



Evaluation of MindMatters at

Clifford High School

(Fictional Name)

Report on a study from 2002 to 2003

This school was one of fifteen schools that agreed to participate in a case study as part of the evaluation of MindMatters across Australia.

The evaluation was conducted for the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health

Principal Evaluator: Trevor Hazell

Evaluation and Education Consultant: Deborah O'Neill

Contact:

Address: PO Box 833, Newcastle, NSW, 2300

Phone: 02 4924 6721

Web: www.himh.org.au

Summary

Clifford High School is a government school located in an outer suburb of a large regional city. The student enrolment is around 500 and the geographic area from which the school draws students is slowly declining in school-age children. Between 15% and 20% of students are Indigenous.

Clifford High first became aware of MindMatters through the attendance at the MindMatters professional development training of the part-time school counsellor. It appears the MindMatters may have been an attractive program for this school because the school, being aware of the high level of need of the students, many of whom experienced disadvantage due to a wide range of socio-economic indicators.

The school accepted an invitation to participate in the evaluation prior to commencing any concrete planning for MindMatters. The main feature in 2002 of the school's plans to adopt MindMatters was a revitalisation of a pastoral care program which, for various reasons, had become no more than a free period (and valued as such by students and staff). Responsibility for leading the implementation of MindMatters was allocated by the principal to a senior teacher (who had not attended MindMatters training).

MindMatters curriculum resources were mapped into the pastoral care period, and responsibility for implementing the plan across different years was allocated (but not fully negotiated) with various faculties. The plan was partially implemented in 2002 but, when the leading teacher left the school to pursue promotion at the end of 2002, the impetus for the adoption of MindMatters waned, and little of the formal plan was actually implemented. The fact that the principal also left at the end of 2002 may have contributed to this effect.

Despite the cessation of any formal adoption of MindMatters, certain teachers reported that they continued to use elements of MindMatters in their teaching throughout 2003 and it is possible that this type of informal use may continue.

I think that having gone into a number of classes where it was being implemented and some of the feedback from students who would come and see us, their impression is that it is not being done. Some teachers have taken it on board and they are doing it quite well, others haven't and they don't do it at all.

Some teachers have tried but they didn't have enough of the background information to implement it well. I guess that would be the case for any program that is picked up, when ever anything is implemented into high school. You always get a fifty/fifty split of those who do it and those that don't. Change puts people out of their comfort zone and that is a big issue at this school. There are teachers here who have been put out of their comfort zone.

There is ambivalence around the change process and the implementation of MindMatters. It was top down but there is an acknowledgment that if it hadn't happened this way then nothing would have happened.

Table of Contents

(If viewing on screen, click on the heading to go straight to the section you want.)

- [1. This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study](#)
- [2. How the evaluation was undertaken at this school](#)
- [3. Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?](#)
- [4. What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?](#)
- [5. What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?](#)
- [6. What issues did this school face during the implementation?](#)
- [7. What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?](#)
- [8. Key learnings from this school](#)

1 This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study

Overview

Clifford High School is a school of around 500 students from years 8 to 12. It is located in an outer suburb of a large regional city. It competes for enrolments with two surrounding schools which are expanding. The geographic area from which the school draws students is slowly declining in school-age children. Between 15% and 20% of students are Indigenous.

Administration

The school administration team comprises a principal and two assistant principals (APs). One of the APs is responsible for the management of administration, timetabling and curriculum. The second AP is responsible for discipline and pastoral care and welfare issues.

In each year there is a year coordinator.

Timetable

The school operates on a 10-day cycle with four 70-minute periods per day.

Annual turnover

In the context of declining school enrolment, the issue of maintaining student numbers at the school is an important one at Clifford High. The school has developed a number of strategies to ensure that students whose attendance is poor or who are at risk of dropping out altogether remain connected to the school.

Nevertheless the school faces a considerable level of student turnover each year.

There is a huge student turnover; a lot of the parents relocate, so you have people moving in and people moving out. There is also the army and they can move around. There are also pensioners that move from town to town. Staff 2001

Teacher turnover was reported to be quite low at the first visit although some staff changes did occur during the study period.

Pastoral care arrangements

Students are organised into home rooms and teachers are allocated as home room teachers. These arrangements were largely for the purpose of roll call and administration and no clear additional pastoral care role was articulated for the home room teachers. If home room teachers become aware of any welfare-related issues or behavioural problems with their students they refer these matters to the year coordinators.

Over recent years the school has tried a number of ways of providing for the pastoral care of students in the curriculum.

Behaviour management arrangements

Clifford High School has adopted a tiered (three-level) approach to behaviour management with classroom teachers dealing with isolated or low-level breaches of discipline and either heads of department or year coordinators dealing with more disruptive behaviours (Level 3).

There was a perception by some informants that the discipline process was not applied consistently.

I think that they are aware that there are some school inconsistencies with the way in which things are dealt with and I think that some of our less-than-desirable kids are well aware of those inconsistencies and play up to them. Then the other kids will say they got away with that and I didn't. Staff 2001

Some teachers believed that the department's policies and the pressure on the school to maintain enrolments has impacted on the efficacy of the school's management of disruptive behaviour.

There are times when I question how many times a student is able to get to Level 3 and still be able to stay at school, the government has outlined the number of suspensions for students under fifteen, so the school finds itself in a very difficult situation in so much that they have to have so much documentation before they can get to the next level and it has to be documentation that is very specific and meticulous. Staff 2002

Welfare support structures

The school employs a Guidance Officer at the school for three and a half days per week. Her role appears to be mainly related to career guidance but also encompasses pastoral care including matters such as student mental health, emotional wellbeing, home and school issues that impact on learning outcomes.

The school shares the services of a school health nurse with another school. The role of this position includes a focus on sexual health and drug and alcohol issues. Additional support staff include the School-based Police Officer and the Aboriginal and Islander Community Education Officer.

The school had, for two years, used the Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP) but stopped due to the costs associated with this program (purchase of books for students). To some extent, MindMatters was seen as a program that could replace RAP.

The school provides a very proactive vocational education program for students in higher years. This program is seen as a particularly important option for the Indigenous students.

We provide a lot of opportunities for kids within the school, we have programs that kids can't access elsewhere, there is a huge vocational program, we have students leave the school with their senior certificate, with a certificate of attainment in recreation practices, furnishings, hospitality and the kids go to TAFE and they can start second year at TAFE. We now have 50-60 kids who attend work through a school-based apprenticeship on a weekly basis, these people generally have a job when they finish school. Staff 2001

The school has established a support team to assist students with difficult-to-manage behaviours. The support involves assessment and referral for welfare, psychological and additional education support.

There is a peer leadership program in place which is directed mainly at assisting younger students in their entry into high school.

In year 11 we have a program called PAL friends where we help the new students coming in to help them into the high school life, help them to settle in and get to know people and be friendly. It seems to work pretty well. I think that helps the senior school interact with the junior school, it means that a lot of us know one another. Student 2001

Links to the community

The school has a number of collaborative programs in place with community agencies, particularly with the youth sector.

In the youth sector we have the outreach program - which is run by an external social worker who comes into the school from an external youth project and they only deal with kids who are running away from home or wanting to leave home and they look at placement. Staff, 2001

We have so many supports that sometimes we trip over ourselves. We are only 500 but we have a lot of people that are in need of that support, probably as many other schools. There is myself, the health nurse, the school based police officer, the Aboriginal / Islander Community education officer and the youth worker. Staff 2001

Student views of the school

Generally, students interviewed were quite positive about attending Clifford High while acknowledging that there were certain disadvantages in attending this school compared to certain others. Mainly these related to resources and the physical limitations that arise from the age of the school buildings and other facilities.

One staff member observed that the students were very reserved in showing outward pride in their school.

