



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga -  
Session 4 'Being a Bear.' (02.02.17)

**Can teaching children Yoga as exercise  
provide an effective calming strategy in  
primary school education?**

**Natalie Gammer | MA Education | 05.01.2018**

**Student ID: 1132486**

# Contents

Introduction.....	1 – 10
Literature Review.....	11 - 26
Methodology.....	27 - 40
Findings & Analysis.....	41 - 69
Conclusion.....	70 - 77
Bibliography.....	78 - 94
Appendices.....	95 – 130

## **Introduction:**

**“Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health.” Dalai Lama**

According to the Oxford dictionary, the definition of ‘calmness’ in English is: 1. The state or quality of being free from agitation or strong emotion. 2. The state or condition of being free from disturbance or violent activity (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). In today’s primary schools, achieving and encouraging an appropriate level of calmness is necessary to enable children to fully engage, concentrate and learn effectively. However, in my personal experience of growing class sizes and a lack of funding (meaning less resources and staff), supporting all children along with their individual learning and at times challenging behavioural needs can be a perplexing and demanding undertaking for teachers.

What if we as teaching practitioners could provide a calming strategy to reduce feelings of negative emotion in children whilst also providing an opportunity for physical exercise and a chance to promote children’s health and wellbeing? Could a calming strategy revolutionise how we teach aspects of Physical Education, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education, Personal, Social and Health Education in primary schools?

Health and wellbeing education can be viewed as multidimensional (Goble & Bye-Brooks, 2016) and includes supporting children’s:

- Physical health and well-being – healthy development and functioning of the body, within reason of physical normality; including those living with physical, sensory or intellectual impairment.

- Mental and emotional health and well-being – the healthy functioning of the mind within reason of what we define as ‘normality’; embracing the concept of neurodiversity (Silberman, 2015).
- Spiritual health and well-being – not only an association with one religion, faith or philosophy but rather a sense of meaning and purpose in life. This might manifest itself in political activism for social justice, environmental-awareness or a desire to seek personal fulfilment through a career, sport or unpaid interest and a desire to achieve happiness and well-being in personal relationships and everyday life.
- Social health and well-being – the interrelationship between the individual and the social and cultural environment they inhabit, including the political, ideological and economic factors involved.

(Goble & Bye-Brooks, 2016:4)

Health and wellbeing can be considered through a combination of ‘holistic’, ‘humanistic and ‘ecological’ conceptions (Goble & Bye-Brooks, 2016). Holistic means addressing each of the aspects defined above. Humanistic approaches value the importance of the individual in a ‘person-centred’ approach which recognises that whatever commonalities there may be in the issues and experiences young people face, empowering each individual person to find a solution that meets their own needs, goals and aspirations is the aim. Ecological means to recognise that all individuals sit amongst a complex web of relationships and interactions within their physical, psychological and sociocultural environment and that the impact and influence of these factors are highly significant for young people’s health and wellbeing (Goble & Bye-Brooks, 2016).

Yoga and calmness have many overlapping features in common, but they are also very different constructs, making them distinctly diverse from one another. I have created this Venn diagram to show how there are corresponding and conflicting mechanisms involved in the connotations of each term and how they work alongside each other (Figure 1):

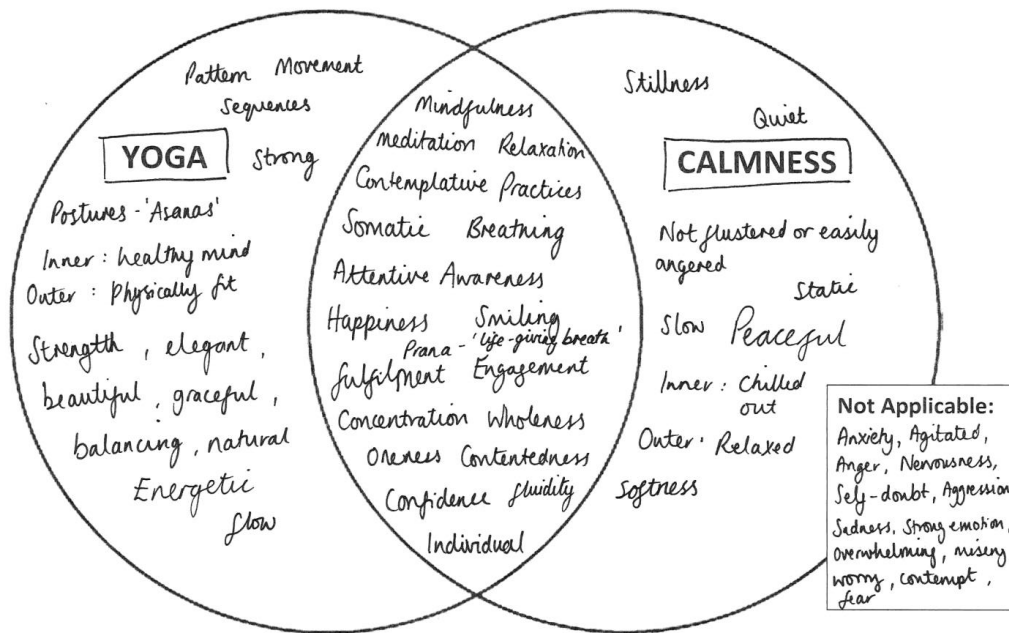


Figure 1: Gammer, N. (2017) The differences and similarities between the terms 'Calmness' and 'Yoga'

It is visible when looking at this diagram that the separate entities are interestingly divided and the similarities prolific. It also becomes clear that 'Yoga' has more in common with the *outer* body, whereas 'calmness' is more of a feeling and an *inner* experience. Having had over ten years' experience of my personal Yoga journey in its many forms, it is my subjective belief that practising Yoga induces a state of calmness and wellbeing like no other. It is something that can be felt but not seen; more of a somatic discipline, spiritual by nature and so much more than merely just an exercise. I began a Yoga class whilst studying at University as a young adult. During this poignant period of stress and anxiety, Yoga helped me to remain calm and focussed and I often refer to the techniques I learnt at this time to help me cope with the pressures of my job and the demands of everyday life.

Yoga provides many adults across the globe with an opportunity to focus on their breath and allow their bodies a chance to become one with their minds. The practice of Yoga affects brain waves, stilling minds of busy thoughts and slowing the breath; allowing both a chance to relax and achieve a state of peace, tranquillity and mindful experience, whilst simultaneously exercising and strengthening the body (Rosen, 2002, Wenig, 2007 and Desikachar, 1995). According to many, including Rosen (2002), the literal meaning of the word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word *yuj* meaning 'to join' or 'to harness' (Rosen, 2002:13) and we understand this today as the practice of uniting body and mind; stilling fleeting thoughts and uncontrollable emotions (Rosen, 2009). Swami Satchidananda prefers not to think of it as 'uniting' anything but simply as 'The extraordinary experience gained by controlling the modifications of the mind itself is called Yoga' (Satchidananda, 1990). His translation of Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras' provides a complete manual for the study and practice of Yoga. He believes that practising the art of mastering the mind (Yoga) every day will lead to the achievement of physical, mental and emotional balance and harmony (Satchidananda, 1990).

The 'Yoga Sutras' is a collection of 195 Sutras first put together by Patanjali in India around 400 CE, collecting materials from older traditions. Passed down through the generations and translated into numerous different languages, his book is often referred to as 'The Yoga Bible' and provides a reference point from which many different types of Yoga have evolved, for example, Iyengar, Hatha and Kundalini to name but a few different branches of Yoga available today. Many of these different styles of Yoga can be traced back to Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras' and teach the logical chapters of 'Yoga Theory', referred to as the 'Eight Limbs of Yoga'. Traditionally, Yoga includes guidelines for social and personal behaviour, these are the 'Yama' or 'Niyama' and conventionally one would practice the 'Yamas' (Restraints) and 'Niyamas' (Observances) before coming to learn the 'Asanas' (Postures). Yamas include: *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (Truthfulness), *Asteya* (Honesty) *Brachmacharya* (Sensual Abstinence) and *Aparigraha* (non-acquisitiveness). Niyamas include: *Shaucha* (cleanliness), *Santisha* (contentment), *Tapas*

(austerity), *Swadhyaya* (self-study) and *Ishwara Pranidhana* (intense devotion and surrender to the Divine) (Saraswati, 2009).

In 1985, the first edition of *Yoga Education for Children* was released by the Yoga Publications Trust with an emphasis on promoting Yoga for pre-school children. Later in 2009, the second volume was released with a focus on teaching Yoga to children of school age and those with special needs. Throughout the books there is great importance placed on the traditional teachings of Yoga in which Swami Saraswati (2009) outlines the techniques and how to make these applicable for young children. Yoga Nidra (Relaxed Alertness), Pranayama (Breathing), Prana Nidra (Alternate Body-Sides Breathing), Trataka (Relaxed Gazing), Pratyahara and Dharana (Relaxation and Concentration) are covered with real-life suggestions and case studies included within the chapters. Saraswati claims that the book 'is designed to stimulate those who work or interact with children to be creative in their use of Yoga practices, empowering children to become creative, emotionally stable citizens of the future.' (Saraswati, 2009).

Physical Education in schools has never had more choice and opportunity than there is available today. However, in my teaching experience, there is a tendency to rely on steadfast, outdated forms of PE rather than challenging what Physical Education might encompass in the future. Could Yoga provide a cross-curricular opportunity for PE, PSHE and SMSC to become a combined subject? In my opinion, yes. There is an opportunity to teach more than just the National Curriculum's PE objectives in a well-designed Yoga lesson. However, exercising a cautious and considerate approach must be maintained when choosing how we plan to teach children some of the more spiritual aspects of Yoga. It is the perfect opportunity to instill moral values of 'trust' and 'respect' and also to build children's awareness of the natural world. But Yoga should not to be used as an opportunity to sway religious beliefs or confuse young minds; the omission of any religious practice is a useful and necessary part of transferring the key elements of Yoga in a respectful manner. I use the welcoming Indian greeting 'Namaste' with children but

in terms of specific techniques such as 'Trataka' (Relaxed Gazing) I would simply guide the children into doing the mindful activity without mentioning the traditional name unnecessarily. Likewise, teaching the Yamas of 'Truthfulness' and 'Honesty' are valuable and worthwhile but avoid mentioning 'Sensual Abstinence' as it is simply not appropriate for children to learn this aspect of Yoga teaching.

Gymnastics remains a popular choice for indoor Physical Education lessons in primary schools and has been so for many decades. Developed in Germany by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn to promote the health and fitness of soldiers, British Gymnastics (formerly known as British Amateur Gymnastics Association) currently aims to become one of the top three sports in the UK (British Gymnastics, 2017). In many ways, Yoga as an exercise is very similar to gymnastics. Both rely on teaching children strength, movement and balance skills. However, the key differences are the lack of competitiveness in Yoga and conversely; the lack of spirituality in gymnastics. Yoga is a non-competitive activity, designed to promote physical and mental wellness of the individual through stretching, breathing and exercise.

Since the 1970's, Yoga has been a surprisingly popular exercise and was once shown in the UK on daytime television (Annis, 2015). The programme 'Yoga for Health' on ITV was led by Yoga teacher Lyn Marshall, as she went through her routine and audiences were encouraged to follow and copy her movements (Annis, 2015). She released several books, programmes and videos to support the programme and these were very popular nationwide. Lyn Marshall believed that 'The benefits of Yoga are endless and wide ranging' (Annis, 2015) and could be used as treatment for a long list of ailments included stress-related back pain. Marshall is not the only high-profile celebrity to attest to the importance of Yoga. In recent years, Yoga has become fashionable and popular amongst people from all walks of society, interested in both promoting their physical and mental wellbeing and likewise expanding their sense of spirituality, meaning and purpose.



In October 2017, Fearne Cotton (TV presenter and author) who released her book 'Yoga Babies' earlier in the year (Powell, 2017) told the evening Standard: 'My son is doing Yoga at school, it's amazing. It's really important - so much focus is on academia, which is great, but I think in this day and age there needs to be a deeper understanding for kids to know it's OK to feel a bit c\*\*\*.' (Powell, 2017). I think what Cotton means by feeling 'c\*\*\*' is that schools need to take responsibility to further develop children's ability to see failure as a necessary part of learning and mistakes as an opportunity to grow and reflect. Schools not only have a duty for high academic attainment, but they must also build children's resilience in a meaningful and non-competitive way.

Teaching Yoga to children is nothing new; many people have developed lesson plans and created websites with videos to support the teaching of Yoga for children. Marsha Wenig (2007) describes the benefits of Yoga in her book 'Yoga Kids: Educating the Whole Child through Yoga'. She believes that physically, it improves flexibility, strength, coordination and body-awareness through an increase in concentration, a sense of calmness and relaxation (Wenig, 2007). She also draws attention to the powerful link between Yoga and the 'Natural World'; many poses refer to trees and animals because when Yogis (ancient spiritual practitioners of Yoga) developed the 'Asanas' many years ago, they would have lived very close to nature. This cannot always be said for today's children growing up in a busy world of technology, so there is a valid need to bring childhood and nature back together (Wenig, 2007). Wenig is adamant this can be achieved by introducing children to yoga:

When children imitate the movements and sounds of nature, they have a chance to get inside another being and imagine taking on its qualities. When they assume the pose of the lion (Simhasana) for example, they experience not only the power and behaviour of the lion, but also their own sense of power: when to be aggressive, when to retreat. The physical movements introduce kids to Yoga's true meaning: union, expression and honour for oneself and one's part in the delicate web of life (Wenig, 2007: 34).

After trialling, Wenig developed her brand of children's yoga called 'Yoga Kids' basing her programme in Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983) to create a programme of teaching which encompasses as many of these different intelligences as possible. According to Gardner there are eight different types of intelligences inherent in all of us; linguistic, logical, visual, musical, kinaesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1983). He believes that children should have as much opportunity as possible to develop these intelligences.

Marsha Wenig (2007) is confident this method of teaching children Yoga achieves the goal of educating each intelligence in its entirety by integrating storytelling, games, music, language, and the 'arts' to engage the 'whole child'. Interestingly, a similar combination of engaging activities and four-part lesson (always ending with 'Pratyahara' or relaxation) is also recommended by Saraswati (2009). The multi-layered approach used by 'Yoga Kids' and other children's yoga providers is widely known to be an engaging and effective way of teaching the Yoga postures to children. Instead of using the correct Yogic terminology for poses, you would hear in an adult Yoga class, postures are given a child-friendly name, such as that of an animal or an aspect of nature to act as a point of reference. This is particularly useful when working with children in Key Stage One (5-7 years old) and visual imagery would be useful to help scaffold their understanding. Using a story to underpin the context acts as a thread to follow throughout each yoga lesson. Children can follow the unfolding storyline and you might break into a song or a game following the same theme providing an engaging context for children to base their learning upon.

One of the key benefits of teaching children Yoga is the effect upon a child's vestibular system; which is a neurological system that controls balance. The vestibular system is the first of the sensory systems to mature and exists even before a child's birth. According to Sally Goddard Blythe in her book 'The Well Balanced Child' (2004), movement and early learning are intrinsic to one another and it is my belief that yoga

can act as the perfect bridge between the two; joining movement with learning, in a fun and engaging context. 'Balance does not begin when we learn to stand on our two feet toward the end of the first year of life' she urges – it is something that babies practice and developed through a combination of movement and regular exercises which strengthens the back, neck and head in order for 'waddlers' and toddlers to begin to stand and walk safely. In her book she alludes to the idea that lacking a fully developed vestibular system at around age seven, could have a negative effect on children's emotional and physiological wellbeing, as well as their academic successes at school because balance affects how we apply core muscles and fine-motor skills in writing (Blythe, 2004).

When I first became interested in teaching Yoga to children during PE sessions, I searched for a study which was written by a primary school teacher and explained how to plan and teach a sequence of children's Yoga lessons in an easy to follow way. Finding a study which explained how to teach children's Yoga in mainstream primary schools was difficult and seemingly non-existent, however I was overwhelmed by the wealth of alternative literature suggesting the benefits of Yoga for special needs children, pregnancy, adults and the elderly; I continued to believe it was a good idea and one worth pursuing.

There is a common belief today that Yoga is 'good for you', people who practice Yoga appear to be more in-control of themselves both mentally and physically (calm), happier and healthier than those who pursue other interests or exercise. In this study, I am interested in finding academic literature that explores the belief that Yoga is good for your mental and physical health. What is the theory behind the understanding, if any?

Is there any literature to support my belief that Yoga could have the same potential benefits for children?

As well as researching whether Yoga provides an effective calming strategy, this study will also discover the potential benefits and considerations necessary when introducing Yoga to children. I will discover how to make teaching Yoga in school possible for any qualified practitioner teaching a class of primary aged children to implement as part of indoor PE sessions. I have aimed the lessons particularly at those children in KS1 (5-7 years old) as existing literature on this age-range is sparse.

There are many certification programmes available to train people to teach children's Yoga, however they often require additional training and high fees (for example programmes like; Rainbow Kids Yoga, Yoga 4 Classrooms, iRest for Kids etc.). Research into the benefits of children's yoga is still at the very early stages.

So, as part of this study, I have planned a six-week course of Yoga which could act as a step-by-step guide that could easily be adapted as part of a weekly indoor PE session by a qualified practitioner interested in promoting children's mental and physical health, wellbeing and spirituality in primary school. The aim of this study is to find out if Yoga could be used as a potential calming intervention with children aged 5-7 years old.

## **Literature Review – Introduction:**

The definition of Yoga is ambiguous and falls under many umbrella terms including: '*Contemplative Practices*' such as '*Mindfulness*' and '*Mind-Body Practices*'. There is a significant amount of literature discussing the many potential benefits of Yoga (as well as other '*Mindful Practices*') by a growing number of educators, paediatricians, psychologists and scientists in various fields of study; however, there are limited numbers of studies conducted with children in the primary age phase (4-11 years old) who are pre-adolescent, in the early years, or children in an educational setting. Until recently, most of the research into '*Mind-Body Practices*' including; Yoga, Meditation, Guided Imagery and Mindfulness has been conducted with adults (Barnes et al. 2008, Raub, 2002, Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003). These studies demonstrate that '*Mindful Practice*' or '*Contemplative Practices*' including Yoga can improve health and wellbeing but also aspects of self-regulation including: a reduction in anxiety, improved behaviour, attentional control, emotion regulation and perspective taking (Shapiro et al. 2014; Ortnier et al. 2007; Walsh and Shapiro 2006, Valente and Marotta, 2005). Other benefits identified include improved self-efficacy, confidence, empathy and the alleviation of stress in girls (White, 2012).

However, Mees (2005) makes reference to the fact that contemporary Yoga bears little resemblance to classical Indian forms. Due to the rapid growth in interest as a recreational activity, clinicians are also seeing a rise in the number of Yoga-related injuries (Mees, 2005). It outlines the drawbacks of Yoga as a fitness activity because it is difficult to assess and that the benefits of Yoga are unproven, so physicians and patients should tailor their expectations of its effectiveness accordingly.

Galantino, Galbavy and Quin (2008) conducted a systematic literature review evidencing the therapeutic effects of Yoga (as distinct from other '*Mindful Practices*'); however, their focus was predominantly on adolescent participants and was explored in a medical field of study as part of a clinical physical exercise intervention for physiotherapists; not

an educational one. Similarly, Daut (2016) explores the roots of Ancient Yoga, tracking the trendy growth in popularity of Yoga in the 1970's and the increase of Yoga studios in Los Angeles in the 1990's whilst building a strong case for the physical, mental and emotional benefits of Yoga. Daut (2016) also suggests that Yoga could be used as a wellbeing intervention to help professionals who suffer from '*Compassion Fatigue*' (Figley Institute, 2012) defined as "the emotional and physical exhaustion affecting professionals and care-givers over time." (pg.4, Figley Institute, 2012) including schoolteachers and social workers. Tamilselvi & Thangarajathi (2011, 2013; 2016) developed and validated a 'Yoga Video Package' and researched the effects Yoga interventions have on the health and wellbeing of school teachers. They found that the implications were positive in relieving depression, anxiety and stress. Mensinga (2011) highlights the potential benefits of unifying both body and mind in a professional capacity, how Yoga can help to promote the well-being of social workers and professionals. Despite these articles being unrelated to my area of study, the breadth and scope of their research attests to the positive power Yoga has to promote wellbeing.

### **Yoga for Children:**

Of the literature concerned with Yoga and children, an interesting review of what mindfulness (including Yoga) is in the early years is found in the work of Erwin & Robinson (2016). It clearly defines what we mean by mindful practice and makes references in terms of early childhood education; highlighting the belief that children are 'naturally mindful' (Erwin & Robinson, 2016:270). A systematic review of available literature was undertaken which "firstly identifies practices that promote mindfulness such as deliberate joy or breathing, Yoga, and meditation, all of which produce a sense of calm, joy and focus." (Erwin & Robinson, 2016:270) a definition I can relate to and agree with, as it has been difficult to conclude a definitive version of what 'Mindful Practice' is in terms of an early childhood education framework and how Yoga might fit into the umbrella-term of 'Mindfulness'. They go on to add: "There is a sense of

engagement, awareness and harmony that permeates a child's experience in the moment" (Erwin & Robinson, 2016:270). One of the main questions raised by this study, is not whether it would be of benefit; but how best to incorporate mindful practice into everyday school life, rather than seeing it as an intervention. They ask how mindfulness practice can be adequately valued within a wider educational context, especially in today's Literacy/Numeracy skills focussed UK education system. Another pressing challenge is how we can articulate what mindful practice is during the early years because young children are so naturally mindful, how we can best support them, "or at the very least move out of the way so they can experience the world mindfully" (Erwin & Robinson, 2016:283).

An early study specifically with school-aged children and the effects of Yoga was carried out in 2003. Slovacek, Tucker and Pantoja (2003) examined the benefits of children participating in a school-based Yoga programme. The study investigated Yoga instruction and student outcome variables at 'The Accelerated School' in Los Angeles, where the demographics were dominantly represented by 62% Hispanic and 36% African-American (2% White, American-Indian & Philipino) students. The study examined 252 elementary (primary) school students who participated in a Yoga curriculum for 60 minutes per week and an additional 153 middle (KS3) school students who participated in Yoga for 120 minutes per week. As a result of the children's participation in Yoga, there was a 20% improvement in the students' positive feelings about themselves. Participation in Yoga class was associated with a decrease in 'bad' behaviour among students, which was measured by school discipline referrals. In addition, participation in Yoga improved physical fitness test scores on flexibility, upper body strength, and aerobic capacity. Students' academic performance also improved. However, Yoga was not found to improve students' attitude towards school or attendance and the school already had a high attendance rate of 98% (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003).

