initially the 'educational function' of an activity should be ascertained, and then how this can best be considered to fully address the educational benefits of the task (2015, 6). Current research demonstrates that mindfulness has 'potential to enhance children's self-regulatory abilities' (Parker et al., 188) and for this reason should not be overlooked or dismissed. Unfortunately there are other reasons for it being overlooked: Erricker surmises that the prioritisation of well-being and reflection for their own sake is often diminished in favour of other skills focused on inspection (2001, 141).

The speed at which the government and schools are adopting the use of mindfulness has led some to be cautious about this type of introduction to a neurological technique. O'Donnell expresses the view that those introducing mindfulness need to be aware that using mindfulness as a form of 'neuro-enhancement' may be ignoring the reasons for the underlying issues of well-being concerns; instead of empowering students schools may be providing a temporary fix to longer term problems (2015, 193). Mindfulness interventions in a school setting are also encouraging pupils to examine their 'inner-self' (Ergas, 2015, 217); this means that they become an end in their own education programme. Typically education is presented as a means to an end: you study to receive an award, which will lead to new avenues for success. However, mindfulness encourages an inward

facing attention to education, which shifts the participant's understanding of education from 'out there' to 'in here' (Ergas, 2015, 218). Consideration should be taken about the method of introducing mindfulness programmes into educational establishments.

There is also a need to ensure that school programmes based on mindfulness are implemented carefully and with due consideration towards the unique school setting, as otherwise the programme could easily collapse (Steward Lawlor, 2014, 88) and this would have an adverse effect on the participants. Those who advocate a cautious approach suggest that mindfulness should not be compartmentalised into a specific programme, but that the whole school should adopt a 'holistic approach' regarding the curriculum (O'Donnell, 2015, 189). This 'broader view' on the application of mindful awareness as a school policy would consider the impact on the pupils of delivering a subject heavy and rushed curriculum. It could be seen as an attempt to alleviate some of these 'outer conditions' (O'Donnell, 2015, 197). This is endorsed by Langer who suggests that unless pupils are given the opportunity to learn in a more mindful way (1997, 3) it will not matter how much the curriculum changes or how much money is invested into new school initiatives. Langer considers that mindful learning supports education holistically because it sets pupils to be open to new perspectives and to be aware of their presence as a learner in the process of education (1997, 5). More recently Hyland also recommends that mindfulness is 'best thought of in cross-curricular terms as a dimension of learning' (2016, 112).

Therefore, overall if mindfulness is to work in schools the teaching practices should be brought in line with the practice itself in order to avoid destabilising the possible benefits (O'Donnell, 2015, 198). For mindfulness to work within schools it

seems that the need for it to be placed sympathetically within the framework of the school is of vital importance. To the placement of the practice of mindfulness within morning Quaker collective worship we now turn.

2.6 Is Using Mindfulness in Quaker Collective Worship Acceptable?

Some may consider the appropriating of mindfulness into Quaker Meeting for Worship to be hypocrisy to the theology of Quakerism: the concern is that it may 'become detached from its spiritual roots' (Hay, 2000, 73). Put in another way: when mindfulness is introduced as a specific teaching method to be used during Quaker worship time, this may be detaching the Quaker silence from it's religious and spiritual home and in it's place deploying another form of silence that is wholly other. In a parallel to 'On Holy Ground' presented by Gearon, it could be considered that collective worship is being separated from the religious life to which it is inextricably linked and to secularise Quaker Meeting for Worship for some participants would be to deny the sacredness of the space (2014, 152). If the school were to be experiential with Meeting for Worship simply because it is within a Quaker school where the majority of pupils are not Quakers, it could be seen as merely replacing one form of religious practice with another, albeit with secular make-up applied. Copley indicates that the practice of de-Quakerising (the gradual disappearance of Jesus Christ within Quaker teachings) Quakerism has led to the faith being secularised and adopted by atheists and other religions alike (2005, 63).

It is understandable how this secularisation can occur in a Quaker educational setting because it is highly likely that there may be few (if any) Quakers on the teaching staff in a Quaker school. The generic concepts (Fancourt, 2015, 179) understood by the Quaker insider are not as coherent or as cogent as they should be

and this filters through to specifically Quaker activities, such as Meeting for Worship. The ability for the pupil outsider to grasp the concepts fully will also, therefore, fall short. This stems from a failure by the participants (through no fault of their own, as it is a compulsory part of the school day) to fully understand the concept of Quaker silence. Everyday concepts such as 'that of God in everyone', 'all precious, valued, a child of God' and 'the light inside' are far simpler for an outsider to comprehend than 'a gathered stillness' and 'silence'. The reason for this is that the term 'silence' is a generic concept for everyone, and yet even insiders might disagree on what they actually 'do' in the silence of Meeting for Worship. Collective worship in schools expects that the participants take part and become an insider, however, in silence it can seem very much like there is nothing to do, nothing to be done, and simply put 'time-wasting' (Muers, 2015, 339). To expect non-voluntary participants to become intentionally experientially involved in 'an inner dimension' with Meeting for Worship is not a state that can be verified, as it is purely subjective. This approach as a form of activity within Religious Education has been criticised by Thatcher (1991, 23).

Thatcher's response was directed to Hay's project on the experiential in RE, which focussed on 'awareness' exercises to complement Religious Education (Hay, 2000, 78). This way of analysing pupil experience in a religious setting is, however, also applicable to the way that mindfulness complements the religious aspect of Quakerism. As long as the relationship between the two disciplines is made clear, then the two are able to retain their intrinsic purpose and maintain a healthy relationship within school Meeting for Worship. Mindfulness and silent meeting are, as Hay would posit, of similar ilk in that both 'requires the same attention to the immediacy of the situation' (2000, 77). Meeting for Worship is to be a shared

experience, so this is a mutually beneficial arrangement for the school to make. To those who are Quaker or religious from other traditions the mindfulness/stilling will have a religious dimension, but secular members may also share it. To implement mindfulness into Meeting for Worship may not be alien, but rather is another way to experience 'that of God'. Religion can be found in many spaces and the experience manifests itself in different ways (Hay, 2000, 71). The important aspect of this for consideration is that no one can tell, so whether it would matter that some were practicing mindfulness within the gathered stillness would be intangible, as we cannot judge if it is working in the mechanistic sense.

3. Reflection

George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, said in his journal of 1646-7 that it is a faith that 'speaks to my condition' (Smith, 1988, 13). As an action researcher the question now is to reflect upon whether the areas above speak to the condition of the learners and educators in this school setting. Quakerism is 'not a notion but a way' (Advices and Queries 2) and it is therefore active; but can stillness be expressed in educational terms to show that Quaker stilling and silence is an active teaching method?

There is a religious philosophy that underpins the silent collective worship in a Quaker school, but in this Quaker school it needs to be better understood and the significance utilised to make it an 'inward source of our strength' (Advices and Queries 3). Silence is not a new phenomenon in this Quaker school, but harnessing it as a teaching tool would be. The current aim of Quaker silence in a school setting is the fulfilment of the educational requirement to provide collective worship and also to express the ethos of the school. With so few Quakers present a 'gathered stillness'

is unlikely and at a school level the silent time is usually dull and pupils are not participating in the way that a Quaker would recognise.

It is clear that cultivating the positive use of silence in a school requires certain conditions to be made available and a culture to be inherent within the school for silent practice to flourish. In schools adopting mindfulness or meditative practice this will require planning to ensure that the tone is set before the introduction of a mindfulness programme. A Quaker school Meeting for Worship provides this environment in a ready to use format and is able to support those students and staff who are willing to seize this as an opportunity for mindfulness practice. The underpinning ethos of the school and daily routine of silent Meeting for Worship provides a ready-made environment in which to structure opportunities for mindfulness. The placement of collective worship being at the start of the school day is also beneficial to mindfulness practice. Within the mindfulness tradition it is recommended that 'If the whole school, students and teacher, can meet together in the beginning of the day to sit silently or have a mindful school meeting, so much the better' (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 96-97). The collective worship time in a Quaker school is already dedicated as a space for silent time, but introducing mindfulness could make this space more appreciated by the non-Quakers taking part. This practice could then be followed up during the course of the daily lessons to embed it within the curriculum.