However, after just having had an inter-school swimming carnival there appears to be zero school spirit within the public school system. They love being here, but school spirit is lacking. Staff 2001

Staff views of the school

Generally the staff who were interviewed held positive views of the school and of their careers as teachers. The school is small enough for teachers to know each other.

We have a combined staff room which I think is good because you get to talk with staff that aren't in your area of teaching. Staff 2001

Community views of the school

The school has established very cooperative links with the business sector in the local town as a consequence of its pro-active vocational education approach.

This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study

In terms of the vocational stuff where we are getting a number of the local businesses involved, I think that the vocational awards that we have won, the science awards, I think that out there Clifford would have a fairly good reputation. Staff 2001

Nevertheless, several informants indicated that overall, the general community held largely negative (but poorly informed) views of the school.

I go to church in the city and it is primarily white middle class people and when you talk about (the school) they are pleasantly surprised when you tell them what it is actually like. There is a lot to do with racism, it is a low socio-economic area and people think that nothing much comes out of that area. Staff 2001

2 How the evaluation was undertaken at this school

Three school visits were made in October 2001, November 2002 and December 2003. At these visits, the school arranged for various members of the school community to be interviewed, and these conversations were audio taped for later analysis. The following interviews took place:

Interviewees	Number interviewed		
	1 st visit	2 nd visit	3 rd visit
Principal		1	
Deputy or Assistant Principal	1		1
Senior teacher	1	2	2
Teacher or assistant teacher	3	4	4
Student	16	16	
Counsellor, social worker etc	1	2	1
Parent	2	2	
Community member	1		
Other	-		

Over the two years of the evaluation, two telephone interviews were conducted with the assistant principal and these were also taped for later analysis.

Student questionnaires were administered in November of 2001, 2002 and 2003.

An attempt was made to collect parent consent forms for students to complete MindMatters surveys in this school but participation was so low it was decided that it would not be useful to implement the student questionnaires.

Clifford High School did not participate in the extension of the evaluation for a further year in 2004/2005.

3 Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

3.1 Community context

Clifford High draws its student population from a mixed socio-demographic population. A large proportion are from families whose homes are owned by the state housing authority, while a minority come from a relatively new estate of privately owned houses. This mix was well described by one staff member at the first visit in 2001.

On one side there is housing commission and on the other there is this tiny area which is the nice suburb of (name withheld), and that is where our white middle class families come from. Some great kids come from that area. Our clientele is quite varied and it is higher than most other schools in terms of indigenous population. There are very few kids in this school who are from a non-English speaking background, however, for a lot of indigenous students, English is their second language since a lot of them would speak Creole or pigeon at home.

Staff 2001

The social consequences of low-socio-economic characteristics of the surrounding area were nominated by a number of sources as a reason why the school needed to adopt a program like MindMatters.

We see kids that come from situations of economic hardship, that makes it very stressful for them and I am not sure if they have very good mechanisms to deal with that. There are groups of kids that are very angry; they explode; abuse of a physical nature. I think that parents are struggling, we have parents come to parent-teacher evening and they are saying that they don't know what to do, that they have had it and are asking the teachers what would you do? Staff 2001

The kids that we have at school certainly require this knowledge (from MindMatters). We don't have a lot of white middle class high socio-economic families. The clientele of this school have poor role models, so if we can educate these kids about some of the life skills that they need then that's what we need to do. Staff 2001

A further factor in relation to Indigenous students is that many of these are from out of town, attending Clifford High because it is the nearest available place of learning where there are relatives who can house and support the students.

A lot of our kids are living in families that are not necessarily 'Mum and Dad', particularly Indigenous kids since they come from (other places) where the parents don't feel that their educational needs are being met so they send them to (this town), so these kids might be living with their Aunty or Grandmother. The extended family works well within the indigenous community, but not living with mum and dad does have repercussions. Staff 2001

3.2 Student wellbeing issues

Mental health problems

At the first visit, those informants who were members of the support team indicated that mental health issues were often the underlying cause of difficult student behaviours:

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

There are kids in our school who have really obvious concerns with their mental health and there just isn't any way to address them at this time - we can suspend them and we can expel them, at no point really is their mental health addressed. There seems to be a growing number of these kids. Staff 2001

Apart from these students with more obvious mental health problems, staff acknowledged the more common mental health concerns of students and that MindMatters could potentially help the school to assist these students.

Then we have our normal kids who have the stress of day-to-day living, peer pressure and trying to study and work, even those kids that we would describe as 'normal' have lots of stress and pressure. One of the kids that has just graduated who was achieving highs throughout most of her schooling just couldn't cope, she couldn't put it all together and these are mental health issues. So when I discovered MindMatters, I thought that so many of our kids could benefit from this, the whole lot. Staff 2001

...and...

Self-esteem is a huge part of why the kids smoke. The reason for it is peer pressure and low self-esteem. If I have no friends and nobody likes me then my self-esteem takes an absolute battering. So to be accepted by my peers helps my self-esteem, and if I want to be accepted by my peers then I need to join in with what they are doing. Staff 2001

The particular mental health needs of the Indigenous students were mentioned by a number of staff at the first visit.

Bullying and harassment

This issue was commonly identified by staff as one of the most important reasons for this school looking positively at adopting the MindMatters program.

I mean bullying is an issue. We have got kids that come from very violent families. We have got kids whose parents tell them if he hits you hit him back; we have got kids whose parents are abusive and threatening. Staff 2001

The students on the other hand were ambivalent in 2001 as to just how big a problem it was in the school, with one student claiming:

I have never seen bullying, I hear about it and see the occasional fight, but that's it. I have heard some verbal things; I suppose it comes from different groups. Student 2001

Other students however were able to describe bullying incidents and felt that the school's approach to dealing with it was not always very effective.

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

Unless a student deals with harassment or bullying themselves then nothing seems to get done about, it gets filed away somewhere.

Last year my friend and I were being harassed so we confronted the person, and a whole group of bad people started fighting with us. So once there was an incident the teachers became involved and it stopped. Students 2001

The school had taken steps to deal with the issue of bullying before the adoption of MindMatters. It is assumed then that the appeal of MindMatters was largely in that it would add a curriculum approach to what the school was already doing with its existing policies and procedures about bullying.

We are developing structured policies around bullying. We have got a commitment to making sure that bullying is dealt with. We make it very overt to the whole school that we will not tolerate it and that we want every instance of it reported and we tell that to the parents, and we try and make the processes as open as possible in a bullying situation so that people actually know that it is happening. Staff 2001

At the beginning of the year we did this big thing with year 8 on bullying and sexual harassment and throughout the year the kids were so well aware of the language that was involved, and what was and wasn't bullying, there was some over reporting of it but we were more aware of what was going on. Staff 2001

Drugs and alcohol

Staff and students agree that tobacco use is common among the student population and that there is a level of smoking at school.

Smoking is something that happens in the school on a day-to-day basis. Staff 2001

The level of alcohol consumption was not seen as particularly more or less common than what is normal in this particular community. Nevertheless, a moderate to high level of alcohol consumption might be common in some student groups.

I don't believe that drugs and alcohol is a bigger issue here than at other schools. It certainly is an issue anywhere there are 15-17 year-olds. The kids regularly use alcohol at parties and on the weekend, alcohol is readily available and used quite heavily by a fair majority of the school population and quite acceptably used. Staff 2001

Use of other drugs was also mentioned at the first interview in 2001.

There is also glue sniffing. These kids are quite happy to talk about it, they don't care if you hear them, some of them see it as a real brag. Perhaps some of the kids see marijuana as taking them away from their stressors and pressures. I don't see the high level kids as being constant users, they might use as an occasional or social thing, whereas for some it is using as often as they can. Staff 2001

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

There are people that bring tablets into school, not like headache tablets, but dexamphetamine, speed tablets. That's what my brother was expelled for - selling and getting these tablets. Students 2001

Peer pressure was mentioned by students as one of the main reasons why smoking and other drug use is as high as it appears to be.