A common theme often repeatedly referred to within the literature, is the theory of 'self-regulation' as a key feature of 'calmness' which is crucial to a child's healthy development and sense of wellbeing (Shapiro et al. 2014, Longo, Coyne & Joseph, 2016). Self-regulation is the outward behaviour of inner calmness which lends itself to children's ability to learn and succeed academically (Yang & Chan, 2014). Those who are calm will have 'mastered' their impulses and will have regulated their attention and focus (Shapiro 2014). If someone is feeling calm and happy on the inside, then they will appear to be 'in-control' of themselves and their behaviour (Shapiro et al. 2014). It is thought that self-regulation measured in preschool predicts school readiness (Shapiro et al. 2014; Blair and Razza 2007; McClelland et al. 2007) and may predict future potential for substance dependence or socioeconomic status. It is also believed by to be the key intermediary between a child's biology, early experiences, and later functioning, which is a developmental progression in a child's capacity to modulate reactions to stress, maintain focused attention, and understand mental states in the self and others (Palgi, 2007, Fonagy and Target, 2002). It is the overriding thought, conferred in many articles, that mindfulness or 'attentive awareness' (which includes Yoga) lends itself to self-regulation theory (Black and Fernando 2014; Brown and Ryan 2003; Oberle et al. 2012) in that it brings mind and body back to paying attention to the present moment, which influences positive psychological and emotional change in children (Bergen-Cico, Razza & Timmins 2015; Shapiro et al. 2006; Zelazo and Lyons 2012).

The components of Yoga in its many forms (Hatha, Iyengar, Vinyasa, Kundalini etc.) traditionally include calm breathing, postures and meditation. Calm breathing is thought to help focus the mind and regulate autonomic nervous system which encourages relaxation, physical poses which help to improve posture, flexibility and strength; while relaxation and a meditative state is thought to calm the body and focus the mind (Yang & Chan, 2014, Steiner et al. 2012).



According to a recent UK survey nearly 1 in 3 children across the UK (aged 2-15) are overweight or obese (Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action, 2017). Consistent physical activity is essential to promote health and fitness in children, including cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and weight control. Getting children involved in physical activity is more critical than ever before. Moreover, physical activity is believed to make people happier and can alter our mood from negative to positive (Kanning & Schlicht, 2010). Current guidance states that schools should provide two hours of PE or physical activity each week. However, UK chief medical officers recommend that all children should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day. This could be during break times, lunch-times and active lessons or through after-school clubs. But how can we as teachers fit in an extra 60 minutes every day with an already over-crowded timetable teaching the core subjects?

As a form of aerobic exercise, Yoga provides a good option to help children and teenagers become active. It is a non-competitive activity with low-aerobic intensity. Yoga could be the answer for children and teens who may not feel comfortable participating in other sports, or who may be intimidated by more vigorous forms of exercise (Birdee et al., 2009). Yoga has demonstrated positive effects on the overall cardiovascular fitness and body mass of children (Birdee et al., 2009). Research conducted at The Accelerated School in Los Angeles found that students who participated in Yoga intervention classes improved their aerobic capacity and their upper body strength over the course of the year and saw more improvement in flexibility as compared to their peers who participated in traditional P.E. classes (Slovacek et al., 2003). Taking short exercise breaks during the day, also known as brain breaks, can impact physical fitness measures such as aerobic fitness and flexibility and has been shown to boost cognitive and brain health (Gomez-Pinilla & Hillman, 2013).

As children grow, their brains require support to help them not only learn and perform in school, but also to develop skills and habits to become balanced, healthy adults (p23, Blythe, 2004). Exercise helps to create new brain cells and has a powerful effect on the parts of the brain that produce serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine, which all directly impact learning and wellbeing (Ratey, 2008). Because movements and breathing exercises in Yoga engage multiple networks throughout the brain (Ratey, 2008), Yoga can provide both a full-body and full-brain workout. Bender (2007) discusses the potential health benefits of a branch of Yoga called 'Laughter Yoga'. Laughter releases endorphins which impact the brain and body creating a sense of calm and wellbeing and creating a positive mood (Provine, 2000). Laughter helps lower blood pressure, improve immune system, improve mood and strengthen the heart (Provine, 2000; Bender, 2007).

Unfortunately, children in the UK show increasing signs of stress particularly around exam times (Weale, 2017). Stress can not only affect children's mood but can also take a range of physiological forms including; feeling sick, headache, stomach aches or 'feeling funny' (Sharrer & Ryan-Wenger, 1991). Weale (2017) found that 84% of children cited 'school and homework performance' as the biggest cause of stress; which they defined as feeling worried or anxious which 'led to changes in behaviour including difficulty sleeping, bad dreams, reduced confidence and concentration' (Weale, 2017). A recent survey amongst school leaders (Weale, 2017) observed increasing signs of stress around exam time including children complaining of suffering sleeplessness and panic attacks. Eight out of ten primary school leaders (82%) who took part in the 2017 Guardian survey reported an increase in stress-related behaviours around national standardised testing times, saying it is likely the government will not expect children in KS1 (age 6-7) to take part in standardised testing, although it is currently statutory. Beyond impacting the happiness and wellbeing of children and teenagers; stress can have long-term effects on health and can lead to serious health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity (Ratey, 2008).

Physical activity is known to help relieve stress (Kanning & Schlicht, 2010), but Yoga may go further than exercise alone in acting as a healthy balance for children in education. Studies show that Yoga has a positive effect on reducing stress and improving overall mental and emotional wellbeing (Birdee et al., 2009; Noggle et al., 2012), by:

- Reducing perceived stress and increasing self-compassion, so that the mind can deal with stress more effectively and lessen its toll on the body (Gard et al., 2012)
- Regulating the brain and nervous system, to reduce the physical stress response and improving brain function (Sengupta, 2012).
- Improving sleep quality by decreasing sleep onset time and number of awakenings while increasing total sleep time, sleep efficiency, and subjective sleep quality (Khalsa, 2004). This is especially important for children and teenagers, who require sleep for healthy growth and development, and aren't getting the sleep they need, particularly when stressed.

Because of the many documented benefits to adults, it is no surprise that in recent years practitioners and researchers alike have become interested in teaching children mindful practice, including Yoga, at school and other educational settings, but there are very few studies which test the theory with primary age children. Marraffa's (2015) study was carried out within a school context with the equivalent of our Year 6 aged children (10-11 years old). Thirty students took part, either engaging in a 15-week Yoga or alternative PE (Physical Education) session three times a week. The Yoga session was made up of three parts; 'Centering' (conscious breathing), 'Asana' practice (standing, seated back bends/inversions) or 'Vinyasa' practice, also referred to as the linking of movements so that they flowed naturally and then a closing 'Guided Relaxation' which is typical of an adult Yoga class. By comparison, the traditional PE sessions were made up of activities including; soccer (football), volleyball and walking to raise levels of physical activity. The

physiological measures of heart rate and blood pressure were compared across groups both before and after each intervention and then again after the implementation of two 'stressors' – a mental arithmetic test and a mirror tracing task. The results of the study found that Yoga did not provide any difference in stress reactivity compared to the PE class.

One of the variables that may not have been considered during the design of this study was that the children expressed a negative attitude because they may have been 'jealous' of their peers who had chosen the PE session and were spending the same time outside 'playing' various games. Marsha Wenig, the founder of 'Yoga for Kids' an American certification programme for teaching Yoga to children suggests that children's Yoga should be based on mindful and active play and should not be the same as an adult Yoga session (Wenig, 2003). Yoga sessions should be infused with storytelling, music, games, poetry, songs and art so that they are engaging for children's minds (Wenig, 2003).

### **Children with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders and Special Educational Needs:**

A number of studies conducted in recent years, recognise the benefits of teaching Yoga to children with SEN (Special Educational Needs), those with EBD (Emotional and Behavioural Disorders) and also those who exhibit challenging behaviours such as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) as well as children with particularly challenging SEN, including children on the Autistic spectrum (Steiner et al. 2012; Cerillo-Urbina et al 2015; Powell, Gilchrist & Stapley 2008). An exploratory case study followed nine SEN children's participatory learning in a school-based Yoga programme which taught visual activities as well as Yoga, reflection and perspective taking (Palgi, 2007). This study reported similar positive outcomes to previous quantitative research of school-based relaxation programmes, in children's self-awareness, emotional and behavioural control, maintenance of attention and self-regulation (Redfering & Bowman 1981, Sumar 1998, Uma et al. 1989 and Walton, 1979). A more recent study with children with

developmental delays (Gruber & Poulson, 2016) raises important issues of SEN children's exclusion from participating in mainstream physical education due to skill deficits and adds to a growing body of research into the inclusive effects of Yoga on SEN children's mental health and well-being.

Children with social, emotional and mental health disorders (SEMH) have proved consistently popular groups for research studies involving Yoga interventions to relieve negative symptoms including depression, anxiety and aggression and particularly with children who display behaviours associated with ADHD (Kehle et al. 2005, Cerrillo-Urbina et al. 2015, and Velasquez et al. 2015). However, upon closer analysis of the findings, it is difficult to make a conclusive statement in terms of outcomes as the studies are not always supportive of the hypothesis. Kehle et al. (2005) concluded that there was not a change in the time the children with ADHD were on-task compared with the control group. Cerrillo-Urbina et al. (2015) noticed children's ADHD symptoms were slightly reduced and studied aerobic exercise and Yoga's effects; however, there was less evidence of the benefit of a Yoga programme, as they found there was more of an improvement from aerobic exercise than with Yoga alone. In Bogota, Colombia, Velasquez et al. (2015) found that despite there being positive evidence of the implementation of a Yoga intervention on reducing school-aged children's depression, anxiety and aggression – a cautionary conclusion is drawn which highlights the need for further replications of this kind of study to be carried out in order to alleviate the limitations encountered.

Steiner et al. (2012) also reported positively reducing the problematic symptoms in children with emotional and behavioural disorders who completed a Yoga intervention in small groups of 7-10 in an urban setting. Despite the seeming feasibility of this school-based study, parent questionnaire analysis reported no change in the children's behaviour at home. Similarly, the 'Self-discovery Programme' (SDP) an intervention involving massage, Yoga and relaxation (Powell, Gilchrist & Stapley, 2008) yielded small improvements in behaviour. The SDP study is set within the theoretical framework of

self-efficacy (Bandura, 1988) and was carried out with 107 child participants who have behavioural and emotional difficulties and those at risk from exclusion in three schools in the same geographical location in England, UK. Self-efficacy is the “central mediating mechanism in human agency whereby perceptions of capabilities to carry out the courses of action necessary to meet situational demands influence choice of actions pursued, level of motivation thought patterns and emotional reactions experienced” (Powell, Gilchrist & Stapley, 2008). The SDP intervention allowed children a safe place to practice the taught relaxation techniques and to role-play ‘mastery experience’ (Bandura, 1988). Regardless of the minor improvement of quantitative results; teachers observed an improvement in self-confidence, social confidence, communication and contributions in class.

A recent scoping review of existing literature promoting resilience programming for maltreated and at-risk youth through ‘Eastern Arts’ based practices (Waechter & Wekerle, 2015); which also includes Tai Chi, Qi Gong as well as more popular programmes of Yoga, mindfulness and meditation had similar small amounts of evidence regarding the effect of ‘Eastern Arts’ on supporting resilience among maltreated, child-welfare involved, high-risk youth. Despite the fact there are limited results from existing studies, they conclude that “there is merit in further empirical inquiry into the utility of Eastern Arts-based practices as resilience programming for maltreated, at-risk youth” (Waechter & Wekerle, 2015:14) because of the low-costs, minimal negative impact and high accessibility involved in this field of research.

Frank et al. (2014) assessed the feasibility of implementing a ‘universal Yoga-based social-emotional wellness promotion program; *Transformative Life Skills*’ (2014:29) on 49 participants attending an alternative education school (also known as a ‘Pupil Referral Unit’ for children excluded from mainstream education). Findings suggest a significant reduction in anxiety, depression and psychological distress as well as a decrease in feelings of revenge motivation and hostility amongst participating youths. Conclusions are promising, yet also state that one of the main limitations is the reliance

on children's self-report as evidence; suggesting that future studies could be developed further to include evidence from both teacher and parent reports.

### **Self-Regulation in children:**

Traditionally speaking, the primary curriculum was designed to foster and develop the foundations of academic skills such as literacy and numeracy. Studies have also shown that Yoga can improve focus, concentration and executive function (Shapiro, 2014), so that children can perform better in school and develop skills for long-term success. Recent approaches to pedagogy have recognised the need for a more holistic approach to education which increases children's ability to self-regulate and be able to learn effectively in a classroom setting; especially those in the early years where learning begins (Shapiro 2014; Bierman et al 2008; McClelland et al 2007). If a child is unable to sit still, pay attention or follow classroom rules and avoid disruptive behaviour then it is very difficult for that child to learn; likewise, to try and teach them. Shapiro et al. (2014) believe that exercising the skills of self-regulation promotes the development of executive function, emotion regulation and perspective taking. However, a criticism of this article is that it is written by researchers, not primary school educators and the evidence base used to justify the benefits of self-regulation is based largely on research with adults. Some children, especially those in early years settings, will not display adult levels of concentration on tasks or during contemplative practices. In my experience, Yoga sessions with children do not always increase children's attention levels in one session; it needs to be embedded into the high expectations of everyday practice and has more to do with the leadership and management of a school and their expectations of behaviour than 'contemplative practices' which Shapiro et al. (2014) identify as having "...historically been associated with spiritual or religious traditions, the practices themselves are not inherently religious. These practices at their core involve regulation of attention. In addition, these practices often focus on cultivation of *prosocial* attitudes and behaviour, such as compassion, empathy, and respect for others, and as such, they reflect a system of values and have moral implications" (Shapiro et al., 2014:2). This

educational psychology study goes onto define the three main areas of interest (outlined below) how 'contemplative practice' is believed to benefit children's functioning skills including their ability to self-regulate their outward behaviours by learning to differentiate between one's inner and outer existences which are extremely important skills to possess to be able to function in our socially-driven world.

**Executive function** refers to influences on self-regulation which are top-down, effortful and consciously controlled (Shapiro et al. 2014). Shapiro et al. refer to studies by Zelazo and colleagues (Zelazo 2004, Zelazo et al. 2012) which argue that the development of reflection, the ability to process information before responding, is a fundamental function of the prefrontal cortex which underlies the development of cognitive flexibility, inhibitory control and working memory (Shapiro et al 2014). They suggest that age-appropriate contemplative practices may be particularly useful in scaffolding the development of executive function because they require the child to look 'inwards' and engage in sustained self-reflection of their own experiences which drives their development. For example, practising reflecting on a sensation or a thought may enhance children's ability to reflect more deeply in cognitively or emotionally demanding contexts; using a plethora of executive functioning skills. This makes reference to 'mindfulness' studies with children, including those in second and third grade (Johnson et al. 2012).

**Emotion regulation** refers to the ability to manage emotions which arise automatically (Gross 2002, Rubin et al. 1995). Emotion regulation skills are associated with important aspects of social development in young children, including social competence during peer interaction and empathy (Eisenburg et al. 2002; Ramani et al. 2010). It is needed to maintain attention in the face of emotional ups and downs. Problems with emotion regulation are associated with poor mental health (Blair et al 2004) and academic achievement (Raver 2004); contemplative practice improves emotion regulation (Davidson 2010, Ortner et al. 2007). Research with children indicates that mindfulness training reduces anxiety across a range of different studies, including adolescent



outpatients with psychiatric disorders (Biegel et al. 2009), inner city children (Semple et al. 2010), and typically developing first, second and third graders (Napoli et al. 2005). Shapiro (2014) believes that contemplative practice in the classroom “supports the development of emotion regulation by shaping the neural circuitry underlying both automatic and controlled aspects of emotion regulation” (2014). Shapiro et al. argue that contemplative practice promotes a nonreactive awareness of one’s experience; which is entirely non-judgemental. This promotes a balanced approach to everyday life which means positive and negative events will not elicit an automatic emotional reaction. By encouraging each child’s ability to self-regulate their emotional responses, they are more likely to respond flexibly and adaptively in the face of emotional events. Increasing a child’s ability to reflect on emotional experience through mindfulness and Yoga (contemplative practices) may encourage the engagement of the prefrontal cortex; so that when a highly emotive event occurs, the connections are strengthened between the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, supporting emotion regulation throughout a child’s life.

**Perspective taking** refers to meta-cognitive skills including; self-awareness of one’s cognitive processes, empathy, social perspective taking and flexible shifting between one’s own and others’ perspectives. Contemplative practice encourages children to reflect on their own perspectives and realising their own subjective feelings like their emotional reactions. Then, challenging them to explore the opposite of that emotion and after this switching back and forth between imagining the original emotion and its opposite; practicing flexible perspective taking (Miller et al. 2011). However, research on the effects of contemplative practices on perspective taking in children is extremely limited.

### **Recent Government Documentation**

Since the Education Reform Act of 1988, schools in England and Wales have a statutory responsibility to:

Promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

(Para. 2.1, 2.2, Education Reform Act, 1988)

However, the promotion of 'spirituality' and 'morality' are extremely subjective and vary widely from one teacher to the next. Faced with this impossible task how do teachers ensure that each child has received enough spiritual and moral guidance to prepare themselves for later life? Surely my opinion of what is spiritual and moral will differ from the next teacher's opinion. What I deem to be a 'good' spiritual education may not include any religious connotations but another teacher, particularly those from faith schools might believe it is an intrinsic part. Yoga as well as other '*Mindful Practices*', does contain spiritual aspects but it is not a religious practice. How can the government leave schools wholeheartedly responsible for the promotion of children's spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, preparing them adequately for the responsibilities and experiences of later life without clearly defining what these things are from one school to the next?

An increasing number of recent policy releases from the Department of Education are concerned with the promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. This is largely due to the rise in mental health issues, including stress and anxiety affecting young people and the lack of funding to counteract this rise (Pg. 3, House of Commons, 2017). In 2014, Public Health England released 'The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment' which builds a strong case for the need for schools and colleges to prioritise a whole-school strategy, creating a virtuous cycle: happy and healthy children achieve their academic potential, improving educational outcomes of the school enabling them to continue to improve student's health and wellbeing. It states, 'disruptive classroom behaviour directly influences pupil attainment' (Gutman & Feinstein, 2008) and that physical activity has a direct link to

improved classroom behaviour and higher academic scores (Buck, Hillman & Castelli, 2008).

More recently, in May 2017, a joint report by the House of Commons Education and Health Committees outlines the need for personal, social, health and economic education to be a mandatory OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) requirement in schools and colleges. Ofsted has reported a strong correlation between school that achieved a high grade for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and those who were graded 'outstanding' for overall effectiveness (OFSTED, 2013). Currently this area is a non-statutory to 'allow teachers the flexibility to deliver high-quality PSHE programmes of study' (2013). However, this programme of study states that each school must also cater for and address the needs of its pupils. Since 2013, this subject area also includes financial education as part of PSHE giving the same priority as physical activity, diet and healthy lifestyle education. But does children's financial education have more to do with the core subject of mathematics than with PSHE?

There is a need for stronger links to be made between schools and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The 2016 'Good Childhood Report' conducted by The Children's Society in partnership with the University of York carried out research which found that there were subjectively low levels of happiness and wellbeing amongst school-aged children in the UK compared with 15 other diverse countries around the world. Although the findings do not indicate the reasons why children felt subjectively unhappier than children of other countries, Kevin Courtney, deputy general secretary of the National Union of Teachers blames poor mental health, "narrow curriculum" and an "exam factories" culture in schools. He said that children were too often branded "failures" when barely into primary education and that testing at all stages of school life could lead to "serious stress-related anxiety" (BBC, 2016). The Children's Society concludes their report by urging the government 'to create a statutory entitlement for children and young people to receive evidence-based mental-health and well-being interventions in schools and further education colleges. This should be matched with

sufficient funding for services. The government has confirmed its intention to provide substantial additional investment (£1.25 billion) in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services until 2020. This additional investment should be ring-fenced for children and young people's mental health and the funding should be used to secure provision in educational settings' (Pg. 15, The Good Childhood Report, 2016).

It appears that American Health and wellbeing research is potentially a step ahead of the UK - having already drawn significant parallels between the impact Yoga has on promoting public health and wellbeing. In the 2017 academic journal 'Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Public Health Law and Practice' (Krueger, Counts & Riley, 2017) discuss mental wellbeing as an underlying public issue which has for far too long lain dormant beneath society's surface until very recent discourse. The article reviews the impact of stress on our physical and behavioural responses including the increase of coping behaviours; smoking, drinking, over-eating and over-working. Managing stress through regular exercise, healthy eating, mindfulness, Yoga, sufficient sleep, nature and the arts are all methods discussed in this article. UK Government simply outlines the issues; rather than creating a strategy for successful mitigation of children's mental health and wellbeing; stating that 'Mental Health and wellbeing are a crucial part of health and public health. By promoting skills to manage stress and by ameliorating social and economic sources of stress, public health laws and programs, in alignment with laws in other sectors, have begun to promote well-being in powerful new ways' (Krueger, Counts & Riley, 2017:39).

Riggins (2013) provides justification for Yoga as a powerful therapeutic tool to promote physical and mental health and prevent chronic disease in American society. Riggins (2013) recognises the need for more support and recognition of Yoga to positively impact both public health and medical communities, part of growing research providing evidence that Yoga is an implicit part of a healthier future in western society.

