

MindMatters Evaluation

Schools Case Study

Interim Report – July 2004

This interim report provides the results of an analysis of qualitative interviews conducted in five case study schools. Each of these schools have been using MindMatters for at least two years.

Later reports will include the results from an additional 10 schools.

This interim report will be useful to all schools who are interested in making use of the MindMatters resources.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Hazell'.

Trevor Hazell
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Evaluation Team

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1 School Case Study

1.1 Overview of the case study

The case study design was selected to serve several purposes:

- to observe the natural uptake and implementation of MindMatters in schools;
- to identify factors that facilitate successful uptake and to identify barriers;
- to identify the types of changes that schools make in curriculum, school ethos and in their partnerships and connections with the community;
- to identify the impact of making these changes; and
- to identify any outcomes (if any) for students, teachers and schools as a whole.

The original intention was to select one Government school from each state and territory, an Independent school in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, a Catholic school in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and an Indigenous community school.

The method of selecting schools in a particular state was as follows: all schools were listed in random order, and then those that had not sent staff to one of the PD workshops were removed. The school at the top of the remaining list was contacted to determine their interest in, and suitability for the evaluation. Written information about the evaluation and a consent form was then sent to the principal. If the principal decided that the school would not participate, the process was repeated. Schools were considered suitable for inclusion in the case study if: they had decided to implement MindMatters; they already had some clear plans in place; they had not progressed too far with implementation (to allow true baseline data to be collected); and there was a clear intention to implement the program over at least two to three years.

As, in one state an all-girls school was selected, the selection process was modified to ensure that at the next selection, only all-boys schools were considered for selection.

A government school in Western Australia was selected but later withdrew from the case study. This school was replaced by an Independent school. This school was randomly selected from a list of all schools in Perth. Note a narrowing of the selection criteria was applied to ensure that a capital city school was selected.

Similarly, a Catholic school in South Australia was selected but was a late withdrawal. Several other Catholic schools in this state were subsequently approached but agreement to participate could not be obtained from the schools that had attended training at that point. Pragmatically, another Catholic school from New South Wales was randomly selected from a list of Catholic schools due to the larger number of such schools that had attended training.

An initial field visit was made to the schools in 2001 and 2002. Subsequently a one-year follow-up visit was made to all schools in 2002 and 2004. To date a further follow-up visit has been made to twelve of the schools. At these visits (typically two days in duration), schools arrange for qualitative interviews with individuals and groups. Informants include executive staff members, teachers, other staff, students, parents and community members. Not all informant types were interviewed in each school at each visit.

These interviews are audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis. The following report represents detailed analysis of the five schools that have been fully analysed to date (end of June 2004). Analysis of the remaining ten schools will be incorporated in the next interim report.

Table 1 outlines an overview of the characteristics of each school and their implementation of MindMatters. Schools have been given fictional names as ethics requirements specify that their privacy should be protected. Every effort has also been made not to disclose the identity of individuals.

Table 1: Case Study Schools: characteristics and overview of implementation

	Kerry Bay Girls High School	Glastonbury High	Clifford High	Coombes High	Oxford College
Type of School	Catholic	Government	Government	Government	Catholic
Location	Capital city	Capital city	Rural city	Capital city	Rural city
High School Grades	7 to 12	7 to 10	8 to 12	7 to 10	7 to 12
High School enrolment	1100	700	500	800	400
Evaluation commenced	November 2001	August 2001	October 2001	November 2001	February 2002
Attendance at MindMatters PD	2	20	2	4	12
Involvement of school executive	Leadership	Leadership	Support	Leadership	Leadership
Core group	Ongoing throughout period	Initially and then merged with other group	Only met 1-2 times	Function adopted by existing group	Ongoing for first year
Use of MindMatters planning tools	Found to be too time consuming	Some use of audits	No use	No use	Some use of audits
Use of other planning approaches	Yes, other surveys done, curriculum review	Yes, formal plan written	No	Curriculum review	Curriculum review
Main strategies attempted	Curriculum, community involvement	Curriculum, policies, structures	Curriculum	Curriculum	Curriculum
Sustainability	Changes substantially embedded	Changes substantially embedded	Minimal embedding	Changes somewhat embedded	Changes substantially embedded

1.2 Feedback from the Case Study schools about the MindMatters PD Program

Interviews from the initial and two subsequent annual follow-up visits to five of the case study schools have been analysed to date. Where possible, interviews were conducted with staff who had attended MindMatters PD training. From these interviews, much can be gleaned about the quality of PD and the effect that PD had on the schools involved.

Quality of the PD Training

Staff who attended MindMatters PD in the early phases of their school's uptake of the program indicated that the training was valuable. They claimed that they found significant support in the opportunity to develop familiarity with the curriculum materials and to share understandings and experiences with colleagues from their own and from other schools.

Staff from four of the five schools were very positive about the quality and content of the professional development. Their comments indicate that they found the PD sessions to be helpful, useful and interesting. There was an appropriate mix of content and activities, and delivery was described as very professional. They generally felt that the training equipped them well to return to the school and begin implementing the program.

Oh it was really good. It was really professionally done. There was a good mix of written stuff we did, in groups and individually, and also practical things. I think everyone got a lot out of it.

It was very personally rewarding and fulfilling and made you aware of what you are trying to do as a teacher.

Staff in one of these four schools, however, reported that while they were confident immediately following the workshop they felt less confident once they returned to the school where they faced internal and external constraints that they felt might make implementation difficult.

In one of the five schools, staff expressed irritation with the amount of time spent on familiarisation as they felt they were being spoon-fed. They would have preferred more time to be allocated to planning for implementation.

For staff who attended PD after they had already had some level of experience interacting with the curriculum materials, and perhaps even teaching with them, there was some level of dissatisfaction expressed, as these staff felt they needed less time spent on familiarisation with the materials.

This may indicate a need for greater differentiation of the type of MMPD offered to schools to cater for the range of staff experiences with MindMatters prior to attending PD.

I think that we are all at different levels of understanding about MindMatters and I would have like to look at more in-depth things and strategies around how it could all go together within a school, and you know, the next step.

It should be remembered that the case study schools were randomly selected from lists of schools that had sent staff to early PD (i.e. in 2001 or early 2002) and had decided to implement the program at some level. It is not surprising then that staff at four of these five schools reported that their attendance at PD was followed by a period of activity in which they were engaged in the process of adoption or implementation, and that the PD had assisted these processes.

In the fifth school, the only two staff members to attend the MindMatters PD were part-time staff members who, subsequently did not take a significant role in the planning or the practical implementation of MindMatters at that school (either by choice or because they were excluded from the process). The staff member who was later charged with implementation did not attend MindMatters PD. She indicated that she interpreted reports of the staff who had attended the MindMatters Training as an indication that the PD would not be helpful.

All they do is read you through the books.

This contrasted somewhat with the comments of the staff noted in our interviews where staff indicated that although they had some previous familiarity with MindMatters they nevertheless thought the training was positive and broader than this observation indicates.

We did a lot on the values and judgements with certain topic areas, and to realise how you perceive things and how this is important in the delivery of the product. Some of the activities were from the booklet. It was effective.

At all five schools, staff had also reported either formally or informally to the school executive. In addition, at four of the schools, participants provided a more in-depth briefing to either a whole staff meeting, and or to a particular staff team (such as a team of year-group teachers or a curriculum development team).

At four of the five schools, staff indicated an increase in their own awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues as a result of attending MindMatters PD.

So I got a lot out of the training as far as how I relate to kids. It opened my eyes as to awareness of what some kids are kids going through and I think the more staff that are aware of it and do go through the training, I think the overall wellbeing of the school could only benefit from it. So even though it's useful to do the training and the kit is a very useful curriculum tool, having people that have that knowledge and expertise in the school fosters a very healthy environment in the school.

Impact (short-term outcomes) of PD

The MindMatters Professional Development Workshops are designed to provide an overview of the component resources in the Kit and to encourage schools to use the resources to increase their focus on student mental health and wellbeing. In particular, the training encourages the schools to implement MindMatters in ways that reflect a "whole school approach" and the "health-promoting schools" framework.

This section of the report looks at the evidence that, after attending PD, steps are taken to implement the program in ways that are consistent with these principles. Outcomes that are examined include:

- reporting back to schools
- decision to implement the program
- establishment of a core group to plan and implement MindMatters
- use of various MindMatters "tools" for planning
- involvement of school community in planning
- nature of school implementation
- flow-on professional development training

The perceived impact of the PD training on subsequent implementation is also examined.