I think that a lot of people only smoke to be cool, we have a few that do actually smoke outside of school and they have taken up the habit and others just follow because they think that it is cool. Students 2001

Some of the issues that students face at this school is that they have to smoke to be cool, if they don't smoke they can't join the big groups and they have to hang out with the little groups. Those who don't join the groups get picked on because they won't smoke. I can see that the cool people smoke, the people in my group don't smoke and they harass us and come over and try to start fights. Students 2001

Behavioural problems

The management of students with difficult behaviours was commonly mentioned as a reason why the school was interested in adopting the MindMatters program.

This year we have come across a large number of kids with challenging behaviours, since we are a small school and need the numbers, as a result we have accepted a large number of kids with these challenging behaviours. Staff 2001

As previously mentioned, such students are usually referred to the A Ps for discipline and support reasons. The school's approach is to assess the students and often this results in the discovery of underlying causes of the behaviour which may not previously have been known. These are not always fed back to the classroom teachers, for confidentiality reasons. It is possible that this may explain why some teachers perceive that the school is too lenient with students who cause them constant disruption.

The school is not black and white to the approaches that it adopts in dealing with certain behaviours. I think that certain teachers feel that we are far too lenient and that they would prefer to ration out the same consequences for every student, which may not apply because of the backgrounds being so different. A lot of information is confidential so that the administration can't pass it on to teachers, and teachers say that if we knew how hard that person's life is then we wouldn't treat them the same but because they don't have the information.

It is a catch 22 in a sense that you can't pass on this type of information. Staff 2002

Truancy, attendance

Mental health issues were mentioned as one of the contributing causes to the school's apparent problems of school non-attendance.

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

The other thing that I have noticed is that the kids that are often late for school or absent there is almost like a depression or a fear of failure so they tend to stay away or don't try at all. Some of the indigenous kids who could achieve very well are staying away from school and I don't know if that is fear, or shame, depression, cultural or economic. By 'shame' I mean a cultural concept of standing out in front of everyone. Staff 2001

Perceived need for life skills

A small number of staff articulated the perception that an all-round education necessitated that the school make some attempt to help the students learn skills for living.

The kid that pops out at the end of the day has to be a whole person and without a lot of this life skills stuff, which I believe MindMatters fits into, you do not process a whole person. You might have an intelligent person, you might have a kid with a vocational traineeship, but without life skills they are not a complete person. Staff 2001

Perceived need to improve pastoral care

Prior to the adoption of MindMatters the school had attempted a number of ways in which such learning could be incorporated into the school curriculum by designating a 'pastoral' period for this type of learning, however without much success.

Initially this was catered for in a subject called 'Human Relations Education'. Later this period was re-cast as a 'Personal Development Period' and, immediately prior to the evaluation period commencing, a 15 minute pastoral care period (known as 'CARE' period) was introduced.

Last year they had pastoral care in form class and the teachers of those classes were supposed to work through certain issues in that 15 minutes each morning. Ninety percent of the kids were late. It wasn't a time that was conducive to doing care issues, especially when people were rushing and since it wasn't assessable it went. There was stuff on role models and the teachers were provided with handout sheets but it was too difficult to do at that time. Staff 2001

The material that was set to be covered in the PDP period and then, later, in the CARE period was not assessable and it appears that both students and teachers had come to expect that it was 'free time'. It was hoped that using MindMatters would fill the gap that had developed in this area.

Many students were late, teachers were rushed and it wasn't working well. Staff 2001

There was a perception at the first visit that the school needed to give the teachers who were teaching the 'pastoral' period a more concrete outline of subject matter and teaching strategies that had previously been the case.

They (the staff) have been looking for something to try to deal with these issues and develop a better relationship with the students. I think that MindMatters will assist this relationship. The staff believe that there is a need

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

to start changing and developing better practices and I think that MindMatters will just be one of the tools that they utilise to do this. Staff 2001

3.3 Impact of student wellbeing on academic outcomes

The school had for some time expressed a commitment to student outcomes for all students. One staff member identified that the school needed to address student wellbeing issues as a necessary step in achieving this outcome.

We talk in this school about personal best for all kids and then we start looking at some of the students that come into our school and where they are coming from in terms of their backgrounds and we need to find a way that we can engage with these kids around where they have come from and where they are going to. If we are talking about personal pathways for kids and best outcomes, we are not just talking in an academic sense, because if you don't have the rest of the stuff in place the academic falls apart. Staff 2001

3.4 Organisational concerns

Staff mental health

The fact that MindMatters resources included consideration of the mental health of staff was seen as an important aspect of the program. One of the main promoters of the program saw this as a point that would enhance its acceptability to staff.

So could our staff (benefit from MindMatters). Staff are suppose to be able to cope but we don't. Staff 2001

In addition, it was thought that if staff mental health could be improved then this would enhance the teachers' capacity to help students.

It also deals with teachers' own stress and mental health, which I think, is hardly ever dealt with. I think the sooner that we understand and realise that these issues affect us and we are susceptible to them - teaching is a very stressful job. I think that teachers have this thing about recognising their own mental health issues and the stigma that can be attached to their own stress. There are teachers that get depressed and stressed throughout the year and they don't admit because they see it as a failing, I think that once we address these issues then the teachers will be more effective in dealing with issues that students might bring to them. The amount of kids I see who look down and depressed is very common. Staff 2001

3.5 Characteristics of MindMatters itself

The principal and deputy principal and the two part-time staff who attended a two-day professional development workshop were very impressed with MindMatters as a set of resources, and these in themselves provided a motivation for adopting the program. The following comments provide some of the aspects of MindMatters that were seen to be appealing.

(a) Capacity for embedding in the curriculum

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

What I can gather from my reading around MindMatters is that rather than it being its own little curriculum, which a lot of these things are, since they are taught exclusive of the main curriculum. This means the kids think that they can wag the class because it is not assessable, whereas MindMatters seems to be embedded in the curriculum and it wouldn't require timetable space as such, it looked like a much more effective program. Staff 2001

(b) Well-prepared and well structured program

I think that anyone can put together a program. It takes a lot of time and energy. If there is a structured program that is already there that we know works and is positive in its outlook, then as a school I would rather be taking on that rather than inventing our own. Staff 2001

(c) Whole school approach

I think a program like MindMatters is important for this school, in fact for every school because we need to have a whole school approach in all the areas that MindMatters deals with. We have trialed other programs that targeted only certain year levels and found them to be semi-effective. They weren't totally effective because it wasn't a whole school approach. Staff 2001

(d) Potential for changing teacher' perspectives

I think that MindMatters is good because it actually tackles the values and viewpoints that teachers have before they start to implement the program. It makes them think about things and perhaps it creates a mind shift from the teacher's point of view so that they have more understanding of what is going on. I think that by having it in the curriculum it makes it more real for the students and it is a much more effective way of dealing with it. The issues that it deals with are issues that this school and other schools every year find it hard to put things together to actually deal with them. Staff 2001

3.6 Early expectations of problems

The person designated to coordinate the adoption process was very confident at the outset that there would be few, if any barriers to successful implementation. Unfortunately this was not the case.

4 What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

4.1 How MindMatters was identified

The principal and one of the A P's were separately introduced to MindMatters at regional or state-wide meetings and they both formed positive views of the resources.

The guidance officer and school health nurse attended a two-day workshop run by the state-based MindMatters officer.

4.2 Process of deciding to use MindMatters

Implementation did not commence immediately after these staff attended training, as some felt it was important to hold off implementation until sufficient staff had been trained so that the program would not be implemented piecemeal and out of context.