However, it has also been discussed that some Quakers, perhaps the school governors, may not be impressed with the notion that Meeting for Worship is being used to promote mindful meditation. Meditation is not always considered to be a spiritual practice, rather a 'consciousness discipline' (Kabat-Zin, 2004, 264) and as such detracts from the notion of the Divine within Quakerism, and that Meeting for

Worship is a space in which to meet with the Divine. Others might consider meditation to have a deeper connection with eastern religious traditions and again consider it dissimilar to the stilling that is aspired to in the Quaker tradition. The term awareness, however, should resonate with all the above ways of seeking 'being' and really it is this awareness that schools wish to cultivate to improve responses to learning in pupils and to promote well-being for the duration of their school life and beyond.

Awareness too of the conflict and tensions between a quick-fix (Hyland, 2016, 110) approach to mindfulness and the seriousness with which any programme should be considered and implemented is going to be necessary to avoid a superficial mindfulness that will not achieve the possible outcomes to enhance 'attention span, emotional resilience and general well-being' that is possible from this type of programme (Hyland, 2016, 113). From witnessing mindfulness as being rooted within spiritual practice it becomes obvious that mindfulness is a long process to awareness and not something that can provide a remedy to pupil issues within a short space of time (Hyland, 2016, 110). Actively using mindfulness in school will need to be a long-term coherent strategy to support the development of pupils.

Respect to listen to the internal voice: that "still small voice of calm" (Whittier, 1872) within still and silent spaces enables the learner to engage and develop responses rather than to give a reactionary response. Providing spaces to learn in a 'mindful state' means that educational value comes not in the subject matter or the ability of the learner, but from the learner comes the educational value (Langer, 1997, 137).

4. Methodology

4.1 Action Research

Action research is a small-scale reflective cyclical method that enables the practitioner researcher to reflect on the situation as it develops during and after the intervention (Opie, 2004, 79). The process thereby brings together research and practice and contributes towards new developments in practical and theoretical knowledge (Furlong and Oancea, 2008, 5). Education based action research is considered to be beneficial to the wider research body and educational practice (Rickinson et al., 2011, 60). In the case of this piece of action research the following model was adopted:



Figure 1: A model of action research, adapted from Opie, 2004, 80.

The relevance of this action research and its implications are significant for the whole school body; both pupils and teachers across the junior and senior school, as all take part in still and silent collective worship and could make better use of this space for learning. In this instance this research was contained to the senior school, but a further cycle for the junior school can be introduced in the future as progression of the initial action research cycle. The course of a school academic year was taken to complete the first research cycle in collaboration with the Religious Studies Department and Pastoral Board.

Pupils identified for the intervention programme were withdrawn from the school collective worship for a period of five weeks. In this time they attended mindfulness sessions in the school Drama Studio as an alternative venue. Several staff also attended the sessions from their own volition; however, they do not form part of this study at this time, as none of them were able to sustain their attendance.

The fortunate position of being both the teacher and the researcher did lead to a tension within the study, as it was impossible not to discuss the intervention with involved participants during the lesson time that was spent with them. BERA recommends that when the researcher is also the teacher that this aspect of a dual role is considered with particular reference to confidentiality (BERA website 12.5). It would have been impossible to bar pupils from expressing themselves to me with regards to the research that they were experiencing over the course of five weeks. This interaction between researcher and participant outside of the intervention zone meant that while in 'teacher mode' the researcher had to be aware not to encroach upon the intervention, but it enabled some interesting use of the mindfulness techniques within the classroom setting. Negotiating this conflict of roles was an essential part of the research practice in this instance (Punch and Oancea, 2014, 74).

The different roles did, however, give first hand experience to the researcher about how the participants were utilising what they had learned on a daily basis. Clearly care had to be taken that the teacher-pupil relationship did not alter the findings in any way (Pring, 2015, 146), however, total impartiality would be impossible to achieve. It was considered that the 'ad hoc' information imparted to the researcher provided interesting points that enriched the research rather than taint it, which is the contribution of action research 'to the growth of professional knowledge' (Pring, 2015, 163). The occasions of overlap between the intervention and classroom time remained a confidential aspect of the research even though the participant did not necessarily realise or recognise the need for this to be the case. Even though confidentiality within this arena had not been formally ascertained or agreed, it was considered by the researcher to still be a part of the study and therefore the information from the individual concerned was treated with care (Pring, 2015, 179). The importance to maintain the position of trust and transparency during the research was paramount, as was ensuring that anonymity and confidentiality was maintained during the study (Menter, 2011, 37-38). Had the participants later found that comments, made when in a different setting, had been made regarding their participation in the research this could have led to complications by shifting the boundaries of trust between those involved in the study and skewed the results that were finally obtained. This tension was continually reflected upon during the cycle of research in order to ensure the study was not compromised in this respect.

4.2 Collaboration

Continuing in the convention of action research this piece of research involved teacher collaboration. The need for collaboration in the school environment is

beneficial because the 'research activity is unbiased and dispassionate' (Menter et al., 2011, 8) and this will enable the implementation of changes to be accepted. It is also imperative because the success of the intervention and the subsequent impact of the implementation of new strategies into school practice depends on whether colleagues involved in the research are also willing to cooperate with the distinct teaching and research practices that they have (Meirink et al., 2010, 164-5). Teacher initiated action research also ensures that: the research stems from an understanding of the school rather than an imposed policy or procedure, and that within the collaboration there is no 'hierarchy of power' (Altrichter et al., 1993, 203). This research involved several colleagues in the collaboration process to ensure that the action research project was successful and that 'responsible action' was taken (Altrichter et al., 1993, 202).

The collaboration with department members was significantly more involved than those from pastoral board, which is to be expected given the stake held in the project overall as the facilitator of the intervention. Members of Pastoral Board were able to cooperate with the collecting of the data sample. The overall findings were presented to the staff body and the following cycle will take place in the forthcoming academic year. However, explaining the project is only one facet of collaborating with colleagues, as sharing information does not necessarily lead others to a desire to share in the findings and so encourage the same employment of techniques. For this project to become established colleagues would need to be given autonomy over the techniques, so that they could use them within their lessons with the pupils (Meirink, 201, 176). For example: the use of the pebble to focus on the breath, or the mention of 'the monkey mind' to remind pupils of a need to not be distracted could be used by all staff given the correct level of training and involvement in the project.

The mindfulness five-week course was devised in collaboration with LS, the second teacher in the Religious Studies Department. He practices mindfulness himself, which is a prerequisite to being a mindfulness instructor (Burnett, 2011, 111), so it was with his assistance and from his commitment to the practice that this study took shape. LS devised the five-week course from his personal reading on the subject and from his knowledge of the school ethos and the pupils that form the school community.

Finding a space on the busy school timetable for practicing mindfulness was one of the difficulties facing the study. However, the link between Meeting for Worship and mindfulness within this study enabled the five week course to take place in an alternative venue during the allocated Monday morning Meeting for Worship time. Colleagues were satisfied with this time slot and supported the study by sending their tutees along at the correct time. This provided an intervention time of twenty minutes at the beginning of the week to be still and focus on being mindful.

4.3 Sample Data Collection

The sample group were selected using a merger of data collection methods, as was regarded suitable for the school setting and participant set. Whether this mixed-method of choosing the sample affected the results cannot be clear, however, it was ethically driven considering the school policy regarding safeguarding within the school.

A form of snowball sampling (Drever, 36) was used, as initially colleagues were identified who would be able to generate the names of the participants in the intervention. The senior members of Pastoral Board formed the inner and second circle of the snowball: the deputy head and the two pastoral deputy heads, which

broadened out to other pastoral provision in the school with safeguarding access e.g. school nurse, counsellor, boarding house parents and tutors. In this way colleagues were the 'informants' (Cohen et al. 2011, 158) to collect the names for the two sample sets. In this way the control and intervention groups are more of a collection than a sample (Drever, 37).

