SCHOOL SHOWCASE

Latchmere School in Kingston upon Thames

– One of the first schools to start meditation and relaxation.

Background:

Latchmere School in Kingston upon Thames, made waves nearly 20 years ago with its innovative approach to pupil wellbeing.

Project Aim:

In 2009, Relax Kids approached Latchmere School to introduce a series of lunchtime clubs aimed at helping pupils take a break in the school day to pause and relax to manage anxiety and help improve focus for the afternoon sessions. Relax Kids coach Gillian Fitzsimmons, who ran the lunchtime club, found The Blue Room to be the perfect environment for leading relaxation sessions.

Aims and Benefits of Relax Kids

To help children:

- Learn basic relaxation and stress-reducing techniques that they can use in everyday life
- Become aware of their feelings and emotions and to manage these feelings
- Have fun whilst exercising and learning to relax
- Develop emotional and physical fitness
- Develop concentration skills
- Improve general behaviour
- Promote positive self-image and self-esteem
- Improve school performance

Implementation:

In the 30 mins sessions, Gillian followed the Relax Kids 7-step approach which helped regulate and calm children's nervous systems in a fun and creative way using one of the school's standout features - The Blue Room, a dedicated meditation space designed to encourage relaxation and meditation.

Impact and Sustainability:

This visionary initiative spearheaded by former Head teacher Kevin Hogston was featured in the National press in 2009 and inspired many other teachers to bring meditation and mindfulness into their schools. Hogston's pioneering idea of creating The Blue Room has paved the way for a more holistic approach to education, focusing on mental well-being alongside academic achievement. At the time he said "Some people think it's a strange thing for a school to do,"

The response from both children and parents was overwhelmingly positive. Children were signed up for a term at a time and most returned each term.

Both teachers and parents noticed changes in the children's behaviour and felt Relax Kids had positively impacted their children's lives in school but also at home. One parent recalls how her child who once had a fear of flying was able to overcome this anxiety through the breathing techniques and affirmations and was able to take a family holiday and years later when in an anxious situation in the Dentist's chair, remembered the tools she had been taught.

One parent was so amazed at the results, she decided to train as a Relax Kids coach herself to deliver the unique 7-step programme in schools around Kingston.

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Parent Feedback:

'My daughter Eve has benefitted hugely from attending Relax Kids. The classes with Katy have provided a calming, positive space during a busy school day. Eve has faced challenges around her learning which have impacted her confidence and feelings of self worth; Relax Kids has provided a valuable space to teach well-being techniques such as breathwork, stretching and relaxation, as well as positive affirmations to focus on self appreciation. I would recommend these wonderful classes for every child!' Rachel

"I don't know if it's a coincidence but she seems to be far more in control of her emotions this term. She also has started giving me hand and back massages whilst I read her bedtime stories. Absolute heaven!"

"...huge thanks for whatever magical effect you seem to have on my girls!' Louise

Future Plans

The innovative spirit that started with Kevin Hogston's vision has been continued by Carolyn Coles and staff who believe that wellbeing need to be high on the school agenda.

Teacher Feedback:

'The calming atmosphere allowed students to unwind and connect with themselves in a meaningful way.' - Gillian

In 2015, Gillian passed the baton to Relax Kids coach Katy Huckfield, who has continued to run the lunchtime Relax Kids sessions with enthusiasm and creativity until now.

Last week, on top of the lunchtime club, Katy successfully ran 22 relaxation sessions across the school, offering children in each class tools they need to regain calm and manage their emotions effectively.

'I feel welcomed and supported by Latchmere School; the recent whole school Children's Mental Health Week sessions I ran proved to me just how invested they are in their pupils's well being.' - Katy

What happened next

Carolyn Coles

In later years, The Blue Room was transformed into The Music Room. Carolyn Coles, the current Head has been keen to make wellbeing and nurture more prominent and has transformed the room into a beautiful Wellbeing Sensory Room and has transformed an old office into a Nurture Room.

A combination of a dedicated nurture wellbeing space, regular Relax Kids classes and daily relaxation has made a huge impact on this school, equipping pupils with essential life skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

The Blue Room was featured in the Independent in 2009 https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/licence-to-chill-the-primary-school-taking-learning-to-another-level-1691527.html

If you would like more information about introducing Relax Kids into your school please contact us info@relaxkids.com

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