## **Methodology**

### **Children's Voice**

Research with children should not require any unusual or unique methods or methodological approaches compared with an adult research study (Prout, 2007) as any defining characteristic of working with groups of children could also be shared by some groups of adults, such as feeling subordinated in a power system or low-levels of literacy. Traditionally, research into childhood and children's lives has been carried out by adults who claim to speak *for* children, viewing the child as object and the adult as viewer creating assumptions and excluding the child from the research process entirely (Christensen & James, 2007). More recently, changes in research with children reflect the acknowledgement of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UK Children Act, promoting children's right to freely participate and encouraging the changing perspective that children possess distinctive cognitive and social developmental characteristics that should be heralded as integral to the process and practice of research (James and Prout, 1990). Traditionally and generally speaking, it is adults who write about and debate the rights of children. However, adults' ideas and interpretations of children's rights are subjective and differ from one adult to the next; more importantly, they are probably very different to the real perceptions of a child. Historically, children's views in research have been deemed unimportant and unreliable.

The neglect of children's perspectives in social sciences has come about as a result of particular social constructions that estimated them as incapable of producing relevant, reliable or representative evidence (Mills, 2004: 31).

Despite the UN creating the first Declaration of the Rights of Children in 1959, the original document held the now outdated view that children are passive and the property of their parents. It was not until the 1990's when the updated version of the Rights of the Child was released that adult perspectives were challenged, and children were seen as able to take a more active and participatory role in their lives, in their

ability to participate in decision making that directly affects them, and for their views to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. These views should be facilitated and encouraged by adults and researchers alike.

*Article 12:* States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

*Article 13:* The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

(Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989)

However, rather than researchers making assumptions about levels of understanding based upon age, Christensen (1994) outlined the need for 'a re-examination of the conceptual frameworks that influence children's representation' (Christensen, 1994:4). Research with children should not take the age-biased adult/child distinction for granted, instead the methodological approaches chosen for each piece of research should be appropriate for the participants involved in the study, for its social and cultural context and the types of research questions children are expected to answer (Alderson, 1995; Punch, 2002).

### **Naturalistic Observation**

The qualitative study approach I have used is naturalistic inquiry based (Armstrong, 2010); Armstrong (2010:880) suggests that naturalistic inquiry is 'an approach to understanding the social world in which the researcher observes, describes, and interprets the experiences and actions of specific people and groups in societal and

cultural context' (Armstrong, 2010:880). It was originally developed for anthropology and sociology research and can include: participant observation, direct observation, ethnographic methods, case studies, grounded theory and field research methods when making sense of the data yielded from the study. Armstrong goes on to add:

Working in the places where people live and work, naturalistic researchers draw on observations, interviews, and other sources of descriptive data, as well as their own subjective experiences, to create rich, evocative descriptions and interpretations of social phenomena (Armstrong, 2010:880).

For the naturalistic inquirer "objectivity and detachment are neither possible nor desirable. Human experiences are invariably influenced by the methods used to study them" (Armstrong, 2010:883). What I perceived and reacted to during each session is deemed to be a sufficiently reliable and also an accurate observation because I am a professional teacher; what I notice and write about is due to my professional knowledge and understanding of teaching. This is also true not only of what was written down, but also of what was left out of my reflective journal. In many ways Naturalistic Observation is an extremely unique and personal research method of professional inquiry.

Naturalistic inquiry involves the study of a single case, usually a self-identified group or community. Self-identified group members are conscious of boundaries that set them apart from others. When qualitative (naturalistic) researchers select a case for study, they do so because it is of interest in its own right. The aim is not to find a representative case from which to generalise findings to other, similar individuals or groups. It is to develop interpretations and local theories that afford deep insights into the human experience (Armstrong, 2010:880).

Armstrong explains that Naturalistic inquiry can be carried out in many different settings; including schools. Researchers who use this method are required to spend lots of time with their participants; the researcher is the 'research instrument' engaging in conversations and activities with their participants in order to understand their experiences and points of view. Language is deemed to be a key source of insight into

their experiences and the recording of participants' words, thoughts and actions should be in detail with minimal interpretation. Despite the focus on language, naturalistic researchers learn through all their senses. They collect data in a range of ways, observation being another crucial method; which is why I have collected my observations in a reflective journal (see p34).

When it comes to analysing the data, they use all the data available, including journals and transcripts looking for repeated patterns in the frequency of words, phrases, events and actions. The interpretation of these means making sense of the patterns and themes and what this might mean. Naturalistic researchers draw on their own experiences and understanding of the world and relevant theory and academic studies to form their own accounts of their findings. As a by-product of this process, new research questions will emerge and keeping the research question broad will encourage lots of avenues for further exploration. There is a generalised series of steps which loosely forms the process of Naturalistic Inquiry (Armstrong, 2004:881):

1. Gaining access to and entering the field site
2. Gathering Data
3. Ensuring accuracy and trustworthiness
4. Analysing data
5. Formatting interpretations
6. Writing up findings
7. Member checking (sharing conclusions and conferring with participants)
8. Leaving the field site

In terms of evaluating a Naturalistic inquiry project, Armstrong (2004:881) states that there are many characteristics that are widely considered to be key indicators of merit in the design. Transparency and rigour, reflexivity (rather than objectivity), comprehensiveness and scope, accuracy, claims and warrants, attention to ethics, fair



return, coherence, veracity and illumination are all categories to consider when designing a Naturalistic inquiry project of quality.

### **Reflective Journal**

The reflective journal approach I used to document my observations as the teacher was made up of the thoughts and feelings I thought, felt and wrote down after each session in a small exercise book. This method is completely personal and subjective and involved writing down my observations of the child participants involved and also my thoughts and feelings about the level of calmness within each session I taught. Adopting a reflective journal approach was useful because it helped me by encouraging a sense of professional reflectivity which I could grow and learn from. Moon calls them 'learning journals' and says:

A learning journal is essentially a vehicle for reflection. Probably all adults reflect, some more than others, and for those who do reflect, being reflective can represent a deeply seated orientation to their lives. For others, the process would seem to come about only when the conditions in their environment are conducive to reflecting, perhaps when there is an incentive to reflect, or some guidance or a particular accentuation of the conditions (Moon 2006:1).

Moon goes on to say there are many different names for a 'learning journal' or 'reflective journal'. They may be called diaries or logs but as it is difficult to define precisely what they are or could be because there has been such substantial development in terms of what we mean by a 'learning journal' that it is an aspect of the very process of reflective learning because it is ambiguous and multi-faceted (Moon, 2006:3). Moon outlines the meaning of a 'learning journal' when she says: 'we refer to an accumulation of material that is mainly based on the writer's processes of reflection' (Moon 2006:2).

Moon says it is important to note that the body of writing is 'accumulated over time and not written in one go' (Moon, 2006:2). The intention is that learning is enhanced through stages of reflective recounts but descriptive diaries that go no further than

simply describing events are not included as part of the 'learning journey' subject matter. I chose this medium to capture my thoughts, feelings and observations as it is functional, creative and reflective as well as being cost and time effective. *Reflective journals* or *Personal Development Journals* are also open to a wide range of different subjects and can be adapted to suit all different types of learner's meaning-making needs (Moon 2006:3). They could include verbal recordings or drawings.

I believe that we do not simply accumulate knowledge, but as we learn something new our existing knowledge changes and grows in the process. The stages of reflecting and writing a journal is the acting-out of the activity through questioning these new experiences with what you thought you knew at the beginning of the process. Moon (2006: 2) believes that firstly, although there may not be any new learning material other than what we have directly experienced; the process of reflecting may lead us to 'change our minds' or rather the cognitive structure of our minds. Secondly, the state of this cognitive structure guides the process of assimilation; what we learn is guided by what we already know. It is the sense that the learner makes of the material that is important, not anyone else's; the changing of one's conceptions and ideas in a *transformational* way. The reflective journal helps a professional to 'clarify for themselves what she does not know about something in order that she can understand new material of learning' (Moon, 2004:28).

The notion of being a 'reflective-practitioner' is a widely used and respected term in teacher education today. One of the most prominent authors in this field is Donald Schon who became popular in the mid-1950's with his views on the importance of practical knowledge as the defining characteristic of being a professional person. Newman (1999) believes that Schon's popularity was in part due to the fact that his work on reflective practice provided an informed perspective that encouraged teachers to regain their professional status by valuing their knowledge and educated judgement in society. He defines Reflective Practice in different ways, firstly through *Knowing-in-action*; a type of practical knowledge which informs the necessary everyday actions of

any practitioner. It is the 'knowing we manifest in the doing' (Schon, 1987:230) things like embedding everyday routines into our teaching practice to avoid any surprises or unwanted outcomes. Before each session of Yoga, I would put up a visual reminder as part of a visual timetable to remind children of the activity they would be participating in. Without thinking, I would automatically remind children of expectations of behaviour and noise-levels whilst walking into the hall; however, these moments have not featured in my reflective diary because they are so intrinsic to my everyday practice they have become banal and not so out of the ordinary for me to comment upon. Schon suggests that if the teacher and student 'roles' and expectations are clear, outlined in a structured and clear manner and with emphasis placed on rewarding good behaviour then this will maximise student's learning. The teacher's role is to be in control of the class and him/herself as this will 'maximise teaching conceived as the imparting of information' (Schon, 1975:7).

This leads to the next and more complex stage of Schon's Reflective Practice theory; *Reflection-in-action* (Schon, 1992:123). The first stage is looking back and reflecting upon the *Knowing-in-action phase*. The second stage is known as *Reflection-in-action*: Reflecting on practice, whilst 'in the midst of it' (Schon, 1983:62). School believes that someone who is engaging in. Reflection-in action 'becomes a researcher in the practice context' (Schon, 1983:68). It is the action of reflecting upon the knowing-in-action stage where practitioners can observe, view and criticise their own professional understanding and can 'make sense of the situations of uncertainty and uniqueness' (Schon, 1983:61). Schon believes that Reflection-in-action is a significant stage and reveals the 'artistry of competent practitioners' (Schon, 1992:125). As practitioners we are capable of making errors of judgement and it is only through reflecting-in-action we can see the error of our ways and see what we can do to change our practice to better suit the children we teach. Schon calls this '*professional knowing*' (Schon, 1983:69) and believes that it is only through reflecting upon our *Knowing-in-action* phase that this clarity leading us to reassess our practice becomes possible. In the final most complex phase of Schon's theory of Reflective Practice, it is also possible to reflect upon the

*Reflection-in-action* stage (Schon, 1983:243). The process of completing my reflective journal after each session of yoga teaching and then the subsequent analysis of the reflection provides evidence of what Schon believes to be the final stage of reflecting upon the *Reflection-in-action* phase or ‘a process of getting in touch with the understandings we form spontaneously in the midst of action’ (Schon, 1992:126). This ancient form of ‘learning through experience’ or *experiential learning* is defined as ‘learning through reflection on doing’ (Patrick, 2011:1003). Kolb’s four-step experiential learning model focuses on the learning process of the individual: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation (Kolb, 1984:21). According to Moon, in order for the four-step process of experiential learning to happen, there are requirements of the learner to have an “intention to learn” and an “active phase of learning” (Moon, 2004:126). She goes on to add that to ensure the effectiveness of Kolb’s model she insists there needs to be a ‘reflective learning phase’, a ‘learning resulting from the actions inherent to experiential learning phase’ and a ‘further phase of learning through feedback’ (Moon, 2004:126). The role of emotions and feelings as part of the learning process of experiencing has been recognised as an important part of experiential learning; individuals should immerse themselves fully in the experience of doing, reflect upon the experience analytically and in order to gain a greater insight into the new knowledge and engage in deeper-learning of the information or subject matter.

### **Teacher/Child Relationships**

As the teacher of the class of children I am researching the effects of yoga with, together we are already engaged in an established relationship. The majority of power is vested in myself and other teachers by the nature of the hierarchical education system we live and work in. On a daily basis, children are expected to listen and follow instructions and carry out activities and tasks fulfilling required objectives of the National Curriculum at the request of the teacher. If children do not, then there are sanctions in place to encourage compliant behaviour. Due to feasibility issues such as

time constraints, the identified group of children with whom this research project is collaboratively completed, are children already known to me and me to them. I believe that children's relationships with others are what matter most of all to children of this age. Children who have positive relationships with and are open and receptive to the adults in their lives value their approval (Ostrosky & Jung, 2010). The children in my class want to 'do as I say' and please me by following my instructions because there is already a positive teacher-pupil relationship established at the school in which this research project is carried out. This wishing to 'please' or 'give the right answer' can be due to both wanting to do their best for me and for fear of my displeasure at their 'wrong' answer, even if they have never experienced this negative reaction before. It is also the nature of being a child to want to please and do the 'right thing' for adults because it is in a young child's interest to be compliant for their parent/carer so that they get what they need - food, water, shelter etc. to be able to survive. In order to achieve a positive reaction from me as their teacher rather than researcher, they may have given more positive views about each yoga session, even if in reality they did not really enjoy taking part or had little or no opinion of the yoga sessions. This could have been due to the fact that despite the children being in a well-known social situation (school) which may have felt familiar to them (doing PE in the hall); there were also several unknowns, we were engaging in a new activity (yoga) and I was asking the children for their opinions and feedback in a way I would not normally (post-its) which may have led to a certain amount of anxiety surrounding the novelty of the situation they were in.

Scott (2007) suggests that having a good relationship and rapport with children is crucial in improving qualitative data quality as it may encourage more forthcoming, truthful and careful answers, especially when they feel their responses are confidential. I feel that I have child-centered approach to teaching and endeavour to form meaningful connections with each individual child in my class. I also hope that each child in my care knows that my classroom management style is built on mutual respect between adults

and children. With this said, however, one of the main challenges of research with children continues to be the disparity between power and status between adults and children (Hart and Tyrer, 2006). When researching groups of children, it is also important to take into account power relationships amongst children with other children in their class (Hart and Tyrer 2006). Age, gender, birth order, educational attainment, class, ethnicity, disability, individual personality and physical stature all play a role in shaping the power relations in childhood (Hart and Tyrer 2006). Punch (2002) believes that adult-child relations are based on unequal power relations between the generations but should not be seen in terms of independence versus dependence. This adult-child relationship is changeable and dynamic and should be explained in terms of inter-dependencies which are negotiated and renegotiated over time and space and in their particular social and cultural context. She goes on to add that children are capable of renegotiating adult-imposed boundaries and asserting their autonomy; which includes 'decision-making, gaining control over one's use of time and space, taking the initiative to do something and taking action to shape one's own life' (Punch, 2002:95). She believes that autonomy is partial and relative to different contexts affecting adults and children alike. Autonomy is related to issues of power and control and is linked to social relationships, particularly children who are faced with unequal adult-child power relations. However, children are capable of developing coping strategies to resist adult power and control. Waksler's research (1996) specifies that children can lie, fake illness, have temper tantrums or act extra cute in order to cope with and control certain aspects of their lives. Reynolds's study of South African children (1991) outlined children's ability to negotiate adult relationships in order to secure help for their future, rebellion in defying adults' wishes by gambling, smoking and refusal. However, it must also be noted that children's reactions to adult power range 'from unquestioning acceptance to instances of resentful resistance' (Mayall, 2001:121). These studies suggest that although children may not have full independence they are capable of negotiating a level of autonomy within the limited constraints imposed by adults. In

numerous studies there are completely polarised responses of either compliance or entire rejection in an attempt to manage their responses to adult control.

It is widely acknowledged *ethically speaking* - that if a child or an adult does not want to take part in a study then we, as researchers, must entirely respect their wishes. Whilst thinking about the ethical element of the proposal for this study, I maintained that any child wishing not to take part in the 6-weekly Yoga sessions would not be forced to do so. Working in a two-form entry school, it would be possible and fairly easy to organise for a few children to join the second session of PE with the adjacent Year 2 class. This is in order for each child to receive their required amount of PE time at school (2 hours per week). However, all the children in this study were keen to take part in the Yoga sessions. I sent out permission slips to their parents stating that if their child did not want to take part then they would not have to. With this said, there may have been a small group of children in the group that did not want to participate but perhaps their parents thought they should, however this is just my speculation and I am not aware of there being any children who did not want to participate. Furthermore, if there were children who vehemently did not want to take part in each session, then more of the negative behaviour outlined in Waksler's (1996) study above would have been evident during the sessions.

## **Methodology**

Firstly, I planned a series of Yoga lessons (See Appendix) which was aided by the development of my personal practice of Yoga and through teaching Yoga informally during 'Golden Time' (a time where children can freely choose activities) at school and out of school. I have also attended children's Yoga training courses with Birthlight and Rainbow Kids Yoga which has enormously strengthened my subject knowledge. After each of the courses I attended I felt that I was brimming with new information of different ideas and activities which I wanted to try out and incorporate into each lesson, so the process of planning and putting everything down on paper brought everything in

my mind together, although I was also very aware that as with any planning, it was more a guide for me to follow and definitely not a finished product yet. A notable point to mention and be understood and recognised by those unfamiliar with children's Yoga or Yoga in general, is that children's Yoga classes are not the same as what you might expect from an adult yoga class. Marsha Weinig says:

Unlike adults, children did not wait for my instructions, nor were they interested in explanations. They just jumped right in and did the poses *with* me. They had absolutely no interest in holding poses, or in trying harder or trying again. They wanted to play and have fun. Children live in the moment; those moments move fast, and the questions come even faster. Why is Dog pose Dog pose when it does not look like a dog? Dogs bark nip heels and lift their legs to pee; they do not look like little pup tents! It was time to undo what I had learned (Weinig, 2003:15).

I knew I had to design these sessions to ensure they were exciting and fun for each child to enjoy and the focus was not going to be on teaching the key principles of Yoga practice, it was to try and build poses into the lesson without explicitly teaching them. Each session should contain a warm-up because it is good practice before any form of exercise, an engaging theme and storyline for the children to follow as well as postures as part of the overall activity and finally some relaxation at the end to calm minds and prepare for the next instalment of the school day. I included each part of these within the lesson plan to ensure there was enough opportunity to experience the *active ingredients* of relaxation, poses, breathing, sensory experiences, imaginative play and some aspects of 'Mindfulness' (or Contemplative Practice), all of which have come to define what a 'children's Yoga lesson' should contain.

Rather than using their traditional names for the poses, my intention was to teach children the movements and postures by using words that children can relate to, for example, rather than asking the children to get into 'Tadasana' I will say 'Mountain Pose' and model this position as this will help the children to access and understand the



different movements involved in each session. I also wanted to incorporate the use of song, movement and practical resources, such as scarves, plastic balls, bells and music to engage and enthuse my class. I wanted to always make sure I ended each session with an opportunity for ten minutes of calming breath exercises or guided visualisations to achieve a state of calm for both body and mind.

After planning the scheme of work, I sent out a letter asking for parental permission (See Appendix) for the children in my class to participate in the research study and also for photographs to be taken which would be used for this study. After speaking with the Head teacher, I managed to work out an alternative PE session for any child/parent that did not want to take part with the adjacent Year 2 class teacher at a slightly different time, so they would still be able to participate in a different indoor PE activity (Gymnastics). However, this was not necessary as 100% of parents responded by saying yes to my request.

For six consecutive weeks (12.01.17 – 16.02.17) I systematically collected data after each Yoga session; asking the children what they liked or disliked about the lesson, what their favourite part was and how they felt after each session on an anonymised post-it note, sometimes I had to ask children what they meant as their handwriting was not always decipherable but I asked what they had written and then wrote what they had meant to say underneath their words. I worked collaboratively with my class as an identified primary age-group of Year 2 children, alongside completing a reflective journal account of my observations after each session of yoga and documented the feedback I obtained from the children. These are descriptions of their own subjective experiences and they have been recorded anonymously with minimal interpretation. I collated these post-its onto different coloured sheets of paper and then typed them up word-for-word into a word-document. I hoped this would help me find out what the children thought about taking part in Yoga as their indoor PE session and shed some

light upon my research question – *Can teaching children yoga as exercise provide an effective calming strategy in primary school education?*

The Year 2 class of participants (age 6-7 years old) was made up of 29 children (18 boys, 11 girls) and had been taught by me for a year and a half previously to the beginning of this research. I was also their Year 1 teacher and had moved year groups with them, so the majority of the class were very well-known to me and knew me very well too. Four children had special needs and one had complex medical issues preventing him from fully taking part in the first two sessions, but he joined in with what he wanted to participate in and then rested on a chair provided. Ten children were working close-to or below national academic expectations, so when I asked for children's feedback their responses were sometimes scribed by myself or our LSA and this also means that their responses are not as in-depth as some of the more able children. Some children in this class were experiencing unsettled domestic situations resulting in challenging behaviour. This meant that some of their responses were not always taken into account; sometimes they refused to fully participate in part or all of the lesson or during the time-frame allowed for their response it was not always possible to ask for their views/feedback.

## **Findings and Analysis:**

When reviewing the data compiled from this study, I firstly looked at the children's comments received as feedback after each yoga session, grouping them individually to ascertain whether there were any patterns or trends beginning to form (Appendix 1). I organised the data into a 'consistent and thoughtful order' (Radnor, 2001:70), by highlighting any similar themes in the same colour, then used a table to help me rank the top three themes before beginning to analyse and interpret the data in both a 'rigorous and careful' (Radnor, 2001:70) manner. I chose to consider each session separately to begin with, looking closely at the children's responses and putting them into a table of response preferences. This format helped me to analyse children's feedback about what they liked/disliked (their opinions), how they 'feel' and also their 'best/favourite part' of each individual session; if there were any trends beginning to appear in children's comments, then this would be clearly seen in the frequency of each response. I ordered them into the most frequent three responses; initially, I thought this organisation would give a clear result.

In this section, I have included some photographs taken by myself during each session to exemplify some of the key findings of this research project. Before completing the study, I asked parents for permission to be able to include photographs of their child in this dissertation and only children with permission are featured.

Radnor (2001) suggests there are six steps to 'step-by-step' analysis:

- 1. Topic ordering.**
- 2. Constructing categories.**
- 3. Reading for content.**
- 4. Completing the coded sheets.**
- 5. Generating coded transcripts.**
- 6. Analysis to interpreting the data.**

Yet, when describing this approach, Radnor (2001) refers to analysing the data obtained from a semi-structured qualitative interview as the example for her 'interpretive approach'. Despite the fact I am not using this method to acquire data, I have found this step-by-step method to analysis helpful for structuring and analysing the findings from this data. Having looked at the comments from the children to find similar themes in my findings, it began to appear that there was not always a similar theme in every child's feedback from each session, so I then thought that a good way to sift through their responses would be to carefully count the number of times children had a broadly similar response to the session. I then put this information into a table to show the many different themes as clearly as possible, highlighting their similar responses in a corresponding colour on the original data sheet (Appendix 1).