Reporting back to school

In at least four of the five schools, those who participated in professional development had returned to their school and delivered a report at a staff meeting, although the depth of the discussion varied and not all school staff may have been present. At all schools, staff had also reported either formally or informally to the school executive. In addition, at three of the schools, participants provided a more in-depth briefing to a particular staff team, such as a team of year-group teachers or a curriculum development team.

Decision to implement MindMatters in school

One of the five schools became aware of MindMatters through their participation in a Health Promoting Schools program. Two were made aware via their contacts at the Catholic Education Office. One school learned about MindMatters through their attendance at a workshop by a prominent trainer and advocate of adolescent mental health issues. In one school the principal and deputy principal learned of MindMatters at separate regional or state-wide meetings where the resource was introduced.

In all of the schools it seems reasonable to assume that participation in the professional development reflected a prior level of interest in or concern about student wellbeing and, in four cases, the immediate effect of their attendance at PD was to cement a course of action which the school was already considering.

In the fifth school there was a considerable gap in time between the attendance by staff at PD and the school's decision to adopt the program. It is possible that the invitation from the evaluators to the school to participate in the case study may have caused the leadership team within the school to give the program more serious consideration and the decision to implement the program may have occurred after rather than prior to these considerations.

When asked about their reasons for implementing the program, each school nominated a selection of the following factors.

Factors relating to the MindMatters program:

- the program is consistent with our school ethos
- the program is consistent with our integrated curriculum approach
- the program is positive because it has a universal, preventative approach

Factors relating to the MindMatters material:

- the package is well presented, clear and easy to use
- the content is comprehensive and draws together several important issues
- sensitive topics like feelings and relationships are introduced well
- the package has good credentials
- the package has support from others in the education system

Factors relating to schools and their curriculum:

- gaps in the curriculum in regard to mental health, or a need for it to be updated
- concern about misinformation or stigma in society and the need to provide accurate information in the curriculum

- an increasing awareness that schools have traditionally not paid enough attention to mental health in general or in the curriculum
- a hope that the increase in mental wellbeing upon implementation would support improved academic outcomes

Factors relating to student wellbeing and behaviour:

- concern about the number of students with mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders and suicidal behaviour
- concern about high or increasing levels of disruptive behaviour, bullying or substance use, prejudice against race, ethnicity or sexuality.
- concern about truancy and disengagement from school
- concern about the impact of social change or social problems on the wellbeing of students and staff
- perceived need to emphasise student mental health and wellbeing
- the opportunity to compensate, to a degree, for perceived inadequate access for students to counselling support
- the opportunity to develop essential life skills

Establishment of a core group to plan and implement MindMatters

The establishment of a formal group within a school to plan and take responsibility for the implementation of MindMatters is one indicator that a school is serious about its intention to focus on student mental health and wellbeing. This strategy is supported by a number of “tools” in the MindMatters booklet entitled “School Matters” and is promoted in the PD workshops.

In four of the five schools, a core group was established fairly quickly after staff attended the professional development training. The core group was made up mainly of those who had attended the training, and was represented mainly by staff whose role related to student health and welfare or to behaviour management.

In two of these four schools, the core group continued to meet regularly and take responsibility for implementation, in others the groups decreased in size or morphed into other forms to integrate with other committees in the schools with compatible agendas.

In the fifth school, as mentioned above, there was delay in formation of a core group. This was attributed by one staff member to a conscious decision by her, following the MindMatters PD, to protect the Kit from indiscriminate or piecemeal adoption by holding on to it as a personal resource until a significant number of other staff had experienced MindMatters PD. When formation did occur it was much later in the year and, quite possibly only occurred because the school was invited to participate in the evaluation. This core group did not emerge as a formal committee and did not meet very regularly at all (possibly only twice).

All schools were aware of a level of vulnerability in their uptake of MindMatters in that they recognised that successful adoption often depended on the leadership and commitment of one or two key staff members. In one school, the key leader (an Assistant Principal) was absent for long period due to illness. The Core Team in this school struggled for direction until, eventually, a member of the core team advocated for the use of the program through the mechanism of another committee of the school.

In one school where meetings of the core team had lapsed, the attendance of two additional staff members at a two-day PD workshop resulted in a renewed interest in re-establishing a core group.

Use of MindMatters tools

A key question for this evaluation is whether implementation of MindMatters in schools where one or more staff have attended a MindMatters PD workshop is consistent with an "ideal model" as presented in the workshop. In addition to the establishment of a core group, participants are encouraged to utilise the planning "tools" included in the booklet entitled "School Matters". None of the five schools developed a formal, written implementation plan with objectives and timelines, but all did go through a process of identifying priorities and discussing how these could be addressed.

One school that did not use the audits or checklists provided in MindMatters considered that they had undertaken a similar process themselves in a recent curriculum review and their ongoing review of school policies. At this school staff expressed the view that the audits offered in the package did not accommodate the school's unique structure and alternative curriculum. However, they did express that an audit might be useful in a future review of relevant school policies.

A second school indicated that the School Matters audits and Audits for Teachers were read through by one individual who undertook an informal mental "tick off of what we did and didn't have." Similarly, this staff member indicated that the audits might be revisited at a latter point in the implementation.

One of the schools formally completed the whole school audit, doing this collaboratively before attending the professional development. This school sent a large number of staff to the training. They had identified a set of clear priorities by the end of the PD session and had started to put these together into a plan. They identified bullying as a priority and listed a small number of other goals, including integrating curriculum materials into their health units and making health a compulsory part of the curriculum for senior students. They also planned to extend pastoral care periods and introduce MindMatters curriculum units into these sessions.

A fourth school indicated that they had undertaken a bullying and harassment audit in the year prior to investigating MindMatters. They had employed outside assistance, using a consultant administer the do the survey and then to do the compilation and analysis. The staff considered that the bullying audit was a valuable tool in the identification of the depth and nature of bullying and harassment and it was with this knowledge in place that they were seeking a program to support implementation of better policy, curriculum and strategy in this area. This school did not utilise any of the audits in the Kit partly because they had recently conducted the bully9ng audit and partly due to their perception that since they had a large enrolment and a large staff, the audits would be too difficult and costly to analyse.

The fifth school undertook a staff audit and then, by arranging release for KLA coordinators, undertook a complete mapping of the ways in which their school structures, policies and curriculum (including, for example their religious Education curriculum and liturgies) were relevant to a MindMatters perspective.

Involvement of school community in planning

A further aspect of "ideal" implementation is the involvement of the various members of the school community in the school's planning of MindMatters implementation.

As mentioned above, the most common ways in which members of the larger school community were involved in MindMatters planning was through the use of audits but not all schools used these instruments.

One school involved local community youth workers in consultative auditing, in the formation of the core team and in the first wave of training. This was atypical.

None of the interviewees reported any direct consultation with students in regard to implementing MindMatters at their school, and there was little evidence of consultation with parents, although one school did go to some length to inform parents about their adoption of the program.

There was greater evidence of consultation with staff. In one school several staff members had collaborated in completing the whole school audit. In another a staff vote finally cemented the adoption of MindMatters. However in most schools, this does not appear to have been a major priority.

In one school in which adoption of MindMatters was largely unsuccessful, the main reason given was the staff's perception that the decision to adopt the program had not been sufficiently consultative to achieve any level of staff ownership.

Aspects of "whole school" implementation

The MindMatters resources are based on a "whole school" approach to student mental health and wellbeing. Although this is not specifically defined, the booklets and the training workshops emphasise the health-promoting schools model in which changes in curriculum are implemented alongside other more structural change strategies.

All schools seemed able to identify priorities readily, but few assigned equal weight to the three aspects of the health promoting schools model: school ethos, curriculum and partnerships.

An overview of each school reveals significant differences in the balance of these components. The models of curriculum adoption, management, change support and review, varied greatly across the five schools but each school planned to make changes to the curriculum elements in the school following their introduction to MindMatters. Thus it appears that it is the curriculum materials and the potential for the materials to meet curriculum needs that most appealed to the staff of these five schools. Each of the schools elected to integrate the curriculum materials in some way into their teaching, with mixed success. Changes in the curriculum are reported in detail in a later section of this report.

