



At Mindful Chess, we have a full transparency policy. That's why we keep our teacher guidelines public, so that prospective teachers and schools can better understand who we are and how we run things.

We hold all our teachers to the same standard and while we encourage each teacher to find their own style, we have set guidelines so that schools and parents can relax knowing that their budding Mindful Chess kids are in safe hands.

What It Means To Be A Mindful Chess Teacher

A Mindful Chess Teacher Is Assertive

Although it is important that Mindful Chess kids are enjoying themselves, we also nurture a healthy work and play environment. It is important that we maintain low levels of noise so that students can focus, and other neighboring classrooms are not disturbed.

If a student is misbehaving, it is important to let them know that this is not acceptable as it is unfair to other students and is disrespectful to the teacher. We do this not by simply telling them off but by trying to understand what the problem is and how it can be solved. Often children misbehave because there is something they do not understand so we approach our students to find out what it is they are not enjoying so we can reengage them.

If a student continues to misbehave, our teachers will give students a final warning before writing their name on a piece of paper to be handed into the headteacher. We do not send students out of the class as it does not comply with health and safety regulations.

A Mindful Chess Teacher Is Friendly & Approachable

Mindful Chess is an afterschool club, so we don't want our students to feel like they are being burdened with extra work. It is always important to maintain a professional relationship, but we also try to engage with our students as individuals. Asking a student about their weekend is a great way to start a lesson and to remind them that they are here to have fun. Mindful Chess teachers are friendly and approachable but are assertive too. As with everything, balance is key.

A Mindful Chess Teacher Engages All Students

While some students find themselves naturally engaged, others respond to different learning styles. We maintain a small student to teacher ratio so that Mindful Chess teachers can take the time to engage all students.

If students don't seem engaged, we do our best to get them involved. One good way to do this is by asking them to help with the session. Giving a student the chance to be a helper by setting up the display board or helping another student is a great way to get them on board.

When doing group work on a display board, we make sure to ask all the students questions so that everybody can be involved. It is important to reassure students that it is perfectly fine if they don't know the answer. When students give an incorrect answer, we say something positive before moving on to the next student. It is important to make sure students feel comfortable to make mistakes and feel encouraged to keep on trying.

Lastly, Mindful Chess teachers speak slowly and clearly. We make no assumptions about the ability level of our students and take the time to make sure that everybody understands and that everybody is enjoying themselves.

What A Mindful Chess Lesson Looks Like

A Mindful Start

Chess is a game that requires focus and before we begin, Mindful Chess teachers take a few minutes to create a calm and focused atmosphere. A good mindfulness practice is to ask the students to sit cross-legged on the floor and to concentrate on the sensations in their body, starting with their toes and moving up their body to the top of their head.

If teachers are not comfortable leading mindfulness exercises, we still encourage them to use the first few minutes of the lesson to create a calm and focused atmosphere. This can be done through a group activity if they prefer.

Group Activities

Mindful Chess teachers begin the session with a group activity on a smartboard or display board. This is an opportunity to get everybody together and to teach the class something new. We sometimes use the ChessKid video lessons as these are great fun and help students to learn quickly. For a one-hour session, a maximum of 5-10 minutes for group activity is the general rule of thumb.

Playing & Learning

The rest of the session is a chance for students to play one another and to practice what they have learned. If some students don't feel like playing, we usually set up puzzles or give them worksheets so that they have something to do and don't get bored.

Each group of students is different so Mindful Chess teachers tailor lesson plans for their Mindful Chess kids. If some students like to start playing straight away, that is OK too. We plan our lessons according to the student's needs and do not push them to do anything they don't want to do.

Finishing On Time

All Mindful Chess teachers have a love of the game and are aware that it can be easy to lose track of time when engaged in a game. As a result, we set an alarm that goes off 10 minutes before the end of class. This is so that students can pack up and be outside and ready to be collected when the session ends.



Our Responsibilities As Mindful Chess Teachers

Keeping Students Safe

First and foremost, it is crucial that we keep our Mindful Chess kids safe. All teachers receive a document with the school's official health and safety guidelines which they will comply to. All our teachers are DBS checked.