Since it was not always as easy to group some of the children's responses together as I had first thought (as sometimes children gave unique answers/responses which were not always possible to group with a similar response) I had to leave the single comments to discuss independently. Does this mean that this child's thoughts about the session are less important? No. It has just meant that I would have to consider her/his response separately to others, usually featured at the end of that section's analysis. Some very thought-provoking themes emerge from their 'unique' responses. I have summarised the overall findings and trends from the six-week intervention at the end of this section to show what has been children's overall likes, dislikes, favourite part and feelings over the duration of the course.

Whilst analysing and interpreting the children's responses to each session, I also had to simultaneously analyse and interpret my own personal reflective data which featured in my 'Reflective Journal' accounts (Appendix 2). My aim was to see if there were any areas of overlapping themes that emerge between my reflective data and the children's thoughts and responses. Are there any key themes in both my reflections and the

children's responses? What was the most popular aspect of the session? What was the least popular? How do they relate to one another if at all? What can be gleaned from the children's experience of practicing Yoga at school?

Finally, is there any evidence in the data to suggest that teaching children's Yoga as exercise during indoor PE could provide an effective calming strategy in primary school education?

Session 1 - 12.01.17			
Likes	Animals - 9	Stretching/Relaxation/ Yoga - 4	Everything - 4
Dislikes	Lying on the floor/Hurt Knees - 6	Silly - 5	Shouting/Screaming - 4
Favourite Part	flying/aeroplanes/adv enture - 4	Relaxing. - 3	Animals - 2
Feelings	I feel happy - 6	I feel great - 3	Relaxed - 2

This introductory session was the first taste many of the children had had of 'doing' yoga, although five children stated they have had some experience of yoga before this session. Four children enjoyed 'Everything' and another four liked the stretching, relaxation element of the session. Nine children enjoyed imagining being African animals both by doing the yoga poses and making the noises of each one. Some children were displaying some low-level challenging behaviour during this activity, 'Sadly, some children were being a little bit silly whilst they pretended to be the animals' (Appendix 2) which meant that this was something that five children 'disliked' about the overall session, four children also did not like the Shouting/Screaming of others. As with anything new, the children were more excitable than usual, manifesting itself in challenging behaviour. This is not a recurrent theme as it is not mentioned in later sessions, however one child has an unrelated emotional outburst in Session 4. Another main dislike of six children was that although I had put the comfy mats out on the floor before the beginning of the session but there were not quite enough for one each. So, children said they disliked hurting their knees or lying on the floor, which was an error on my part through the lack of time allowed for the preparation of this session:

Quite understandably, they may have found this uncomfortable and I will need to ensure mats are laid out before the session next time. *However, the time constraints at school are quite constrained.* (Reflective Journal, 12.01.17)



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 1 'Not all children have mats.' (12.01.17)

Having not put out enough mats was easily rectified in the subsequent sessions of the study but is something I have found to be a crucial consideration for any practitioner hoping to teach children's yoga at school in the future.

Four children's favourite part was the 'imaginary adventure' aspect of the yoga journey we had embarked upon and I was surprised to see how well the children engaged in this element during this session, however the same cannot be said for all sessions as some children did not like this aspect later in the study. Three children said the opportunity for 'Relaxation' was their favourite part and two others liked being the African animals best. This would have included being a lion, which is a fierce creature but not as scary for children as some of the later animals like snakes and tigers would be. One child felt that they disliked that they 'could not do one thing' throughout the session. My perception was different as I felt that children were participating well so this could be a child with poor self-esteem when trying something new for the first time. Another child did not like playing the 'traffic light' game and another did not like getting 'caught' out (one child in Session 3 also comments they disliked this aspect). Children do not always enjoy the traditional competitive warm-up PE game of 'Traffic Lights', which would suggest that a balance of warm-ups should be provided for children who do not enjoy winning or losing games. However, one could argue that encouraging this type of experience builds children's resilience to both positive and negative experiences in later life and should (within-reason) be encouraged at school. Does anyone really enjoy losing a game? Or is being able to move on from

negative experiences like losing a sign of a well-adjusted 'healthy' person and a skill that should be encouraged at school?

Other responses included children who 'liked' the opportunity to 'crawl' around the hall. The exercise of crawling is good for developing children's gross motor skills, building core-strength and exercising the vestibular system. It is interesting that a child liked this aspect because later on in session 4, one child comments that they 'did not like the balancing.' This is a good example of how contradictory some of the individual children's responses can be. Two children disliked the stretching element of the yoga in this session, one saying it 'hurt' when they had to stretch out their arms. I also reflect upon this in my account by referring to the fact that I will need to explain to the children that yoga and stretching should not be an activity that 'hurts':

I will need to explain to the children that the feeling of the postures should not be painful. If it is painful for them then they need to adapt the way they participate in the session; for example, they would need to walk on their feet and not on their knees like the other children. I also think that perhaps some children were not used to moving in this way and that it may be unusual for them at first. (Gammer, N. Reflective Journal, 12.01.17)

After explaining this to the children and giving adaptations for the stretches, the children do not tend to refer to the fact that it 'hurt' them in future sessions (except once in the final session, when they had the chance to repeat poses from throughout the 6-week course and when doing 'fish pose' one child commented on their shoulders hurting). This could be that their bodies become used to stretching, or that the use of mats meant that they were adequately supported during each session.

However, upon reflection, perhaps I should have better explained that if the positions or stretching is too 'painful' for the children then something is not right. We should have built up to doing the poses by holding them for shorter periods of time to begin with and building the length of time up as each session progresses. In the future, this increase in stretching might also be particularly helpful for those children who do not partake in regular exercise. In hindsight, it would have also helped the children in this study to ease the painful element of the session and ensure they did not 'over-stretch' their limbs.



As a thought for future sessions or studies, it would be interesting and helpful for children to co-create an indicator for their yoga sessions, so they would be able to show whether the position/stretch is too painful/hurting them for their teacher to be able to see this clearly and be able to intervene before any serious pain or damage has taken place during the session. It might be a small laminated card in traffic-light colours to show the severity of the stretch? Perhaps giving the children a circular card with the numbers one to ten clearly shown. It could have a moveable arrow to show what 'level' of stretch they are participating in and if it was causing them to feel uncomfortable. This would also track the change in their body's tolerance level for stretching as each session progresses, hopefully building up children's ability and tolerance for stretching, whilst adding a competitive element. Are you able to stretch more than you were last week? Can you hold the pose for longer than when you began the yoga sessions?

One child mentioned that they loved everything and could not choose a favourite part. Another child's favourite part was when I was 'scared' by their lion impressions. Overall, the children felt positive about the session. Six children feeling 'happy', three feeling 'great' and two children feeling 'relaxed'. One child thought their 'heart was beating' and another felt 'proud' of themselves.

Session 2 – 19.01.17			
Likes	Being a mermaid/merman - 9	Being a fish/dolphin/swimming in the sea - 8	Laying on the floor - 6
Dislikes	Stretching/Touching the ground - 10	Resting/laying on the floor - 3	Touching hands on the floor without knees bending - 2
Best part	Being a dolphin/whale/swimming/diving - 5	Being a merman/merboy - 3	Putting diving gear on/Exploring the pirate ship (involving imagination) - 2
Feelings	Happy - 3	Relaxed/Calm - 3	Good/Amazing - 2



Interestingly, six children liked the opportunity to lie on the floor after ensuring there were enough mats put out before the session, using gym mats as well as yoga mats to ensure enough comfortable support. This tells me that rather than being something the children do not like doing, quite understandably, (as it is the same place where children eat their lunch only

moments before) they enjoy these moments of calm. Opportunities to lie in 'corpse pose' with their eyes shut are not always part of a typical school day but perhaps they should be?



Eight children liked the opportunity to imagine being a fish/dolphin or swimming in the sea and nine others liked the opportunity to pretend to be a merman/mermaid. The main thing the children did not like was touching the ground and two said stretching to touch the floor without bending knees. This could be referring to a similar theme in last week's session where they said the position 'hurt'. This uncomfortable feeling of limbs stretching could be why they do not like 'touching the ground' as there were two children who explicitly refer to not liking 'touching hands on the floor without knees bending'.

Conversely, this could mean the children do not like being in close proximity to or the act of 'touching the floor' as there were three other children who did not enjoy 'resting/lying on the floor'. This seems to be in direct contradiction of the six children who enjoyed this aspect of the session. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I did not investigate this theme further whilst this study was taking place. It would have been beneficial to clarify why they did not like touching the floor. Was it the stretching

aspect? Did it hurt or feel painful as I found in last week's session? Or would it be more to do with the act of touching the dirty floor? Were the gym mats at school cleaned regularly? Why did some children really enjoy this aspect and others not? Does it have anything to do with using a combination of yoga mats and gym mats?

Intriguingly, in this session we would have held 'fish pose' and this comes up in the final session as being the pose that 'hurt' one child's shoulders. In this session, one child says they did not like the 'stretching' and another did not like lifting their hands above their head (this could be referring to 'fish pose' but equally could be part of the warm-up). If both children were referring to the same position, it might be worth finding a good opportunity to explain to the children in advance that this pose should not be held for too long to avoid straining and experiencing any pain or discomfort. Perhaps an easier option could be developed to allow children to build-up to the traditional pose instead. This seems to be a paradox in the children's response feedback as seven children state that 'Fish Pose' is what they liked about Session 4, although it is also worth pointing-out that three children also say it is something they do not like along with four others who disliked being a bear.

For a group of ten children who responded similarly to their favourite part of the session, it was the imaginative aspect of being a dolphin/whale and swimming/diving under the sea that they enjoyed the most. However, five children responded by saying they 'disliked' the imaginative aspects of being a mermaid/merman and swimming under water. This would suggest that for some children they really enjoy imagining and pretending but for some children, this is not something they find easy or particularly enjoy. Perhaps they did not like the theme of being under-the-sea because they were scared by the context of being underwater? One child responds by saying the thing they 'dislike' was going underwater and two children say they do not like swimming. Is this because they fear being underwater or are not able to swim?

Of the eight children who responded to the question, 'How do you feel?' the main response was positive with one more child stating they feel 'Relaxed/calm' than the previous session. Three children said they feel 'happy', one child felt 'good' and another felt 'amazing'. This is not reflective of the whole group as not all children responded so it is not clear if all the children would have felt this way. Rather than giving a negative response to the way they felt, maybe the children chose not to respond to this question instead for fear of upsetting me as their teacher?

Nevertheless, in my reflective diary, I also comment upon the children's positive behaviour: '...the children enjoyed the experience and seemed much calmer, especially throughout the lesson and for the remainder of the afternoon.' This might suggest the calming impact of teaching yoga. However, this could also be down to me as a practitioner relieving feelings of anxiety around teaching something new and becoming more comfortable in my teaching practice. Or whether the children felt calmer because they knew what to expect in the session now: 'I am not sure whether the children were calmer because of the yoga or because they knew what was happening in the class now?'

Session 3 – 26.01.17			
Likes	Monkey - 8	Being a frog/snake/ tiger/parrot/crocodile - 9	Laying down - 4
Dislikes	Specific animal/pose: Snake/tiger/crocodile/ boat - 9	Movement: Lying down/rolling over - 3	Went out of the game (lost) 2
Favourite Part:	Being an animal: monkey/crocodile/lion /tiger/frog - 9	Breathing/Relaxation (Tibetan Singing Bowl/bell sound) - 2	I liked it all/Laying on the floor/boat - 1
Feelings	Calm/Relaxed - 4	Good/Happy - 3	Wonderful – 1

I wrote in my reflective diary that the levels of behaviour had been improved 'I did not have any LSA support today but it was not very necessary because there were no behaviour related issues during the session which attests to the levels of peace and calmness the class now respond to these sessions'. The children were getting changed quickly and were visibly enjoying the sessions, enough for me to note this down in my observations. Not having an LSA to assist children whilst teaching PE is an increasingly common occurrence for teachers across the country and knowing this activity can be taught on your own is one of the comforting findings of my research.



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 3 'Boat Pose.' (26.01.17)

Seventeen children responded by 'liking' being the animals. Four enjoyed lying down. Nine children did not like specific animal poses, including 'I did not like the snake, they are creepy' and 'I did not like being a crocodile'. One child commented on the reason for not liking the 'frog' was because 'my legs hurt'. After asking the child what hurt them, it was a break time injury that was causing some minor pain. One child said 'I didn't like nothing' which was because they enjoyed everything about the session. Two children did not like losing the warm-up game where they had to pretend to be a different animal and move in this fashion. As with many warm-up games there is always an element of competition and naturally children do not enjoy 'losing' a game as I have mentioned previously. Specific reference is again made to 'scary' or 'creepy' animals as being something children did not like about this session.

Feeling calm/relaxed is mentioned by four children. This has increased by one child response each session (from two in the first session to four today). Two children responded by saying their favourite part of this session was the 'Breathing/Relaxation' part. I write:

I used a Tibetan singing bowl to regulate children's breath. I asked them to listen carefully and when the sound began take a deep breath in counting to three and then breathing out for a long breath. (Gammer, N. Reflective Journal, 26.01.17)

The inclusion of active listening and responding to sound is a well-known mindfulness activity. I thought they may have found this activity challenging, given their age, but they all seemed to be concentrating. 'They always seem much calmer straight after breathing activities' is an interesting observation. Perhaps it is interesting to note that yoga has come to mean so much more than just actively participating in poses, but it is in seeing yoga as a holistic practice that is important to teach young children all the elements including breathing and meditation too.

I include one child's response of 'I did not like rolling over' in as part of the theme of 'movement' as it fits in with other children saying they disliked 'lying down' but it is not the same thing completely. Personally, rolling-over actually has more to do with balance than lying-down and could be a symptom of an underactive vestibular system. The child in question could be suffering from a balance problem and the rolling-over or balancing form of activity might not feel comfortable. Three children respond by saying they feel 'Good/Happy' and one child states they feel 'Wonderful' after the session. This positive reaction to self-perception through participating in a weekly yoga session is identified previous studies into yoga interventions with children (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003).



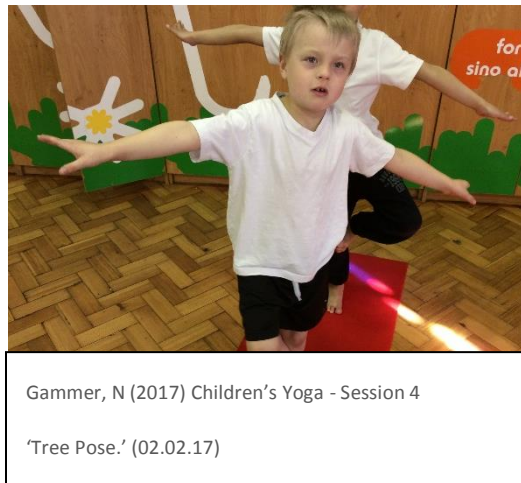
Session 4 - 02.02.17			
Likes	Being a fish - 7	Being a Bear – 3 'All of it' - 4	Mountain/Tree/Rainbow /River/Sea - 2
Dislikes	Being a bear - 4	Being a fish - 3	Nothing/Balancing/Bo at/Tree/First Warning - 1
Favourite part	Being a: butterfly/tree/mounta in/rainbow/flower - 5	Singing - 2	Relaxing/Everything - 1
Feelings	Calm/Relaxed - 7	Happy/Joyful/Good/Gr eat - 3	Confident – 2 Amazing/Tired - 1

Ten children liked the opportunity to 'be' different Mountain-themed animals and the nature-inspired poses including a fish, bear, tree and a rainbow. Four children enjoyed all of it. Seven children did not enjoy being a fish or a bear specifically. One child did not enjoy the balancing aspect of tree pose, perhaps because they found this activity difficult? One child did not like another child getting a 'first-warning' for bad behaviour.



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 4 'Mountain Pose.'  
(02.02.17)

The child who received the 'first-warning' experienced an unsettling home-life situation and was prone to exhibiting both antagonistic and challenging behaviour. 'Refusal is one of her default behaviours in an attempt to take control of the situation around her and perhaps the change in timetable had affected her ability to cope in a school situation.' For future studies, in an ideal situation, the day/time of each session needs to be regular as children expect and respond to structure more favourably.



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 4

'Tree Pose.' (02.02.17)

Five children's favourite part was the different poses we tried out along our 'Mountain' journey. I write: 'I enjoyed seeing the children joining in with the movements and really trying to participate with each posture as we went down the stream and through the woodland'. The similar perceptions from both children and from me as their teacher is encouraging to see, particularly as I write in my 'Reflective Journal' about how unhappy one child's behaviour made me feel.

Two children enjoyed the singing aspect of this session and as I wrote in a previous session (Session 3) 'In Year 2 we hadn't done as much singing as we did in Year 1, so it was a good excuse to encourage children's voices.' I think any opportunity to sing is usually gratefully received by children but sadly we do not seem to do enough of it during the school day. This view is not always shared by the children themselves as overall three children throughout the six-week course responded by saying that 'singing' and 'music' was something they had disliked about their yoga session.



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 4  
'Being a Bear.' (02.02.17)

Overall, seven children responded by saying they felt 'Calm/Relaxed' after this session. This is the most who have responded in this way after a session of yoga so far. It seemed like the children were more prepared and ready for the relaxation section of the session than in any session previously (Two children in Session 3 commented by saying that the relaxation part of the session whereas only one today said that it was their favourite. Four children in Session 3 comment they feel calm/relaxed whereas there were seven children in this session who comment feeling calm/relaxed). I write:

We then prepared for relaxation and although I hadn't dimmed the lights (because they don't come back on in time) the children seemed ready and prepared for this bit. They lay in corpse pose and shut their eyes as I read a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh (Buddhist Monk) asking the children to breathe in and out deeply.  
(Gammer, N. Reflective Journal, 02.02.17)

I observe that the addition of the poetry 'captured the peaceful and calming quality of the relaxation aspect of the lesson' and say that it would be good to include this again. 13 children respond positively to this session, despite the unsettling behaviour of one child.

Two children disliked 'being a tree' and 'balancing'. Exercising the vestibular system and training an individual's core strength to be able to balance effectively are an important benefit of teaching children yoga at school. It is interesting that children experienced discomfort whilst balancing in these positions.

One child felt tired after this session, this interesting reaction may have been because the feeling of being totally relaxed might be easily confused with being tired. Deep breathing and laying on the floor may also be conducive to feelings of tiredness. Calm breathing is associated with a meditative state, calming the body and focussing the mind by regulating the autonomic nervous system which encourages our bodies to relax (Yang & Chan, 2014, Steiner et al. 2012).

Overall, a total of eight children report feeling relaxed and calm (including one child saying they feel tired) which is a large percentage of the children who gave feedback and of the participant group in total. It would be an important finding of this research to report the importance of including an opportunity for relaxation or meditation within the 60-minute yoga lesson.

Session 5 – 09.02.17			
Likes	Space/Rocket/Aliens/ Moon/ Star - 18	Laying down - 4	I liked it all - 3
Dislikes	Rocket/Spaceship/Alien - 7	Laying/ Crouching/ Stretching - 5	Warm-up game - 3
Favourite Part	Rocket/Space/Alien/Moon/Star - 10	Warm-up/Singing 2	Packing bags/Stretching - 2
Feelings	Good/Happy -14	Calm - 10	Surprised/Amazing - 1

Eighteen children responded they ‘liked’ this cross-curricular session’s ‘Space’ theme as we were learning about ‘Explorers’ and it fit in well with our day-to-day learning. Four children liked the opportunity to lay down and three children ‘liked it all’.

Seven children did not like pretending being in a Rocket/Spaceship or ‘pretending to be an Alien’. This indicates that imaginative role-play is not always a good idea for all children. Five children did not like lying/crouching down and three did not like the warm-up game.



Gammer, N (2017) Children’s Yoga - Session 5 ‘Warming-up by walking like we’re on the moon.’ (09.02.17)

Ten children responded that their favourite part was the role-playing element of the session. Two children enjoyed the warm-up game and the singing the most. Two children enjoyed packing their space bags the most. However, three children refer to packing their bags (getting 'food' and 'water bottles') as something they disliked. This could be because they are twisting their upper bodies and their spine, a movement that might not feel comfortable without regular practise. One child contradicts this feedback by stating that packing their bag was their favourite part.

I write that I am feeling more confident in teaching yoga in this session. I also feel able to respond to children's ideas and suggestions more freely than I did initially. 'I like the collaborative approach to designing the lesson and allowing myself to trust the children's ability to come up with ideas and then introduce them into the plan.' I go on to reflect upon how teaching has become more about planning than the actual doing. It is far more enjoyable to work with the children and allow them to have some control over the lesson itself. I write:

This session of yoga has been the highlight of my week! I'm enjoying teaching and the children appear to be learning and exercising which is great. They also seem calmer, particularly during class time and especially in the session.

(Gammer, N. Reflective Journal, 09.02.17)



Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 5 'Child Pose Relaxation.' (09.02.17)

This positive reaction is echoed in the children's feelings in their responses to the session. Fourteen children felt 'Good/Happy' and ten children felt 'Calm'. One child felt 'Surprised' after the session, another felt 'Amazing'.

Again, I go on to add the importance of singing in KS1. 'I think there is a relaxing element to singing which produces a calmness to the room as you need to be very aware of your breath to be able to sing properly. I know there are children in my class who particularly enjoy it but not all of them, I think a few of the children (boys in particular) think it is a bit babyish.'

The theme of singing/breath is something that I keep referring to throughout my 'Reflective Diary' and could be considered an important finding of my research. Even though not all children unanimously agree with this statement as three children in the final session say that music/singing is something they disliked. Perhaps the age and maturity of each child plays a part in what children enjoy participating in, but as it is only a small number of children who disliked singing and the majority were joining in; I will continue to encourage singing and music as part of the yoga session.