Three of the five schools indicated that, at the point of adoption of MindMatters, the school was already positively oriented to supporting students social and emotional wellbeing and that they were highly receptive to the holistic education model underpinning the MindMatters, PD and curriculum materials. In these schools, curriculum change was the main outcome of the school's implementation. In one of these schools, significant change was achieved in the way in which the school related to and used the services of external health and welfare agencies.

I've got such a community network out of MindMatters - unbelievable.

One school selected for MindMatters in the expectation that the program would assist a change of culture to a more supportive and safe environment for students and staff. This school implemented significant changes in timetabling, pastoral care, policies (such as behaviour management), as well as school uniform. Ultimately this school gave greater value to these changes than they did to curriculum. Nevertheless curriculum was an important aspect of their adoption.

In the fifth school, a number of issues relating to the school's existing ethos were identified at the point of uptake of MindMatters but these did not subsequently become part of the school's

focus with the program. In this school, MindMatters was seen solely as a source of useful curriculum resources.

All of the schools already had some partnerships with other agencies such as health and community organisations. None developed a formal plan for reviewing and strengthening community partnerships. However, in one school, there was an emphasis as implementation progressed on establishing more and stronger partnerships. While this school had always maintained a strong pastoral care focus it had tended to deal with student welfare issues largely internally, rather than by referral. MindMatters was credited with helping the school to look beyond these boundaries, creating partnerships with drug and alcohol organisations, health services, local council and community groups. A second school indicated some minor increase in community connection, although this school was reasonable well connected to community agencies at the outset.

Influence of PD on subsequent implementation

Three of the five schools reported that the PD had been helpful in guiding the implementation of the program on their return to school.

As previously mentioned interviewees from one school felt that the workshop concentrated too much on the content of the kit and would have preferred more emphasis on the practical aspects of implementation. However, it should be noted that these participants left the training before it was completed and missed the relevant sessions on the second day.

In one other school the staff who had attended MindMatters train were not significantly involved in the implementation at all. In this school the training had no impact at all on implementation

Interviewees from three of the schools reported that attending the professional development allowed them to work more closely together outside the normal school environment. In one of these schools, the team of eighteen staff who attended became key advocates for significant changes that were subsequently adopted in the school. In one school, staff indicated that in the PD they attended there were opportunities for them to collaborate with staff with whom they may not otherwise have had much contact. In another school, two additional staff attended the PD approximately twelve months into the implementation of the program. They returned with renewed enthusiasm for the program and suggested re-convening the school's core team, which had stopped meeting regularly as a consequence of a key staff member leaving the school.

Interviewees from three of the five schools indicate that implementation is greatly enhanced in schools that send large numbers of staff to the PD session, either initially or through progressive attendance at training. One of these schools further suggested that it would be helpful for MindMatters staff to offer a compressed PD session for the whole school, to follow up after the comprehensive two-day training.

Flow-on PD in schools

Each school reported that at some time during the period of this evaluation, the school had provided additional professional development to staff in areas which are broadly related to mental health such as: suicide prevention; gender and sexuality; equity and the use of language; drug education; restorative justice; behaviour management; eating disorders; the creation of positive classroom environments; and a range of bullying and teasing intervention strategies. It is difficult to ascertain whether this focus on professional development about student wellbeing was partly attributable to MindMatters, or would have occurred without this influence. However it was clear

that undertaking a range of professional development initiatives added weight to the concept of building resilience in the school.

One negative response to this shift in the focus of PD offered within and outside the school was from a staff member who indicated that other initiatives of merit were being swamped by the current funding and 'flavour of the month' status of mental health in schools. In the same school a staff member noted that, in terms of staff mental health, little effort had been made to foster better health for staff being charged with the implementation of MindMatters. These issues were expressed largely in terms of the workloads of teachers and the nature of their teaching contracts. In this particular example, the school had introduced an additional "pastoral period" which has been interpreted by some as increasing their teaching load.

1.3 Changes reported by schools

As schools think about how to implement the MindMatters program, they adopt a variety of approaches for planning and managing the changes that adoption entails. A range of strategies has been observed and, as might be expected, schools have experienced varying success in implementing changes.

Changes in school structures and systems

Two schools made significant structural change to accommodate MindMatters.

One school undertook considerable change, extending its pastoral care periods and changing the composition of pastoral care groups from a vertical to a horizontal structure, as well as introducing new grade supervisor positions. These positions were designed to create a level between classroom teachers and assistant principals to streamline the provision of pastoral care and effective behaviour management. The staff who filled the grade supervisor positions were, by and large, among those staff who had attended the initial MindMatters training. In the early period, it was intended that MindMatters material would be used in a newly created pastoral period although this was only partially implemented. This school also undertook significant change to the timetable to: five one hour periods: two in the morning with a longer 30 minute break for recess; two further periods before the lunch break of 40 minutes; then just one period after the lunch break. Students in particular reported a high level of approval for this change and indicated that it made them feel much better about their day knowing that there was only one period following lunch. This change to the recess and lunchtime enabled opportunities for new student-led activities in those break times. Overall, these and other structural changes appear to have significantly improved the school culture, as reported by both staff and students.

A second school changed the structure of the timetable at the beginning of their implementation, to create a pastoral period once per fortnight. On this day, other periods were each shortened to accommodate the new period. On the second week of the fortnightly cycle, this period time is used for a whole-school assembly. This pastoral period was taught by the homeroom teachers, who were given support by the year coordinators and one of the assistant principals who was the core driver of the program in this school. This change to the timetable resulted in some industrial unrest in the school as a small group of teachers asserted they were teaching over their load as a result of the new timetable. While this left some resentment towards MindMatters for these staff, the majority of staff and students indicated support for the change was firming at the time of the last visit.

In a third school, a system of "release cards" was introduced that enabled students who wanted to see the school counsellor to be able to leave classes and be accounted for without needing to provide a detailed explanation and without anyone necessarily knowing that they were seeking counselling.

Certain events and changes, not attributable to MindMatters, but which nevertheless impacted on the schools at the same time that MindMatters was being adopted are worthy of mention.

In a fourth school, a rigorous induction interview for students at the beginning of each year was introduced. The intention was to better welcome the students and to establish a firm basis for a positive approach to behaviour management. Another change was the upgrading of a school hall into an enclosed sports area. This was reported to have positively changed the way the school and staff gathered, which reportedly improved the school ethos.

In one school, the fact that the school's enrolment was expanding seemed to impact negatively both on the physical environment, and on the capacity of the school to adopt new programs. In each of the years of the study, a proliferation of demountable buildings was observed, together

with a contraction of the amount of space available. Systems of communication in the school were also affected. Common staff rooms, which at baseline were seen as important in enabling easy communication, shared planning, resource sharing and collegial support to arise naturally, became overcrowded. Staff ended up in separate staff rooms. This change appeared to be having an increasing negative impact on the staff and their communication.

Changes in school policies

All five schools indicated some review and change or development of policies in the course of this study. In four schools some significant change occurred in each setting during the period of implementation and there is some evidence that the schools' participation in MindMatters has been instrumental in these changes. In the fifth school, staff mentioned their intention to undertake policy review but there was no concrete indication that this had actually occurred during the time of this study.

One school made significant change to its school uniform, drug and alcohol, and bullying policies. Staff comments indicated that their experience of MindMatters training and their use of curriculum materials had helped to form their views about these policies. Staff, students and parents all assented to the changes. The discipline policies and procedures were also reviewed at the same time that the pastoral care structure was changed. While these changes had been previously discussed, participation in MindMatters was seen as an important factor in facilitating the adoption of the proposals. In addition, this school noted changes arising out of the awareness raised by the extensive MindMatters PD at the school to move towards a policy of more openly acknowledging and supporting staff, which could perhaps be labelled an element of an occupational, health and safety policy.

Another school indicated that significant bullying and drug policy review was underway prior to engagement of staff with MindMatters. They attributed changes in the style of communication about these policies to MindMatters.

If we talk about preventative strategies, we can do that and I don't need to give you a dictionary definition, so that we can talk about. ...And if I need to sort of think of ways in which I can intervene or prevent bullying or harassment or other things taking place, so it's much easier for us to look at the whole school initiatives if we're all speaking the same language literally about these sorts of issues.

A third school experienced a critical incident early in 2002 that prompted the development of a crisis management plan. Although not arising as a consequence of the school's implementation of MindMatters, nevertheless the school made use of the models presented in the "Student Matters" resource.