This method of selection also ensured that the data set was not built on bias or teaching contact with any specific pupils (Cohen et al. 2011, 158). This was manifested when pupils asked why they had not been included, and I was able to explain the method chosen for selection did not express any favouritism on the part of the action researcher.

It was agreed by Pastoral Board at a meeting that all those involved in the research should not currently, or in the past, have had any intervention from external or internal school support: CAMHS, doctors, counsellors, medication and the like. This deliberate act within the selection method obviously excluded certain pupils from the research and included others (Cohen et al. 2011, 153). This non-probability sample meant that the pupils and students identified were therefore able to approach the mindfulness training with no other means of support available to them. It is anticipated that by selecting a sample that represent 'the average student' that the results will provide clear results for analysis that will not be skewed by other factors that lie outside of our control. Therefore, working in collaboration with Pastoral Board meant that the participants for the study were selected based on the judgement of colleagues, as in purposive sampling (Cohen et al. 2011, 156).

Cohen et al. (2011, 144) outline that 'a sample size of 30 is held by many to be the minimum number', so in this case ten pupils were selected from each year group represented in the senior school, which represents 20% of each year cohort. Six staff

also joined the research project, which was a welcome addition to the intervention set, but not enough data was generated from them to be statistically coherent. The sample size is realistic in both size and scope (Punch and Oancea, 2014, 47) given the small scale of the study, which sits in line with the purpose of the project as part of the MLT.

4.4 Questionnaires

The questionnaire in appendix 1.1 was used because of its ease of use in a school environment and its ability to quickly gather data. It mainly used short questions, which were useful to gather information about the attitudes pupils had towards Meeting for Worship and their awareness around school (Cohen et al. 2011, 176) and a single open-ended question, so that participants could write more freely. Although the space for free writing did present some irrelevant answers, on the whole participants kept within the parameters of the focus of the study (Cohen et al. 2011, 382). The quantitative and qualitative aspects of the questionnaire were kept separate and generated different kinds of results, which were interpreted accordingly.

The closed questions were designed using a 'rating scale' (Cohen et al. 2011, 386) and included a final column for coding purposes, which made the analysis of the questionnaire simple, as suggested by Edwards and Talbot (2014, 116). Each column was accredited with a corresponding number, which were added together to form an overall score for each section. These questions were useful for this small-scale study because they could be readily analysed using statistics (Cohen et al. 2011, 382). The questionnaire was taken before and after the intervention, and the statistical results were then analysed to ascertain any positive or negative difference between the scores. The interpretation of these differences led to the summary of results

regarding the effectiveness of the mindfulness intervention. Part one of the questionnaire focused on responses to Meeting for Worship and to silence; part two responses related to mindfulness. The second part of the questionnaire was used, as recommended by the Mindfulness in Schools project, from Warwick research. These results and the measures therein will be detailed later.

The open question, where participants could write freely about their experiences of Meeting for Worship and their sense of well-being, was necessary to include because of the need to allow pupils to express themselves as themselves and not merely as numerical scores for statistical analysis. This is because the topics lend themselves to participants feeling squeezed between answers and may tend towards opting for a best-fit answer. Permitting an area for expansion of thoughts was considered necessary so that the data could be more clearly understood.

The used of both closed and open questions on the questionnaire also provides the researcher an interesting angle of interpretation, but that could be viewed by some to mar the statistical data. However, in order to produce a clearer picture "of children's struggle 'to make sense' or to understand" (Pring, 2015, 71) it was considered pertinent to use a mixed-methods questionnaire. The closed questions helped to understand answers to how pupils felt about Meeting for Worship and their well-being and the open questions assisted the researcher to understand why this might be the case.

I did not have the recommended 'two to three months to devise and pilot a survey questionnaire' (Cohen et al. 2011, 382), so I adopted and subsequently adapted a Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) questionnaire to use for part two of the questionnaire. This is based on research by Greco et al. and demonstrates that 'CAMM may be a useful measure of mindfulness skills for school-

aged children and adolescents' (2011, 606). To provide a consistent approach part one on the questionnaire, the Quaker based questions, was adapted along similar parameters. The questionnaire is included in the appendix.

Participants were also asked to keep a written diary so that work done outside of school could be recorded. This, it was hoped, would increase the validity and reliability of the questionnaire data (Cohen et al. 2011, 385). Many participants did not use it, which is likely perhaps to reflect either the reluctance of pupils to do more homework or that it was considered unnecessary for their purposes.

LS made all the sessions available on the school intranet, which could be monitored to see who had accessed the site and who were making use of the resources. Participants were not aware that their access to this information had been logged, as this is a general school system applicable to the whole school intranet site. Making them aware of this access could compromise the school use of such data.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This area of research could present 'potential sensitivities' (Cohen et al. 2011, 177) as it is dealing with emotional responses to personal self-reflection and the material has a religious background. As with all research in a school setting

> '…the educational well-being of learners must be a very high priority, as well as being concerned about the protection of other human subjects of educational research including parents, teachers and other education workers' (Menter, 2011, 53).

In order to ensure that potential participants would be receptive to the questions and be willing to discuss sensitive information an information sheet was provided outlining the study (Cohen et al. 2011, 395). As the research was taking place during the school day and the participants ages ranged from 11-18 the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) required that when working with children and

young people their informed consent be given, and assurance that they also understood that they were free from coercion (Cohen et al. 2011, 377) to take part, and their contributions would remain anonymous, and would be kept confidential for the duration of the study (Menter et al., 2011, 37-38, 63). The selected participants were given to take home an information sheet and details to show to their parents. They were asked to sign a form giving their 'voluntary informed consent' (Punch and Oancea, 2014, 65) and reminded that they could withdraw from the research trial at any time with no questions asked about their reasons for doing so. The names of participants have been removed from this study and to ensure anonymity they have been allocated a numerical identifying marker '1-35' (Punch and Oancea, 2014, 69) according to their group: intervention group 'IG' or control group 'CG' to comply with ethical parameters (Richards, 2015, 208). The Head also gave consent for the research data and findings to be used for this piece of action research (Elliott, 1991, 61; Punch and Oancea, 2014, 65), however, any subsequent use should not be assumed.

I have an insider view on this educational study, both as a Quaker and one who teaches Religious Studies in a Quaker school setting; my proximity to Quaker education and practice will sharpen my analysis (Nesbitt, 143, 2002) and provide an insight into the generic and everyday concepts of Quakerism. It is not known whether this position is unique, but once the study is disseminated this will allow practitioners in a similar role to identify this individual project as part of a wider project (Rickinson et al., 2011, 53).

5. The Study

5.1 Introducing Mindfulness

Being still is an element of mindfulness practice, yet the mind is active in that it is learning to adopt an openness to be aware of the present moment. The practice of which has benefits for learning in other settings because it develops resilience. Rather than use other programmes that train in mindfulness for this study it was considered pertinent to devise a series of sessions that would meet the needs of the school's pupils and the time frame that was available. The sessions also only had twenty minutes in which to be delivered, as this mirrored the collective worship time that had been allocated. The following sessions were devised:

Week 1: Where is my Mind?

- The background of mindfulness and the workings of the brain and then considering the breath and awareness of the breath in using mindfulness.
- Supported by: a video recap of the session (lasting 16 minutes), a laminated card with QUAKE 'Quiet, deep breaths – Understand what's going on – Aware of the wider world – Kindful thoughts –Execute your response', a small pebble to remind to focus on the breath.
- A task for the week: do one thing mindfully from the list provided.

Week 2: Senses Working Overtime.

- Focus: Bringing attention to our senses.
- Supported by: a video of being a cow, food, plates and charcoal.
- A task for the week: three minute silence every day.

Week 3: Let it Go!

- Focus: Being fully present in the now. Senses can be deceived and we can have a monkey mind. Stop doing and just be.
- Supported by: A banana suit and a monkey puppet.
- A task for the week: five minutes of awareness every day.

