



# **Evaluation of MindMatters at Highlands College**

(Fictional Name)

## **Report on a study from 2002 to 2005**

**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**

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## Summary

**Highlands College** is a low-fee paying independent school in a capital city. While the school extends across two campuses, the evaluation was restricted to just one campus, which is co-located with a primary school. The high school comprises Years 8 to 12. While the school is associated with a particular Christian denomination, enrolment is not restricted to membership of this church. There are low levels of students who are from non-English speaking or bilingual families, and no Indigenous students enrolled.

The school is structured around an equal emphasis on pastoral care and academic learning. At baseline, the school's strong pastoral care ethos was very evident and apparently very effective based on reports from all parents, students and staff who were interviewed. Pastoral Care is based around a House system, with each of the three houses having its own 'Dean' and with one of the deans being responsible for the overall pastoral care systems within the school.

The main appeal of MindMatters to the staff of Highland College was its consistency with its Christian and pastoral care ethos. Essentially MindMatters offered a set of curriculum resources that addressed issues that were very relevant within the school. These were: bullying, stress, loss and grief and mental health.

A period known as 'Personal and Values Education', or 'PAVE' (and later renamed as 'Faith and Values Education' or 'FAVE') was identified as a place in the timetable where MindMatters could be integrated. Changes in the position of the dean who was responsible for PAVE, and a subsequent review of PAVE which took over twelve months may have inhibited the early adoption of this plan, eventually, by 2004, MindMatters was being used to some extent in PAVE and then FAVE classes across all grades. Training of around ten staff in 2004 also assisted a greater level of uptake.

Distractions arising from systemic and curriculum changes in 2005 have seen some diminishing in the level of use of MindMatters curriculum. In contrast the school has significantly increased its whole-school efforts to address bullying.

*I'm still sort of playing around with it myself... I'm trying stuff with them in science or any of our classes: 'so get into groups of three', or 'get into groups of five'; and the kids will go like that. And there'd be some kids that are left out and there'd be some kids that don't know whether to go with that group or that group and neither group's actually asking them. So we're trying to remove that approach. There are some strategies that you can do. And all the kids have got to go around and they talk and they laugh and they chat. All of a sudden three minutes later, you've got a group and you say right, get into groups, this is what we're going to do today and so it's really non-threatening.*

*I think that's partly because the school's always looking for what can we do for students so we're always ahead of the formal program so you're always doing something there anyway so when a formal programme like Mind Matters comes along, you're like that will fit in just nicely here and it's already happening.*

*I know that about PD, if you send one person, they come back and it's very hard for them to make a difference. You send a group of people and it usually has a much better uptake. You think of it costing more but if you want to make a difference it's the best way to go.*



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

## Overview

Highlands College is a low-fee paying independent school in a capital city. The high school extends across two campuses with a total of approximately 2000 students and 230 staff. One of these campuses commenced operation during the evaluation period, but the evaluation is limited to the original campus only. There is also a primary school campus, so some students have been attending this school since their early primary years.

The school is affiliated with a Uniting Church. Approximately one-third of students are part of the Uniting Church community, while about two-thirds are from other religious or non-religious backgrounds. The student population is not very diverse culturally or socio-economically. Most students are from middle-income Anglo-Saxon / European backgrounds. There are few if any Indigenous students. Students are not selected on the basis of academic merit, nor is academic excellence emphasised to the detriment of skills in other areas.

*The first third will be families from the Uniting Church .... then it's a third other church and a third non-church and the siblings get status over non-siblings obviously in each of those three categories. But once that category is filled, we move on to the next one. ... We don't have scholarships, so we don't just select bright students. - Staff, 2003.*

*At parent information night we make statements about a well-balanced person, in fact, I make the statement if you want a school where your child will be pushed to achieve their highest score possible at the expense of them being able to play football or go to the drama festival or whatever, then this is not the right school for your child. ... And we're very upfront about the fact that we're a Uniting Church school and that we try to live out what that means. - Staff, 2003.*

As a non-government school, Highlands College recruits its own staff and is able to select those people who would seem to fit well into the school community. Staff are not required to be practising church members but are expected to uphold the school's Christian ethos.

*As a non-government school, we choose our staff - and we choose our staff because we get a sense that they share the same core values and they're Christian values, call them whatever label you like and we're very upfront about that and ... there's just that intuitive thing which you can't write in a job ..... Will this person fit into our community? - Staff, 2003.*

## Curriculum

There is a semi-integrated approach to the curriculum in the younger years, when students complete Integrated Studies. This combines elements of English, pastoral curriculum and Society and Environment issues.