As a result of that (incident) there was some major discussion around what we should do, there may be a situation other than a fire, such as a lock down, or if a kid hangs themselves in the toilet. As a result of this we have developed crisis management plans which includes suicide, death and has addressed counselling and where this comes from. The crisis management plan has gone through all the staff, I believe that it came from MindMatters as a starting point ... There is now a team who has specific duties and responsibilities if something were to occur within this crisis management framework.

Finally, one school indicated that the elevation in status of the pastoral group was a major policy change for the school. The nature of the pastoral period in the new configuration required a different level of preparation by pastoral teachers and year coordinators. It reflected a whole school shift to a commitment to seek opportunities to create space and resources to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and a desire to provide time for skill and attitude development to enhance wellbeing and resilience.

Changes in curriculum or classroom content

Interviewees from all schools reported that they had been readily able to select relevant material from the MindMatters resource kit and to adapt it where necessary. Each of the five schools sought to incorporate MindMatters into both a homeroom group or pastoral care period **and** elsewhere in the curriculum.

Four of the five schools attempted to integrate MindMatters materials into either a homeroom group or into a separate pastoral care period. These sessions were usually conducted once per week or per fortnight. In two cases this was an existing period while in others it was in a newly created period created for this purpose. In the fifth school, as well as being integrated into an established 'Personal Development' curriculum, the material informed particular discreet initiatives such as retreat days, drug and alcohol programs and mentoring programs.

The experience of schools who used a homeroom period or pastoral care period was mixed:

- In one of the schools the pastoral care periods lacked structure and purpose and became increasingly used by staff and students for general activities or normal school work.
- In one school which had grades 7 and 8 as part of a middle school, the homeroom teachers had more success at integrating the materials
- In two schools, the homeroom teachers provided mixed reports. Some had adopted MindMatters very successfully while others remained resistant or expressed discomfort with implementing the materials.

The overall impression from staff and students is that this approach results in patchy implementation and that the effectiveness of the session may be variable, depending on the characteristics of the teacher and the student cohort.

I think it's a problem in most schools ... that, when you have an extended pastoral group period, some teachers are fantastic but other teachers don't see it as their role, and despite the fact that we we're producing materials for those pastoral groups because it wasn't a really water-tight lesson plan, there were quite a number of teachers that weren't just using it. And, so from that point of view we were losing the impact that we needed.

In two of the three partially successful schools that used this approach, it was suggested that sending all of the homeroom or pastoral care teachers to the professional development sessions would increase staff commitment and comfort. The cost and practicality of ongoing training to induct and support staff in ongoing skill development was an issue of concern raised in each of the four schools implementing a MindMatters pastoral program. There were indications that in each school some of the staff teaching the material could not see the broader purpose of the program. Several were unaware of the prevalence or nature of mental health problems in their school, which were often handled by other staff. Some remained somewhat uncomfortable with the content despite their experience of PD:

MindMatters opens up all sorts of sensitive issues too, you know. And staff aren't perhaps used to talking about these sorts of things.

Despite this, where use of MindMatters in pastoral care had been successfully introduced and supported, staff and students had positive views about its value. In one school, staff identified that for senior students, as health is not a compulsory subject, the pastoral care period had become an important 'time out' for senior students, in that it enabled them to address issues such as stress management and time management, to reduce stress and improve success and esteem. In addition, significant numbers of students and staff who had been immersed in a pastoral program at their school for three years indicated that they would consider it a significant loss if the pastoral program and timetable allocation for it were to disappear.

Each of the five schools was able to incorporate materials into the broader curriculum of their Health and/or Personal Development units. In general, this appeared to be an adoption method that seemed a more palatable form of implementation than the incorporation into a pastoral care or homeroom group period. At the most recent interviews in each of the five schools it was this type of implementation that appeared to be most securely embedded. Many staff appeared to be more comfortable exploring these issues as part of a structured curriculum approach. Staff who teach Health also commented that their, and the curriculum expectations for the teaching of health, generated a type of teacher more likely to have experience and a sense of confidence and competence in teaching and responding to sensitive issues.

In three of the schools which used the Health and/or Personal Development curriculum, the relevant units are coordinated across grades by a team of teachers, facilitating the development of a generally coherent curriculum sequence across all the year groups at the school. In each case, the curriculum team also featured one or more people from the MindMatters core group or the head of the Health curriculum area or equivalent. During the period of the evaluation, two of these schools successfully advocated to make Health and/or Personal Development a compulsory part of the curriculum for their year 9 and 10 students, where previously it had been an elective. One school moved to incorporate assessment of the MindMatters Mental Illness unit into the formal assessment structure of the subject in Year 10.

Several schools used a combination of approaches over the implementation period. One school, which implemented an integrated curriculum model, used the fluidity of the structure to implement MindMatters materials in both curriculum and pastoral groups with staff indicating that in the course of the evaluation period they changed their approach after the first year because their flexible arrangements allowed them to do so.

Each school used a unique selection from the range of MindMatters materials. Across the five schools the most commonly selected materials were the 'Bullying and Harassment' resources, and the 'Resilience' resources. The 'Loss and Grief' materials, and the 'Understanding Mental Illness' resources were also used but less commonly. The latter tended to be selected for more senior students.

Only one of the five schools has adopted a comprehensive approach across multiple curriculum areas. This school integrated MindMatters into an existing pastoral care structure and also redeveloped the entire curriculum, in order to integrate resources into multiple learning areas. As well as the health and/or personal development units, this school has also been able to map MindMatters into some areas of English, Science, Mathematics, Religious Education, Health and Social Studies. For example, Mathematics students use MindMatters materials and surveys as a stimulus to explore statistics, tables and graphs. They work through mathematical problems using material such as the Holmes-Rahe survey of recent loss experiences (Loss & Grief, p.49) as data for teaching addition in a unit on whole numbers in Year 7. Students in Science explore mental illness as part of their study of the brain and coordination

Changes in School Culture

One school experienced a significant improvement in school culture, reported by both staff and students, as a result of the structural and policy changes that occurred during the evaluation period. In particular, the school had restructured their pastoral care periods, introduced a year advisor position for each grade and upgraded the detail and enforcement of bullying and discipline policies. Change from the time of the first visit to that of the last that was described by a staff member in this way:

The changes I've seen. There are much fewer drug problems. There are still kids smoking marijuana ... many fewer problems and most of the kids are scared of it now because they know what it is going to do. They all saw kids who lost their motivation ... they saw that and didn't want to go there. And there are fewer suspensions now. We manage cases really well. We have support (with external health agencies). To manage individual cases we have a social worker for a day a week, so the hours may have been extended there because we didn't have him before.

... it's quieter, it's sort of a nicer feeling. We get in early with most of those things ... We are holding onto a boy we never thought we could hold onto ...

It was a normal school. The change is enormous. You walk down the corridor and you can feel it and see it.

This school experienced a significant drop in the rates of truancy and suspension over the period. The following extract from the school's newsletter illustrates this outcome.

Information recently released by the Department of Education illustrates the success of (our school's) approaches to managing student behaviour. In 2001, our suspension rate was 11.6% (87 students). This rate was less than the average for secondary schools, and reflected a calm, safe and well-managed school. However, the fact that the rate was climbing was one indicator of a need to improve the school environment that resulted in our changing pastoral care, forming grade teams and developing a greater range of responses to both good and unacceptable behaviour.

Last year, our suspension rate had declined dramatically to 5.7% (42 students). This was less than half the rate of secondary schools.

Our rates of student absence also are far better than for comparable schools and diminishing.

While this level of change was not articulated in the other four schools, three of these schools did indicate that participating in MindMatters had reinforced and deepened the school's existing culture of concern for student wellbeing.

1.4 Factors likely to influence outcomes

A number of factors are emerging as being important influences on the nature and extent of implementation and hence whether directly attributable outcomes can be observed and/or measured.

It should be noted that as the evaluation is ongoing, a fully comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data collected has not been undertaken at this stage. For most of the schools, the implementation process is ongoing and there are likely to be further changes before the final visit. The following points are the impressions gained from the field visits to date. These points may be confirmed or revised by the time the evaluation is completed.

“Readiness” of schools and teachers for change

Interviewees at one school described it as innovative, with a culture of openness to change and a practice of regularly taking on pilot programs and initiatives. They felt that this made it easier for the school to implement MindMatters.

In another two schools, interviewees commented that staff were happy at the school and were open to new suggestions and creative ways of teaching. While they did not specifically describe the school overall as innovative, they felt that there was little resistance to change among staff members, particularly where changes were oriented to supporting students.