We have been safe-guarding it (the kit) because we don't want it to be pulled out of context and to be used as a single session. I would like to see it as an entire program, rather than 'we want to do something on bullying and here is a section'. I think that you have to look at what is going on with every year level and then slot it in where it best fits into the context of what is being done at that time in those subjects rather than waiting until there is a need. Staff 2001

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 to decide to go ahead and adopt the program rather than delay decision-making any further.

Some staff feel that had this invitation not been forthcoming the school would not have adopted the program.

Initially, the main promoters of MindMatters were the principal, the deputy principal, the guidance officer, the school-based nurse and the coordinator of the Personal Development – Health (PDH) curriculum area.

At the time of the first visit (conducted soon after the school accepted the invitation to participate in the evaluation), the PDH Coordinator was allocated the responsibility for planning and implementing MindMatters. It is probable that this person actually volunteered for this role as she had previously been responsible for trying to implement the CARE program.

4.3 Attendance at professional development

As previously mentioned two part-time staff members were the only people in the school to attend the formal two-day professional development run by the state-based MindMatters staff. These staff formed generally very positive views of the training they received. One of them thought that more time could have been allocated at the training to more in-depth consideration of how to actually go about implementing the program at the school level.

We looked through the booklets and I was aware of the booklets anyway because I had seen them before. It didn't really go into how you would implement the program within the school since each school is different. We did a lot on the values and judgements with certain topic areas, and to realise how

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

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, I think for myself, I think that we are all at different levels of understanding about MindMatters and I would have liked 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. Staff 2001

Although the person appointed to coordinate the implementation process had not attended MindMatters training, she felt comfortable in adopting responsible for its implementation because:

I have been teaching and managing PDP and HRE and CARE programs since I started teaching 15 years ago so I am not frightened of this stuff. Some teachers are. It doesn't worry me, and I felt quite comfortable after having read through the lead-in books and the lesson packages. Staff 2002

Also, she had been told (presumably by those who had attended the training) that 'all they do is read you through the books'.

The PDH coordinator took time during the vacation period at the end of 2001 to familiarise herself with each of the resource booklets and formulated a plan for implementation during 2002 (see below).

4.4 Formation of a core group or other planning group

Following the resumption of school in 2002, a small group consisting of the PDH coordinator, the principal, the guidance officer and the school-based nurse met to

Look at how we were going to do MindMatters. I got from them (those who had been to training) a second hand version of the training, they had a really good understanding of it and they thought it was such a worthwhile program. At this point the three of us are probably the driving force plus (name) as the deputy who does timetabling although she really lets me go ahead. We have met since then, but it was more on an organisational level to see where everyone was up to and to identify work that needed to be done. Staff 2001

This planning group did not evolve as a formal committee with designated responsibility for planning. By the middle of the first year of implementation, it was clear that it did not meet very regularly, if at all.

The core team is still there, and it meets when we need to. The school health nurse and I meet now and again when we need to. Basically the program was structured and organised in such a way that we won't need to meet again till fourth term to reflect on how it has gone so far - what worked, what didn't work, what can we put where, how do we change it and so on. Staff 2001

4.5 How school was informed or involved

The PDH coordinator liaised with heads of department about the detailed implementation plan for the program. The staff were introduced to MindMatters at a staff in-service day in early 2002.

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

There have been two staff in-services since I last spoke with you. I ran part of it because of all the other stuff that was going on, I didn't feel that the staff had a thorough understanding of the whys and wherefores. Mine was a very brief PowerPoint presentation on what MindMatters was and why we were doing it. I got statistics from Lifeline and places like that on youth suicide and depression rates and other mental illnesses. Probably I went for about 10 minutes and that was probably all that we needed. Staff 2002

Another member of staff wanted to delve deeper because we touch on the loss and grief units, but only the year 9 physical education teachers taught that. This teacher's argument was that all staff needed to be aware of it which I agreed with, they needed to be aware of what we were doing and what to look out for ... I did the second session which was a brief one, it was just for the people that needed to know, the people that were directly involved and this worked quite well. Staff 2002.

These excerpts imply a level of disagreement among the implementation team about the nature and extent of staff training required. In the end very little training appears to have been provided to the staff as a whole.

Despite the fact that the evaluator was informed of a number of staff briefings about MindMatters, a number of senior (non- executive) staff members expressed only vague awareness of the MindMatters resources.

Let me speak frankly (laughs). I know the term (MindMatters) and I know it's in the school, in a previous regime anyway. I can't identify much to do with MindMatters under this regime. In a previous regime the odd thing would come up and they'd say 'Oh we'll toss that under MindMatters'. But, apart from that, it hasn't really taken hold of my intellect and my curiosity, that sort of thing. I guess there are so many other things around and it has an attractive title and I'd imagine that there'd be a lot of things associated with that which would be useful in a school but I haven't seen a lot of it here. Staff 2003

4.6 Process of planning

At the time of the first visit in 2001, the school had not yet commenced any formal planning and had only broad ideas of what the implementation would consist of. The PDH coordinator intended to take responsibility for formulating the initial plan.

After reading the program and deciding, then I will put a plan together. It will be my job once I have decided where it fits in to sell it to the people that I am going to have to get to teach it. In the first instance it would be an executive board meeting and I would talk to the heads of department and say this is where I believe this could work. Then it would be up to me to in-service the staff as to what and why we were going to implement MindMatters. Staff 2001

Although it was acknowledged that this approach contained some risk, the coordinator was confident that she could get the school to adopt her plan.

I think the fact that I am bossy and I am the one who is going to look after it and I hate things to fail. In all honesty the fact that I am managing it means

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

that I will bully it through. Sometimes you have to, especially if you believe the idea is good enough. Staff 2001

4.7 Early plans for change

As mentioned, the coordinator developed a quite comprehensive outline of how the MindMatters curriculum resources could be incorporated into the 2002 CARE program and also, partly, in the English, Health and Fitness, SOSE and Drama curriculum areas. (See section 4 for details)

The following was reported in the middle of 2002:

We have jumped on board with the program, I came here at the start of the year after I had MindMatters with me at home over the holidays and I put together a list of what I would love to see. Usually when you do that with anything, especially when you are asking to borrow curriculum time the teachers are resistant, and what I did though was I said this is the program that I am wanting to do and here is the stuff that they have already provided which you will be able to utilise. Well everyone has just grabbed it and run with it. In first term we had it in year 8 Drama, year 8 Social Studies and year 8 English and it was embedded in the curriculum, they also did year 8 CARE. The year 9's are also doing it in their CARE lessons and in their Health and Fitness. year 10 is doing it in English as well as their CARE lessons. We started in areas that we felt were more applicable. Staff 2002

The coordinator recognised that elements of the MindMatters curriculum would require more in-service training for the teachers who would be asked to deliver it.

We have chosen to do some of the fairly simple stuff like team building, creating connections ... none of the stuff that is particularly 'hairy' is happening until everyone has received that training, so the training will happen at the beginning of next term. Again it is embedded predominantly in physical education and English, other than in year 8, the staff that teach these others are going to be tackling stress, coping, grief and mental illness stuff. I have a written plan for all of this. Staff 2002

As indicated earlier, the coordinator undertook a process of negotiation with relevant senior staff.

I negotiated it with the head of department for English, the same with Social Science, the Drama teacher tends to manage her own area so I spoke with her and I am the head of Health and Fitness so it just went in because I said.

Unfortunately, this negotiation does not seem to have been successful as subsequently several senior staff either claimed it did not occur or that it was not done in a spirit of negotiation. Rather, some of the heads of department saw it as being imposed on them and that they were given little choice.

It was left to these heads of department to ensure that the teachers who were designated to teach the planned curriculum were prepared to do so.

Basically I did it with the heads of department, I couldn't do it on an individual teacher basis, it had to come from above. Staff 2002

What did this school do to introduce MindMatters into the school?

