

# Schools in England Introduce a New Subject: Mindfulness

Mindfulness exercises are already taught in many schools worldwide, including this one in New York. Schools in England are joining a study to determine which techniques work best. Credit Lindsay Morris for The New York Times



- **Jay Sekulow – ACL J** - Some public schools are forcing students to participate in Buddhist-inspired meditations – or be removed from the classroom.  
<https://youtu.be/sZCFGp1gZqU>
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- LONDON — Students in England already learn about mathematics, science and history, but hundreds of schools are preparing to expand the traditional curriculum with a new subject: mindfulness.

In up to 370 English schools, students will start to practice mindfulness as part of a study to improve youth mental health, the British government said on Monday.

They will work with mental health experts to learn relaxation techniques, breathing exercises and other methods to “help them regulate their emotions,” the government said in [a news release announcing the program](#).

The goal of the program is to study which approaches work best for young people in a world of rapid change. The government said the study, which will run until 2021, is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

“As a society, we are much more open about our mental health than ever before, but the modern world has brought new pressures for children,” Damian Hinds, the British education secretary, said in a statement.

“Children will start to be introduced gradually to issues around mental health, well-being and happiness right from the start of primary school,” he added.

The initiative comes months after [a survey commissioned by the National Health Service](#) found that one in eight children in England between the ages of 5 and 19 suffered from at least one mental disorder at the time of their assessment in 2017.

The survey, which was published in November, also indicated a slight increase in mental disorders in five to 15-year-olds, which rose to 11.2 percent in 2017 from 9.7 percent in 1999. Disorders like anxiety and depression were the most common, affecting one in 12 children and early adolescents in 2017, and appeared more often in girls.

Imran Hussain, the director of policy and campaigns for Action for Children, a British charity, in the United Kingdom, called it a “children’s mental health crisis.”

“Every day our front-line services see children and teenagers struggling to get to grips with how they fit into the increasingly complex modern world — contending with things like intense pressure at school, bullying or problems at home, all while being bombarded by social media,” he said in a statement on Monday.

He added: “Services like these can lessen the anxiety, pain and anguish that some teens go through, but also reduce their need for intensive support further down the line.”

But two Parliamentary committees have criticized the government reports on which the program is based, for focusing on handling emotional problems rather than preventing them. In [a report released last May](#), the Education and Health and Social

Care Committees wrote, “the Government’s strategy lacks ambition and will provide no help to the majority of those children who desperately need it,” while increasing the workload of teachers.

“The role of prevention appears to be a missing link in building better support for children and young people, especially in the early years,” the committees wrote. They found that social media and the schools’ system of high-pressure exams can have particularly negative effects on the mental health of young people.

But Dr. Jessica Deighton, an associate professor in child mental health and well-being at University College London who is leading the government trials, said that the new initiative was intended to offer more than quick fixes.

“There is a tendency to think that the solution is mental health intervention,” she said on Monday. “We will try to reduce the stigma against mental health problems, by making the school environment literate in mental health.”

She said the program included several tactics, including training teachers to hold role-playing exercises, teaching relaxation practices and inviting professionals for group discussions.

“It’s not just to make them feel better in the short-term,” Dr. Deighton said, “but to better equip them for later in life.”