In another school, while there was no history of recent change, there was an awareness at the time of adoption for the need for change. While several ideas had been mooted, it was when a significant proportion of staff attended MindMatters training and undertook a priority setting exercise that a commitment to make these changes was established.

In one other school, recently completed audits of bullying had enabled the school to identify that as an issue that required a significant policy and action response.

In each of the five schools the MindMatters curriculum materials received a high level of positive response from at least some more enthusiastic staff. From the first encounter with the resource, staff identified that it covered issues that were relevant to schools and were not being addressed fully in existing curriculum or pastoral areas. As the study continued and despite difficulties that arose in implementation, staff in each of the schools continued to assert that the resource was continuing to provide an important support to the implementation of desired change at their schools.

On the other hand, in each school there remained a number (usually a small number) of staff who were resistant to the program's adoption or, more commonly, to the way in which the program had been adopted. Such resistance can largely be attributed to several underlying issues: these particular staff not having attended the MindMatters professional development; staff being uncomfortable about the topic areas or perhaps having difficult personal experiences; staff being uncomfortable with the more open style of teaching necessitated by MindMatters; or (in one school) the nature of the leadership and management style of the person charged with responsibility for implementation.

Extent of executive involvement in MindMatters

In each of the five schools either a member of the school executive (usually an assistant principal) was either directly involved in the implementation of the program, or had empowered a senior member of the teaching staff (eg subject coordinator) to undertake planning and implementation of MindMatters.

In two cases, the involvement of a school executive member was specifically mentioned by interviewees as a factor which may have facilitated the allocation of resources to implementation and the level of support from members of the school community. In one of these schools the change process was implemented by a core group led by a key executive member who was highly committed to the program and its incorporation into the school culture:

This is my baby. I'm retiring in two years. I reckon if I say it enough it will happen. And this has got to be up and going, and going in spite of me, by the time I leave.

In another school the executive staff member was the driving force of MindMatters adoption until he became ill and the momentum for change was, for a time, lost. However, the significant level of training undertaken by staff at the school, appeared to act as a mitigating factor that enabled new leaders to eventually emerge from the teaching staff who had attended MindMatters training.

In the remaining three schools, responsibility for the implementation of the program rested with other staff member(s) who were not on the school executive but reportedly had broad support from the school executive. In one school where executive support for this person was very apparent, implementation was clearly more successful than in the other cases.

Characteristics that staff identified as good leadership qualities included: a capacity to consult; a high level of organizational capacity; availability at point of need; a deep knowledge of the resource; a capacity to create and allow time for engagement with the program (PD and practical time for planning at school); and a respect for the professional integrity of the team with whom they were working.

Resources allocated to implementation

Each of the schools allocated some level of staff or financial resources to the program.

In terms of staff time to attend MindMatters professional development two of the schools made significant commitments to providing an experience of external MindMatters PD for a critical mass of up to one third of their school staff. One of these schools has made an ongoing investment of additional PD related to MindMatters issues in the school. In the remaining schools a limited number of staff attended MindMatters PD. In two of the cases, additional internal professional development opportunities were arranged.

Schools also invested staff time in planning and coordinating their implementation of MindMatters PD. In one of the schools, teaching staff were, in one way or another, formally granted time away from teaching duties to work on the programming and implementation. This support was seen as a valuable sign of support for the MindMatters program from the school executive.

In each of the schools key leadership staff indicated that they devoted significant time of their own, sometimes in holiday periods, to work on the implementation of the MindMatters program at their particular school.

The MindMatters kit was available at all schools. In the case of four schools additional Kits (additional to the one complimentary copy of the Kit provided to each school) were purchased.

A small amount of financial assistance was provided for schools agreeing to participate in the evaluation, to reimburse them for the costs associated with the collection of students' surveys and participation in interviews. One school in this sample also received some financial assistance from the Education Department in their state, to become a focus school. Schools commented that the financial assistance available through these mechanisms had been helpful in supporting

the school's implementation process as well as its participation in the evaluation. One school ensured that the use of these funds was allocated to the Health faculty to be to support additional professional development or the purchase of resources.

While financial resources were important, interviewees from four schools suggested that the critical resource factor was the provision of release time for staff, to support planning and implementation.

Staff at three schools indicated that there had been significant commitment to the identification and purchase of MindMatters-related materials for the school. These ranged from academic texts on bullying to student CD ROM's. In one school, the librarian supported this with allocation of funding from the general library budget.

In one school staff identified 'expert trainers' who had been identified and invited to the school to provide PD as a significant support to the ongoing implementation of MindMatters and the overall benefit of staff and students. Some at this school noted that the power of a guest speaker to garner staff and student interest, and in a way to signify "authority", was an important facilitating factor.

The nature of the MindMatters resources

Staff in the five schools identified that they had found the curriculum resources in the MindMatters Kit as highly useful. This experience of the usefulness of the resources reinforced the adoption of the program in these schools. Even in one school where implementation of MindMatters has not been ideal, use of the curriculum resources prevails for this reason.

This is a selection of comments that indicates typical statements from staff across this sample group.

(You can) choose something or pick something out but it seems to generate lots of discussion...you tend to have the thing in front of you because you've got this material, you have a bit more structure about it...I think it just helps you to focus before the lesson and say well this is where I want to get them to and this is really what I want to impart. I make's you a bit more structured in your approach to the lesson which is good.

It was very good because it was factual but there was also some good teaching ideas and things in it as well which was good.

Its almost skeletal but it actually brings a lot of discussion... they (students) were talking about positive ways of supporting a friend in grief...and then the kids just chatted and chatted and chatted. It took a whole lesson, lots of ideas coming from them so its good stuff.

Some teachers feel much more confident when they've got a package, they feel that the eight ball work's been done behind it and they can just become upfront to it in the classroom. Things like this too can be very affirming in that was in place is travelling along the right route and they usually add further dimensions to what is in place already.

In one school criticisms by staff were that some of the materials were not age appropriate. These staff simply used the resources as a starting point and adapted them as the basis for their classes. In fact, informants from all schools indicated that teachers take this approach.

Nature and amount of PD training provided to staff

Four of the five schools reported that the MindMatters professional development was helpful in guiding the implementation of the program on their return to school. In all but one of the schools the initial trainees were instrumental in providing reports to colleagues that encouraged them to seek further opportunities for the training of staff in MindMatters PD.

One of the five schools sent a large number of staff for training (eighteen initially and five the following year). As mentioned earlier, this appeared to have helped the school to maintain momentum, in the face of the absence from school of the program's main advocate, due to a protracted illness. They also specifically reported that it helped them to appreciate and adopt the whole school approach. Interestingly, this was the only one of the schools which made several deliberate changes to structures and policies, with the specific aim of improving school culture.

In another of the schools, the fact that additional staff attended training later during the implementation phase, had the effect of re-energizing the program in that school and motivating ongoing commitment.

The staff chosen to attend professional development may emerge as a critical consideration. A particular issue in at least one school was that those who had attended the professional development were not those who were delivering the material in the classroom, nor were they the ones charged with leading the implementation. Three of the four remaining schools trained a range of leading teachers, pastoral teachers and regular classroom teachers across a range of faculties. In the sequencing of this training however, there were periods in which the coordinators and other key staff who were driving the implementation, and most of the homeroom teachers who were delivering the material had not attended the training. Some of these staff were resistant to the program.

In the school that had ensured that staff across different roles and faculties were sent to the training, this may have been a critical factor in this school's successful integration of material across multiple learning areas where a critical number of staff were able to take their knowledge to year group and subject area and begin a conversation with colleagues across those arbitrary divisions.

As previously mentioned, schools also undertook professional development in a range of other areas which relate broadly to student mental health and wellbeing. It is difficult to know how much of this additional professional development is attributable to the schools' participation in MindMatters. From comments received from interviewees in each of the schools, it would appear that attending a range of PD activities lent weight to the concept of promoting resilience in the school.

A focus on health and wellbeing in the school

All five of the schools reported that, prior to adoption, they had a school ethos or culture that valued student wellbeing highly and was committed to providing student support. Interviewees cited this as a factor which aided their school's adoption and implementation of the MindMatters program. The indications of the clarity of that focus on health and wellbeing and the anecdotal and practical indicators in each school, indicated a significant variance in the type and quality of experience of mental health and wellbeing that students would experience in any of these schools.