Session 6 – 16.02.17			
Likes	Resources: bells, scarves, string, parachute - 10	Relaxing – 5 <i>All/ Everything</i> - 5	Yoga/Specific Poses/ Laying down - 6
Dislikes	I disliked nothing - 4	Music & Singing – 3 <i>Showing each other</i> - 2	Behaviour/Specific Poses – 6 Shoulders hurting - 1
Favourite part	Everything - 8	Singing/Music -5	Specific Poses/Activities - 9
Feelings	Calm/Relaxed - 12	Happy/Nice/Fine/Great/ Joyful/Wonderful/Pleasant - 8	Sweaty - 1

In both my reflective diary and in the ten most popular children's responses; they liked the addition of the practical resources. Five children liked 'Relaxing and another five liked 'Everything/All'. Six children liked specific poses which we had recapped from over the course of the previous five-sessions. These include 'monkey' and 'bear'. I write:

'We recapped the last five weeks and discussed the things the children enjoyed which were very wide-ranging from songs with actions, going under the sea, to specific animal postures to going into space and meeting aliens. We had another go at doing them and it was interesting to hear the things the children enjoyed most and good to give them another opportunity. I thought it was interesting to mention that the children suggested the most high-energy or active parts of the lesson, the movements or postures not the relaxation elements.'





Gammer, N (2017) Children's Yoga - Session 6 'Snake Pose.' (16.02.17)

Four children did not dislike anything. Three did not like the Music/Singing and two others did not like showing the poses in front of an audience of other children. This 'showing' others throughout the session is a big part of the PE curriculum with performing and presenting being an objective to be expected of children in both Key Stages. However, with some children lacking in self-esteem and confidence, 'showing' the things they have learnt can cause unnecessary fear and anxiety for some children. I would never force a child to show their poses and children were always given the option not to show their poses. However, some children must have felt uncomfortable with this additional aspect of the final session and it is worth bearing in mind for the future.

Six did not like doing specific poses and one child did not like that their shoulder hurt. After talking with the child about when their shoulders hurt them, they explained this was during 'fish pose', known as Matsyasana, seen here in the image below:



*Matsyasana* – 'Fish Pose'. Last Accessed on: 03/12/17  
[<http://www.englishyogaberlin.com/tag/fish-pose/>]

Eight children enjoyed 'Everything' as their favourite part. Five children enjoyed the 'Music/Singing' as their favourite part of the session and nine others stated they enjoyed specific activities, poses and games from the previous sessions the most. 'I was also surprised to see how many of the postures they had retained over the six weeks as some poses were from the very first session.'

Twelve children responded by saying they felt 'Calm/Relaxed'. Eight children responded by saying they felt 'Happy' or 'Good' or something positive of a similar effect. One child felt sweaty after all the exercise. An interesting comment to draw attention to because despite the misconception that yoga is an 'easy' form of exercise; previous studies have also suggested that yoga can improve cardiovascular fitness and body mass of children, whilst also accommodating participants who may feel intimidated by more vigorous forms of exercise (Birdee et al., 2009).

I write: 'I have really enjoyed teaching the children each session and would thoroughly recommend yoga as an indoor PE activity.' This positive response in my 'Reflective Journal' is testament to how well the six-sessions have been received, both by myself as a teaching practitioner and by the growing number of children who respond saying they feel more 'Calm' after each session.

The increase in children's 'calmness' levels, is not dissimilar to an American research study of the implementation of a weekly yoga intervention. It showed an improvement of 20% in children's perception of themselves and a decrease in 'bad' behaviour, measured by a reduction in school discipline referrals (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003).

What is difficult to measure or find enough evidence of in my reflective journal account is any improvement in the levels of children's 'calm' behaviour throughout the week. When writing the reflective journal, I was limited to reflecting upon the lesson I had just

taught and did not expand this reflection throughout the day or week. Although some children felt calm during the yoga session and their comments would also suggest this; it is impossible to find evidence of their 'calmness' in other school situations and any suggestion of this would be my opinion only.

In summary, the findings from this study are varied and wide-ranging and at times contradictory. However, it is possible to surmise a few possibilities from the findings.

Overall, children enjoyed the thematic nature of the sessions; giving the yoga postures a context worked particularly well and specific animal poses were enjoyed by the children. This is echoed by Marsha Wenig's belief that Children's yoga sessions should be infused with storytelling, music, games, poetry, songs and art so that they are engaging for children's minds (Wenig, 2003). However, one of the key findings of my research is that not all the children enjoyed the 'imaginary adventure' or the 'pretending' aspect of the themed yoga sessions. Was this because of individual children's inability or dislike of being asked to imagine or pretend, or was this because they did not like the context or theme proposed? Were they scared of the jungle or of space? Would it be more appropriate to ask children to suggest the theme or context?

In future, it would be important to have a variety of different approaches for all children in a class of 30 Year 2 children. This could be as simple as a range of challenge cards with the postures on, removing any of the imaginary themes so children can focus wholly on the postures. It would also be an important approach to teaching yoga for some of the older children at primary school or to teenagers and young adults.

It is also important to note that some children did not enjoy doing some of the scarier animal postures (snakes, bears etc.) so it might be possible to come up with alternative names for postures using the children's own interests. Perhaps snake could become seahorse, bear could become unicorn to make them less frightening reference-points for the children. After seeing how imaginative the children's responses were during the

sessions, I believe it is totally possible to ask children for their ideas and adapt yoga sessions according to individual preferences. Teaching yoga at primary school has been a positive experience both for me as a practitioner and for the majority of the children in this study.

An important finding from this study, impacting my future teaching of children's yoga is to ensure that the environment is comfortable for all children to lay on the floor. Not putting out enough mats or expecting children to share mats comes with its own difficulties. Although it would be ideal, you do not always need a yoga mat per child to teach yoga at school, larger gymnastic mats most schools already have worked adequately. Nevertheless, perhaps we need to question the hygiene element of using gym mats and how often they are cleaned during the school year. Some children enjoyed the calming aspect of the relaxation part of each session, but others disliked lying on the floor and the bad smell might have been why this was the case.

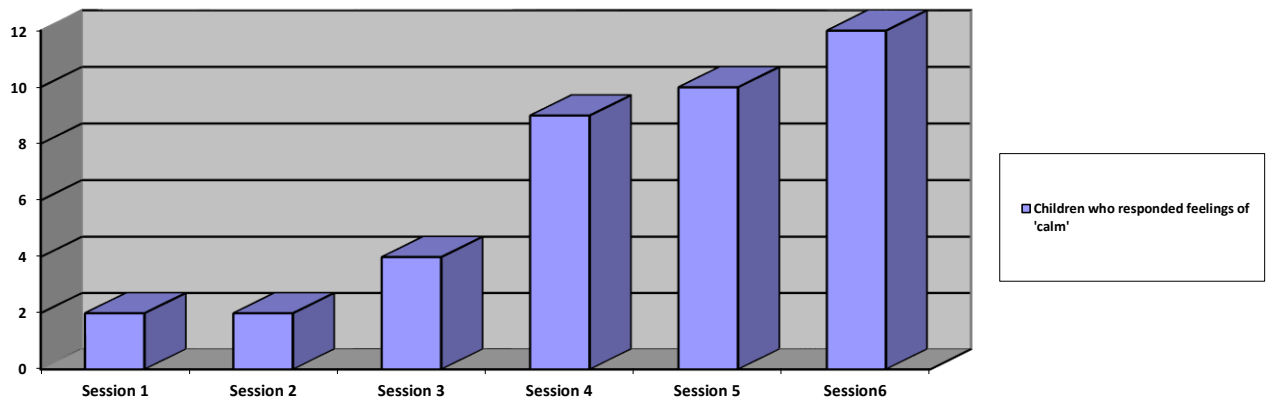
A recurring theme in both the children's response data and in my reflective diary is that the inclusion of features like singing, breathing and musical elements brought children enjoyment. In my opinion, this is because singing is an example of 'Natural Mindfulness' (Erwin & Robinson, 2016). The way we use our breath and voices to sing might also be considered the mindful practice of 'Pranayama' which lies at the heart of yoga. This echoes the *natural mindfulness* theory suggested by Erwin & Robinson (2016), who insist that children are so inherently capable of being mindful. Singing draws attention to the breath and could well be considered a Mindful Practice. Mindful Practice "firstly identifies practices that promote mindfulness such as deliberate joy or breathing, Yoga, and meditation, all of which produce a sense of calm, joy and focus" (pg. 270, Erwin & Robinson, 2016). This study further demonstrates children's natural mindfulness and how we as practitioners can give children the opportunities to demonstrate this inherent skill by facilitating 'Mindful Practice' such as singing throughout the school day. It is easy to become distracted by teaching the necessary literacy and numeracy

objectives we can forget to include activities which enhance children's experience of being. Singing and rhymes could be easily incorporated into children's learning easily and effectively helping them to remember and retain information, useful when learning necessities like the days of the week, months of the year or colours of the rainbow.

Children said that they disliked stretching because it hurt, and it is difficult to understand whether this was because they did not like touching the floor or because the stretching was a new experience and may have felt uncomfortable. Further investigation would have been required at the time and is not possible retrospectively. One child said the 'fish pose' created discomfort in their shoulders, despite many commenting that this was a pose they 'liked'. This unnecessary discomfort could have been alleviated through the creation of an indicator for children to keep next to them; so, they would be able to show whether the position/stretch is too painful/hurting them in order for their teacher to be able to see this clearly and be able to intervene before any serious pain or discomfort takes place during the session.

Levels of children responding that they felt calm or relaxed (including one child who reported feeling 'tired') after the session increased over the 6-week course (Figure 2). I also felt that during the sessions and just afterwards, children seemed to be calmer and levels of concentration and engagement in classroom activities had improved, which corresponds with the increase in children's positive feelings (Figure 3) but this is more of an opinion than a documented fact.

**Figure 2 - A chart to show how many children responded with 'calm' feelings after each session of yoga:**



Overall, children's positive responses to the sessions was more than their negative responses each week. This is clearly seen in there being more likes than dislikes each week throughout the 6-week course:

**Figure 3 - A table to show how many positive & negative comments were made after each session:**

Session	Positive (Likes)	Negative (Dislikes)
1	24	21
2	27	23
3	21	16
4	25	11
5	30	19
6	30	12

Because I collected anonymous data from the class, it is very difficult to track any individual child's change in response to the yoga sessions. However, as mentioned above a rise in positive group responses can be seen (Figure 3); there is an increase in the total number of children responding that they feel calm/relaxed (Figure 2). I am

certain that there is a small number of children who responded positively from the first session throughout the six-weeks and their responses did not change as they continued to enjoy each weekly session. A small number may have begun positively and changed their opinion throughout the series. Some may have not enjoyed it and continued to dislike yoga throughout the six-week course. It is difficult to know if there were children who did not enjoy participating in the yoga session because they may have chosen not to respond at all rather than respond negatively. Without evidence of their feedback or an opportunity to go back and question each child, it is also difficult to know who they were and why they felt this way.

With any key findings of this research study outlined; there are many avenues for further developments of the research into teaching yoga to children that could be explored in the future. A similar replication of this study would benefit from researching the calming effects of teaching yoga daily, with practitioners keeping a reflective diary throughout the week. It might also be useful to 'bookend' the research by asking the children to take part in a puzzle, quiz or activity which requires a high-level of calmness and concentration, both before and after each session/series to see if the outcome changes. Is there an improvement in children's concentration score after a session of yoga?

This might help to provide more clarity into the benefits of implementing yoga teaching into indoor PE sessions and everyday practice. It might also indicate that yoga could help to improve calmness levels in primary schools. It would also be interesting to complete this study with some of the older children at primary school to see what reception yoga and contemplative practices is given by children in KS2 or even KS3/4.

## **Conclusion:**

The aim of this research study was to see if the implementation of a six-week course of weekly one-hour Yoga sessions during indoor PE could provide an effective calming strategy that could be used to support children's health and wellbeing in primary schools. Children in mainstream schools in the UK are expected to consistently meet the increasingly high standards of a Literacy and Numeracy focussed curriculum, increasing pressure on children and leaving very little time for them to express their natural mindfulness (Erwin & Robinson, 2016). Furthermore, a recent survey suggests that nearly 1 in 3 children across the UK (aged 2-15) is overweight or obese (Childhood Obesity: A plan for Action, 2007). Consequently, this study explores the potential benefits of combining both important strands of physical exercise and mindful spirituality to provide children with an opportunity to cultivate their best selves both inside and out.

The positive effects of Yoga are wide-ranging and well-documented, including a study researching the effects of Yoga as part of a wellbeing intervention to prevent symptoms of *Care Fatigue* (Figley Institute, 2012) amongst professionals (predominantly teachers and social workers) and another study looking at how Yoga can increase our 'attentive awareness' promoting the skill of *self-regulation* (Black and Fernando, 2014, Brown and Ryan 2003, Oberle et al. 2012). A key signifier of one's calmness level would be the extent of their ability to regulate impulses, attention and focus (Shapiro, 2014). There is substantial literature recognising the benefits of teaching Yoga to children with SEN and Emotional and Behavioural Disorders. Nevertheless, academic literature concerning research into the application of a Yoga intervention conducted with children in a mainstream school was difficult to find, particularly research involving Yoga being used as an intervention to increase levels of calmness of children at school.

In this short trial it is clear that most of the child participants (Year 2) enjoyed partaking in most of the Yoga sessions. Despite there being an indication that the total number of



children who felt 'calm' increased after each session of Yoga, this could have been the result of a range of limiting factors. I became more trusting and collaborative in my approach to teaching the sessions; perhaps the children enjoyed having more autonomy during the later sessions resulting in them feeling calmer because they were more in control?

Feedback showed a steady increase over the six-week period (the total number of children claiming they felt calm rose from two children in the first session to twelve in the final session). Nonetheless, there is simply not enough evidence from the children's feedback or in my personal reflective journal to suggest that increasing calmness levels provided by one session of yoga a week was unquestionably effective enough to be used as a calming strategy. Any suggestion of a noticeable improvement in the children's behaviour throughout the school week was little more than a brief comment in my reflective journal:

I felt more at ease than I had in the previous session and from my positive experience last week I knew it was working well and the children enjoyed the experience and seemed much calmer, especially throughout the lesson and for the remainder of the afternoon.

(Gammer, N. (2017) Reflective Journal (19.0.17)

My personal reflective journal gave an account of how I perceived the session I had just taught; but not enough of the observations were documented concerning the children's calmness levels throughout the remainder of the school week. If I were to replicate this study, I would be inclined to keep a reflective journal every day, rather than only reflecting after each taught Yoga session. However, this was also an extremely time-consuming activity and not always easy or appropriate to find a moment to write down personal reflections when you are also responsible for teaching a class of children every day.

Despite the guidance (Wenig, 2007 & Saraswati, 2009) recommending a combination of arts and crafts, drama and stories as well as teaching children the 'Asanas' (postures); the Yoga sessions I taught were not as 'cross-curricular' or as stimulating as they could have been because they were held during PE lesson time and did not always include a follow-up activity after each session had ended. The themed sessions worked well and provided a 'thread' to tie-in each context for the children to follow and gave the inspiration for songs and games, such as: The Jungle, Africa and Mountain themes. The 'Space' themed session worked well because we were already studying a topic about 'Explorers', so the children were engaged and had suggested lots of ideas for collaboration. Working together with the children to come up with a theme of their choice might be the next step for me to explore. I could give the children a choice of contexts or locations or better still ask for suggestions. We could then decide upon the animals we may meet, how we get there etc.

In an age where there are high expectations for all teachers to have a detailed plan of each lesson they teach with carefully mapped out objectives usually weeks ahead of themselves, often regardless of the needs of the class; this co-created approach to using the children's suggestions is both appealing and creative. To think I may not know the outcome until I come to teach the session itself puts the excitement back into teaching for me as a practitioner. The collective aspects of the Yoga lessons worked extremely well, coupled with my growing confidence in teaching Yoga; the collaboration between myself and the children grew into something we could both enjoy and learn from:

Just as I did before I asked children questions like, "What can you see at the bottom of the sea?" some said jellyfish, starfish, buried treasure and their responses were both imaginative and plausible and with each response I taught a new posture or recalled a movement for each suggestion. This exchange of ideas required me to put my plan to one side and react organically with the children's ideas and suggestions.

(Gammer, N. (2017) Reflective Journal (19.0.17)

Could I have taught a session of Yoga informally as part of their topic instead of using a weekly PE slot? Yes, I most certainly could have, particularly some of the less physical aspects, like the poetry, meditations, *mindfulness practice* or active listening such as listening to the Tibetan Singing Bowl for three sounds to calm and quieten the class. I am certain these activities would work as well as a full session and might have been easier to implement. The reasons for being so compartmentalised in my approach is partly down to the time-constraints and pressures we face as practitioners delivering all areas of the current curriculum. In a busy primary school, space is a huge consideration and as hall times generally coincide with indoor PE sessions it seemed appropriate. Having used a four-part lesson model (based upon traditional PE lessons) we started with a warm up, held poses played a game and cooled-down, very much in the same vein as a Gymnastics, Dance or Skills-based PE session.

Traditionally, you would teach a four-part lesson with an opportunity for a plenary at the end of the PE lesson. This might include children showing or presenting what skills have been learned or acquired, but this study suggests that not all children feel comfortable when 'showing' back to their peers. This may be because of a low sense of self-esteem or self-confidence but might also suggest that as practitioners we must treat young children delicately and what might work for one child does not mean will work for all; giving a choice is much healthier than having high expectations. Another finding was that the competitive nature of warm-up game activities had a negative effect on some children. Winning or losing might have once been a necessary part of growing up and an essential 'life lesson', but for some children it is harder to handle in a calm manner than others. Particularly for those children who have experienced negative feelings associated with losing or because they might never have had enough opportunity to feel like a 'winner' or that they are 'good' at anything at school. However, one could argue that encouraging this type of experience prepares children for potential disappointment in later life; is being able to move on from negative

experiences the signifier of a 'healthy' and well-adjusted person. Should we be building the skills of resilience at school?

Rather than seeing the Yoga lesson as a separate PE session or as finite entities; perhaps I should have been more fluid in my approach to implementing Yoga by spreading it out across the course of the school day in the same way as 'brain-breaks' might be used to improve physical fitness and boost cognitive brain function (Gomez-Pinilla & Hillman, 2013). Possibly including short-burst yoga sessions of 5-10 minutes as part of transition periods might be an easier way of embedding yoga practice into primary schools. After energetic break times and unstructured play times it would be the perfect opportunity for children to calm themselves down with a 5-minute Yoga exercise, to become relaxed and focussed, exercising self-efficacy; and most importantly feeling less anxious and readier for new learning challenges.

The addition of singing and music as part of the sessions was another feature that was received well by the children. The majority of children enjoyed the singing, however, 3 did not. I feel that currently there is not enough opportunity for music and singing at school, except during designated lessons (when learning Christmas carols or as part of assembly time). With so much to teach and so little time, it is easy to become distracted by literacy/numeracy objectives and forget that our purpose as educators is to enrich the lives of the children we teach; what better way to do this than to show children the joy in just being a breathing human being? Through singing and music both adults and children can enjoy a shared moment of togetherness. We can also learn necessary objectives like times-tables, days of the week, months of the year or colours of the rainbow, to name just a few.

In summary, the key things I have learnt from this study and would recommend to colleagues interested in teaching Yoga to children are:

- **Cushion the floor** – use Yoga mats if possible (however, these are not always available unfortunately) or clean gym mats to provide support for children lying on the floor. Blankets and cushions might be useful for the relaxation elements.
- **Provide ‘Brain-Breaks’** – If blankets, cushions, Yoga mats and space are an issue in school, you could try doing a bit of Yoga with children in the classroom, perhaps after break or play-time. Not all the postures will be feasible, and it might be difficult to teach a whole lesson, but 5-10 minutes of carefully chosen mindfulness activities would be a good way to focus the attention of the children and provide an opportunity to calm and centre your class.
- **Vary warm-ups and use non-competitive games sometimes too** – Some of the more traditional warm up games in PE can be competitive. Particularly for young children, the concept of winning can be difficult to grasp. Varying the warm-up activity may help to ease any negative behaviour associated with ‘losing’ a game.
- **Provide children with a theme or context** – This will help to guide each Yoga lesson and offer inspiration for songs, games and postures. I have found that children have far more imaginative ideas than any I could come up with myself. The ability to be flexible and knowledge of different postures will be required, so be ready to adapt and change plans to go with what the children themselves have come up with and give opportunities throughout the lesson to ask questions and listen to children’s ideas. Or, even better still, let children decide a theme of their choice in advance?
- **Singing/Music** – Provide opportunities for singing and music wherever possible. The relaxed sensation that singing can bring is closely linked with ‘Pranayama’ (the Breath) an essential part of Yoga teaching. The soothing calmness created when singing Nursery Rhymes to babies is replicated, encouraging children to use the rhythmic sound of their voices to relax and calm their bodies.

- **Practical Resources** – Using visual stimuli and props help to scaffold children’s understanding and is not a new concept. It still remains an important reference point to help enthuse and engage, particularly when working with young children in KS1.
- **Stretch Indicators** – A key finding of this research study was that a handful of children experienced pain and discomfort when holding some of the Yoga postures for the first time. This could be resolved by either having a range of postures, differentiated by ability and more of a build up to the more intense postures. Or, through using an indicator to show the intensity of each stretch. This could be a laminated wheel with numbers or colours signifying the level of discomfort the child is experiencing. This would make it easier for teachers to spot if a child was feeling any soreness or distress.

This study has brought to my attention that the majority of KS1 children (Year 2) enjoyed taking part in the Yoga sessions each week and overall, would benefit from a more cross-curricular experience of Yoga than simply just an indoor PE session. In the future, it would be interesting to replicate a similar study with older children, as perhaps the thematic nature, songs and stories may be less appropriate in KS2? Instead, older children may prefer to do short bursts of 5-10 minutes of postures (perhaps a set routine or sun-salutation), or potentially use challenge cards during transition periods throughout the school day instead of a full hour-long themed session. However, it would also be interesting to see how older children would have reacted to the same PE sessions. Would they have also been scared by the scarier animals like lions, tigers and snakes? Would they have been as upset about having a gym mat instead of a yoga mat to use to cushion themselves from the floor? Would they have experienced pain and discomfort in the same postures? What might the children’s feedback be like if conducted with older children? All these possible outcomes may be worth exploring to find out how Yoga might be received by older children.

Executing this study has taught me that rather than narrowing children's experiences, we as teachers should be widening and broadening the breadth of children's understanding at an early age. Steadfast favourites like Gymnastics will remain a worthwhile activity to teach growing children, but if we simply taught this as the only option for indoor PE, we could miss out on presenting children with an opportunity to not only build physical fitness, balance and strength but also a worthy opportunity to learn about the natural world. To give children a chance to grow spiritually and enhance their mental wellbeing. All of which are valid, possible and could well be achieved through teaching Yoga to children as part of the school day.