This initial plan made no mention of use of MindMatters other than in relation to curriculum. The school did not make any formal use of the planning tools included in the 'School Matters' resource booklet. Nevertheless, in response to questions about this aspect, the coordinator indicated that there were informal plans to look at structural changes as well and indeed certain activity in this area did take place.

The School Matters audits and audits for teachers, I read through all this material and did a mental tick off of what we did and didn't have. I have done this informally. I believe that we will be looking and in fact have been looking at some of the structural issues. Staff 2002

4.8 Review processes

While it was indicated in early interviews that a review process would be put in place this never occurred largely due to the fact that several key staff (including the PDH coordinator) left the school at the end of 2002.

5 What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

5.1 Changes in policies

The 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. Staff 2002

The person who took a major role in driving the new crisis management plan indicated that the process of planning and implementation started well but, similar to the implementation of MindMatters as a whole, was affected by diminishing enthusiasm over time due to pressure of other work.

The teachers got themselves motivated to consolidate things that we already had for those situations should things happen, so they would have a process. When you start off looking at something you need and why, everyone agrees that we do, but then by the next time you meet nothing has happened, so one person ends up picking it up and doing it and this isn't the way that these things happen. It should be - 'lets work out what needs to be done and then put something on paper'. But teachers that were involved were all too busy to be actively involved in change. Staff 2002

This policy was still current by the end of the evaluation period in December 2003.

5.2 Changes in structures and processes

Throughout the period of implementation of MindMatters at Clifford High, the school was continually grappling with the issue of how to manage student behaviour more effectively. Consequently, a number of parallel initiatives were undertaken which, although not arising out of the school's adoption of MindMatters, are nonetheless focussed on student wellbeing.

Behaviour management is a big thing in the school. I think that with the teachers it is a big issue as well. We are just starting on a new course of behaviour management training for the teachers and they have got (a trainer) coming up this week to start the ball rolling. He mainly deals with the psychological side of children in relation to the differences in the way in which adults and children see things. Staff 2002

From interviews with staff in 2003, this initiative does not seem to have been effectively implemented. The training was offered out of school hours, and few teachers attended.

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

During 2002, the school developed a program to more effectively introduce new students into the school, which addressed social skills, and also set expectations of the students' behaviour in terms of school rules and standards.

The idea came from the school's experience with their 'night school' (vocational education program) which had experienced high drop-out rates.

So we ended up this year doing a very rigid system where we interviewed every single student who enrolled as if they were applying for a job, we took this on board. We devised a program where the students would be inducted as if they were starting work and they had to attend the induction, the students knew all about this. At the induction it was outlined how interpersonal skills was what they were aiming for, what they look like, what they sound like and so on. As we went on we got smarter and decided that we would have an interview and then have set days for induction so that if they really wanted to come along to that subject they would have to wait for the next induction day. It was better, we devised a social skilling regime that we utilised which was direct instruction of certain concepts, and it was very different and developed through trial and error. It was then looked at and adopted as a whole school approach. Staff 2002

Again, this initiative did not arise out of the school's implementation of MindMatters. Nevertheless, due to the nature of the planned program, the relevance of the MindMatters resources, particularly those in the 'Resilience' resource books was seen and certain aspects were included in the program. The links with MindMatters and the use of the MindMatters resources however, was not obvious or clear to teachers as this exchange indicates.

I think it was just a coincidence that some of the stuff we're saying because, no-one had this MindMatters stuff, no one had any of the information from it ...

Well, I know I've got some of the stuff in my induction folder and the games were, like, photocopied. They might have picked it up from somewhere else and like put it in here. Staff 2003

At the end of 2003, one of the new members of senior staff indicated that school had been working on new policies and procedures for managing student behaviour.

Most schools would call it behaviour management. We've gone away from that terminology. This year I've led a team across the school, representatives from each of the staffrooms at least. We've had a representative on the committee and we call it the Positive Partnerships Policy and Procedures with an emphasis on building that rapport with students, establishing strong relationships, the curriculum - so there's a three pronged approach -inter-personal relationships with students and the wider community, the parents, curriculum and what we're doing in terms of school organisation. Staff 2003

As this person had not been briefed about MindMatters and has not attended MindMatters training, no connection between this positive initiative and the school's adoption of MindMatters can be drawn.

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

5.3 Changes in school environment

At the time that the first visit was made to Clifford High School in November 2001, the issue of school facilities, buildings and grounds was mentioned by a number of staff and student informants.

The physical resources of the school and the physical surroundings are pretty poor, there is paint coming off, it is an old school. Staff 2001

At that stage the principal had applied for funding from a renewal program and in 2002 it was reported that the school had been successful. By the time of the second visit, new building and renovation of certain older buildings had commenced and this continued throughout 2003.

We got funding from the Schools Renewal Project; this is the second one. It is completed. We got the outdoor basket ball relocated and they are brand new, an up-graded home economics facilities, the performing arts was upgraded and that has made big difference, we turned our hall into a sports centre which has a stage and is enclosed, then the pride and joy was the multi-media centre which has lap-top facilities, virtual classrooms, withdrawal areas for project work and a 150 seat lecture theatre which has video conferencing and so on. It has made a great and positive difference, staff suddenly feel that they are no longer the poor cousins and even the kids, I don't open the hall until we had a whole school assembly, the first time I used the lecture theatre it was for a whole staff meeting. I made sure that everyone benefited in some way. Even its location I made sure that people driving past could see it. Everything is coming together. Staff 2002

Nevertheless, not all facilities have been upgraded and it was observed that faculty staff rooms and work areas were not updated and were very crowded.

5.4 Changes in curriculum

Changes in pastoral curriculum

As mentioned earlier, the implementation plan developed at the beginning of 2002 predominantly included changes to the CARE program. This program was at the time a designated period for teachers to deal with pastoral care issues. In reality, this purpose had been corrupted and students and teachers had come to see this time as a free period.

The 2002 arrangements for CARE saw responsibility for planning and teaching the CARE lessons allocated to individual faculties. The arts faculty had responsibility for CARE in year 8, physical education was responsible for year 9 and SOSE was responsible for year 10.

The original plan was that in year 8 CARE students would do eight CARE lessons based on the 'Resilience 1' resource booklet. Year 9 were to be given seven CARE lessons on 'Bullying and Harassment', and six lessons on 'Loss and Grief'. Year 10 were to be given seven CARE lessons on coping skills based on the 'Resilience 2' resource booklet and four lessons on 'Loss and Grief'

As the year progressed, it evolved so that there were no systems in place to ensure the CARE teachers actually implemented the program. It is apparent that in 2002 only one of the four year 8 arts teachers followed the program. The physical education teachers responsible for year 9 CARE largely implemented the bullying lessons but few of the lessons on Loss and Grief were taught. It is understood that in year 10, none of the SOSE teachers responsible for CARE actually implemented the planned program.

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

At the end of 2002, it was decided that full responsibility for the CARE program (and hence for implementing the MindMatters lessons that were part of the program) would be given to the physical education faculty. It was indicated that this would ensure that the full program of MindMatters lessons would be taught.

Everything will come to physical education next year for CARE. At the moment we have one lesson a week for PE in year 8, one in 10 and two in 9 because we look after the CARE program and the arts had two lessons and they will go back to one and social science that has had two lessons this year will go back to one, and PE will then have two in 8 through to 10 and we will look entirely after the CARE program in PE. Staff 2002

It should be noted at this point that at the end of 2002, the then PDH coordinator left the school for promotional reasons. This person was the main driver of MindMatters and, had she remained in the school, it is quite likely that the original plan for CARE (and MindMatters) would have been implemented by the PE staff.

When a member of this faculty was contacted early in 2003, it was clear that staff had only a vague idea of the original MindMatters implementation plan. At the end of 2003 it emerged that the CARE lessons were no longer referred to as such and these periods had in reality become additional PE periods.