Week 4: All is Full of Love

- Focus: To focus on everyday wonders, be accepting and grateful.
- Supported by: Video of the cosmos and music
- A task for the week: complete a gratitude journal.

Week 5: Float On

- Focus: Other ways to be mindful
- Supported by: A truckload of dung.
- A task for the week: flush your troubles away.

All participants were given access to an intranet page set up as a sub site on the school Religious Studies page. This gave them a summary of the sessions and assistance with the weekly task should that be required. They were also given a small pebble to carry with them and a glow-star for their space at home as a physical reminder of their mindfulness training and also a card to serve as a mnemonic reminder of the mindfulness process:

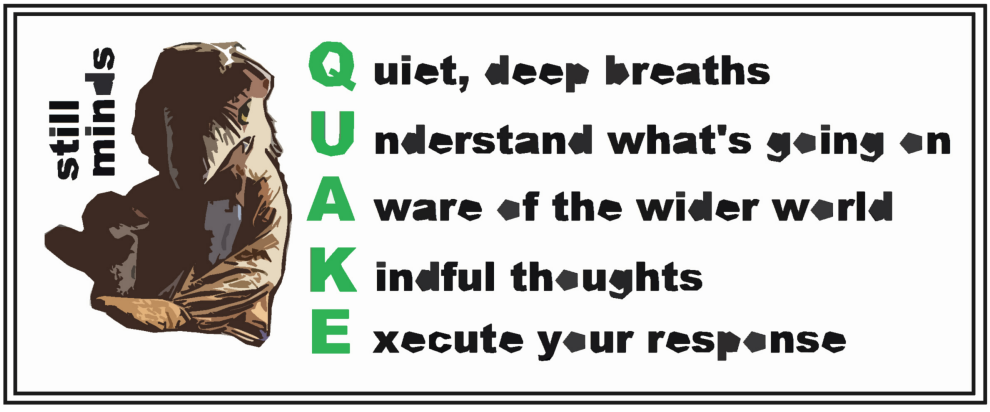


Figure 2: Pocket sized intervention card

6. Findings

6.1 Questionnaire 1 (pre-intervention data)

Within both sets of data, the intervention group (IG) and the control group (CG), all the quantitative data was completed fully (data analysis to follow). However, within the qualitative data it was noticeable in the first questionnaire that there were few written comments from the seventy participants for either part one (Meeting for Worship) or part two (mindfulness). The seventeen participants that did comment regarding part one were mainly constructive and reflected the general idea that the silence is:

'a good time to relax and clear my mind from school work and any stresses' (IG 32.)

That it provides time to

'gather my thoughts and sort of plan my day' (CG 20).

It also

'makes me feel calmer when it is silence so all my thoughts can go away' (IG3). One response commented that *'Sometimes the silence helps me get into the mindset for school and learning although sometimes I just almost go to sleep or think about food'* (IG 25).

It was also considered to be distinct from a Quaker Meeting for Worship:

'I don't feel like I am in a religious place or feel like I should be thinking religious thoughts (CG 11).

The silence was also used to dispel negativity:

'If something is bothering me I use meeting to think of a way to resolve them' (IG 21).

It was also a negative space because *'I mostly worry about prep I have forgotten to hand in'* (IG 23).

In part two (mindfulness) only seven comments were given in total, although all sections of quantitative data were again completed. The participants in the IG

candidly commented on a lack of control that they felt they had regarding their feelings and emotions:

'I don't think I can help my feelings so I just accept what I feel and deal with it' (IG 21).

'I can't control what I think and feel' (IG 23).

'I think how in home life it can make an effect on how I feel' (IG 28).

'I often don't think about how I'm feeling, it sounds odd but I don't feel like I have the time to' (IG 32).

The higher numbers suggests that these were the older pupils from the cohort providing this information.

6.2 Questionnaire 2 (post-intervention data)

The IG reported eighteen comment entries regarding part one (Meeting for Worship) compared with eight previously. Comments were varied: some mentioned the silence as a positive time to prepare for learning:

'I like going and sitting in silence before the struggle of lessons' (IG 9).

Others made reference to the pebble that they used:

'I have found my rock and the breathing techniques useful' (IG 20).

Some comments were general regarding the use of the time as a space to think:

'It is a good time to think about the day' (IG 30).

Some reflected on the experience positively:

'Since I started the mindfulness course I have found meeting for worship a better environment for awareness of my thoughts' (IG 34).

'I'm just glad I took part' (IG 4).

The content of the CG comments in part two were similar to the pre-intervention questionnaire, being eight in number and referencing it being a time to 'think', 'reflect' 'be calm' and 'sit quietly'.

In part two (mindfulness) the IG group posted nineteen comments that were from across the age range, the content of which had a particular significance to this study regarding the improvement to emotional behaviours:

'I think that the mindfulness has actually really helped me calm down or reduce my anger. I also think it has made me think that being more mindful has made me a better person' (IG 3).

To improve mental agility:

'I feel like I have benefitted from this, sometimes just to relax and mentally let things go…definitely feel better physically and mentally afterwards' (IG 16).

To be resilient in the face of academic pressure:

'I have used the technique to de-stress before exams. In meetings [for worship] *I have started to think about positive things going on in my day'* (IG 23).

To develop self-awareness:

'I think I am more aware of my feelings, think more about what I eat and how grateful I am. I breathe more deeply and feel much more calm' (IG 32).

Positive thanks for the opportunity:

'Mindfulness is extremely helpful, I wish I could carry on with it!' (IG 21)

Conversely in the CG there were only three comments, two very negative:

*'Often I try to stop myself from crying' (*CG 1) and *'I am often exhausted so don't' notice what I am doing'* (CG 34).

6.3 Diary entries

Very few diaries were submitted at the end of the intervention. There is no known reason for this, as no demands had been imposed to make this part of the intervention compulsory, so participants either did not take part in this element or wished to retain the information as private and personal (Elliott, 1991, 77). The opportunity was presented because Rechtschaffen suggests that it is 'helpful to give the students time to reflect in their journals about the lesson…These practices help students to integrate and make meaning of whatever they have just experienced' (2014, 148-149). Those diaries submitted expressed comments from a variety of the tasks set and, therefore, incorporating keeping a diary seemed to be a worthwhile aspect of the intervention. A variety of points were expressed and explored:

Evidence of the consideration of the experience:

'In my opinion, we often don't get time to actually just think. Maybe just being grateful or happy or just pondering random questions…I believe using these times to think, may not be a bad thing' (IG 12).

'I think the five minute mindful meditation was a good idea because the children should remember how lucky they are compared to other children around the world' (IG 9).

Reflection on the physical objects that had been received:

'Interestingly, I have found that the pebble we were given at our first session is very helpful. I keep it in my pocket and it brings a sense of calmness and peace if I am feeling stressed' (IG 32).

Practice at home was evidenced:

'I have been practicing listening to music mindfully. To do this I focus only on the music, lyrics and nothing else. It makes me understand the meaning of the songs more, which I haven't done before because I don't take the time to think about it' (IG 32).

'Today I ate my food and I thought about who produced the food, where it came from, how it was transported. It made me appreciate how much effort must go into producing the food I eat. I need to remember to always be grateful' (IG 32).

'Doing the three minutes of breathing before I go to bed each night really puts me in the right frame of mind to rest and makes me feel refreshed, it sets me up for a good nights sleep and the day ahead. It really is fantastic' (IG 21).

A simple reflection on the opportunity provided by the study:

'I wish that we could do mindfulness every Monday through the rest of my time at Fergow' (IG 21).

After the intervention I received an email correspondence from a Year 11 participant involved in the study. She asked whether the mindfulness would be continuing in the following academic year, and if so please could she be involved because she had found it very helpful. I also produced a 'Wordle' (www.wordle.net) of the qualitative data above, which revealed the top twenty-five key words that summed up the experience of the study for the participants. This suggestion from Gill Boag-Munroe (01.10.2015) creates a visual display of the data above. The most frequent word was 'think' followed by 'feel' and 'just' which makes for some intriguing word play availabilities as a reflection on the study: 'just think about how you feel' for example.