## Bibliography

Annis, C. (2015) *Lyn Marshall & Yoga*. Available at:

<http://www.relaxandrelease.co.uk/lyn-marshall-yoga/> [Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> December 2017]

Alderson, P. (1995) *Listening to Children: Children, Ethics and Social Research*, Barkingside: Barnado's.

Armstrong, Jan. (2010). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. In: Salk, N. J. (2010)

Encyclopedia of research design, SAGE Available at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256294652\\_Naturalistic\\_Inquiry](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256294652_Naturalistic_Inquiry)  
[Last accessed on: 30/0/17] 880-885

Bandura, A. (1988) Perceived Self-efficacy: Exercise of control through self-belief. In *Annual Series of European research in behaviour therapy*, ed. J. Dauwalder, M. Perrez, and V. Hobbi, 27-59, Swets& Zeitlinger Lisse, The Netherlands.

Barnes P, M., Bloom, B., Nahin R, L. (2008) Complementary and alternative medicine use among adults and children. *National Health Statistics Reports* 12: 1–24

BBC Education (2016) *Children in England 'among unhappiest in world'*

[online] Available from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-33984082>

[Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Bender, M 2007, 'A Healthy Laugh', *Working Mother*, 30, 7, p. 46, Education Source, EBSCOhost, viewed 26 July 2017.



- Bergen-Cico, D., Razza, R., & Timmins, A. (2015) Fostering Self-Regulation Through Curriculum Infusion of Mindful Yoga: A Pilot Study of Efficacy and Feasibility. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* Vol 24:11, pp. 3448-3461
- Biegel, G., Brown, K., Shapiro, S. & Schubert, C. (2009) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction for the Treatment of Adolescent Psychiatric Outpatients: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. Vol. 77, No. 5, 855– 866
- Bierman et al (2008) Promoting Academic and Social-Emotional School Readiness: The Head Start REDI Program. *Child Development* Volume 79, Number 6, Pages 1802 – 1817
- Birdee, S, G., Yeh, G., Wayne, P., Phillips, R., Davis, R., & Gardiner, P. (2009) Clinical Applications of Yoga for the Pediatric Population: A Systematic Review *Acad Pediatr*. 9(4): 212–220
- Black, D. S & Fernando, R, J. (2014) Mindfulness Training and Classroom Behavior Among Lower-Income and Ethnic Minority Elementary School Children *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2014) 23: 1242.
- Blair, K. A., Denham, S. A., Kochanoff, A., & Whipple, B. (2004) 'Playing it cool: temperament, emotion regulation, and social behaviour in pre-schoolers.' *Journal of School Psychology*, 42, 419-443
- Blair, C. & Razza, R. P. (2007) 'Relating effortful control, executive function, and false belief understanding to emerging math and literacy ability in kindergarten.' *Child Development*, 78, 647-663

Blythe, S. G. (2004) *The Well Balanced Child: Movement and Early Learning*. Gloucestershire: Hawthorn Press

British Gymnastics (2017) *British Gymnastics: About Us*. Available at: <https://www.british-gymnastics.org/about-us> [Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> December 2017)

Brown, K, W. & Ryan, R, M. (2003) The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: Vol. 84, No. 4, 822–848

Buck, S, M., Hillman C, H., & Castelli, D, M. (2008) The relation of aerobic fitness to stroop task performance in preadolescent children. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2008 Jan;40(1):166-72.

Cerillo-Urbina, A, J., Garcia-Hermoso, A., Sanchez-Lopez, M., Pardo-Guijarro, M, J., Santos Gomez, J, L. & Martinez-Vizcaino, V. (2015) The effects of physical exercise in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized control trials. *Child Care Health Dev.* 41(6):779-88

'Exam stress overwhelming for thousands of children' 2017, *Education Journal*, 303, p. 10, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 27 July 2017

Christensen, P. and James, A. (2000) Introduction – ‘Researching Children and Childhood: Cultures of Communication’, in P. Christensen and A. James (eds) *Research with Children. Perspectives and Practices*, pp. 1-7. London: Falmer Press.

Christensen, P. (1994) ‘Children as the cultural other’, *Kea:Zeitschrift fur Kulturwissenschaften. TEMA: Kinderwelten* 6: 1-16.

Daut, C. (2016). A case for more yoga on campus: yoga as self-care for higher education and student affairs professionals. *The Vermont Connection*: Vol. 37, Article 6.

Davidson, R. J. (2010). Empirical explorations of mindfulness: conceptual and methodological issues. *Emotion*, 10, 8–11.

Department of Health (2017) *Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action* Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action> [Accessed 23rd July 2017]

Department of Education (2013) *Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education [online]* Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education> [Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Desikachar, T. K. V. (1995) *The Heart of Yoga*. Vermont: Inner Traditions International

Eisenburg, N., Fabes, R. A., Guthrie, I. K., & Reiser, M. (2002) 'The role of emotionality and regulation in children's social competence and adjustment.' In L. Pulkkinen & A. Caspi (Eds.), *Paths to successful development: personality in the life course* (pp.46-70). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Erwin, E. J. & Robinson, K. A. (2016) The joy of being: making way for young children's natural mindfulness. *Early Child Development and Care*. Vol.186:2 268-286

'Exam stress overwhelming for thousands of children' 2017, *Education Journal*, 303, p. 10, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 27 July 2017

Figley Institute. (2012). *Compassion fatigue educator certification course participant guide [online]* Available from: [http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook\\_AMEDD\\_SanAntonio\\_2012July20\\_RevAugust2013.pdf](http://www.figleyinstitute.com/documents/Workbook_AMEDD_SanAntonio_2012July20_RevAugust2013.pdf) [Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Fonagy, P. & Target, M. (2002) *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. London:Karnac

Frank et al. (2014) Effectiveness of a School-Based Yoga Program on Adolescent Mental Health, Stress Coping Strategies, and Attitudes Toward Violence: Findings From a High-Risk Sample. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*. 30:1 29-49

Galantino, M, L., Galbavy, R., and Quin, L. (2008) Therapeutic effects of yoga for children: a systematic review of the literature. *Pediatric Physical Therapy*. 20:166-80

Gard et al., 2012 Effects of a yoga-based intervention for young adults on quality of life and perceived stress: The potential mediating roles of mindfulness and self-compassion. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 7:3 165-175

Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books

Goble, C & Bye-Brooks, N. (2016) *Health & Well-Being for Young People*. London: Palgrave

Gomez-Pinilla, F. & Hillman, C. (2013) The Influence of Exercise on Cognitive Abilities. *Comprehensive Physiology*. 3:403–428.

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, 39, 281-291.

Gruber, D, J. & Poulson, C, L. (2016) Graduated guidance delivered by parents to teach yoga to children with developmental delays. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. 49:1 193-198

Gutman, L. & Feinstein L. (2008) *Children's Well-being in Primary School: Pupil and School Effects*. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning: London.

Hart, J., Tyrer, B. (2006). *Research with children living in situations of armed conflict: Concepts, Ethics & Methods*. Available at:

<https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/hart-j-tyrer-b-2006-research-children-living-situations-armed> [Last accessed on 30/10/17]

House of Commons Education and Health Committees (2017) Children and young people's mental health – the role of education [online] Available from:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhealth/849/849.pdf> [Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

James, A. & Prout, A. (eds) (1990) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, London: Falmer Press.

Johnson, A. E., Forston, J. L., Gunnar, M. R., & Zelazo, P. D. (2012) *A randomized controlled trial of mindfulness meditation training in preschool children*. Submitted.

Khalsa, S, B. (2004) Treatment of chronic insomnia with yoga: a preliminary study with sleep-wake diaries. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*. 29:4 269–278

Kolb, D (1984). *Experiential Learning as the Science of Learning and Development*. NJ: Prentice Hall.

Krueger, J., Counts, N. and Riley, B., (2017). Promoting mental health and well-being in public health law and practice. *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 45, pp.37-40

Guerini, R., Marraffa, M. and Paloscia, C. (2015) Mentalization, attachment, and subjective identity. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 6:1022

Lynn, R. & Mensinga, J. (2015) Social Workers' Narratives of Integrating Mindfulness into Practice, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 29:3, 255-270

Mayall, B. (2001) 'Understanding Childhoods: A London Study', in Alanen, L. & Mayall, B. (Eds), *Conceptualizing Child-Adult Relations*, London: Routledge Falmer

McClelland, M. M., Cameron, C. E., Connor, C. M., Farris, C. L., Jewkes, A. M., & Morrison, F. J. (2007). Links between behavioural regulation and preschoolers' literacy, vocabulary, and math skills. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 947–959.

Mees, P, D. (2005) Yoga Participation Surges. *Physician & Sportsmedicine* 33:5, p12-15

Mills, J, 2004, 'Research with children, a contradiction in terms?', *Primary Practice*, 36, 29–34

Miller, Richard C., Butler, Britta (2011). *iRest for kids. Integrative Restoration Institute [online]* Available from: [www.irest.us/node/338](http://www.irest.us/node/338)  
[Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Moon, J. (2006). *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development*. London: Taylor & Francis

Napoli, M., Krech, P. R., & Holley, L. C. (2005). Mindfulness training for elementary school students: the attention academy. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21*, 99-125.

Newman, S. (1999) 'Constructing and Critiquing Reflective Practice', *Educational Action Research, 7:1*, 145-163. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09650799900200081> [Last accessed on: 30/10/17]

Noggle, J. J., Steiner, N. J., Minami, T., & Khalsa, S. B. (2012) Benefits of yoga for psychosocial well-being in a US high school curriculum: A preliminary randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Development and Behavioural Paediatrics, 33(3)*, 193-201.

Oberle, E., Schonert-Reichl, K., Lawlor, M. S., & Thompson, K. C. (2012). Mindfulness and inhibitory control in early adolescence. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 32(4)*, 565-588.

OFSTED (2013) *Not yet good enough: Personal, social, health and economic education in schools* London: OFSTED

Ortner, C. N. M., Kilner, S. J., & Zelazo, P. D (2007). Mindfulness meditation and reduced emotional interference on a cognitive task. *Motivation and Emotion, 31*, 271-283.

Ostrosky, M. M. & Jung, E. Y. (2010). *What Works Briefs: Building Positive Teacher-Child Relationships*. Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. Available at: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwwb12.pdf> [Last accessed on 30/0/17]



Oxford Dictionaries (2017) *Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Available at:  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/calmness> [Accessed: 28th  
December 2017]

Palgi, I. (2007) Our Story of Yoga: Participatory Learning and Action with  
Young Children. *Children, Youth and Environments*. 17:2, 329-340

Patrick, F. (2011). *Handbook on Research on Improving Learning and  
Motivation through Educational Games: Multidisciplinary Approaches*.  
Hershey, PA: IGI Global

Peck, H, L., Kehle, T, J. & Bray, M, A. (2005) Yoga as an Intervention for  
Children with Attention Problems. *School Psychology Review*. 34(3), 415-  
424

Powell, E. (2017) *Fearne Cotton: Children should do yoga at school to boost  
their mental health*. The Evening Standard. Available at:  
[https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/fearne-cotton-  
children-should-do-yoga-at-school-to-boost-their-mental-health-  
a3658381.html](https://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/fearne-cotton-children-should-do-yoga-at-school-to-boost-their-mental-health-a3658381.html) [Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> December 2017]

Powell, L., Gilchrist, M., & Stapley, J., (2008) A journey of self-discovery: an  
intervention involving massage, yoga and relaxation for children with  
emotional and behavioural difficulties attending primary school. *Emotional  
and Behavioural Difficulties*, 13(3), 193-199.

Prout, A. (1999) Foreword in: Christensen, P. & James, A. (1999) *Research  
With Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Falmer Press

Provine, R, R. (2000) *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*. New York: Viking.

Public Health England (2014) *The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment*. London: Public Health England

Punch, S. (2002) 'Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults?' *Childhood* 9(3): 321-341

Punch, S. (2002) 'Interviewing Strategies with Young People: the 'Secret Box', Stimulus Material and Task-based Activities'. *Children and Society* 16: 45-56.

Ramani, G. B., Brownell, C. A., & Campbell, S. B. (2010) Positive and negative peer interaction in 3 and 4 year-olds in relation to regulation and dysregulation. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology: Research and Theory on Human Development*, 171, 218-250.

Raub, J, A. (2002) Psychophysiologic effects of Hatha Yoga on musculoskeletal and cardiopulmonary function: a literature review. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 8(6): 797-812

Raver, C. C. (2004). Placing emotional self-regulation in sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts. *Child Development*, 75, 346-353.

Redfering, D, L. & Bowman, M, J. (1981) Effects of a Meditative-Relaxation Exercise on Non-Attending Behaviors of Behaviorally Disturbed Children. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*. 10(2): 126-127

Reynolds, P. (1991) *Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Riggins, L. (2013) Understanding the Health Benefits of Yoga and Implications for Public Health. *The Health Monograph Series*. 30(1) pp. 46-53

Rosen, R. (2002) *The Yoga of Breath*. Boston: Shambhala

Rubin, K. H., Coplan, R. J., Fox, N. A., & Calkins, S. D. (1995). Emotionality, emotion regulation, and pre-schoolers' social adaptation. *Development and Psychopathology. Special Issues: Emotions in developmental psychopathology*, 7, 49-62.

Saraswati, S. (2009) *Yoga Education for Children – Volume Two*. Bihar: Yoga Publications Trust

Satchidananda, S. (1990) *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Virginia: Integral Yoga Publications

Sattelmair, J. & Ratey, J. (2009) Physically Active Play and Cognition An Academic Matter? *American Journal of Play*. 365-374

Schön, D.A. (1975) 'Deutero-learning in organizations – learning for increased effectiveness', *Organizational Dynamics*, 4, pp. 2-16.

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books

Schön, D.A. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schön, D.A. (1992) 'The Theory of Inquiry: Dewey's Legacy to Education', *Curriculum Inquiry*, 22, pp. 119-139

Scott, J. (1997) 'Children as Respondents: Methods for Improving Data Quality', in L.Lyberg et al. (eds) *Survey Measurements and Process Quality*, New York: Wiley.

Semple, R. J., Lee, J., Rosa, D., & Miller, L. F. (2010). A randomized trial of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for children: promoting mindful attention to enhance social-emotional resiliency in children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19, 218-229.

Sengupta, P. (2012) Health Impacts of Yoga and Pranayama: A State-of-the-Art Review. *International Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 3(7) pp.444-458

Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Beigel, G. M. (2006). Teaching self-care to caregivers: Effects of mindfulness based stress reduction on the mental health of mental health therapists in training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 1, 105-115.

Shapiro, S. L., Jazzeri, H., Golden, P. (2012) Effects of mindfulness training on ethics. *Mindfulness*, 2-12.

Shapiro, S. L., Lyons, K. E., Miller, R. C., Butler, B., Vieten, C., Zelazo, P. D. (2014) Contemplation in the Classroom: a New Direction for Improving Childhood Education. *Educational Psychology Review (2015)* 27, 1-30.

Sharrer, V., & Ryan-Wenger, N. (1991), 'Measurements of stress and coping among school-aged children with and without recurrent abdominal pain', *Journal Of School Health*, 61, pp. 86-91

Silberman, S. (2015) *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and How to Think Smarter about People Who Think Differently*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Slovacek, S., Tucker, S., & Pantoja, B. (2003) A study of the yoga ed program at the Accelerated School [online] Available from:

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.557.5632&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Steiner, N. J., Sidhu, T. K. Pop, P. G, Frenette, E. C, & Perrin E. C. (2013). Yoga in an urban school for children with emotional and behavioural disorders: A feasibility study. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22, 815-826.

Sumar, S. (1998). *Yoga for the special child: A therapeutic approach for infants and children with downs syndrome, cerebral palsy, and learning disabilities*. Kansas City, KS: Midpoint Trade Books.

Tamilselvi, B. & Thangarajathi, S. (2011) Development and validation of yoga video package and its effectiveness on depression, anxiety and stress of school teachers. *I-Manager's Journal on School Education Technology*, Vol. 7.

Tamilselvi, B. & Thangarajathi, S. (2013) A study on effects of yoga on adjustment problems of school teachers. *I-Manager's Journal on Educational Psychology*, Vol. 7.

Tamilselvi, B. & Thangarajathi, S. (2016) Subjective well-being of school teachers after yoga- an experimental study. *I-Manager's Journal on Educational Psychology, Vol. 9*

The Children's Society (2016) *The Good Childhood Report – Summary*  
London: The Children's Society

The Education Reform Act (1988) Available from:  
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1988-education-reform-act.pdf> [Accessed on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017]

Uma, K., Nagendra, H. R., Vaidehi, S. & Seethalakshmi, R. (1989) The integrated approach of Yoga: A therapeutic tool for mentally retarded children: A one-year controlled study. *Journal of Mental Deficiency Research, 33(5)*, 415-421

United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Geneva: UN

Valente, V. & Marotta, A. (2005) The impact of yoga on the professional and personal life of the psychotherapist. *Contemporary Family Therapy. 27(1)* 65-80

Velasquez, A, M., Lopez, M. A., Quinonez, N. & Paba, P. (2015) Yoga for the prevention of depression, anxiety, and aggression and the promotion of socio-emotional competencies in school-aged children. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 21:5-6*, 407-421

Waechter, R, L. & Wekerle, C. (2015) Promoting Resilience Among Maltreated Youth Using Meditation, Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong: A Scoping

Review of the Literature. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 32(1), 17-31

Waksler, F. (1996) *The Little Trials of Childhood and Children's Strategies for Dealing with Them*, London: Falmer press

Walsh, R., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). The meeting of meditative disciplines and western psychology: a mutually enriching dialogue. *The American Psychologist*, 61 (3), 227-239.

Walton, W. (1979) The Use of a Relaxation Curriculum and Biofeedback Training in the Classroom to Reduce Inappropriate Behaviors of Emotionally Handicapped Children. *Behavioral Disorders*, 5(1), pp. 10-18

Weale, S. (2017) *More primary school children suffering stress from Sats, survey finds [online]* The Guardian. Available from:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/may/01/sats-primary-school-children-suffering-stress-exam-time> [Accessed on: 23rd July 2017]

Wenig, M. (2003). *Yoga Kids: Educating the whole child through yoga*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang Books

White, L, S. (2012) Reducing stress in school-age girls through mindful yoga. *Journal of Pediatric Healthcare*, 26, 45-56

Zelazo, P. D. (2004). The development of conscious control in childhood. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 8, 12-17.

Zelazo, P. D., Muller, U., Frye, D., & Marcovitch, S. (2003). The development of executive function in early childhood. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 68*(3), Serial No. 274.

Zelazo, P. D. & Lyons, K. E. (2012) The Potential Benefits of Mindfulness Training in Early Childhood: A Developmental Social Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective. *Child Development Perspectives, 6*(2), 154-160



## Appendices

1. Yoga Planning
2. Reflective Journal
3. Children's Feedback
4. Parental Permission Letter
5. Calmness/Yoga Venn  
Diagram

## Children's Yoga Planning

Session	Theme & Warm Up	Yoga Activities	Songs, Story & Participation	Meditation & Relaxation
1.	<p><b>Yoga Safari</b> Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit within me salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p> <p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale down.</p> <p>Introduce the idea that we will be travelling to 'Africa' on an aeroplane, First we need to warm ourselves up. Starting with lifting shoulders up and down, then one up and down, alternating sides and finally wiggling shoulders. Then, we need to pack a bag, so legs outstretched in front of you, see if you can touch your toes? Slowly lifting ourselves up and opening the bag. Holding arms out wide we are going to twist</p>	<p><b>Zebra:</b> Crawling on all fours.</p> <p><b>Elephant:</b> Arm as though trunk outstretched in front of you.</p> <p><b>Lion:</b> Sad cat (head down to chest), Happy cat (head up with a smile).</p> <p><b>Antelope:</b> Warrior Hippopotamus: walking on hands and feet.</p>	<p>Now we are ready for our exciting aeroplane journey, so on our knees using arms outstretched and tongue at the front of mouth to create a buzzing aeroplane sound – arms out stretched we swoop up and down to warm up bodies fully, bending and rotating arms in turn.</p> <p>We then bend onto right arm on floor, lifting left knee outstretched and left hand waving at the sky. Bring knee in front and shoot out back leg. Lift hips. Repeat other side. Pranayama – humming the sound of the aeroplane.</p> <p>*For toddler yoga could include Parent Supine – child flying on adult shins.</p> <p>Straighten legs for a gentle inversion.</p> <p>We made it to Tanzania in Africa!</p> <p>First of all we need to put some sun cream on because it</p>	<p>After arriving back safely with our mats, we stretch up and down, finding a blanket to rest upon.</p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen to meditation music (Track 1) use blankets to rest.</p> <p>When hear the bells chime begin to wiggle toes, wiggle fingers and slowly come up to sitting.</p>

	round one way and collect our toothbrush, then twist the other way and drop it into our bag (repeat with tent, sleeping bag, water, sun cream, etc.) after all the items we need are inside we shut our bag by bringing our knees in slightly and bringing arms down to our toes.		<p>is very hot! Standing up straight, we rub down our legs from hips to toes, one leg, then the other, one arm, then the other. Front and sides. Face. Tummy. Bottom. Feet! Blob, blob, blob!</p> <p>On our safari, we see a Zebra, crawling through the bushes...  <i>Crawling, crawling, crawling, crawling, Stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, stretch, Crawling, crawling, crawling, crawling, Rest, rest, rest. Rest, rest, rest X2</i></p> <p>We can see...</p> <p><b>Zebra</b>  <b>Elephant</b>  <b>Lion</b>  <b>Antelope</b>  <b>Hippopotamus</b></p>	
2.	<p><b>Under the Sea</b></p> <p>Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit within me salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p>	<p><b>Seagull</b> – Pigeon Pose, both sides of body.  <b>Whale</b> – sitting with knees up to chest, chin on chest, rocking back then forward.  <b>Dolphin</b> – Cat pose on all fours, toes under,</p>	<p>Under the water, we swim down onto the seabed, we can see lots of amazing things! Remembering to breathe mindfully, in and out, we circle our arms and swim down <i>I roll my arms so slowly, as slowly as can be, I roll my arms so</i></p>	<p>After arriving back safely with our mats, we stretch up and down, finding a blanket to rest upon.</p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen to meditation music (Track 2) use blankets to</p>