The thing is with it we have our two PE lessons a week and we've got all of our stuff to cover as well as we're told to say well yeah this has to be part of it so we have used it to some extent but not fully going through the programs just because we don't have time to cover our stuff properly. We don't have a timetable...

So you weren't given any extra time? So CARE isn't a separate program any longer?

It was a separate program last year but the kids had one lesson of CARE a week, and then they had one lesson of PE a week. Whereas this year we have two lessons of PE a week, and then there's been no CARE - the CARE has been incorporated into other things as far as I'm aware. Staff 2003

Changes in health curriculum

As the PE faculty was given responsibility for CARE in year 9 in 2002, the PE staff (on the whole) implemented the planned program of 'Bullying' and 'Loss and Grief' in the CARE period.

Outside this area, the original plan was the PE would also incorporate elements of MindMatters into the PE curriculum for year 10. Specifically, the year 10 students were to be given eight lessons on the issue of 'stress' from the 'Resilience 2' resources.

As outlined in the previous section, CARE was absorbed into PE in 2003, and no one in the school was taking responsibility for leadership in relation to MindMatters. Despite these unplanned developments, it is clear that the PE curriculum now incorporates elements of the original implementation plan and hence elements of the MindMatters resources.

Teacher 1: So we've tried to - like, for me with the stuff I've tried to use the stuff in the unit that we've done though, so, I haven't treated as though it's extra things I've got to do, I've only just sort of incorporated bits and pieces where I can so rather than ... like "Loss and Grief" I've hardly covered anything

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

of Loss and Grief because it fitted in with some stuff but, yeah, you sort of picked out bits and pieces.

Teacher 2: And at the start of the year when we did up our overhead for the year, we had a look and we kind of tied them in with units that we were doing.. So like the bullying one fitted in with our discrimination unit and we put a bit of stuff in there, like definitions and the activities ...

*Teacher 3: And bullying and harassment yeah, and like the stress busters. The year 10's do a unit on stress so we used some of the activities from that program along with other stuff that we did ourselves, and that worked really well and the stuff at the beginning Creating Connections and Teambuilding. That was good in Term 1 to be used with the year 8's to get the class sort of bonding and doing different things together there. That worked well there.
Staff interaction 2003*

It appears that this 'accidental' adoption may be quite sustainable as these elements are taught as part of the normal PE program and not because the school is 'doing MindMatters'.

Last year we actually had to do these things ... at this (particular) time because they (the students) had the CARE class. Whereas this year, we've just sort of stuck it in where it fits in with this program. And a lot of it does but it's not an actual program within the school. And I'm not sure about how the other departments have, I think we've taken on everything just about. Staff 2003

Changes in other curriculum areas

The original plan for implementation of MindMatters included an intention that the English curriculum for year 8 would include four lessons on 'Friendship' from the 'Resilience 1' resources. The year 9 curriculum was to include eight lessons using the 'Giving Voice' resource. Year 11 English students were intended to undertake eight lessons on 'Understanding Mental Illness' and year 12 students were to do two lessons on 'Loss and Grief'.

As it turned out, these plans were never implemented, largely due to a perception by this faculty that they had not been consulted, competing priorities and a perception of inadequate skills development. For example:

*MindMatters was planned for years 11 and 12, but this didn't happen. The factors that contributed to this were that people felt that they were not trained to deal with it and the other was that there was so many things that had to be fitted into the curriculum already and that this was yet another thing.
Staff 2002*

In 2002, the Drama teacher did agree to incorporate certain ideas from the 'Defining moments' resource and this implementation seems to have been reasonably successful in 2002 (early in the year).

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

We have another teacher who is currently on maternity leave and she took year 8 SOSE and year 8 Drama and was concerned with the workload. (But) I asked her just to have a go with the first term and if it didn't work to let it go. She came back to me and thought that it was fantastic and even wanted to take another class. Staff 2002

Interviews with this teacher late in 2003 indicate that she made considerable effort to integrate the ideas into her program:

Well the resources were really good. I didn't use them carte blanche, didn't use them as they were. I took the bits from them that I felt I could use best with the kids but the concepts that were there is what we worked through on a couple of the activities I kept as well. We had a very short period of turnover with the kids six weeks or so, so I didn't feel that the program as it was written, could be used in that timeframe as well as it could be. So that's another reason why I cut down a bit as well. Staff 2003

Nevertheless, her perception was that she would only teach this material again if she was required to by the school. It had not become embedded in her usual teaching program.

This year, I didn't even know I was doing it for the first couple of weeks and yet was told 'we need to keep you doing it' and I picked it up because I'd already been doing it and so I had all the resources, but none of the resources were supplied for us this year. I was just lucky I had them I guess. This year, organisationally, it wasn't as efficient.

Had you not been prompted to do it, you wouldn't have done it?

Probably not no. I was unaware until I was told that it was continuing, that it was a continuing program. Staff 2003

As this staff member intended to leave the school at the end of 2003, it is unlikely that any aspect of MindMatters would be included in the Drama curriculum for 2004.

5.5 Changes in other supports for student mental health

A plan was developed early in 2002 to introduce a peer mediation program into the school.

A group of students will be trained from years 8 through to 11, to work next year as peer mediators so any minor things will be taken to the peer mediation group. This will be a group of kids who will discuss the issue and decide the punishment and or try to work out a solution. A teacher will also be trained so that we can continue to train each year, this is an attempt to deal with the kids' issues but more importantly to get kids to deal with the kids' issues since it does become quite time consuming when you have to deal with every issue. So, if we have a process where kids could deal with it themselves, it will also empower those kids that have been selected as well, it will give them skills that they can use in later life. Staff 2002

This program seems to have been progressed by the time of the second visit late in 2002.

What changes were made during the first two years of the evaluation?

Two staff are also being trained, each year we will run a training session for those new students that are selected. It is a whole school approach to dealing with student behaviour issues and the niggly things that go on. That is probably the most exciting thing that we are doing at the moment. Staff 2002

This informant indicated that the school picked up on this program as a direct result of its adoption of MindMatters. The school's participation in the evaluation involved the payment of a small fee to the school to compensate it for costs associated with organising visits etc. These funds were used to enable the training of teachers and students.

5.6 Awareness of reactions to changes

Staff awareness or reactions

Office staff, 2002

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.

6 What issues did this school face during the implementation?

6.1 Issues that helped

Positive professional development

Although, overall, only two (part-time) staff attended formal training of MindMatters, the positive views formed were important in persuading the school that the MindMatters resources would have value for the school. Unfortunately, these staff members were not actively involved in the planning and early implementation of the program.

Positive staff attitudes or reactions

Certain staff, (particularly those in the physical education department and one of the Drama teachers) reacted well to the curriculum ideas they were asked to implement.

The teachers providing the MindMatters teaching are all pretty happy with the book and basically what I have done is copy a big chunk and provided them with the lesson plans. The Drama teacher approached me and said I really have a curriculum set and I asked to just have a read of it and if doesn't fit it can go somewhere else, but she came back and said how great and well thought out it was, she commented that her whole term was done for her and they are great activities. They have been really positive about the things that have been provided. Staff, 2002

Unfortunately, these positive reactions were not shared across the faculties.

Participation in MindMatters evaluation

It is apparent, that the invitation to the school to participate in the evaluation was a key factor in this school's decision to implement MindMatters. As one teacher said in 2003:

There was a discussion at, you'd call it an executive meeting, and we sat down and said, 'Look this is what's happened, we've been asked whether we'd be one of the few schools in Australia to be offered this. Let's get into it. Let's support this 100%'. Staff 2003.

This comment reflects a level of misunderstanding about the invitation to participate in the evaluation. Participation in the evaluation may also have been the only reason that there was any follow up on the initial plan to adopt MindMatters as is reflected in the following comment:

At the beginning, it was more of a scolding meeting than a let's work together meeting. We've been given money for this, let's get our act together right?

