

Schoolboys getting classes in meditation and stress relief

Schoolboys at the leading public school, Tonbridge School, in Kent, are receiving weekly 40-minute classes in meditation and stress relief.



Experts say the project helps teenagers identify 'corrosive' mindsets that could lead to mental health problems. Photo: PA



By [Andrew Hough \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-hough/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-hough/)

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In what is being described as a ground-breaking school curriculum addition, the school's pupils aged 14 and 15 are taking part in the courses designed by Oxford and Cambridge psychologists.

The school's year 10 pupils' "mindfulness" course, which will last for two months, is said to be one of the first in the country, which was designed to develop skills in concentration and to combat anxiety.

The school also reportedly said it showed teenagers the benefits of silence and helps them to identify certain "corrosive" mindsets that could lead to mental health problems.

The project is being jointly run with staff at Charterhouse and Hampton schools, which will soon introduce similar classes.

It is being lead by the Mindfulness Centre at Oxford and the Wellbeing Institute at Cambridge.

[Meditation 'should be routinely available on NHS' \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6933011/Meditation-should-be-routinely-available-on-NHS.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6933011/Meditation-should-be-routinely-available-on-NHS.html)

[Meditation 'cuts risk of heart attack by half' \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6581495/Meditation-cuts-risk-of-heart-attack-by-half.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/6581495/Meditation-cuts-risk-of-heart-attack-by-half.html)

[Meditation 'makes people more intelligent by growing the brain' \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/5325373/Meditation-makes-people-more-intelligent-by-growing-the-brain.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/5325373/Meditation-makes-people-more-intelligent-by-growing-the-brain.html)

[Couple die during 'spiritual cleansing ceremony' \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/6311726/Couple-die-during-spiritual-cleansing-ceremony.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/6311726/Couple-die-during-spiritual-cleansing-ceremony.html)

Richard Burnett, A Tonbridge housemaster who is leading the course, said the course demanded a “culture change” in the perceptions of silence for teachers and pupils.

“One of the things about schools is that silence is associated with power, the teacher tells the pupils to be quiet,” he told The Times.

“What you need to do is convey the idea that silence is a positive activity to be savoured and enjoyed.”

Prof Mark Williams, director of the Mindfulness Centre at Oxford, told the paper that Tonbridge was the first school to introduce a full meditation course in a practical rather than academic context.

“This is not about converting people to Buddhism, but showing there is scientific evidence that these practices are useful,” he said.

“So why deny them from being used?”

Andrew McCulloch, chief executive of the Mental Health Foundation, said that mindfulness training also offered the chance to take proactive steps to avoid depression and anxiety in later life.