

Is There a Place for YOGA IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION? Absolutely!

Lisa Applebee

This article is in response to an article written by Ciara Delaney entitled 'Is there a place for yoga in physical education?' published in the Spring 2015 edition of *Physical Education Matters*.

Here at YogaBugs, we have to agree with Ciara and her research that there is most definitely a place for yoga in the education system. Not only does yoga provide a physical and enjoyable challenge, it also creates a sense of what we like to call 'mindfulness'. We have been delivering yoga-inspired classes and integrating them successfully into schools' curriculum lessons for over ten years, and we have the results to prove how effective it is.

With YogaBugs we ensure that the core benefits of yoga are entwined with interactive stories that stretch children's imagination while building their self-confidence and enhancing their self-esteem. This develops both the physical and mental wellbeing of each child. Classes are all taught by experienced instructors who not only share our passion for the place of yoga in education but who also believe in the importance of encouraging children to lead happy and healthy lives.

YogaBugs has improved concentration during lessons and helped to build self confidence. They love the story telling.

Head Teacher at Ryecroft School

Over the past five years we have been gathering data on the improvements that children make through yoga in the curriculum, using physical, emotional, social and behavioural criteria. We have been measuring this through the implementation of our most popular programme: *Impact and Change*.

IMPACT AND CHANGE

Impact and Change is a results-driven, child-development programme that runs during curriculum time. All of our classes are carefully structured to develop children emotionally and physically whilst enhancing their learning experience. Our programme teaches stories through yoga-inspired moves and meets the needs of children of all abilities. It takes a whole school approach, offering training to staff on simple breathing and relaxation techniques that they can deliver to the children on a daily basis to further enhance the benefits. We also invite parents to attend a YogaBugs workshop, where they can join in with their children's adventures, and supply them with information and exercises they can practise at home together.

HOW DO WE SHOW IMPACT?

The programme makes a measurable positive improvement to children's education and lives. It has achieved results of up to 40 per cent improvement in pupils across the UK in five key areas (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1: key areas of impact



YogaBugs works alongside each school's teachers to assess the children against these key areas at the beginning and, again, at the end of the programme. The school is then supplied with a detailed report showing both the individual and group improvements across all of the areas. Schools that we work with have used this report as evidence for Ofsted inspections as well as using it to show progress within personal, social and health education (PSHE).

HOW DO OUR CLASSES WORK?

YogaBugs classes bring stories to life through specially developed moves inspired by yoga. Combining enjoyment with exercise, children go on wild adventures where they may roar like a lion, fly like a bird or blast into outer space! This encourages them to use their creative imagination as well as having fun. All children can do YogaBugs to suit their own ability. Children don't need to be fast, have good hand-to-eye coordination or be physically fit. Children are encouraged to be vocal during a class and express their emotions physically. Through creative visualisation techniques we help children believe they are unique and special. Balancing postures help children to focus their minds with concentration techniques that keep the mind in one place instead of letting it wander.

We tailor our classes to suit each school's needs, whether it is to support the curriculum, to offer a before-school or after-school club, or to deliver a special event, such as a health week.

WHAT DOES A 'TYPICAL' CLASS LOOK LIKE?

All children will start with a warm-up, with 'sun salutations', as a way to prepare body and mind for the class. Children are encouraged to concentrate on their breathing, and will learn how to control their breathing through a number of techniques taught by the teacher. Once warmed-up and mind-cleared, children will be drawn into a story adventure that will stretch their imagination and allow them to be part of the story. The carefully designed class plans embed yoga-inspired moves within the story, and guide children into postures and stretches that provide physical and creative challenge. The combination of these movements improves children's fitness, teaches breathing techniques that they can incorporate into their daily routines, and teaches them to focus and release day-to-day anxieties. Every class ends with relaxation and visualisation so children can wind-down and enhance their sense of self-belief.

All of the classes are non-competitive and allow children to develop at a pace with which they are comfortable. Each child can set their own individual targets, which means children of all abilities can take part and thrive. The programme is also proven to assist children with ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia.

The following schools have all benefitted from our yoga-inspired programmes.

Alvaston Infants School, Derby

"We have had the YogaBugs programme in our school for the past three years. The results for the children speak for themselves when you see the great improvements made with their physical literacy, hand writing skills and behaviour, amongst other positive outcomes."

Lyndsey Davies, Acting Head Teacher



Stanville Primary School, Birmingham

"We have noticed a significant difference in the children's behaviour, concentration and confidence. The children who usually can't concentrate for more than five minutes are engaged for the whole session. We also develop cross-curricular opportunities from these sessions back in the classroom. We are currently running the sessions as a transition programme from EYFS to Year 1. However the company works with all age groups across the primary school."

Annette Davies



Herbert Strutt Primary School, Belper

"The Impact and Change programme has enriched the children's week with improvements made in the development of children's hand writing and behaviour amongst other positive outcomes."

Sarah Core, Head Teacher

Easterside Academy, Middlesbrough

"This year we invested in the Impact and Change programme following our 2014 Foundation Stage profile results. We identified that the cohorts coming through from nursery to reception were having difficulty in maintaining any level of concentration and listening and this was impacting on different areas of their learning. YogaBugs has helped to develop these skills as well as others, such as developing their self-confidence, self-esteem and supporting good behaviour. This year our profile results were very pleasing and in particular those for 'Attention and Listening.' Although it is likely that a number of factors have increased these percentages this year, we have found that YogaBugs has certainly helped and, therefore, are ensuring that all our reception pupils get the opportunity next year."

Delyth Linacre, Head Teacher



Lisa Applebee is General Manager of YogaBugs, which is part of the Bugs Group that also includes FootieBugs and DanceBugs. For details visit: www.yogabugs.com or www.thebugsgroup.com