One school with an integrated curriculum and a middle school model had structures and processes in place that encouraged a high level of communication between staff and students. The school was established with a deliberate focus on student wellbeing and outcomes-based reporting. This model appeared in early visits to create a type of intimacy where students knew

that they could locate their teacher at any point in the day. Staff had a regular classroom where they maintained a high level of contact with the same students across a range of curriculum areas so that their health and wellbeing, or lack of it was highly likely to be noticed. In the course of this study, an increase in the size of this school led to an increase in reporting of difficulty in keeping this focus.

Two of the schools were familiar with the whole school approach and drew on long traditions of high levels of pastoral care. This is how they perceived themselves and how the community reportedly perceived them.

The level of pastoral care that is offered here is second to none. If I had a daughter I'd send her here because I think they are a very, very caring staff.

They themselves recognised that MindMatters reinforced and supported what was already in place:

Of course you realise a lot of that stuff already existed? That it just fitted into the whole Mind Matters philosophy? It's not as if we got Mind Matters and thought "Right, we're going to start having masses and liturgies"

Both of the remaining schools reported that they had been undertaking a number of initiatives to improve a focus on student welfare at the time that the MindMatters program emerged. There are, however, significant differences in the actual focus on mental health in these schools. One school was seeking a deliberate vehicle to bring about significant change in student behaviours, student and staff wellbeing and a shift to a more positive whole school ethos. They were actively looking for a program to support a desire for change. Interviewees specifically stated that MindMatters became the overarching philosophy or approach under which they united a number of programs relating to health and wellbeing. The other school, in contrast, had not yet made a significant commitment to change.

A focus on health or personal development in the curriculum

Two of five schools reported that prior to, or during the adoption of MindMatters, they had been in the process of re-developing an existing the health or personal development curriculum. The MindMatters material became available and both energized and informed these changes. Staff in both schools reported felt that this had aided their adoption and implementation of the program. In the course of this study these two schools both moved to mandate particular health or personal development units for their senior students. Increasingly that material appeared to be likely to be delivered by staff trained in health, personal development and physical education.

In one of these schools, this change required major change to the timetable that initially caused a great concern for staff. However, by the end of the study, the units had been incorporated into the curriculum and were being delivered to all students in that cohort with a high level of acceptance by other staff. In the second school the movement out of middle school and towards senior college provided a structure to support teacher specialisation and student movement to discreet subject lessons and a decline in integrated learning. Against these losses the cementing of MindMatters into the health program was identified as a significant support to students.

In one school a timely state curriculum change and release of syllabus documents further supported the incorporation of MindMatters-related change already underway in the curriculum across the year groups. The Mental Illness unit particularly appealed to this school and was used as a core part of the assessment for Yr 10 students, thus raising the status of the content.

Commitment to the adoption of MindMatters

In each of the five schools, interviewees made comments about the importance of staff commitment to the successful implementation of a program like MindMatters. In particular, commitment and leadership of the key advocate or driver of the program was identified as important and was valued by other staff.

Staff at these schools also praised those of their colleagues who demonstrated a commitment to the students and a genuine interest in supporting the wellbeing of adolescents. They felt this commitment was an important aspect in a school's willingness to adopt and trial such an initiative. Despite the homogeneity of this view, levels of staff commitment to implementation of the program, support for fellow staff members, and willingness to adapt teaching style to accommodate a different type of pedagogical practice was patchy and affected by a complex array of variables.

In one of the five schools, the implementation of MindMatters was supported by a formal process of checking on implementation of the planned program across the curriculum. The pro forma adopted by the school called on teachers to program, implement and evaluate with a mindfulness of the MindMatters overlay in their subject area at each of those points.

...the MindMatters programs and the MindMatters philosophy is taken up, in the topic, with each teacher, and they finish their topic as an evaluation sheet and there's a section there – what have you done about MindMatters?

Staff at the same school indicated that being a part of the review prompted more thorough and ongoing internal school evaluation of their implementation of MindMatters.

Staff in the other four schools did not indicate a particular mindfulness of any special review processes.

Communication issues

In four of the five schools one could assert that communication between staff members was improved by the implementation of MindMatters. In turn, this level of communication supported its adoption and embedding in those schools.

In one school where the integration into the curriculum area appears most tenuous, at the second visit the coordinator of MindMatters was about to leave the school, a staff member stated:

Even if (the coordinator) is not here someone else can coordinate it, we have embedded it in such a way that it will survive. It is not a one-person hobbyhorse. It is written into the curriculum. It is solid and not ad hoc.

This proved to be, however, an overly optimistic view. In addition to this person leaving, the principal and one of the deputies also left the school. It became apparent to the evaluator during 2003 that the new administration was not adequately briefed about the school's participation in the evaluation and, indeed, were not aware of this until contacted by the evaluator. The staff also were not aware that the program was ongoing.

I am not really aware of what the school has been doing with MindMatters this year. Even working at the main office I haven't seen or heard anything. I haven't heard anything from my son either. He may have

spoken about it in a general sense, and may not have been aware that it was MindMatters and part of the curriculum.

In contrast one of the schools where implementation was swift and deep the tonal quality of the comments from staff were starkly different

This is an amazing school where the staff just support each other so much. They're so friendly and they are always supporting me in anything I do...I guess in a way they believe that if you support each other that you'll get support your way...but everyone's so positive and just so wonderful especially the level coordinators, which is where you need to start.

1.5 Barriers to implementation

Staff attitudes and reactions

It was apparent from all of the schools that, at some stage during the evaluation, there had been some level of staff resistance to the introduction of MindMatters. Several schools acknowledged pockets of staff resistance, or uncertainty among particular staff members.

The following reasons were suggested as contributing factors:

- Discomfort in discussing mental health and emotions in the classroom
- Concern about needing to change teaching style or practices
- Concern about causing distress for some students by discussing sensitive topics in the classroom
- Fear of a student disclosing a mental health problem, abuse or other sensitive issue in the classroom
- Discomfort because of one's own mental health problems or negative life experiences
- General resistance to change or new initiatives
- Concern about additional workload in preparation, classroom management or reporting
- Negative experiences in relation to the outcomes or sustainability of other initiatives, creating cynicism
- Questioning the value of the MindMatters program or being uninformed about its broad goals
- Questioning whether all classroom teachers should be involved, or whether the issue relates solely to welfare and health education staff
- Questioning whether schools should address social or welfare issues in addition to educational outcomes
- Questioning whether schools and teachers can influence young people's mental health

If staff are resistant to the use of MindMatters, and there are no systems in place to check what aspects of the planned curriculum are used, implementation of planned approaches may be incomplete.

Some staff tend to think more things are important than others, so they tend to gloss over issues they may not feel comfortable teaching, or areas in PD that they are not quite as comfortable with, so that in itself creates gaps in the curriculum.

Where MindMatters is introduced into pastoral care settings, the attitudes and reactions of pastoral care teachers arose. While schools may give a high priority to pastoral care, it is often the case that when it comes to selecting the staff who will be pastoral care teachers, it is not always possible to appoint staff who have the aptitude or attitude to support ideal pastoral care approaches.

When the school's timetable is put together the first things that are put in are senior Maths and English and Science and last comes (pastoral care); and who has got some left over time and that is where MindMatters fits. That doesn't necessarily mean that we have teachers that are qualified, comfortable or even slightly interested in taking it in.

Staff turnover

In three of the five schools, staff turnover emerged as a significant barrier to the implementation of MindMatters, particularly if those staff who leave or are absent were significant leaders at the time MindMatters was adopted.

Reasons for staff turnover in these three schools included:

- in one school an assistant principal became ill and required frequent and sometimes extended period of leave;
- in another school, the principal, deputy principal and senior teacher all left to pursue promotional opportunities;
- in another school, one of the key teachers left to travel overseas while other teachers left the school because of staff mobility policies in the region.

Executive changes during implementation can also influence a school's commitment to student wellbeing or particular programs. In one school there had been a number of changes in the administrative team over the past several years, with differences in emphasis and direction. This was considered a possible barrier to the implementation of MindMatters because it had created some cynicism among staff about new initiatives.

Some interviewees in two schools (which had experienced problems due to turnover) suggested that the induction process for their school should include material about the school's commitment to student wellbeing and its implementation of MindMatters. Induction processes and the practice of sending several staff to professional development would help to offset the difficulty of staff turnover.