Being Inclusive

Inclusivity is a core value of Mindful Chess. If a student is not on the register but wishes to join the session, we welcome the stay and join in. If a student would like to bring along a friend, we encourage them to do so.

We have a policy that all students are welcome to sessions. If a parent is unable to pay for the sessions, we would much prefer the student still gets to come and develop a passion for chess than miss out. Of course, if a student not on the register is attending, it is crucial to let the school know.

Giving Students the Choice

At some clubs, chess students are pressured into playing league games when they would much prefer to play casually and for fun. Sometimes, our teachers run chess competitions, but students always have the choice to join. If they do not want to join in, we find out why and give them something else to do that keeps them enthused and doesn't make them feel left out.

When splitting the class into teams, we either pick the teams ourselves or let the least experienced players be the captains. If the captains pick teams, we step in when there are a few students left so no one is the last to be picked.

Staying on Top Of Marking

Mindful Chess teachers occasionally give out worksheets for the children to do if they choose. It is our responsibility to mark these worksheets and give positive and constructive feedback. Sometimes, our teachers arrive ten minutes early to lesson to give them a chance to catch up on marking.

When the answer is correct, we give a tick. If it is incorrect, we draw a square with some positive feedback like “nice try” and then explain to them the mistake so they can avoid it in the future.

Disciplining When Necessary

As we have emphasised already, Mindful Teachers have a responsibility to control the class so that a healthy teaching environment can be nurtured. If a confrontation begins between two students, teachers must stop what they are doing and step in before it escalates.

Keeping Phones Off

Phones should be put in flight mode and must not be used at any time during the session other than for the alarm at the end of the session. The only other time it acceptable to use phones is to take a picture of the register on the first and last day of term. This should be done when the students are outside the room.

And Finally... Here Are Ten Top Teaching Tips From Our Very Own Mindful Chess Teachers

All of our teachers inevitably find their own style but we work as a team to lift each other up and help everyone be the best Mindful Chess teacher they can be. Here are some of the top tips given by our current to teachers to any potential new teachers.



1. Ask students to help out! Asking a more experienced player to help out is a good way to keep them stimulated. Students are often happy to teach and are responsive to their peers. Teaching is also good experience for the students.
2. Once a term, it can be fun to set up all the boards and play each student at the same time. This way, the students get to play the teacher, but you don't need to spend too much time focusing on just one student as everybody is involved. Getting the chess clocks involved makes this even more fun!
3. Remind students that it is the taking part that counts. Do not put too much emphasis on winning or losing the games and if a child continues to lose, do not let them get disheartened. Encourage them and give them a task they can succeed at to give them a boost.
4. When referring to pieces, try to be mindful of whether you describe them as 'he' or 'she'. Either refer to them as 'it' or try to make sure to balance referring to the pieces as he and she.
5. Promote confidence! Be as encouraging as possible and try to make them feel good about their chess.
6. If there is a student that seems to be less engaged, try to make an extra effort to work out what it is that will help them enjoy the sessions more. Often, they don't want to do the Mindful Chess chapters as they think it will be boring but when given a bit of help on the first couple of puzzles, they really enjoy them.
7. Other options for students that seem less engaged is giving them the chance to play a pawn game, team game or another chess variant. Students should either spend some time initially working on puzzles or playing a normal game of chess before playing a variant.
8. It is important students don't mix up the different sets as it slows the setting up time the following week.

9. Please be aware you are a role model for young students and they will look up to you. Please ensure that your language and behavior is positive and encouraging.

10. When asking for silence an effective technique is putting your hand in the air and loudly counting down '5,4,3,2,1'. Students should be aware that they must be silent by the time you get to one. Another technique is to clap a rhythm and get them to clap back.



Finally, we would like to remind everybody that an important part of Mindful Chess is that our teachers are mindful. We are mindful of: what our students want to be doing; what they will benefit from doing and how we can encourage them to get the most out of our sessions.