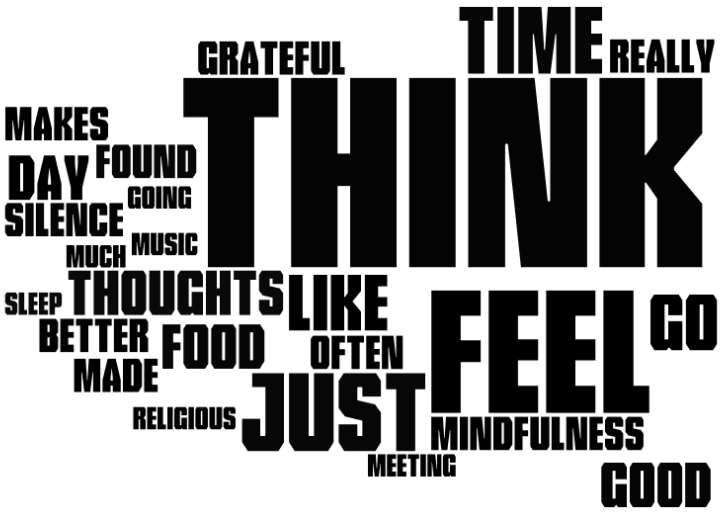


Figure 3: Wordle of questionnaire and diary entries listed in 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3

6.4 Intranet data

The 'Quake' page on the school intranet contained a summary of the sessions and also support with the tasks. This was there to serve as a reminder and reinforcement of the intervention to the participants. The participants were sent an email reminder after each session to check the site. At the end of the study the data was accessed to ascertain whether this aspect of the intervention was useful to the participants. Overall 18 of the 33 participants accessed the page, so it is evident that pupils not involved also found the page and browsed. The reason for their interest is unknown, but their involvement does affect this data.

Total hits	83
Total sessions	59
Total users	27

Table 1: Quake page hit statistics users

The most popular time of the day to access the page was found to be during the evening. This showed that home-based practice was happening, which is an important aspect of mindfulness intervention. The session times below represent the school day/timetable:

Total hits, by time		Total users, by time	
-08.00	3	-08.00	1
08.00-08.35	0	08.00-08.35	0
08.35-08.55	2	08.35-08.55	1
08.55-10.15	9	08.55-10.15	4
10.15-10.35	2	10.15-10.35	2
10.35-12.35	11	10.35-12.35	10
12.35-14.15	4	12.35-14.15	4
14,15-16.15	6	14,15-16.15	4
16.15-18.00	7	16.15-18.00	6
18.00 +	40	18.00 +	16

Table 2: Quake page hit statistics time of day

On reflection of the results regarding whether there was any correlation between the questionnaire and intranet results participant IG 28 was asked whether accessing the Quake page might have enabled better access to the post-intervention questionnaire. The response from IG 28 was positive about this connection: *'Yes it did, because it gave me greater awareness because I had revisited and practiced it.'*

6.5 Data Analysis

The sample size is small; this presents issues with the reliability of any conclusions derived from analysis of the data. Given the small population and the constraints on sampling that existed, the sample size is still adequate relative to the population (25%). Data from pupils that were subsequently absent or did not complete both sets of questionnaires were discounted from the final results; the control group had 34 pupils and the intervention group had 31 pupils in total.

	Mindfulness			**Meeting for Worship**		
	CG	**IG**		**CG**	**IG**	
Mean start	22.7	22.4		9.84	10.48	
		N 21.5	Y 23.11		N 10.42	Y 10.52
Mean increase	-0.25	0.58		-0.78	1.16	
		N 1.8	Y -0.56		N 0.73	Y 1.47

Table 3: Mindfulness and Meeting for Worship mean data
Control group = CG / Intervention group = IG

N = did not visit the Quake mindfulness webpage resource
Y = did visit the Quake mindfulness webpage resource

From the data we can observe that the CG and the IG have the same starting values for both mindfulness and meeting for worship. The values for N and Y in the IG is also similarly even. This means that we have a good basis for comparison to evaluate the increases. Over the same period of time there has been a decrease in the mindfulness of the CG compared to an increase in the IG, more than double. This also corresponds to an increase in the IG Meeting for Worship compared to a decrease in the CG Meeting for Worship. It would appear that an increase in mindfulness corresponds to an increase in the value of Meeting for Worship and a decrease in mindfulness results in a decrease in the value of Meeting for Worship.

The effectiveness of the questionnaire was evaluated by examining the Yes/No split in the IG. This demonstrated that the mean starts for both groups are similar for both mindfulness and Meeting for Worship. There is double the increase in Meeting for Worship for the Y group compared to the N group and yet there appears to be a decrease in the mindfulness score of the Y group compared to the N group. It appears to be that students visiting the webpage resource grasped the concepts of mindfulness better and, therefore, changed their responses in the second round of testing to more mindful responses. Those who did not visit the webpage did not change their responses, as evidenced by the greater r-squared value on the No group scatter graph showing a stronger correlation in No group students: they have not adjusted or considered the responses from one testing to another.

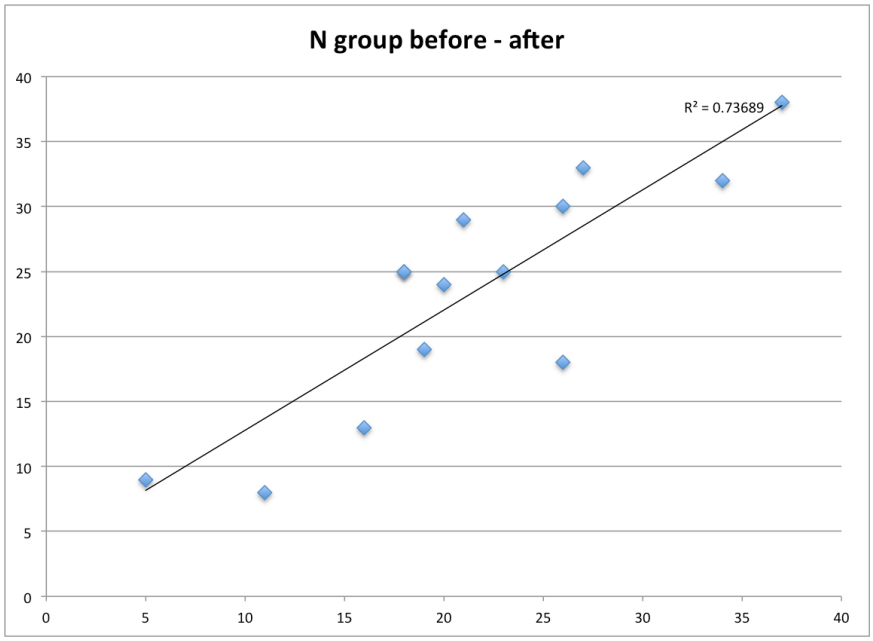


Figure 4: Variation of change between the two questionnaires in the mindfulness group that did not access the Quake page

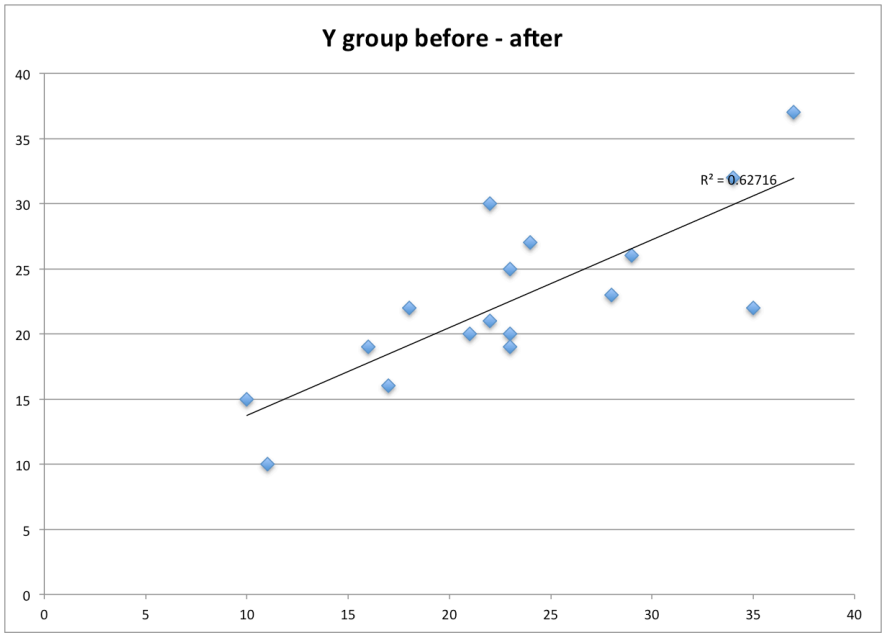


Figure 5: Variation of change between the two questionnaires in the mindfulness group that did access the Quake page