Effects of other change processes in schools

MindMatters operates within the broader context of the school and its implementation can be affected, positive or negatively, by other changes happening within the school community. Where the use of the materials has not yet become embedded in the curriculum, or the program has not gained a strong footing in the school culture, changes can jeopardise the continued implementation of MindMatters by creating other priorities for staff.

It can be difficult to differentiate between cause and effect when considering school change. Changes in the school may influence the implementation of MindMatters, but we have also seen that MindMatters causes a number of changes within a school. As previously suggested, an increasing focus on health and wellbeing in the school or the curriculum tends to support the integration of MindMatters. Structural changes and staff changes within a school may also impact upon implementation, or be influenced themselves by the program.

In one school, considerable growth in size had occurred during the first year of implementation and in the previous three years. While the continued growth had not lessened the school's commitment to the program, it had influenced school culture and practices. Students commented on the shortcomings of temporary school buildings and difficulties in accessing venues and facilities. Teachers noted a decrease in contact and close relationships with other staff, caused by division into sub-teams and physical separation in different staff rooms.

Teachers in three of the four schools commented that MindMatters had not been the only new initiative that had been adopted in the school over the period of the evaluation. In some cases, change had been imposed on schools from the broader education sector, while in other cases, individuals within the school had introduced the changes. In any event, the tone of the comments was consistently that staff were overloaded with change and that this reduced their capacity to fully implement any of the changes whole-heartedly.

I think in the last year or so we've had such an overload on our staff that I think there are mental health concerns for a lot of staff members at present. And I think it's reached a stage where everyone really is trying really hard and there's all these different things coming from every

direction that you often feel like you are split into about 10 things. And you will talk to the students about being caught up in things and signs of stress and coping mechanisms etc. but I know there would be a lot of staff with everything that has happened, that would feel like I can't go to work today.

1.6 Impacts on students, teachers and schools

Support for student wellbeing

In four of the schools five schools under review at this time informants from the staff or the students (or both) reported that they considered themselves to be generally more open to discussing mental health and issues of emotional support. This suggests that MindMatters had encouraged the development of a culture in which there was recognition of emotional needs and wellbeing. For example, although many teachers claim a high level of discomfort with using the 'Loss and Grief' resources, one teacher reported very positive outcomes from her classroom experience.

I have a girl in year 9... her mother died this year and we just happened to be right on that section (Loss and Grief). I asked her 'Would you like to leave the room? This is the topic now' (and she said) 'No, I want to be here'.

And it was really good because the other kids could identify with what she was going through but not at such a personal level and she knew that they all knew, and they all knew that she knew.

It was helpful for me to know all the things to do ... a parent dies in your class 'I don't know how to respond' and it (The MindMatters resource) was helpful for me as well. What to say and what not to say. I found that very beneficial right at the particular time. And I think the rest of the class did too.

It is important to acknowledge that most schools already had comprehensive structures and collaborative programs in place to support student wellbeing. Only one of the schools made specific and deliberate change to their practices and structures in this regard, and one other significantly increased its connection with the local community to provide a broader and better resource base for the school students, staff and parents to tap into. In both cases, participation in MindMatters was largely credited as having facilitated the change.

One of the five schools moved from a pastoral care structure that incorporated students from different year groups to a horizontal structure within the year group. This was designed to complement structural changes within the school, with the aim of improving the school culture and better supporting student wellbeing. In addition, in two schools, the working hours of the school's part-time counsellor were increased during the implementation period, although a number of interviewees felt that this level of support should be strengthened further.

Increased support sometimes included specific programs aimed at risk of disengagement from school or those who were socially marginalised.

In developing a defined process, staff are more aware and...there's been an improvement, in being able to identify more of these students and look more carefully at their needs and work towards meeting them...it has really been worthwhile and many students have been able to gain some sort of support, sometimes it's on a short term basis, others it's long term and it may involve people with staff but it can also involve agencies outside.

Awareness and Help Seeking

Four of the five schools reported that their participation in MindMatters had resulted in greater awareness of mental health and related issues among students, who appeared more willing to talk about a range of issues relating to social and emotional wellbeing. Students were reported to be learning a number of strategies to help them cope with stressors or to seek support when needed. In three of these schools, some members of the community felt that there had been an improvement in help-seeking behaviour and two schools reported that students were noticeably more supportive of peers who may be having personal problems.

It (MindMatters) was very proactive in getting the students to be aware of what they could do about these things and where to go for help. So the resource factor is very good. Making students aware of the resources available to them, what they could tap into. So I think that is really positive.

...there's kids here who don't necessarily believe you've got to be totally nuts to see the counsellor. Like some of those pamphlets with the MindMatters Kits, you know the Dumping Depression, and we use those with year 11 and 12 and, I think, a couple of sick kids as a result, went and saw the counsellor because they go "Oh well this is the way I'm feeling". They want to do something about that. It's like, as I've said, it might be just somebody that's not happy, whereas before they would have just tried to live with it and work it through themselves.

Attachment to School

At two of the five schools there appeared to have been an increase in students' attachment to school, reflected in measures such as fewer at-risk students disengaging from the school and reduction in suspensions and truancy.

We usually have a fleet of kids leave the school ... but this year we've got fewer kids seen to be heading off ... it might be something to do with how we're trying harder to be open to the lifestyles and the problems of these kids.

Students at these schools also spoke more positively about the school as the study period progressed. At a third school, there was also evidence of a strong attachment by students to their school. This appeared to have been high throughout the study period, but one staff member felt there had been an increased sense of belonging in later visits, engendered by changes in their pastoral program.

Opportunities for Leadership and Participation

Three of the five schools had introduced or had strengthened opportunities for students to show develop leadership skills, mainly through involvement in formal or less formal peer support programs or through participation in undertaking tasks or organising events related to student wellbeing. These were the same three sites that demonstrated a high level of attachment to

school; it is possible that this opportunity for genuine participation and leadership may have contributed to resilience and school attachment.

We have involved them (students) more in the planning of the Expo ... I've had a core team of one student from every home room working with me ... they've gone out and sourced the materials and they give me feedback ... and they come to planning meetings with the teachers and community centres.

Bullying and Harassment

Two schools reported that the inclusion of bullying and harassment issues in the curriculum had resulted in an increase in students' knowledge and awareness, but that this did not appear to be translated into appropriate responses when bullying did arise.

I think too, with some of the bullying that goes on in year 8, kids are bullied and instead of probably dealing with it in the way that the MindMatters kit suggests, the kids often retaliate and that's when we're finding out, yeah, it's a reaction rather than an action. And that's when we're find out probably after the event has occurred, so we've had quite a few fights and things like that.

Two other schools reported that there was a greater understanding of the issues among students and that help seeking and reporting of bullying had also improved. In one of these schools, incidents of bullying decreased significantly, in response to inclusion in the curriculum as well as comprehensive changes in discipline and behaviour management.

My experience would be that there has been a significant decrease in bullying and harassment ... the major thing about it is with that management team now ... having a class teacher who is responsible for a year group and having the specific management structure, kids are significantly more likely to talk to people about harassment.

In the fifth school, both students and staff reported that bullying was not very prevalent and was less of an issue than at other schools in their area. The school had a positive ethos and atmosphere with high levels of school attachment. At the beginning of the study it already had a strong bullying policy in place and was working to continually improve the situation by identifying any problem areas around the school. The incidence of bullying did not appear to change significantly over the study period.

Substance use

Four schools reported little or no change in substance use, including two sites where both staff and students reported throughout the study that drugs and alcohol were not a significant problem at their school. One of the five schools reported that harmful substance use among students had decreased, although some students continued to use drugs and alcohol. This school made extensive changes to their discipline, behaviour management and support structures over the period of the study.

The other thing is that anecdotally at least I would have to say there is a significant reduction in use of drugs and alcohol. Including smoking and marijuana use and so on. That seems to me just from talking to kids that the amount of binge drinking and that sort of stuff that used to occur has significantly lessened.

Knowledge and awareness of staff

At four of the five schools, staff reported that implementing the program in their school and/or attending the professional development had increased their knowledge of mental health and illness and their awareness of risk factors for mental health problems. At these four schools, staff were reported to be more sensitive to a range of emotional and mental health issues affecting young people. They were also more aware of possible links between student behaviour and mental health, being more likely to ask the student about a change in behaviour or to consider mental health issues as contributors to difficult behaviour.