One staff member who participated in early discussions pointed out that:

I don't think that it (the money) was the deciding factor at all. It was certainly a sweetener. But it wasn't a deciding factor at all. I think the kudos of being one of the chosen ones was bigger. Staff 2003

It remains an open question whether MindMatters would have been adopted at all in Clifford High had they not been invited to become a case-study school.

6.2 Issues that hindered

Inadequate level of PD about MindMatters

The person who was given principal responsibility for driving the implementation of MindMatters had not attended the training provided by the state-based officers. Those who had attended training were not involved in the planning of the implementation. Consequently, implementation is characterised by a sole emphasis on curriculum change, as this seems to have been the initial understanding of the person allocated responsibility for implementation. This impression was formed by reading the resource booklets rather than through attendance at MindMatters PD training.

It could be viewed that a 'whole school' approach was adopted in the sense that curriculum changes planned involved all faculties but not in the sense that the whole school would become involved in planning and that MindMatters may have some relevance to and a potential impact on non-curriculum areas.

Teachers and heads of department at the final visit claimed that they did not really understand the program or why the school had adopted it. Although some small efforts were made during 2002 to discuss MindMatters with the staff at staff meetings and at a pupil free day, most of the informants interviewed seemed very vague in their understanding of what the MindMatters program was about.

I vaguely remember the discussion. But follow-up, like you were talking about the programs in English, we were given social science, year 8 social science as a cultural unit, and it was given to me as a pile of handouts and I gave that to the teachers and they shoved it in where they could ... and the caravan moved on I think from there.

*And there was no ... a lot of background preparation I think needed to be done.
Staff 2003*

Another indication that the program was not well understood was that, in the original plan for implementation, the 'Understanding Mental Illness' module was to be taught in year 11 English, whereas this module was written for use in either a senior health class or a senior psychology class. The reaction of English staff was, perhaps, predictable.

*At an English meeting when we were talking about this, people felt adamantly and very strongly that they are not trained psychologists. You've got stuff here - Bipolar Mood Disorder, Schizophrenia. These are, you know, psychological terms - and they were adamant: 'I am not a trained psychologist, I am a trained English teacher. How dare you ask me to do something I'm not trained to do.'
Staff 2003*

The lack of PD also impacted on the actual implementation of MindMatters in the classroom.

Some teachers have tried but they didn't have enough of the background information to implement it well. I guess that would be the case for any program that is picked up, when ever anything is implemented into high school. You always get a 50/50 split of those who do it and those that don't. Change puts people out of their comfort zone and that is a big issue at this school. There are teachers here who have been put out of their comfort zone. Staff 2002

Lack of adequate time for planning and early implementation

The school's approach to adoption is characterised by haste. As mentioned above, the 'Whole School Audit' and other planning tools were not used. A single person who had not attended training devised the plan for adoption. There was a perception by many staff that insufficient effort was made to consult and discuss the reasons for being involved in the program and, in particular, the rationale for the decisions behind the allocation of curriculum units to various faculties.

It is possible that the school's decision to participate in the evaluation was the cause of this hasty approach. Having agreed to participate in the evaluation, key staff may have felt under pressure to get something underway quickly. Unfortunately, this early burst of implementation was not followed up by further planning or by any external professional development of key staff who were allocated responsibility for implementation.

Way in which MindMatters was introduced

As outlined above, the PDH coordinator developed a plan for introducing MindMatters curriculum resources during the Christmas vacation period in early 2002. This person informed me that heads of department had been consulted and that they had agreed to support the implementation plan. Feedback from a number of these staff indicated, however, that the process of negotiation was perceived more as an imposition from the executive level and that they had no room for input and no opportunity to refuse.

This fundamental conflict about process was acknowledged by the coordinator:

There is ambivalence around the change process and the implementation of MindMatters. It was top down but there is an acknowledgment that if it hadn't happened this way then nothing would have happened. Staff 2002

It needs to be acknowledged that this discussion about decision-making in the school had apparently been going on for some time and that it is possible that a culture of resistance to certain leadership styles had developed.

There have been a number of projects that we have undertaken this year. We had an awards night and when we went through the projects there were a lot that we hadn't done and this has to do with the fact the projects were driven by really enthusiastic staff who have moved on. They were projects that didn't require any driving from the top. They were never from the top but no one at the bottom took them on either. No one wants top-down, but they also don't want it to be bottom-up; they don't want to move themselves and they don't like to be told to move. Staff 2002

A further issue that arose was the manner in which the actual MindMatters curriculum resources were presented to staff. As previously indicated the person coordinating the implementation photocopied relevant 'lessons' and put them into the pigeonholes of the appropriate staff who, according to the plan, were going to teach them. Reflecting on this at the final visit, some staff felt that this was not an ideal way to introduce staff to the MindMatters resources as it did not give them a sense of the overall program or of the overall high quality of the resources.

If I don't appear to be shallow, I mean, a nice glossy book or something would certainly engage me a lot more than something like this. (shows photocopy) ... I mean this is what I've got. Like ... 'do this - here's your photocopies'. You know? ... 'put together something' ... You know? You know that doesn't engage me as a reader. To look you know at colour and the books that I saw in the original sort

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

of hamper looked fantastic but one copy for the co-ordinator doesn't cut it I don't think.

That's a good point. It reminds me of the 'Discovering Democracy' project. It was well presented, and staged and regular glossy stuff arrived - but not like this sort of thing. Staff 2003

Together with the earlier comment on the haste with which the program was planned, indicate that had more time and care been taken to inform staff about the program, and had perhaps more than one set of resources been made available to staff, uptake may have been more comprehensive than eventually occurred.

Staff skills and attitudes

From the outset, the coordinator identified that the curriculum plan would be optimally implemented if the staff who were to teach the lessons were those most suited in terms of attitudes and pedagogical capacity.

*I think that the crucial issue will be careful selection of the teachers. Most teachers will take on board whatever they are asked to, some are less enthusiastic than others, but they will do it. If they can see value to it then they will adopt it. In terms of whether they will be good at teaching it is another question.
Staff 2001*

During 2002 this issue arose as one of the reasons why less optimal implementation was observed, particularly in those components that were to be taught in the CARE period.

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 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 2002

This is something that we need to teach the people that write timetables that if they want this thing to work effectively then we have to timetable it with effectual teachers, not just say it's going in that area and that group of teachers will do it. It's all well and good if you have got a person like me who really loves MindMatters; but if you have got people that aren't interested then it won't do it justice. Staff 2002

These observations were reinforced by other staff members:

I think that having gone into a number of classes where it was being implemented and some of the feedback from students who would come and see us, their impression is that it is not being done. Some teachers have taken it on board and they are doing it quite well, others haven't and they don't do it at all.

Management issues

At the first visit in November 2001, there was a perception among certain staff that there was a level of disunity among the management team.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

I would say that the lack of unity in the administration in this school causes severe anguish and lack of morale for the body of the staff, both at middle management - head of department right through to the bottom. This is distressing because teachers are looking for support and leadership and they don't get it and feel it as a unified group. Staff 2001

The fact that senior staff simply refused to implement the program reflects, perhaps, that the disunity within the management team would ensure that no strong consequences would be incurred from their lack of cooperation.

Changes of staff

At the end of 2002, the then principal, the deputy principal, the PDH Coordinator and the school-based nurse all left the school, mostly for promotional reasons. For the first term of 2003, an acting principal and acting deputy principal managed the school. These positions were permanently occupied during second term of 2003.