	<p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale down.</p> <p>Introduce the idea that that this week we will be going on an undersea adventure, to prepare ourselves we need to warm up our bodies for going onto a boat like a sailor would. Standing in Mountain pose, legs slightly wider than hip apart, stretching up and knotting hands together – saying ‘Heave, Ho, Heave, Ho...’ alternating bending and looking back through legs and up high facing forwards, repeat X10. Sit with knees bent, lift up one foot, then the other, then one arm with palms facing the outside of knee, then the other – We are now in boat pose. Hold this pose and then come back in to knees up. We are now going to get our scuba diving gear on and checking breath, breathing 1,2,3 lay flat back with arms out wide, lift one leg so it points at the ceiling. Swap sides. Standing up and diving into the water.</p>	<p>arching our backs and looking down between our hands, into our belly button, then we dip our belly down and look in front. Wiggling our bottoms, then up into dogfish pose (downward dog) *could create a tunnel, split the group in half whilst one goes through the legs other half practises postures. Then back to cat and finally onto knees and wrapping arms back into a small egg.</p> <p><b>Clownfish</b> – sitting, with soles of feet facing, back straight, flutter knees up from floor.</p> <p><b>Starfish</b> – Standing with arms out to the side.</p> <p><b>Mermaid</b> – sitting, front knee bent around to one side with back leg further</p>	<p><i>slowly, now fold them just like me. I roll my arms so quickly as quickly as can be, I roll my arms so quickly now fold them just like me....</i> Laying on the ground we swim forward with our arms whilst kicking our legs - until we see a shipwreck, We very carefully explore the shipwreck on our tiptoes, we can see an old Grandfather clock...  <i>Hickory, dickory, dock.  The mouse ran up the clock.  The clock struck one, the mouse ran down.  Hickory dickory dock, tick tock,  Hickory dickory dock, The mouse ran up the clock, The clock struck two, the mouse said ‘boo’, Hickory, dickory dock, tick, tock, tick, tock.</i></p> <p>We are so frightened by the little mouse we fall off the shipwreck and into the sea – holding knees we tilt back rocking back and forth. We decide to swim around on the sea bed (on knees raising up arms to above head). We can see:</p>	<p>rest.</p> <p>When hear the bells chime begin to wiggle toes, wiggle fingers and slowly come up to sitting.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

		<p>back. Hand on knee and looking backwards behind shoulder. Then swishes tail the other way.</p> <p><b>Pirate</b> – Balancing on one leg.</p> <p><b>Treasure Map</b> - knees bent, opening hips by slowly opening knees to floor.</p> <p><b>Glow balls.</b></p>	<p><b>Dolphin</b> <b>Clownfish</b> <b>Starfish</b> <b>Mermaid</b> <b>Whale</b></p> <p>The whale tells us that over there is a pirate with a magical treasure map... we look inside and see that the treasure is located near the shipwreck... we know where that is so we swim back as fast as we can (on knees raising up arms to above head). We find the treasure – adults sitting with their legs outstretched &amp; feet together. Balls in the middle for children to play with.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Jungle</b> Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit within me salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p> <p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale</p>	<p><b>Snake</b> - Cobra <b>Tiger</b> – Sad cat (head down to chest), Happy cat (head up with a smile). <b>Parrot</b> – flap wings <b>Frog</b> – legs bent arms in front on the floor. <b>Tree</b> – Climbing the tree raising opposite arm/knee</p>	<p><i>I hear thunder, I hear thunder, Hark don't you? Hark don't you? Pitter, patter raindrops. (Bending down and patting the floor to create rainfall) Pitter, patter, raindrops. I'm wet through. So are you! Soggy! Give your mum a big</i></p>	<p>Create a space in the centre on mats with cushions. <i>Here is the beehive, But where are all the bees? Hiding inside where nobody sees, but here they come creeping, back to their hive 1, 2, 3, 4, 5!</i> Take a piece of honeycomb and curl up</p>

	<p>down.</p> <p>Today we are going to Costa Rica to visit the rainforest. First let's get warmed up by packing a bag, so legs outstretched in front of you, see if you can touch your toes? Slowly lifting ourselves up and opening the bag. Holding arms out wide we are going to twist round one way and collect our toothbrush, then twist the other way and drop it into our bag (repeat with tent, sleeping bag, water, sun cream, etc.) after all the items we need are inside we shut our bag by bringing our knees in slightly and bringing arms down to our toes. Then we say good bye to everyone at home, so onto knees, wrapping arms around body one way, then the other. We open the door by putting one leg out to the side, and raising the opposite arm to the sky, then bending arm towards opposite foot for a back bend. Repeat on opposite side.</p>	<p>alternatively.</p> <p>Put one foot on top of the other and grow tree up by creating a triangular shape with hands and raising up above head. Swap sides.</p> <p><b>Monkey</b> – on all fours jumping up into a star and landing back on all fours.</p> <p><b>Crocodile</b>- laying flat on side, with arms and legs outstretched. Open arms up and down.</p> <p><b>Boat</b>- Sitting on bottom, lift one bent leg, then the other, then lift, one arm up to side of leg, then the other – strong tummies!</p>	<p><i>hug!</i></p> <p>All the rain has created a giant, waterfall! Lifting hands high above head, lean back then swoop down. Repeat. We see a friendly parrot flapping his wings, can you flap your wings? What colour is he? He tells us to get into a boat at the bottom of the waterfall. Boat- Sitting on bottom, lift one bent leg, then the other, then lift, one arm up to side of leg, then the other – strong tummies!</p> <p>As we sail along down the stream, we can see:</p> <p><b>Snake</b>  <b>Tiger</b>  <b>Frog</b>  <b>Monkey</b>  <b>Crocodile</b></p> <p>We say goodbye to our friend the parrot (wave good-bye) and he flaps away. We can see a giant tree deep in the rainforest, we climb up and can hear a buzzing sound...</p>	<p>on your mat.  Dim lights. Relax.</p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen to meditation music (Track 3) use blankets to rest.</p> <p>When hear the bells chime begin to wiggle toes, wiggle fingers and slowly come up to sitting.</p>
--	---	--	--	--

4.	<p><b>Mountain</b> Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit with me salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p> <p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale down.</p> <p>Be a Mountain: I am a mountain; I am a tree; I am the ocean (hands wide apart) as wide as can be; I am a rainbow (side stretch into rainbow), high in the sky; all of life's treasures am I (giving yourself a big hug, arms around body).</p>	<p><b>Mountain</b> – Tadasana – Mountain Pose. <b>Bear</b> - Warrior <b>Flower</b> – Lotus position Cocoon – Child's pose <b>Butterfly</b> – Butterfly legs. <b>Tree</b> – Tree pose. <b>Boat</b>- Sitting on bottom, lift one bent leg, then the other, then lift, one arm up to side of leg, then the other – strong tummies! <b>Fish</b> – legs out stretched, lean back with elbows behind back and pop up chest looking up to the ceiling and maybe behind you.</p>	<p>Children sitting with legs outstretched lift one leg and circle the leg in time with the song, then repeat with other leg...</p> <p><i>Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream.</i></p> <p><i>Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream, If you see a crocodile, don't forget to scream! Row, row, row your boat, gently to the shore, if you see a lion, don't forget to roar! Row, row, row your boat gently up the creek, if you see a little mouse, don't forget to squeak!</i></p> <p>As we sail gently down the stream, we see beautiful <b>flowers</b> and <b>butterflies</b>... we see <b>fish</b> jumping in the water.... Tall <b>trees</b> and friendly <b>bears</b> in the woods...</p>	<p><i>Breathing in, breathing out.</i> <i>Breathing in, breathing out.</i> <i>I am fresh as the dew.</i> <i>I am solid as a mountain.</i> <i>I am firm as the earth.</i> <i>I am free.</i></p> <p><i>Breathing in, breathing out.</i> <i>I am water reflecting</i> <i>What is real, what is true,</i> <i>And I feel there is space</i> <i>Deep inside of me.</i> <i>I am free, I am free, I am free.</i></p> <p>Thich Nhat Hanh – Buddhist Monk</p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen to meditation music (Track 4) use blankets to rest.</p>
5.	<p><b>Space</b> Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit with me</p>	<p><b>Rocket</b> – Hero pose/ Sitting cross legged, walk hands forward, onto all fours then sit back with bottom inside legs, if too</p>	<p><i>Zoom, zoom, zoom, we're going to the moon, zoom, zoom, zoom, we're going very soon. One, two, three, ZOOM!</i></p> <p><b>Rocket</b></p>	<p><i>Twinkle, Twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are, up above the sky so high, like a diamond in the sky. Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder</i></p>

	<p>salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p> <p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale down.</p> <p>Today we are going up into space, we are going to travel in a spaceship! Let's prepare for travelling up into space taking arms out wide, feet shoulder width apart, lift hands wide and above your head, putting palms together pointing skywards. Hold for three and then slowly take arms behind your back and criss-cross fingers. Ready! After three you will tip forward bringing head between legs, lifting arms up high. Lift-off! Hold for 5 seconds. *Could repeat.</p>	<p>uncomfortable sit on knees, the lace fingers in front and lift up.</p> <p><b>Shooting Star</b> – Warrior pose.</p> <p><b>Spaceman</b> – Opposite arm/leg extension. Slowly swapping left/right.</p> <p><b>Happy Alien</b> – Standing up legs wide, bend knees. Bring hands up bent at elbows, fingers outstretched. Smile like a happy alien and let out a big happy sound!</p>	<p>We have arrived on an unknown planet, we are surrounded by large craters and dusty ground... we see:</p> <p><b>Shooting Stars</b> <b>Spacemen</b> <b>Happy Alien</b></p>	<p><i>what you are. X2</i></p> <p>Close eyes, or take a soft gaze. Practice lengthening the breath... Relax. Children to find mats. After arriving back safely with our mats, we stretch up and down, finding a blanket to rest upon.</p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen to meditation music (Track 5) use blankets to rest.</p> <p>When hear the bells chime begin to wiggle toes, wiggle fingers and slowly come up to sitting.</p>
6.	<p><b>Celebrate you!</b></p> <p>Sitting in a circle, teacher facing children. Bring hands together at our hearts and say 'Namaste' which means 'The spirit with me</p>	<p><b>Parachute</b> - Making Waves: Children can make small, medium, or large movements to make various types</p>	<p><i>If you're happy and you know it clap your hands. If you're happy and you know it clap your hands, if you're happy and you know it and you really</i></p>	<p><i>Goodbye All, Goodbye All, Goodbye All, I'm glad you came today!</i></p> <p>Lay in corpse pose, listen</p>



	<p>salutes the spirit within you.' Sing 'Hello Song' after every introduction.</p> <p>Chime bells, when they stop inhale and stretch up. Exhale down.</p>	<p>of "waves." You can incorporate a story about a ship on the sea, weather, etc. &amp;/or use your voice as a tool to emphasize directives.</p> <p><b>Mirror/Mirror</b> – Partnership between child and child (age-dependent), choose a pose and mirror your partner.</p> <p><b>Scarves</b> – Teacher takes a scarf and places on child's head, blow air to lift scarf, focus on breath.</p> <p><b>Ribbon</b> – Use the ribbon to twirl around your bodies, spinning in a circle and writing letters in the air.</p> <p><b>Balls</b> - Create a ball pit in the middle of the circle with half the class sitting with legs outstretched so children can pass balls to each other inside the circle.</p>	<p><i>want to show it, if you're happy and you know it clap your hands. (wiggle hips, stretch your legs, ride your bike, bend your knees...)</i></p> <p>Explain that this is the last session in the course, talk about what participants have enjoyed the most. Listen to feedback and squeeze in some of the children's favourite games.</p>	<p>to meditation music (Track 6) use blankets to rest.</p> <p>When hear the bells chime begin to wiggle toes, wiggle fingers and slowly come up to sitting.</p>
--	---	--	--	---

## **Reflective Journal**

### **Session 1 (12.01.17): Yoga Safari**

On Thursday afternoon, the children knew that they were going to have indoor PE from the visual timetable I update on the board; so when I asked my class to get their PE kits and get changed they did so quite quickly. Most of the class had a big smile on their face and some even let out a cheer. Generally speaking, the class are enthusiastic and enjoy being active during PE sessions. Unfortunately, two children from the class had lost their kit or not brought them in so I had to find the spare kit (from a bag of lost property I keep in the classroom) this meant that our usual hour slot from 1:15pm until 2:15pm would be slightly shorter. I began to feel anxious about getting the children in on time, so jeered the children to speed up by offering stickers and positive praise. We eventually got into the hall at 2:35pm, I asked the children to find a space and sit down without talking loudly. Although my request was for the children to remain silent whilst coming into the hall, this wasn't adhered to by a small group of children, some boys and some girls, so I had to remind them of my instruction. I could feel myself getting slightly more irritable than usual because I wanted them to be quiet and calm when they came into the space! In my mind I had hoped it would be tranquil and peaceful. Then I remembered they were only six years old and I needed to relax, breathe and smile if this was going to be a pleasurable experience we could both enjoy together.

As it is good practice and really important to warm-up the children's bodies I thought we could play a quick game of 'Traffic Lights' before we began. I didn't include this on my plan, but in hindsight I wanted to make sure the children were playing the sort of indoor PE game they are accustomed to and had first warmed-up their bodies before the yoga. 'Traffic Lights' is a listening game which involves the teacher saying 'Red', 'Yellow' or 'Green' and they either stand still without moving (like they are frozen), walk slowly in and out of the spaces around each other, or run quickly avoiding running into one another by making sure they run into the gaps. It's a game my class have played lots of times and from the shrieks of joy and laughter, they seem to enjoy it. However, there is a competitive element to this game. When they are standing still for 'Red' if they move they might get 'caught' and have to sit out and I could tell that some children were not happy that they had to leave the game and sit out whilst looking forlornly at their classmates continuing to participate with joy. A few of the children who were 'out' were being silly trying to interrupt the game for the other children so I had to spend quite a bit of time focussing on the behaviour management aspect of the warm-up.

After this, we sit down in a circle and I explain to the children that we will be learning some yoga during indoor PE. A few children delightfully say 'Yes!' and I ask them if they have done any yoga before. I notice lots of children putting their hands up. Two children have watched some on YouTube (Cosmic Kids Yoga) at home, one child says they have been to a yoga class with their mum and two others say they have watched it on CBBC's 'Waybuloo' (Children's television programme).

I teach the lesson almost entirely as I had planned, (See Appendix 1.). Sadly, we ran out of time and had to rush through the animals and didn't get to listen to the relaxation music for the right amount of time or get the blankets out at the end of this session. This was mainly because we started late but also because I became aware that between planning the sessions and teaching it, I had changed my approach slightly. Without being aware of this before beginning, I naturally added in any of the children's responses to my questions. When I asked 'What should we take with us on our African journey?' the children gave lots of suggestions like: holiday clothes, a fan and a pen-knife. The enthusiastic suggestions from the children were all plausible and I was so happy that they were actively responding to the imaginary adventure I had begun to lead them on. When we got to the part where we were on the safari, I asked them 'What animal can we see through our binoculars?' instead of telling them each animal I had on my plan. I think this worked well, because children always have a way of thinking of much better ideas than adults. Some said 'giraffe', which I hadn't even mentioned on my plan. So, I was forced to think on my feet and I got the children to raise their arms up high and bend their knees. I'm almost sure this is not a traditional yoga position, but I felt it was important to listen and respond dynamically to the children's ideas. Sadly, some children were being a little bit silly whilst they pretended to be the animals. When the children were pretending to be elephants, some were hitting others with their outstretched arms or 'trunks'. I had stop and explain that they were not to touch anybody else during the session. For me this did not interrupt the session for too long and it needed to be said to deter them from being too silly again in future session. I apologised to the class on behalf of their behaviour and we continued with the session.

Today, I have become aware that each group of children may change and each time I teach the lesson could vary widely so I need to allow for sections of each lesson I teach to grow organically, by adding in open questions for the children to respond to. This will allow the children a level of autonomy within each class and the chance to have the control to come up with their own ideas and for their teacher to listen and respond to the suggestions they make.

After the first session, I asked the children to write down:

**A) What they liked?**

**B) What they didn't like?**

**C) What their favourite part was?**

**D) How they feel?**

***(However it would become apparent that not all children answered all the questions)***

At the end of the first session, from a personal and professional point of view, I felt relieved that although it hadn't gone quite to plan; I had taught the majority of what was on the plan and my overall feeling was that the children had enjoyed it. However, looking more closely at the children's initial responses to the first session on their anonymous post-its, it is really interesting to see their individualised interpretations of the same session and any overlapping themes or ideas. The main thing that strikes me is that it was a positive experience for them. There were

lots of aspects the children enjoyed, not only the yoga positions but the games, singing and the bits that required them to use their imagination by pretending to be certain animals.

The main things that need to be improved before the next session is the level of behaviour from some of the children because that is something a number of children that didn't like the fact that other children were being silly. It is a shame when a few children ruin other children's experiences. Secondly, there are a few children who didn't like the stretches because they thought they 'hurt' themselves. This is a very good point as the hard floor of the school hall did not have mats laid down for them as I had ran out of time and forgotten to do this. Quite understandably they may have found this uncomfortable and I will need to ensure the mats are laid out before the session next time. However, the time constraints at school are quite constrained. Moreover, I will need to explain to the children that the feeling of the postures should not be painful. If it is painful for them then they need to adapt the way they participate in the session; for example, they would need to walk on their feet instead and not on their knees like the other children. I also think that perhaps some children were not used to moving in this way and that it may be unusual for them at first. Some children enjoyed the warm-up game of 'Traffic Lights' and others did not like being 'caught out'. Next session, I will play the game again and see if the response is the same. I am tempted to remind the children that it is only a game to encourage their resilience and that they need to listen carefully to the instructions if they do not want to be 'caught out'.

### **Session 2 (19.01.17): Under the Sea**

Lunchtime finishes at 1:15pm but the hall is usually still being used until around 1:10pm by the dinner-ladies who clean the hall after lunch, so it was a bit tight on time but not impossible to get the yoga mats out ready to begin the session after registration and once the children were changed. I decided to turn the lights off in the hall (later realising that it would take 20 minutes for the lights to come back on) because there was enough natural light coming into the hall and in my opinion the brightness of the artificial light didn't lend itself to the calming activity we were about to take part in. The children had changed quicker than last week and were now ready to go into the hall in 15 minutes. The level of behaviour was better than the previous week, I didn't have to instruct the children to line-up quite as much as last week, but this may have had something to do with my personal attitude as I wasn't feeling quite as anxious as I had last week about teaching the first session. I'm not sure whether the children were calmer because of the yoga or because they knew what was happening in the class now?

I began with a similar warm-up activity as last week, however this week we had to avoid the mats because they were shark-infested pools of water (fitting in with the underwater theme). Overall, the amount of times I had to stop the game because one or two children were being silly had dramatically reduced. I found myself thinking back to last week and having to repeat stock phrases of "You are wasting your own time not mine" and "It's a shame that a few of you are letting down the group by not playing the game sensibly" which will always be a part of teaching in an educational setting, especially with classes of thirty children. The children who were caught 'out' didn't appear to be as concerned and I made sure they weren't out for too long by asking the LSA to send them back into the game.

The children had more of an idea about what to expect from last week so the 'feel' of this session seemed to flow a bit better and I was a lot more relaxed and encouraged the children to participate with their own ideas a lot more. When we were changing into our diving gear ready to go underwater, I extended the breathing activity (we were checking the scuba diving mask) to ensure that there were more opportunities for the children to be aware of their breath, rather than leaving it until the end, mainly in case we ran out of time at the end but also as an extra relaxation activity. I think adding in any opportunity for a bit of relaxing breathing or mindfulness activity throughout the session keeps things interesting for the children, especially the younger ones. It also provides 'moments of calm' for the children to relax and clear their minds. The children always seem much calmer after these activities.

Just as I did before I asked children questions like, "What can you see at the bottom of the sea?" some said jellyfish, starfish, buried treasure and their responses were both imaginative and plausible and with each response I taught a new posture or recalled a movement for each suggestion. This exchange of ideas required me to put my plan to one side and react organically with the children's ideas and suggestions. I felt more at ease than I had in the previous session and from my positive experience last week I knew it was working well and the children enjoyed the experience and seemed much calmer, especially throughout the lesson and for the remainder of the afternoon.

After the first session, again I asked the children to write down:

**A) What they liked?**

**B) What they didn't like?**

**C) What their favourite part was?**

**D) How they feel?**

***(However it would become apparent that not all children answered all the questions)***

### **Session 3 (26.01.17): The Jungle**

The children changed rapidly today, minimal fuss (one boy had remembered his PE kit for the first time this year!) and we were changed and into the hall in ten minutes. Rather than beginning with the same warm-up as the previous two sessions, I took the children's suggestions about animals they could think of that lived in the jungle. I wanted to be a bit more relaxed in my approach to allow their ideas to form the lesson. They came up with a few good suggestions, monkeys, snakes, frogs but struggled with any others so I used a book (Monkey puzzle by Julia Donaldson) to help encourage their ideas. This visual prompt worked well and helped to scaffold their learning and enjoyed listening to the story. We packed our bags and I left everything we packed up to the children, the supine twist worked nicely and moved around correcting the children that were not sitting up straight enough to feel a stretch. I didn't have any LSA support today but it wasn't very necessary because there were no behaviour-related issues during this session which attests to the levels of peace and calmness the class now respond to these sessions.

The addition of the animals into the key aspects of the lesson really work well and the children enjoy 'moving like a frog' for example. Their reaction was good and there were lots of shrieks, laughing and smiles throughout this session, it was so nice to have an excuse to have fun with the children without the pressures of learning objectives, success criteria and outcomes. I found myself joining in and having lots of fun jumping around with them. We sang 'I hear thunder' and most of the children knew this song from our classroom so everyone joined in with the actions too. In Year 2 we hadn't done as much singing as we did in Year 1 so it was a good excuse to encourage the children's voices.