6.6 Evaluation and Implications

The data and research presents some matters for consideration regarding whether the time spent in collective worship can be explicitly used for an educational purpose rather than solely as an act of faith. Of greatest consequence were the

practicalities of the time implications for implementing the mindfulness intervention and any subsequent programme. Burnett says 'To make a measurable difference to the lives of adolescents with so little contact time is a huge challenge, and it may be that to teach mindfulness effectively in a school context we need to rethink entirely the issue of contact time' (2011, 87). Certainly in this study a longer period of time would have benefitted the intervention and made it more effective. The Monday morning space was a good time of the week and coincided with the usual collective worship time, but it did feel rushed. This was a new experience for the pupils and a lot was being delivered to them within the five weeks. Perhaps extending the project from five weeks to eight would be beneficial to prevent this sense of pace and some students not fully engaging with the substance of each session. This reinforces the need for a lengthier course structure, as implemented by .b programme, which conducts an eight week mindfulness curriculum.

Conversely, the placement of the intervention perhaps confused some pupils and colleagues. There was some misunderstanding that this was specifically a Religious Studies programme, because those leading it were primarily from that department. Also because the content was focused on mindfulness and the aforementioned links that this has with religious practices it was exasperating to illustrate that the intervention had whole school implications for learning and teaching. The research may have produced more consistent results if daily bulletins had been given to colleagues and pupils to remind them that the research was continuing and reiterate the purpose of the study (Menter, 2011, 57). In future action research it is recommended that ample consideration of the perception on the study should be regularly surveyed to ensure that it remains high on the school agenda.

This leads to a discussion on the impact mindfulness will also have on curriculum teaching. Mindfulness would need to be adopted as an holistic approach: specific training with inclusion into daily school and home life. Given the links with Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural education some have suggested that mindfulness is the remit of Religious Education or Personal Social Health Economic education. Burnett argues 'The answer to this surely lies in articulating a context for mindfulness in schools which has sufficient relevance and specificity to strike a deep chord with individuals' (2011, 100). It would seem that the majority of students in this school setting are not religious, so therefore, mindfulness is in the remit of general education and wellbeing. Consequently, using collective worship as a method to impart mindfulness training would be an innovative and productive use of the time. Given a faith school where collective worship is all inclusive and conducted in silence, it would be appropriate to use Meeting for Worship time for the promotion and delivery of a mindfulness programme. Burnett suggests that 'Mindfulness practice could be nested within a broad range of possibilities, from the very functional (revision, sleep, sport) to the therapeutic (anger, anxiety, stress, depression), through to the more spiritual (mystery, wonder, meaning). For the latter, mindfulness could be presented as one contemplative discipline among many in the world's religious traditions' (2011, 106). So, although the stillness within Quakerism fits this niche, the educational and pastoral aspect of the benefits of mindfulness confirm that space is also accommodated within the whole school curriculum. This study points towards a complementary use of the collective worship space for the implementation of a mindfulness programme, and so furthers the literature in this respect. However, to only implement mindfulness in this way would be to misunderstand the benefits of the practice within the general setting of education.

Where mindfulness should be housed within the curriculum is a question that does need to be considered carefully. It would be too simplistic to shunt RE or PSHE content to enable mindfulness to have a place, and this would be at the loss to their specific current curriculum content. Kuyken et al. highlight that 'the MiSP curriculum is designed to fit into the school curriculum and, following appropriate training, be taught by school teachers embedded in the schools…typically replacing classes in religious studies or personal, social and health education' (2013, 126). It should not be 'typical' that this replacement occurs, and if mindfulness is so very important and central to the need of every child then a distinct place should be made within the school day and curriculum and not leech from the time of other subjects unless there is a genuine commonality between the areas of study. Whilst further research would provide more insight into this matter the action research above demonstrates that embedding mindfulness into the curriculum can utilise any, indeed all, teaching and non-teaching spaces. Each school should consider their unique setting carefully and reflect upon their school framework individually, as there is no 'typical' educational setting.

The results gathered from pupils in this study highlight a significant rise in their awareness of the use of mindfulness and how it could help them. This corroborates similar studies where meditation processes led pupils to a 'shift in the quality of engagements in the learning process, and a shift in the capacity to learn' (Mann, 2001, 43). The implication for the school is that it needs to respond to the pupil reaction and provide space for mindfulness. Immediately following the intervention the school provided a lunchtime club activity where mindfulness colouring books were provided. These have recently grown in common popularity and although the benefits of them are not documented they create another

opportunity in school for pupils to be still and mindful. Several pupils signed up for this activity and although it was not a part of the study it was an interesting immediate consequence of it and an area that could provide further data for research regarding the impact of mindfulness on pupils.

Another practical matter for evaluation was the length of time the silence could take and whether it would be possible for pupils to develop longer stretches of stillness. Kabat-Zinn recommends 'Forty-five minutes seemed long enough to settle into stillness and sustained attending' (2004, 121). However, it can of course take many years to develop such an awareness that you can sit in stillness and silence for such a long period of time. For the study only three minutes were required initially of the intervention group, however, the intention was that this was an introduction to best practise and that eventually each practitioner could find that they could sustain meditation for the recommended forty five minutes. There is no way of monitoring the daily use of this now that the intervention is completed, but the use of the pebble as a physical reminder will be an aide memoir to participants to continue practice. A further cycle of action research could ascertain whether participants still have and make use of the pebble; this might show whether provision of a physical object in the teaching of mindfulness holds any valuable significance regarding the impact of the programme for the participant.

The well-being of pupils in school is a concern of all those involved in their care, both while inside the educational establishment and when in the wider community. Parents are very much a part of this whole picture and should be incorporated into the mindfulness programme if at all possible. It has been shown that assisting parents to improve their mental well-being improves parenting skills and in turn that of the child (Lindsay et al., 2011). Certainly for consideration should

be how parents could have been incorporated into this study and whether that would have had an impact on the overall results.

The findings of this piece of action research support the literature that propose that mindfulness promotes and enhances the learning of pupils; and further to this it advocates that it is possible to combine collective worship with mindfulness in a school setting. Within the Quaker school used in this study the still and silent form of collective worship can support the practice of mindfulness for pupils, as long as provision is made for the appropriate foundation to be laid and that subsequently mindfulness is utilised within the daily business of education. This study will be shared with the other UK Quaker schools and it is for them to consider the merits of this research for their Quaker school setting. It would extend the literature further to conduct similar action research within the collective worship space in different school contexts to make a comparison with the findings presented here.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Is Quaker Stillness an Active Teaching Method?