Upon the second visit in November 2002, one of the staff who subsequently left said:

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. Staff 2002

This was, perhaps, an overly optimistic view. 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, was not aware of this until contacted by the evaluator. Consequently no visible or functional leadership for MindMatters occurred in this school for the whole of 2003. In fact, some staff was under the impression that the MindMatters 'trial' was over at the end of 2002. A staff member who was asked by the executive to attempt to coordinate activities during 2003 stated:

When I gave this out to the people at the beginning of the year, thinking, well, from last year I was told that it's already up and running, it's organised, people are aware of what's going on, three year program, everybody sort of looked at me with blind eyes, and deaf ears as to what was going on. One person said, 'Oh I thought it was only a year program, didn't think we'd do it again this year. Our program's already set now it's too late to put it in'. Staff 2003

The guidance officer was the only remaining staff member who had been trained in MindMatters and she seems to have been only marginally involved in planning and implementing the program at the outset and not at all during 2003.

Change fatigue

Staff identified a number of recent policy and curriculum initiatives which provided stiff competition for the time, interest and commitment of staff at Clifford High.

There are a number of directives from (the department). I think I could refer you to over 60 documents that came out in that three-year period that we must do and implement, ... so people were just saying 'Oh hell, another thing!' and I

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

think at that time we were looking at changing the timetable as well. And people were really upset about that so yeah there was a lot on our plate. Staff, 2002

While the impact of recent and apparently constant change was acknowledged as a barrier to successful adoption of MindMatters, one senior staff member identified the importance of MindMatters in helping to create a change of attitude towards the need for change.

I am a bit of a sceptic with some of these things too, because like all teachers we have been through a number of changes and the way in which we deal with kids changes and it tends to be politically driven and each new government tends to make a decision on how they are going to make their mark and teachers have to go through many changes and many forms of behaviour management, reality therapy. I think that teachers have become reticent to take on anything new until it has been proven by someone else, because 'why bother?' and this is something that we face ... that is part of why we are doing Ideas and the 'induction' and really trying to turn the school's culture around. Staff 2002

Crowded curriculum

Specifically, new curriculum initiatives, initiated by the departmental authority, were cited as reasons why MindMatters was not easily received by busy teachers.

And there was a lot of resistance with that, in as much as the syllabus that we had - we're working with a new syllabus - and it's got a lot of very difficult concepts, and that takes an incredible amount of time and while it's all very idealistic to say, 'Oh we can include suicide with Looking for Allibrandi and so on', when you come to the nuts and bolts of, you know, putting it all together. It's very difficult to do. Staff 2003

But I think the material is fantastic, but why didn't I take it on? I think I feel the constraints and concerns of literacy and as an English teacher, that's your primary objective. Staff 2003

(The department) shrunk the time that we were allowed to do things in and (the AP) had to change the timetable because of all this extra time that teachers had in preparation and correction - 50 minutes per teacher so she had to shrink the timetable. I think I could be effectively following up, say, you were doing it in my year 11 English class, I go to your class, check off the things that are working well. I don't have the time to do that. So I leave it up to the professional judgement of the teacher to do that and that checking would be good. Staff 2003

Compatibility with staff skills and attitudes

It was also apparent that there might have been a poor 'goodness of fit' between the teachers selected to teach the CARE program and the 'pastoral' nature of this program.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

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 Care, and 'whoever 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, 2002

I think that the crucial issue will be careful selection of the teachers. Most teachers will take on board whatever they are asked to, some are less enthusiastic than others, but they will do it. If they can see value to it then they will adopt it, in terms of whether they will be good at teaching it is another question. Staff 2001

Further, some teachers expressed reluctance to teach curriculum content outside their areas of expertise and in ways that did not suit their usual pedagogical style.

I think that some teachers are more comfortable talking about personal things with kids than some others. I think that it also depends on the size of the group that you are doing it to. It is much easier doing personal stuff with a small group than with 25 kids because they just happen to be your form class. I think that is something that has to be addressed if it is going to work properly. I think that some people would be more willing to do the class if they were trained whereas other just don't want to do it. Some people will always be uncomfortable with certain topics. A lot of people don't like talking about mental health. I also think that it can be more masculine to ignore the mental health side of things whereas it is more feminine to discuss it and work it out.

There are other teachers here that realise that there are things that need to be done and they are supportive of those that are doing it - they might be uncomfortable but they do see the benefit in it. Staff 2001

Inadequate resources

It is apparent that the school did not allocate any time to be set aside for staff to become familiar with the program, to plan and to review etc. Indeed, the PDH coordinator used her own time during the vacation period at the end of 2001 to become familiar with the MindMatters materials and to formulate her plan. The fact that such was the case was, perhaps a cause of resentment by staff. Further, lack of commitment of resources was perhaps seen as a symbol that the program was not allocated a great deal of priority by school management.

No one said 'look', you know, 'all MindMatters people put your hand up. Now, go away, we'll release you from classes, that's fine. This is important'. Staff 2003

7 What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

Overall, given the limited and discontinuous nature of the implementation of MindMatters in Clifford High, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about any impacts from the school adopting the program. What was learned derives mainly from the interviews conducted at one-year follow-up. Further, the only specific outcomes mentioned were in relation to bullying and harassment. This is understandable in that this area was the main focus of the PE teachers who did actually use the MindMatters resources. As the school did not eventually implement a 'whole-school' approach, no significant impacts on policies, structures or partnerships were identified as arising from the school's adoption of the program.

Bullying and harassment

In response to questions about the problem of bullying at the end of 2002, some staff reported that their had been certain improvements in this area.

In terms of what is going on beneath the surface, the year thus far has been really good, I believe, this year the kids have not bullied as readily. I don't believe that there has been the same number of fights, it seems to have diminished - we never had a lot. Is it cause-effect? I don't know, I would like to think so. It is certainly an effect, so those sorts of things are going on beneath the surface and what is ticking over in kid's heads is anyone's guess. Staff 2002

At this stage, other teachers indicated that their might be an impact on knowledge and awareness about bullying but that students were yet to actually implement the strategies they had learned about.

It must be sinking in to a point, there was an incident with some girls down in the Guidance Officer's room and she came to me and said 'It's a little bit funny' and I said why? And she said the girls, whilst bickering amongst themselves and not getting out the issue at all, one of them said if we were in (this teacher's class) she would tell us to do it like this because that is what she has been telling us about bullying and stuff. So they have picked up on a lot of things - assertiveness, but by the same token they are still taking part in the same behaviours, but it is in their head. They just haven't quite learnt the skills yet ... I am hoping that these will develop with age. Staff 2002

We know that some of the kids have done the content, but they are not using any of the strategies to help with the situations that they find themselves in; we are observing that they are not using it. Staff 2002

8 Key learnings from this school

Successful implementation can be jeopardised when too few staff have attended the professional development, or when the person responsible for driving and implementing the program has not attended. This may result in staff not have gaining an appreciation of the whole school approach, the program rationale or the recommendations for implementation.

A top-down approach to implementation may not be effective, particularly in schools where there has been a history of many imposed changes and of staff resistance. A more consultative approach to implementation may reduce staff resistance and increase the effectiveness of implementation.

Inspiring and effective leadership is important and there should be an individual or group, ideally with participation or support from the school executive, which takes ongoing responsibility for implementation of the program.

Systems to monitor the progress of implementation might ensure greater compliance with planned approaches. Feedback from teachers and students about the classroom use of the materials will improve planning and implementation.

In order to ensure ongoing commitment to the process, it is necessary to allocate time for program planning, consultation, implementation and review; this may require release time for staff to become involved in these tasks.

Staff mobility can impact upon the implementation of MindMatters in a school, particularly if key program supporters and/or those who have attended professional development leave the school.

In delivering classroom elements, it may be helpful in the early stages, to choose teachers who have an interest in relevant areas or who have some degree of comfort in discussing personal issues, such as health teachers, pastoral care teachers or religious educators. These can later provide support to other teachers.

For optimal implementation and commitment, it is important for staff to appreciate the rationale for adopting the program, the philosophy of the whole school approach and universal intervention and the possible benefits of using the program. It is not sufficient to photocopy lesson plans and impose them on teachers out of context.