



**University of
Sunderland**

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The Mini Mind Project 2023-2024

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Background and context

The need for positive psychology

Post-pandemic, we know that cognitive, social and emotional resources must now find their place alongside more traditional learning (Wear and Bethune, 2021). Our teachers felt that a combination of external evidence, staff perceptions of pupils, and feedback from parent voice demonstrated an increasing need to support children with self-regulation strategies. Through participatory action research (PAR) those who are concerned about an issue take a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it (Pain et al, 2019). ↓

Activities funded

1. TRAINING AND RESOURCES

To kick-start the project, we brought a Mini Mind trainer to the university to engage in a day of training, reflection and planning on campus as a research group made up of university staff and school staff.

2. CLASSROOM RESOURCES

We bought in class sets of the Mini Mind booklets, which are the materials that the teachers would be using with the children back in their schools.

3. CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL COSTS

Recognising that we could not pay for all of the time needed for teachers to be involved in the project, we were able to make a contribution to school costs. All schools were already initial teacher training partner schools, so we could make these payments through the university's placements team direct to the schools.

4. DISSEMINATION

Some of the teachers have been able to attend close-to-practice and practitioner research conferences. We have been able to network, share our project and invite other teachers to learn from our project. →



Mini Mind training and planning day at the University of Sunderland

What have we learned?

- Participatory action research works well with schools as they are actively involved in the research, and it aligns with the way that they already work.
- University staff act as a catalyst, bringing together schools, ideas and funding opportunity to support schools to be part of their own solution for self-identified research questions.
- Funding is the stimulus for being able to take action with schools – time for university staff to get things set up; contribution to school time – a little funding can result in a wealth of impact.
- Once teacher gets involved in research, they quickly start thinking like researchers and asking questions about reliability, validity and impact.
- As one of our teachers said – they now have more questions, and so we now want to find ways to develop our work with schools and teachers. →

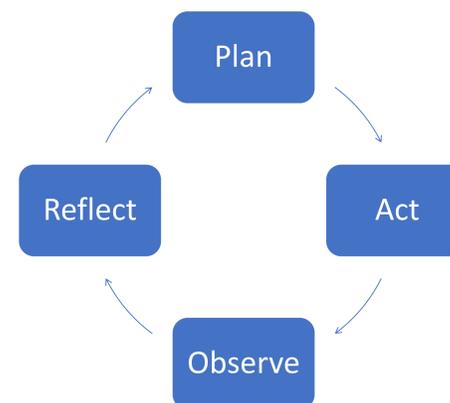


Figure 1: Typical action research cycle, which works well with school academic cycles.

Pathways to impact

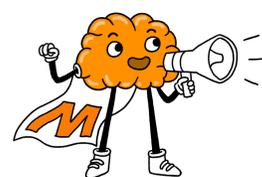
- Created a new network / pathway for impactful research with schools and teacher by inviting schools to participate in PAR project.
- Involved nine teachers from four schools, including one multi-academy trust, enhancing their research skills through participatory action research.
- Trained nine teachers in the implementation of Mini Mind approach and materials.
- Different implementation models in each school mean that we have reached approximately 150 students across those schools.
- Impacted on schools' approaches to curriculum design and progression as they look to embed Mini Mind for next year and beyond.
- Set up an internal agile research team of approximately 12 additional staff to help work on this project as well as others, thereby enhancing their research skills in parallel.
- Communication and engagement with different school communities through sharing the project at conferences and publications. ↓

Impact on children and staff

- 1 CHILDREN NOW HAVE TOOLS TO TALK WITH**
- They are using the positive psychology language in the classroom and playground
- 2 IMPROVED SELF-AWARENESS**
- Teachers notice children's improved relationships, and their own awareness, too
- 3 TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS**
- Teachers' heightened awareness of research issues in relation to curriculum planning. ↓

Contact details

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References and links

Mini Mind <https://mind-span.co.uk/mini-mind/>

Pain R, Whitman, G. and Milledge, D (2019) Participatory Action Research Toolkit: An Introduction to Using PAR as an Approach to Learning, Research and Action. Practice Guide. Durham University. Available at: <https://eprints.icstudies.org.uk/id/eprint/293/>

Weare K and Bethune A (2021) Implementing Mindfulness in Schools: An Evidence-Based Guide. Guidance report. Available at <https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/implementing-mindfulness-in-schools-an-evidence-based-guide>

