



# MOVE4SCHOOLS

## Educational Research Project 2023



Arabella Chute



Caroline Williams

Arabella Chute, Thinking School Co-ordinator at Notting Hill Prep School, the science journalist and author of 'Move: The new science of body over mind' Caroline Williams; the cognitive scientist, professor and author of many note-worthy educational books, such as *Intelligence in the Flesh: Why Your Mind Needs Your Body Much More than it Thinks*, Guy Claxton; and Emily Poel, the co-founder of 'Embodiment at Work', ran a research project at Notting Hill Prep school looking at exploring the question: **'How does what your body is doing affect how your mind is working?'**



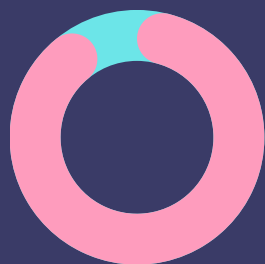
Guy Claxton



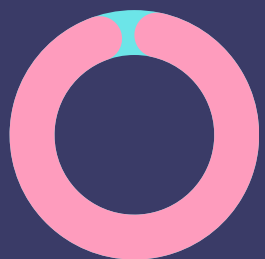
Emily Poel

### OBJECTIVE:

To ask teachers and pupils at NHP to explore how and if bringing movement into classrooms as part of their teaching practice is beneficial to overall learning.



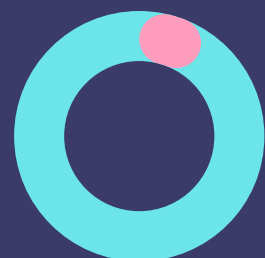
93% of teachers taking part found it easy to include movement effectively in their lessons.



98% of teaching taking part will continue to use movement in their lessons as an outcome of the research.



8% of staff felt that some types of movement disrupted the learning in their lessons.



10% of teacher felt they didn't have enough time to add the movement into their lesson.

### OUTLINE:

- Caroline, Guy, Emily and Arabella ran a CPD session for all academic staff outlining the science research, embodied cognition and how the research will run.
- We selected years 3, 5, and 7 to have one 45-minute workshop with Guy, Emily, Caroline and Arabella to explore and discuss movement, the brain and what they already know. We also outlined the research.
- Communication was sent out each week about what the movement focus was, some questions to think about and some movement ideas to explore - examples can be found on the next page.
- Caroline and Arabella ran one 45-minute workshop for each year 3, 5, and 7 classes to hear their thoughts, discoveries and takeaways from the research.
- Those classes who didn't have workshops were invited to explore movement in a way that suited them.

### DATA COLLECTED:

The data collected during this research was anecdotal:

- Children in the workshops created brainstorms on how they felt movement, and their brains were linked.
- Children had the option to record any discoveries in workbooks during the research, and teachers could give feedback on a Microsoft TEAMS channel at any time.
- Teachers and pupils were given a reflective questionnaire to complete after the research.

# Weekly Movement Focus

Each week, we gave the staff and pupils a movement to focus on and explore. We also provided key questions, movement ideas and the science behind them from Caroline's book. See examples below

## Breath

Question:

Why is mastering our breath important?

Idea:

**Sigh After Stress:** It resets the respiratory system after a period of shallow breathing, allowing you to take stock and move on.

## Stretching

Question:

Would stretching before working help?

Idea:

**Pandiculate:** After a spell of sitting, stand up and stretch your arms and legs. It reminds your brain you have limbs as well as releasing tight muscles.

## Posture

Question:

Have you tried working whilst standing up?

Idea:

**Back straight:** Do you notice a change in your confidence when your back is straight and when you are curved over?

## Dancing

Question:

Do you think dancing can boost your brain health?

Idea:

**Synchronise:** Moving in time with others, whether in a dance class or in the group exercise of your choice, blurs the lines that our brains draw between 'us' and 'them'. This brings us closer together physically and emotionally and makes us more likely to cooperate.

## Walking

Question:

What do you think happens in your brain when you walk?

Idea:

**Wander to think:** Walking, or running, at a pace that feels easy turns the 'thinking' brain down and lets the mind wander in a way that boosts creativity and problem-solving. Do it before a meeting/lesson/homework for a mental boost.

## Strength

Question:

Would strengthening your body boost your confidence?

Idea:

**Work your muscles:** Getting physically stronger (with or without an increase in muscle size) reduces anxiety, relieves depression and increases self-esteem. It doesn't have to involve pumping iron: using your own body weight works just as well.

## Freestyle

Question: Do you have any special moves or tricks that help you concentrate better when you're doing schoolwork or other activities?

Idea: **Fairy Feet:** When you're feeling stressed, take a break and either go for a springy walk or practise jumping and landing silently. Research suggests that moving lightly on your feet is a fast way to lift your mood. Bonus happiness is up for grabs if you also put your hands in the air and wave them like you just don't care.

# Teacher Observations and Anecdotes

- Children are so much more engaged when they have the chance to move and stretch. It motivates and focuses them
- The children welcome the break, and it generally resets them and makes them calmer or more focused
- Children were beginning to recognise how different types of movements helped them feel
- I think it is interesting to not just see movement as 'movement breaks' but to try and weave it into everything
- It has been important for me to remember that older children (and adults) need it just as much [as younger children]
- Children seem to pay more attention once they have done a movement break
- It empowered the children and developed greater confidence
- Children were more engaged when doing [academic] activities, which include movement
- I saw them more engaged and prepared for the next task at hand

“Whole class movement - also incorporated into the lesson content when possible has made lessons more interesting, varied, and often memorable. Often what benefits a child with a specific need, can benefit the whole cohort.”

“In our classroom, we try to encourage as much movement as possible for the children. We will often put questions or answers around the classroom for children to go and find to answer or check their work against. We have noticed that they seem much more calm and focused during these tasks.”

“In MFL we do a 'verb/pronoun dance' so pupils embed the order of pronouns and the conjugations of present tense verbs. We do this with a melody for each verb ending too.”

“I always get children out of their seats and lined up out of the classroom when I start a new lesson, even if I am teaching them before and after. I feel this creates a physical break or marker in their brains about starting something new. If they look sleepy we will do full body stretching while lined up. If they look a little hyperactive we will do full body breathing. While standing I will encourage the children to focus on me and gather themselves before we go into the room.”

“We use think and walk - if we're trying to think through a difficult problem, pupils are allowed to get out of their seats and walk around the room - in silence - if it helps. It often does. I also find that there are certain pupils who find it difficult to sit in their seats and think/work. I allow them to stand up and move if it helps (and they aren't distracting others). I think that the days of forcing children to sit still in classrooms are numbered and, quite frankly, Victorian.”

***“Taking part in the research made me actively \*plan\* for movement and try to find additional ways to use movement in lessons.”***

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[www.move4schools.com](http://www.move4schools.com)