Although I had planned to create a beehive as part of the breathing aspect of relaxation at the end, instead I used a Tibetan singing bowl to regulate the children's breath. I asked them to listen carefully and when the sound began take a deep breath in counting to three and then breathing out for a long breath. I think they found this part quite challenging because it was difficult for them to find an awareness of breath and also count slowly because they are so young but they all had their eyes closed and were concentrating on their breath; which is what I had asked them to do. They always seem much calmer straight after breathing activities.

I have a CD of meditative music which I put on right at the very end of each session (if time). Today the children had laid still during the singing bowl, then the meditation music so they were understandably a little bit agitated and fidgety towards the end. Rather than leave it too long I only played a few minutes before they were getting restless. In hindsight, perhaps I should have switched the order I did this in as the bowl might have been a good way to gently rouse the children after the relaxation.

#### **Session 4 (02.02.17): Mountain**

The usual time of this session had to be changed to the morning because there was something going on in the hall this afternoon. I simply changed the timetable around and juggled the subjects but on reflection, I don't think I explained this as fully as I should have to the children. Even if I did, I definitely think the change of time affected their ability to react as calmly as they would normally when asked to change for PE. There were lots of shocked faces and shouts, jeers and whoops and the atmosphere of the classroom was buzzing with lots of energy.

A child (with lots of issues affecting her at home) was unsettled by the change and when asked she refused to get changed. Refusal is one of her default behaviours in an attempt to take control of the situation around her and perhaps the change in timetable had affected her ability to cope in a school situation. This meant that the class LSA waited with her whilst I took the rest of the children, once changed, into the hall.

Once in the hall I explained the theme of this lesson as 'Mountain'. We repeated a lovely poem with actions and it was so lovely to see the children joining in with the words and actions. All the children joined in, even the boys were reaching from side to side becoming a rainbow and giving themselves a big hug. Part way through this activity, the LSA accompanied the child who had refused to get changed (now changed) into the hall. Although she was now changed into her PE kit, her face showed that she was not happy, her arms were crossed and she stamped her foot. It upset me that she was not participating as if she were in a better mood she probably would

have enjoyed this activity and it seemed a shame because the majority of the children were thoroughly enjoying it.

I enjoyed seeing the children joining in with the movements and really trying participate with each posture as we went on an adventure down the stream and through the woodland. As I showed the children fish pose I spent a little bit longer teaching the correct position and also the inversion of this posture. I was amazed at how well the children managed to get into this position as it wasn't easy to follow the instructions but they all (apart from one) listened well and joined in.

We got into our boats and sang 'Row, row, row your boat...' and we used the opportunity to get into different poses for lion, crocodile and mouse. During this activity, the child who was not happy, was purposefully nudging another child who was complaining. As I noticed her, I asked her to stop and said unfortunately she's on her first warning, if she continues she'll have to sit out. She carried on and was asked to sit out accompanied by an LSA. Later on she started to growl loudly during the quiet relaxation part of the lesson and was asked to leave with the LSA to get changed. She went and her behaviour continued to deteriorate throughout the morning resulting in visiting the school's behaviour manager just before lunchtime.

As we wrapped up the session I asked the children to remember some of the poses and all together we recapped the associated postures of flowers, butterflies, fish, trees and bears. We then prepared for relaxation and although I hadn't dimmed the lights (because they don't come back on in time) the children seemed ready and prepared for this bit. They lay in corpse pose and shut their eyes as I read a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh (Buddhist Monk) asking the children to breath in and out deeply. I enjoyed teaching this lesson and felt the addition of the poetry really captured the peaceful and calming quality of the relaxation aspect of the lesson which would be good to include again.

#### **Session 5 (09.02.17): Space**

The warm-up today was a slight variation of 'Traffic Lights' which the children had become accustomed to play during indoor PE. Because of the space theme, we were avoiding the craters on the moon's surface (yoga mats). Our topic was 'Explorers' so this lesson fit in really well and provided an opportunity for some cross-curricular learning.

We talked about Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Valentina Tereshkova. We packed our space bag with different items the children had come up with. I now felt much more confident letting go and giving the children the choice when it came to deciding on items to put in the bag. I think this is because of the previous week's positive experiences and also because I am becoming more confident in my ability to teach children's yoga. I like the collaborative approach to designing the lesson and allowing myself to trust the children's ability to come up with ideas and then introduce them into the plan. Something I have previously found difficult is to let go of the plan and just go with the flow. I think this is down to years of teaching in an age where you need to justify exactly what you're teaching the children in your class with requirement of detailed lesson plans, learning objectives and outcomes which are devised in advance of the lesson usually on a weekend or an evening to meet the expectations of senior leadership; which does

not always allow for a more fluid and creative approach to teaching children. I understand you need to have a clear idea of what you intend to teach (meeting national curriculum requirements) but with yoga I am experiencing a way of planning a sequence of ideas but allowing children to take control and choose aspects. This session of yoga really is the highlight of my week! I'm enjoying teaching and the children appear to be enjoying learning and exercising, which is great. They also seem calmer, particularly during class time and especially in this session.

I always try and add in a bit of singing/music into the session, as I think it's important to do with young children and so often it is an afterthought when there's so much we need to complete within each school day. Also, there's lots of singing and Nursery Rhymes taught to babies and toddlers but it's soothing and relaxing for all children. Once children reach the end of KS1 they still aren't too old to appreciate singing a song together as one. I think there's a relaxing element to singing which produces a calmness to the room as you need to be very aware of your breath to be able to sing properly. I know there's children in my class who particularly enjoy it but not all of them, I think a few of the children (boys in particular which is sad) think it's a bit babyish.

#### **Session 6 (16.02.17): Celebrate You**

As this would be the last session I wanted to make this a fun and exciting experience for the children. I used some props and practical resources I hadn't used previously so it would be a bit special and a bit more of a memorable celebration of the end of the six-weeks of yoga. I had collected the bits and pieces over the course of the week and stored them in my classroom. The children kept asking what they were for and I said they'd have to wait and see!

We recapped the last five weeks and discussed the things the children enjoyed which were very wide-ranging from songs with actions, going under the sea, to specific animal postures to going into space and meeting aliens. We had another go at doing them and it was interesting to hear the things the children enjoyed most and good to give them another opportunity. I thought it was interesting to mention that the children suggested the most high-energy or active parts of the lesson, the movements or postures not the relaxation elements.

We stood in a large circle and each took hold of the loops of the parachute. We played making waves and talked about a 'calm' sea and a 'rough' sea. We lifted the parachute high and down low making ripples across the fabric and putting soft toys on it to see if they would stay on the water or not.

When I asked the children to get into a pair there was the usual unsettled few who couldn't find a partner but after the last couple had found their pair it was easy to get the children to choose their favourite pose and get their partner to mirror it. This seemed to work really well and they looked like they were really enjoying working together. I was also surprised to see how many of the postures they had retained over the six weeks as some poses were from the very first session.

After this and still in their pairs we used the scarves and ribbon to do a throwing and catching activity then an active one using the ribbons to write their names. I got the children to blow the



scarves in pairs and try to keep it up in the air as a form of breathing exercise, which they thoroughly enjoyed as there was a slight competitive edge as they had to try and keep their scarf in the air the longest. It must have looked like a very exciting and colourful lesson for anyone walking past!

I hadn't got round to using all of the resources I had prepared to use before we had run out of time. Before our relaxation music and corpse pose on the mats at the end of the session I thanked the children for taking part. I have really enjoyed teaching the children each session and would thoroughly recommend yoga as an indoor PE activity. Today has shown me that overall the majority of the children have enjoyed it and learned lots of recognised yoga postures because of it.

## Children's Feedback

Session 1: 12.01.17

Likes:

"I loved everything."

"I liked the roaring."

"I liked it when we were doing the relaxation."

"I liked the bit when we were flying."

"I liked the stretching."

"I liked it when we got to relax."

"I liked it when we were zebras."

"I liked when we crawled around the hall."

"I like the bit were we done an airplane."

"I liked when I did doo the tiger!"

"I like the animals."

"I like that we did it I am."

"I like the lion."

"I liked everything."

"I liked when we did yoga."

"I liked everything."

"I liked when we sung the song."

"I liked the traffic light."

"I liked everything."

"I liked the Lion."

"It was good."

"I liked the warm-up it was amazing."

"I liked the lion move."

"I like when we dun the giraffe."

**Dislikes:**

"I didn't like when everyone was shouting."

"I did not like the stretching."

"I did not like it when the boys were being silly."

"I didn't like it because people were being silly."

"I didn't like the screaming."

"I did not like people being silly."

"I didn't like when I was on my knees."

"I didn't like the bit where we done traffic lights."

"I didn't like it when people were being silly."

"I not like mean the other children." (I did not like it when the other children were being mean.)

"I don't like the scream."

"I do not like the boys being silly and I didn't like my knees hurt."

"I did not like the lion bit because it hurt my knees."

"I dislike nothing."

"I didn't like it when I got caught."

"I could not do one thing."

"I didn't like the shouting."

"I did not like my knee hurt."

"I didn't like when we had to touch our ankles because it hurt my legs."

"I didn't like when we layed on the floor."

"I didn't like it when we had to stretch our arms because it hurt me."

"I didn't like lying down because people touched me."

**Favourite part:**

"I loved everything."

"I liked it when you were scared."

"I liked it when we were doing the relaxation."

"I liked it when we got to relax."

"I liked the bit when we were flying."

"My favourite bit was the airplanes."

"My favourite part was when we done the animals."

"I loved when we were the animals."

"I liked the relaxing bit."

"Plane pose."

"The fake adventure."

### **Feelings:**

"I feel happy."

"I feel happy."

"I feel happy."

"I felt relaxed."

"I felt great."

"I feel great."

"I feel so relaxed."

"I feel great."

"I feel good."

"I think my heart was beating."

"I'm feeling happy."

"I feel happy."

"I feel happy."

"I was proud of myself."

### **Session 2:** 19.01.17

#### **Likes:**

"I like laying on the mat."

"I liked going on a boat."

"I like laying on the mat."

"I liked it when we were mermaids."

"I liked the bit when we were laying on the floor and running on the floor."

"I liked being a merboy/merman."

"I liked the part when we do mermaid."

"I liked being a mermaid."

"I like the traffic lights."

"I liked laying on my back."

I liked being a mermaid."

"I liked all of it."

"I liked being a dolphin."

"I really liked being a whale."

"I liked when we were putting the diving socks on."

"I liked it when we did the wall."

"I liked the part when we were mermaids."

"I liked going in the sea."

"I liked when we were mermaids."

"I liked when we slept down on the floor at the end."

"I liked the bit when we were whales."

"I like the bit when we were mermaids."

"I liked the swimming."

"I liked being a fish swimming in the sea."

"I liked the part we were mermaids."

"I like being a dolphin."

"I liked when we were laying on the floor."

#### **Dislikes:**

"I didn't like the bit when we done the stretching."

"I didn't like the bit when we stretched down."

"I didn't like laying on the floor."

"I didn't like when we sang the song."

"I didn't like touching the ground."

"I didn't like when we were mermaids,"

"I didn't like when we were swimming."

"I didn't like lifting my hands above my head."

"I didn't like touching the ground."

"I didn't like bending down without my knees bending."

"I didn't like when I touched the floor."

"I didn't like seeing the mermaid."

"I didn't like touching the floor."

"I didn't like doing the stretches."

"I did not like when we put our hands on the floor without bending our knees."

"I didn't like touching the floor."

"I did not like touching the floor."

"I didn't like swimming."

"I didn't like putting on the diving gear."

"I didn't like going underwater."

"I didn't like the rest."

"I didn't like when we was laying on the floor."

"I didn't like putting my hands on the floor."

**Favourite part:**

"My best bit was when we were lying down."

"The best bit was the diving."

"My best bit was being the dolphins."

"My best bit was being a merman."

"My best bit was when we were dolphins."

"I liked being a merboy."

"The best bit was when we were swimming."

"I really liked being a whale."

"My favourite bit was getting my gear on."

"My favourite part was inside the pirate ship."

"My best bit was being a merboy."

**Feelings:**

"I feel happy."

"I feel good."

"I feel calm."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel happy."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel happy."

"I feel amazing."

**Session 3:** 26.01.17

**Likes:**

"I liked being a monkey"

"I liked the bit when we were tigers"

"I liked when we were doing the monkeys."

"I liked the bit when we was a parrot."

"I liked being a monkey."

"I liked being a frog."

"I liked the part when we were laying on the floor."

"I liked the bit when we were crocodiles."

"I liked laying on the mat."

"I liked being a monkey."

"I liked when we layed down."

"Monkey."

"I liked the bit when we were snakes."

"I liked when we were monkeys."

"My favourite animal was the tiger."

"I liked when we were monkeys."

"I liked being a monkey."

"I liked when I was laying."

"I liked being a parrot today in PE."

"I liked the part when I was being a frog because I like jumping."

"I liked being a snake."

**Dislikes:**

"I didn't like being a boat."

"I didn't like it when we were down."

"I didn't like it when we laid down."

"I didn't like avoiding the mats."

"I didn't like being a monkey."

"I didn't like when I was out."

"I didn't like when we were frogs because my legs hurted."

"I didn't like the snake, they are creepy."

"I didn't like the boat."

"I didn't like lying down."

"I didn't like nothing."

"I did not like the tiger."

"I didn't like the bit I went out at the beginning."

"I didn't like it when we were doing the snake."

"I didn't like the bit we flied like a plane."

"I did not like being a crocodile."

"I didn't like it when we rolled over."

**Favourite part:**

"The best bit was the boat."

"I liked the sound at the end."



"My favourite part was when we were monkeys."

"I liked the bit when we were laying on the floor."

"My best bit was when we were crocodiles."

"I liked it all."

"My best part was the monkey and the parrot."

"My best bit was when we were doing the monkey."

"I liked the bit when we were snakes."

"My favourite part was when we were a lion."

"I liked the breathing."

"My favourite part was being a crocodile."

"I liked the part when we were tigers,"

"I liked the bit when I was a frog because I like jumping."

#### **Feelings:**

"I feel good."

"I feel happy."

"I feel good."

"I feel calm."

"I feel calm."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel comfortable and relaxed."

"I feel wonderful."

#### **Session 4:** 02.02.17

#### **Likes:**

"I liked being as fish."

"I liked being a fish."

"I liked the bit when we was a rainbow."

"I liked the tree pose."

"I liked the mountain bit when we was stretching."

"I liked it when we were being a bear."

"I liked the bit when we were bears."

"I liked it when we were being a tree."

"I liked the part when we did the mountains"

*"I liked everything."*

*"I like all of it."*

"I like when we were a fish."

"I liked when we were a fish."

"I liked being a fish."

"I liked the river."

"I liked the part when we were being the sea."

"I liked the swimming."

*"I liked all of it."*

"I liked being the bear."

"I like the fish."

"I liked it when we were doing the tree."

"I liked being a mountain."

"I liked when we was a fish."

"I like the bit when I was a mountain."

*"I liked all of it."*

**Dislikes:**

"I didn't like being a bear."

"I didn't like when we was bears."

"I did not like the bit we was fish."

"I didn't like nothing."

"I didn't like the fish."

"I didn't like being a bear."

"I didn't like being a boat."

"I did not like balancing."

"I don't like being a tree."

"I didn't like when we was a fish."

"I didn't like the bear pose."

"I didn't like it when \*\*\*\*\* got a first warning."

**Favourite part:**

"I liked the butterfly."

"I liked the rainbow."

"I liked the mountain."

"I like the tree."

"I liked the singing."

"I liked the flower."

"The relaxing bit."

"I liked the singing."

"Everything."

**Feelings:**

"I feel joyful."

"I feel confident."

"I feel amazing."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel good."

"I feel tired."

"I feel joyful."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel relax."

"I feel happy."

"I feel good."

"I feel happy."

"I feel calm."

"I feel confident."

"I feel calm."

"I feel calm."

"I feel great."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel happy."

**Session 5:** 09.02.17

**Likes:**

"I like going to get a sandwich."

"I like the different movements because they are slow."

"I like yoga because it is comfortable."

"I like the space aeroplane."

"I liked it when we were going to space."

"I liked when we did the big steps."

"I like yoga because it is calm."

"I like the space aeroplane."

"I liked when we stepped on the moon."

"I liked the bit when we walked on the moon."

"I liked all the time we were in space."

"I liked when we got into the rocket."

"I liked getting a drink."

"I like everything."

"I like going to see a star."

"I liked it when we said hello to the aliens."

"I liked the rocket bits."

"I liked walking on the moon."

"I like the aliens."

"I like the warm-up."

"I liked when we walked on the moon."

"I liked it all because I had fun."

"I liked walking on the moon because I like walking on the moon."

"I liked being a rocket."

"I liked being the spaceship and when we was all laying down."

"I liked all of it because we were in space."

"I liked doing the stretches and when we were laying down."

"I liked the part where we were aliens."

"I liked to lay down and think."

"I liked laying on my back."

"I liked all of it."

**Dislikes:**

"I didn't like getting the water bottles."

"I didn't like the rocket bit."

"I did not like pretending to be the alien."

"I did not like the rocket bit."

"I did not like anything because I had fun."

"I didn't like it because it was hard."

"I didn't like stretching."

"I did not like getting the food."

"I did not like getting the food."

"I didn't like laying on the floor."

"I didn't like the alien."

"I didn't like crouching down."

"I didn't like the stretching."

"I did not like going in the spaceship."

"I didn't like the fast movements because they were too fast."

"I didn't like the rocket part."

"I didn't like lying down."

"I don't like the rocket."

"I did not like when we were on the mats and we have to jump."

"I did not like when we did the game."

**Favourite part:**

"My favourite part was when we said hello to the alien."

"My favourite part was going into space!"

"I liked the rocket."

"My favourite bit was the singing."

"I liked the alien bit best."

"My favourite part was the walking on the moon."

"My favourite bit was when we did the stretching."

"I liked the bit when we packed our bags."

"The best bit was the aliens."

"I really liked the star."

"My favourite bit was when we landed on the moon."

"My best bit was the spaceship."

"The best bit was going into space on a rocket."

"I liked the warm-up game."

**Feelings:**

"I feel happy."

"I fel good."

"happy."

"I feel calm."

"I feel very calm."

"I feel very good today."

"I feel very calm."

"I feel very calm."

"I feel good."

"I feel calm. Happy."

"I feel surprised."

"I feel good."

"I feel good."

"Happy."

"Calm."

"I feel amazing."

"I feel very calm."

"Calm."

"I feel very good."

"That was good."

"It was good."

"I feel very calm."

"I feel very good."

"I am feeling calm."

"I feel very good."

**Session 6:** 16.02.17

**Likes:**

"I liked the ribbons."

"I liked the circle."

"I like the relaxing."

*"I liked it all."*

"I liked doing the yoga."

"I liked the words at the end."

"I liked making the waves in the storm."

"I liked the end when we relaxed."

"I liked the parashoot."

"string."

"I like the scarf."

"I liked the bells."

*"I liked everything."*

"I liked the flower."

*"Everything."*

"I liked doing the monkey again."

"I like the relaxation."

"I liked the scarf."

*"I liked everything."*

"I like the balls."

"I liked laying down."

"I like the dancing."

"I like working with my friend."

*"I like everything."*

"I like it when we relax."

*"I liked everything."*

"I liked doing the bear."

"I liked it when we layed down."

"I like the music."

"I liked relaxing."

"I liked when we did the ocean."

**Dislikes:**

"I didn't like the singing."

"I didn't like anything."

"I didn't like the bear bit, it was scary."

"I disliked the music."



"I don't like that my shoulders hurt."

"I did not like the bit when we done music."

"I didn't like people messing about."

*"I didn't like it when we showed our poses."*

"I didn't like the tree."

"I didn't like the silliness when we worked in pairs."

"I didn't like it when \*\*\*\*\* didn't let me have a go."

"I didn't like nothing."

"I disliked nothing."

*"I didn't like the showing."*

"I didn't like anything."

"I didn't like the fish."

**Favourite part:**

"I loved blowing the scarves up in the air."

"My favourite bit was the songs."

"My favourite part was listening to the music."

"My favourite part was the fish."

"My favourite part was everything."

"My favourite part was traffic lights."

"My favourite part was everything."

"My favourite part was the flower."

"My favourite part was mountain."

"My favourite part was everything it was so so fun."

"My favourite part was everything."

"My favourite part was the rainbow."

"My favourite part was everything."

"My favourite part was the end."

"My favourite bit was the singing."

"My favourite thing was everything."

"My favourite was the tree."

"My favourite bit was everything."

"I love the poses and the songs."

"My favourite part was everything."

"My favourite part was when we were flowers."

### **Feelings:**

"I feel fine."

"I feel calmer than before."

"I feel calm."

"I feel sweaty."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel calm."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel calm and relaxed."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel playful."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel great!"

"I feel wonderful."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel nice."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel relaxed."

"I feel joyful."

"I feel happy."

"I feel fine."

## **Permission Letter**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am studying part-time towards an MA Education at University of Winchester and I am at the dissertation phase of the course, which means writing a long essay on a piece of research that I have carried out. I intend to study the effects of teaching children yoga as part of Physical Education and would like to conduct my research with \*\*\*\*\* class during their indoor PE session on a Friday.

Yoga can mean lots of different things to people, but the focus of my research will be to teach the physical yoga movements in a child-friendly way, to find out what the children think of each session and the difference it makes to their enjoyment of P.E. and learning. Mrs \*\*\*\*\* encourages pupils and staff alike to be learners at \*\*\*\*\* and she supports my research project. I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have about this research project. In my spare time I have trained with an organisation called 'Birthlight' and have received a formal qualification to teach children's yoga sessions as well as holding qualified teacher status.

I will teach the children through themed sessions involving stories, songs and through using practical resources in order to make the 6 week unit fun and engaging. I am interested in whether yoga can be a successful calming strategy in primary schools and have previously completed Masters level assignments around this subject.

If you do not wish your child to be part of this research, you are under no obligation to do so. Your child can join in with a different indoor PE session such as dance or gymnastics.

If you would like your child to be part of this educational research, please sign the consent slip below and also sign to give your permission for any photographs taken by me of your child, to be used in my dissertation and potential literature regarding children's yoga; such as a leaflet or study guide in the future.

Many thanks for your continued support and please feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Warm wishes,

Natalie Gammer

## Calmness / Yoga Venn Diagram