Collective worship in some educational settings remains a contentious issue, particularly when curriculum time is pressed and faith is often seen as a personal stance. However, in a Quaker school collective worship works well considering that it is fully inclusive whilst retaining the character of the requirement to be in the main Christian and provide a space for daily reflection. This stems from the Quaker practice of Meeting for Worship where stillness and silence are the central aspects of the worship itself. However, the reality of school Meeting for Worship is that for many taking part the silence is passive, but it could be being utilised more effectively for learning if provision were made for training in the practice of mindfulness. The

general use of silence within schools has been seen to have practical implications for learning by enhancing the experience of pupils and the recent promotion of the practice of mindfulness within schools is based on research that demonstrates the benefits of such practice. The science of mindfulness also shows that in stillness the brain is active. Harnessing the stillness already present in a Quaker school, and steering it towards mindfulness can establish it as an active teaching method. This study set out to ascertain whether there was a way to combine Meeting for Worship with mindfulness in a Quaker school setting and whether there was an educational grounding for a merger of this kind. The research has concluded that by steering the stillness of collective worship in a Quaker school to a specifically mindful perspective it does enhance the collective worship experience of stillness and bring the focus in alignment as a space for active learning. This innovative method has the potential to extend the practice of mindfulness to a whole school population and yet still be held within the school day. The prospect for extending the learning needs and educational outcomes of pupils through this original method has significant potential. For any who remain non-convinced by the value of stillness or mindfulness it is pertinent to remember that 'Non-doing has nothing to do with being indolent or passive. Quite the contrary. It takes great courage and energy to cultivate non-doing, both in stillness and in activity' (Kabat-Zinn, 2004, 44). A school that embraces the act of stillness as an active teaching method will be still learning.

7.2 Future Ideas

Working with others in the school has meant that the research has been effective in highlighting this technique as a strategy to promote pupil well-being and learning. The school will be able to harness the natural Quaker use of silence as a way

to advance pupil learning, with the support of the whole school body. The study has received interest from the staff and pupils in the school, both those involved in the intervention and those who were not. Subsequently when the Deputy Head received an invitation for the school to take part in the .b programme in the next academic year she agreed to nominate the school to do this. This would involve a study by the Mindfulness in School Project targeting Year 8 and 9 pupils. Although this was not in the school long-term plan the acceptance on to this programme has been well received by colleagues. This is because they have reviewed the piece of action research outlined above and can see how mindfulness will be beneficial to the learning of our pupils as a 'life skill that is really worth learning' (Burnett, 2013).

It would be appropriate to make available more mindful spaces during the school day. In a school that already has beautiful landscape and surroundings this may appear to be unnecessary, however, designated spaces provide a security for those who require their use. A mindful corner, space or room (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 97) can include mindfulness colouring, tactile objects, and soothing music and provide a peaceful space. This space can be utilised within the pastoral school policy as a self-help space, where pupils can self-refer themselves when they need to and re-join the learning environment when they feel that they are realigned to learn. This gives autonomy to the learner to self-regulate their emotions towards their learning practice.

Rechtschaffen suggests that the day starts with an open awareness towards others in the working environment (2014, 96). This is currently designated as the space for collective worship, however, perhaps more awareness could be provided to steer participants to mindfulness practice: at the beginning of or during lessons, to have a moment of stillness reflection. This would provide more 'mindful moments' to

sit together in silence (Rechtschaffen, 2014, 96) and build upon the meaning and purpose of the silent collective worship space. The 'art of paying attention' does not appear explicitly on the curriculum (Mann, 2001, 37), but in this way it can be incorporated within daily learning and teaching practice as a technique that has known psychological and physiological benefits (Mann, 2001, 35).

7.3 Limitations

It cannot be assessed to what extent the participants understood that the intervention was aimed at supporting their learning in all their lessons and for life. They also were not privy to any information regarding the legal requirements of collective worship in schools.

The CAMM scale used in the questionnaire is for children aged nine and upwards (Greco et al., 2011, 607), so for future use in the junior school a suitably appraised questionnaire or method to conduct research with younger pupils would need to be sourced.

7.4 Concluding Points

This piece of action research undertaken in a unique Quaker school setting builds on to the current research data on the use of mindfulness in schools by providing another perspective on the approach to how mindfulness in schools can be implemented. Mindfulness in schools research has gathered in momentum in the past fifteen years, but Quaker schools have not yet responded to this as a method to support well-being. This may be because the current use of stillness and silence in Quaker schools meant that it was considered that there was not a need for more quiet spaces. However, given that the majority of children do not use Meeting for Worship

in a positive way it seems pertinent that Quaker schools do encourage the use of mindfulness as a new learning and teaching method. Given also that Quaker schools are able to implement this activity so simply by using collective worship time, it seems to be a natural way to support the learning of pupils. This study has also supported and made an important contribution to the professional development of the staff involved in the action research process (Punch and Oancea, 2014, 47). It has provided a transparent environment in which to conduct research that is beneficial for the development of school policy and procedure and the learning and teaching of its pupils.

I suggest that for other Quaker schools to implement a successful Mindfulness programme they should not rest on the assumption that because they already use Quaker silence that this will either be enough or lend itself and tie in naturally with mindfulness. Mindfulness requires training and a properly researched programme to ensure the success of any mindfulness programme (Steward Lawlor, 2014, 90). The current offer made to Fergow School from the MYRIAD project to trial and implement the .b programme at the school, supported by the Oxford Mindfulness Centre, should be accepted and become the second cycle of this action research study.

This action research has shown that a still space within a school can become an active teaching space where there is still learning taking place through the practice of mindfulness. Within a Quaker school context where faith and education are intertwined this represents 'True silence … [which] is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment' (William Penn, 1699, Quaker Faith and Practice 2.13).

8. References

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9. Appendices
9.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire Part 1

a. Attendance

What is your data collection number:

For how long (in years/months) have you attended Fergow School (please indicate)? ……

We want to know more about what you do in School Quaker Meeting for Worship.

Read each sentence. Then mark with a cross the column that tells <u>how often</u> each sentence is true for you.

Please mark chosen answer with a "X"	Never True	Rarely True	Some-times True	Often True	Always True
b. Background					
1. I have a religious faith (any apply).					
2. I am a Quaker (attender or member).					
3. I have been to a Meeting for Worship somewhere else (not at school on or a school visit).					
4. I attend school Meeting for Worship.					
c. Meeting for Worship					
5. I think going to school Meeting for Worship benefits me spiritually in some way.					
6. I think going to school Meeting for Worship benefits me emotionally in some way.					
7. During school Meeting for Worship I spend the time thinking about God and religion.					
8. During school Meeting for Worship I spend the time thinking positively.					
9. I learn about the world and other people from going to Meeting for Worship at school.					
10. I learn about Quakerism from going to Meeting for Worship at school.					

d. Student Comments: Please feel free to comment here on <u>any aspect</u> of your experience in Meeting for Worship.

Questionnaire Part 2

We want to know more about what you think, how you feel and what you do.

Read each sentence. Then mark with a cross the column that tells how often each sentence is true for you.

Please mark chosen answer with a "X"	Never True	Rarely True	Some-times True	Often True	Always True
e. Mindfulness Measure					
1. I get upset with myself for having feelings that don't make sense.					
2. At school, I walk from class to class without noticing what I'm doing.					
3. I keep myself busy so I don't notice my thoughts or feelings.					
4. I tell myself that I shouldn't feel the way I'm feeling.					
5. I push away thoughts that I don't like.					
6. It's hard for me to pay attention to only one thing at a time.					
7. I get upset with myself for having certain thoughts.					
8. I think about things that have happened in the past instead of thinking about things that are happening right now.					
9. I think that some of my feelings are bad and that I shouldn't have them.					
10. I stop myself from having feelings that I don't like.					

f. Student Comments: Please feel free to comment here on any aspect of your thinking, feeling or what you do.

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire.