I learnt a lot about mental health from it (MindMatters). I didn't realise I was so ignorant in terms of how common it (mental illness) is and how it's in certain categories.

I suppose in a way, people are becoming more skilled at sort of recognising that kids are under stress and being able to guide them a little bit more and show a little empathy.

Impact on teaching practices

In each of the schools, staff who had been trained or were implementing MindMatters indicated that the material had effected some change in their thinking, teaching, or understanding of mental health issues. Staff across a range of schools commented that they had a significant increase in their knowledge and awareness of mental health issues as a result of the flow of information, PD and implementation of MindMatters related materials into their school during the course of this study. A staff member reported that they learned how to better interact with students experiencing grief and loss during the teaching of that unit to his students. Several staff indicated that new knowledge was spilling over into their own personal lives as they adopted a new language reflecting a new awareness gained from teaching MindMatters. Another stated that the MindMatters PD had challenged her to consider her own mental health and sense self and the impact of that knowledge on her teaching:

Who am I as a person? And so what does that mean to me out there with the kids, with other people?1

Another staff member stated:

(MindMatters) has achieved a little bit of status as an important aspect of school life, and some of the day you look at it as a vibe rather than a particular activity. I'm a little bit more aware that the way that you talk to kids might have some sort of dramatic impact upon their happiness ... it's a real vibe that not only goes into those particular activities, but into the way we look after each other. That's a lot to do with those in-services we had.

Students at one school noted that staff had “opened their eyes’ and were engaging with real issues such as harassment, bullying and drug use that had according to students been apparently unnoticed before the MindMatters program had been adopted. This particular school was the one that implemented significant change in line with the health promoting school model in the areas of school ethos, curriculum and partnerships. It was also in this school that a significant number (roughly one third) of the staff attended the initial MindMatters training.

In four of the five schools staff reported that there was a greater awareness among both staff and students in regard to mental health issues and that over the course of the study it had become increasingly acceptable to talk about these topics. Some staff indicated that they were much more likely to refer students for counselling and some staff indicated that, as core leaders of the implementation they had a significant level of contact with staff while discussing sensitive issues and with that an increase in staff collegiality.

A program like this gives us an opportunity of learning more about the area as teachers, and also reviewing and evaluating the things that we do do, and we presume we are contributing to someone’s mental health.

I think it gives you a lot of heart to think that it’s a coordinated approach and it’s something that we’re not just dealing with it at one point. It’s consistent and it’s clear and its coherent and I think you feel sort of perhaps rewarded because you think oh well I’m part of this team and we’re all in it together and that’s the way it should be.

At three of the five schools, certain staff reported that implementing the program in their school and/or attending the professional development had inspired them to reflect on their teaching practices and the way they related to students. Some modified their classroom practice to become less content-focussed and more student-centred, and reported that they were more flexible in their teaching style.

I’m a (subject) teacher, my main area – so it’s more content driven, so it doesn’t really give you the opportunity to open up and give you a bit of I find with health teaching it’s really good in that, and the strategies that MindMatters uses a lot of sharing and stuff and I think it’s a very valuable tool growing up, it’s very easy for kids to learn to share stuff.

Sense of worth or satisfaction

In four of the five schools, staff suggested that at least some teachers derived a greater sense of worth or satisfaction from their role, as a result of participating in MindMatters. Personal benefits reported by teachers included: the satisfaction of successful planning and implementation, the pleasure of teaching something that the students were engaged with, renewed appreciation of the value of supporting students’ wellbeing, greater confidence in supporting wellbeing, a feeling of being better supported as a teacher by the school and closer relationships with students.

I know for the last week, for instance, the amount of support I’ve had has been absolutely superb by everyone and that’s top down all the way through which has been really fantastic and so yes we seem to be doing it (supporting each other) and I think we’ve got to start changing perceptions.

Shared understanding and language within a school

Three of the five schools reported that the implementation of MindMatters had resulted in the adoption of language which helped members of the school community to talk more productively about wellbeing. MindMatters appeared to create a shared understanding among those staff and students who had been involved, paving the way for people to openly discuss mental health issues and for this to become a priority within the culture of the school.

(MindMatters has provided a) shared language among the staff and within the school so that we're using the same sort of language or making the same sort of observations about students. And that's important

He said 'I'm worried about (student name). I think they might be suffering from depression'. I think 'Wow- these fellows are actually using that word and noticing these kids'. So I think that has been a real bonus (of the MindMatters initiative at Oxford.)

Enabling Change

In two schools, the adoption of MindMatters appeared to have contributed to a willingness to engage with other change processes broadly related to health and wellbeing. MindMatters contributed to a culture of innovation where people were open to school change, partnerships and other programs. Schools were able to be more pro-active in selecting and planning for school change to improve wellbeing.

So I guess you were affirming that the structures and the pastoral dynamics and all of those with the school, but you do need to have opportunities through something like MindMatters to think again and to re-articulate and to identify the things that you've got that are working but also to get the strength or to sort of see the possibility of let's try something else. And the staff are far more open to projects like that. Whereas if I think back to about two or three years ago, there had been maybe one or two programmes and they were seen as special kids that had problems rather than that you'd generally offer to within the population because across the population.

1.7 Key learnings from the case study

Positive School Ethos

A positive school ethos, with a pre-existing commitment to pastoral care and student wellbeing, can facilitate the uptake and implementation of MindMatters. In turn, the MindMatters program and principles have the potential to enhance existing pastoral programs and to build greater school commitment to mental health and wellbeing. Schools which have a culture of innovation, with positive staff relationships and good communication, may also find it easier to implement this program.

MindMatters Professional Development

Implementation is enhanced when a significant number of school representatives –both executive and teaching staff – attend the professional development. This builds greater understanding of and commitment to student wellbeing within a whole-school context. It creates a critical mass of individuals who will champion change within the school and can build the school's capacity to adopt other health-building strategies. This also safeguards against a loss of expertise or commitment due to staff mobility.

Other Professional Development

Provision of a whole-school in-service, and incorporation of MindMatters principles into staff induction programs, may help to sustain broad school commitment to student wellbeing. The professional development needs of those who have already started using the material may also be different from those who are completely new to the resource and program. The training needs of individuals will vary and some may wish to pursue additional professional development in areas relevant to student wellbeing.

Leadership and Accountability

Inspiring and effective leadership is important to ensure positive school change when implementing MindMatters. Leadership can be provided by an individual, or preferably a group, ideally with participation or support from the school executive. Implementation is more effective where there is a formal mechanism for review, based on feedback from teachers and students. This fosters a sense of accountability to the leadership team and/or school executive and supports them in making decisions about school change.

Planning and Consultation

While leadership and executive support are important, a purely top-down approach to planning and adoption may not be effective. This is particularly the case in schools with a history of many imposed changes and staff resistance. A more consultative approach may be helpful and industrial issues about workload and responsibilities should be addressed early. It is also helpful in the early phase of adoption to discuss with staff the underlying principles of the program and the anticipated benefits for the school and students.

Resource Allocation

Implementation may be easier and more effective in schools which are prepared and able to allocate specific resources to the adoption of this program. It is particularly helpful in the early stages to provide release time for staff, to support planning and consultation and to establish a leadership group and mechanisms for accountability. Other resource commitments may include providing release or funding to support professional development, or purchasing additional curriculum material or other resources.

MindMatters as a Wellbeing Framework

MindMatters has natural links with other wellbeing programs and can also stimulate stronger partnerships with external agencies. In some schools, MindMatters becomes an overarching framework for other activities related to student wellbeing. The MindMatters program and professional development can also provide the school community with a common understanding and language related to the mental health of students. This can facilitate greater awareness and discussion of relevant issues among students and staff.

MindMatters in the Curriculum

Schools adopt a variety of approaches, including the use of MindMatters material in health and personal development, in pastoral care sessions, or across multiple learning areas. Team-based curriculum planning may assist in more comprehensive adoption. The provision of support and information for those who will use the material in the classroom is critical. Teachers benefit from an appreciation of each activity within its broader resource context and an understanding of the program rationale and the whole-school approach.

Effects on Teachers and Students

Participation in the MindMatters program and professional development can stimulate staff to critique their own school culture, their pedagogical practices and the way they relate to young people. The effects for students vary, but include a greater willingness to discuss mental health issues and some anecdotal reports of increased help-seeking behaviour. Some schools suggest improvements in rates of substance use, bullying or other troubling behaviour among students, but other schools do not report change in these areas.