9.2 Intervention Group Questionnaire Comments

Num.	Comments on Q1 Part 1	Comments on Q1 Part 2	Comments on Q2	Comments on Q2 Part 2
1				
2				
3	It makes me feel calmer when it is silence so all my thoughts can go away.			I think that the mindfulness has actually really helped me calm down or reduce my anger. I also think it has made me think that being more mindful has made me a better person. I also still have my pebble that is nice and cold in my pocket. Thank you!
4			I'm just glad I took part	
5			I think it helps me stay calm	I think it has helped me focus and stay calm
6			During the meeting for worship at school I think about any problems I have and get my mind organised. This helps me stress less	During the course I felt myself getting stressed trying to remember to practice the mindfulness at home. I like going to normal meeting because it helps me de stress but trying to remember at home really stressed me.
7			I think about the day ahead and what I have to do	
8				When I touch my stone that I was given it makes me feel how lucky I am for things like clean water and a bed
9			I like going and sitting in silence	

			before the struggle of lessons.	
10				I found the meetings on Monday made me a little agitated because I thought I would miss it. I also have my pebble.
11				
12	When people use visual aids in meeting, and activities it gives me something to focus my mind on in the silences.			
13				
14				
15				
16			Normally in meeting I think about homework (when we are just silent the whole time). Sometimes I remember bad things I've done in my life especially when I was in Year 9. But try and keep those thoughts away, because I get myself from thinking about it.	I feel like I have benefitted from this, sometimes just to relax and mentally let things go. Also because of my asthma it controls my breathing much better and after just feel better. I personally don't get rid of bad thoughts by breathing like this. I just try hard as I can to not think about my past if I'm honest. But definitely feel better physically and mentally afterwards. So I do appreciate sir's time and effort helping me. I also still have all the hand-outs, and the

				stone, which I designed. So thank you for the opportunity.
17				Made me think of the smaller things I take for granted but should appreciate more. I do not have my rock or card.
18				
19				I still have my quake card
20			I still have my rock. I found the breathing techniques useful but often forgot to	
21	I don't usually think of the same thing in meeting twice. If something is bothering me I use meeting to think of a way to resolve them.	I don't think I can help my feelings so I just accept what I feel and deal with it.	I'm not a practising Quaker, but I like the silence in the morning.	I have kept my rock and my card! Mindfulness is extremely helpful. I wish I could carry on with it!
22	I enjoy the silence as it gives me time to think about things in the environment.		Going to meeting really does help me settle down in the morning and get ready	After the mindfulness I find myself sometimes sitting down and using the meditation techniques that I learnt.
23	I find meeting prepares me for the day ahead. I mostly worry about prep I have forgotten to hand in.	I can't control what I think and feel. When I am on my own, I think very negatively, but when I with others I distract myself.	I still have my card and my rock. I found the rock useful.	I have used the technique to de stress before exams. In meetings I have started to think about positive things going on in the day.
24				
25	Sometimes the silence helps me get into the mindset for school and learning			I have kept my rock and my card and put my star on my wall at home. When I felt anxious

	although sometimes I just almost go to sleep or think about food.			sometimes I felt my rock and it kind of helped remembering what sir said about breathing.
26				I have kept my rock and I sometimes hold it.
27			Sometimes a calming use of time	Anxious, negative, self doubt thoughts
28		I think how in home life it can make an effect on how I feel. Bad/good it alters my emotions subconsciously. So over hearing parts of conversations at home, can unawares have an impact on my emotions. Through parents talking about jobs.		I still got my rock. It helps me focus my attention on certain emotions. I think it has helped me to stay calm.
29			I still have my stone and card	I found the experience interesting, however I don't think I necessarily benefitted from it.
30			It is a good time to think about the day.	
31			Don't like too long silences. I like to hear ministry	I like to think while listening to music
32	I find it a good time to relax and clear my mind from school work and any stresses.	I often don't think about how I'm feeling, it sounds odd but I don't feel like I have the time to.	I find the Quaker meeting is good but for me I find spiritual energy and feelings elsewhere and not in meeting, but it's good for getting me ready for the day in a calm way.	I still have my card which I keep in my room. I still have my stone which brought me peace after the passing of a friend. I wrote his name and the date he passed away on it and made him a little

				shrine in my room. I will treasure the stone forever. I think I am now more aware of my feelings, think more about what I eat and how grateful I am. I breathe more deeply and feel much more calm.
33				
34			Since I started the mindfulness course I have found meeting for worship a better environment for awareness of my thoughts.	
35	I like the calm quiet time where I am not forced to think anything, I can simply get my thoughts in order.		I like the silence, spending time getting my thoughts in order.	I have kept the thinking pebble, I like to keep it in my coat pocket and continue to take deep breaths when I feel it in my pocket.

9.3 Control Group Questionnaire Comments

Num.	Comments on Q1	Comments on Q1 Part 2	Comments on Q2 Part 1	Comments on Q2 Part 2
1	It is a bit boring and it is way too long also we have them too much	When I feel sad I think happy thought (i.e. Woody my dog)	It is a bit boring, I'd rather be reading	Often I try to stop myself from crying
2				
3				
4	Having meeting for worship lets me calm and prepare for the day		In meeting I relax and don't think	I sometimes just do but other times I think they act
5				
6			It is a good time to think stuff that needs thinking about	
7				
8	I think meeting is a nice place to relax		It's nice to have a quiet time to reflect	
9				
10			I'm settling in well, I rarely think in worship in meeting, I just stay quiet and wait	
11	I like going to meeting for worship as it lets me have time to think but I don't feel like I am in a religious place or feel like I should be thinking religious thoughts it just feels very free.		It helps me relax and concentrate on the rest of the day	
12	I do love sitting in silence as it calms you down for the day ahead. And it helps me to collect my thoughts in a calm spiritual way. I also enjoy the pieces of text that is spoken aloud from the Quaker Faith			

	and Practice book as it encourages one to think more deeply into subjects.			
13				
14			I think it is calming and nice to sit in	
15				
16				
17	I like it because it gives me time to just stop and think 'what will happen and what will I do today'	I believe that if I had a different mood when writing this then some of the answers would have been very different.		
18				
19				
20	I think it is good that we have meeting for worship because I can gather my thoughts and sort of plan my day.			
21				
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29	I feel that Quakerism is good for you, necessarily, I do however feel that silence is a good thing for everyone.			
30				
31				
32				
33				
34	I am unsure of my faith. I hope that there is a God but I find it hard to	I wish I could have all the answers to my questions but I know that is not	My parents gave me their faith, so I feel like I don't believe all Quaker values	I am often exhausted so don't notice what I am doing or am so

	believe without proof or a spiritual vision. I am a Quaker because my parents made me one at birth. This means that I attend many Quaker events out of school. I feel obliged to go to meetings at school but I think it is good for me and can give me some still and quiet time in my day. Sometimes the ministry can be very interesting and help me with worries I have. I know a bit about Quakerism already so it usually just reinforces or refreshes it.	possible. I have to look at what I know and what others can tell me. Hearing peoples experiences in meeting is really helpful. I don't get upset exactly but frustrated or inconvenienced. I am often very busy and don't have time to notice my surroundings. I don't keep myself intentionally busy but its just how it is so I don't get much time to think, this is why meeting for worship is so important. I know there is not a lot I can do about the way I feel but I can try to look at things in a positive way and do the best I can. This is challenging at times but the quiet gives me time to think and make sense of my thoughts. I am constantly thinking of all the things I have to do so to be guided into concentrating on others who need help can be very refreshing. I don't think that looking into the past can help solve all our problems but meeting can help with this. I am only human and sometimes I can put	but I don't feel pressured as it is a relaxed society. I find it hard to believe without proof but I like having the community. I am a member but I do not always feel I am living in a Quakerly way. I used to go to meeting every Sunday but I haven't recently because of school deadlines. I try to always go to school meeting but I do not often have a spiritual experience. I just don't want to miss anything that could be helpful to my life. My life is very hard so meeting gives me time to reflect and be still. I find having speakers and learning about others experiences very helpful. I am often not in a positive mood when in meeting, thinking about my work load and meeting does not usually change this. I know quite a lot about Quakers already so I often don't learn anything new but it is interesting to find out new things or be reminded of things I know but have forgotten or have not associated	focused on what I have to do next. I am busy but not out of choice. I would like more time to reflect but sometimes I can't think of anything meaningful. I think we all to some extent ignore suffering and difficult situations if they don't affect us so I feel selfish but I don't do anything about it. I want to learn from my past mistakes but I often just do what I think is right anyway from my gut feeling there are feelings but that's only because I am uneducated but I don't consciously try to render this. It is hard to stop yourself from feeling feelings so I may not act above them but I have them possibly not that they are thoughts.

		thoughts about other people to the back of my mind. Meeting helps me to overcome this.	with a situation before that can help me know what to do.	
35				

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