Senior students can choose tertiary entrance or non-tertiary entrance subjects, the latter intended for those who would prefer to pursue a trade or TAFE qualification rather than studying at university level. Senior students also have access to a catering and hospitality stream, which many students choose if they intend to pursue a career in those industries or to help them secure part-time work.

For the first two visits, health issues had been partly incorporated into a pastoral subject known as PAVE: Personal and Values Education. At the third visit, this had just been separated into two

distinct learning areas: Health and Physical Education, and Faith and Values. Year 11 students also study family and early childhood issues as part of another subject. Year 10 students have a unit called People Management which covers some aspects of resilience and self-acceptance, as well as setting and achieving personal goals. It may be that these unit of work will be consolidated by the new Head of Learning Area who will be responsible for Health and Physical Education.

*In year 10 we teach a unit called People Management, which is based on ... teaching kids personal resilience, but also an awareness of self-acceptance and what that involves and the kinds of things that we teach in there are things like the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People but tailored for kids and ..... self-acceptance through physical, social and emotional health. ... And then in year 11 I teach catering and hospitality ... I also teach year 11 with early childhood studies, which we call Families of the Future ... - Staff, 2003.*

### **Annual turnover**

Respondents indicate that there is relatively little turnover of either staff or students.

*Very little [turnover], once you are in here, you tend to stay. That goes for staff as well.- Staff, 2002.*

### **Pastoral care arrangements**

The school is divided into three houses, each lead by a Dean who is responsible for both pastoral care and discipline. Teachers are also affiliated with houses. Each house includes students from all year groups, who remain in that house for the length of their stay at the school. Students and staff are encouraged – informally and through the school's physical structure and practices – to associate with peers in their own house rather than being divided solely by faculty or year group. This is designed to facilitate communication and a sense of connection.

*Yes my personal experience with [Dean] ... I think he is quite a nice guy and I just built a relationship up. I think it's good the way they have the three Houses and all that, that you have this kind of family and they have a head of the family and I think they got pretty good people. - Student, 2003.*

While the Deans have a leading role in pastoral care, the school's ethos and recruitment practices mean that the majority of teachers have a caring relationship with students and would see pastoral care as an important part of their role. Staff participate in weekly house meetings at which they can discuss how best to support students who may have special needs for any reason.

There are also home room, each of which has two teachers(ideally one male and one female) who meet with students on a regular basis, if only for administrative periods, and therefore have an opportunity to become familiar with their students' needs.

*The home room teachers ... they have a duty to look after the Pastoral Care needs of the kids and they see them every day for 20 minutes on two occasions, so there's a fair bit of ongoing contact there and they'll play a role. They're classroom teachers by and large, they're not expert psychologists or counsellors ... The Dean*

*plays a crucial role as well ... and the capability's there is to bring in outside specialists ... - Staff, 2003.*

*Had some instances of boys from year 12 - one or two would not graduate because of what was happening at home. ... There was one girl, I know, because of the care the staff gave the family and understanding to guide the girl through year 12, I strongly feel that if it wasn't for the staff, I think she would have failed. A lot of concessions were made for her, which is fair enough, she was going through a rough time. ... The staff encouraged her and her friends as well. - Staff, 2003*

Students, staff and parents reported that most young people in the school would be able to find a staff member they felt comfortable talking to, if they wished to discuss a personal problem. However, students suggested that some students would feel more comfortable talking to a counsellor or a friend, rather than talking to or seeking referral through a teacher. It was also suggested that teachers would know their students well enough to be able to identify those who might be having problems. However students might not always welcome the assistance offered or may have concerns about confidentiality when their situation is shared with other staff members.

*I think if it's affecting them academically as well, it's affecting their class and their concentration or whatever and their behaviour, then the teachers will notice something. - Student 2003.*

*I think everyone, no matter what issue they're dealing with - depending on what the issue is - but they would probably want to speak with someone, probably one of their friends or the teachers or whatever. But the teachers nagging them about it when they don't want to speak about it just yet is not the way to go about it. - Student, 2003.*

*I had 2 lung infections last year and I missed a term and a half of school, and last year I didn't want to talk about it because I'd been real sick and I think the second day I went back every single teacher had an email saying specifically why I was sick ... so I had all my class teachers and every teacher in my House bugging me about are you okay ... I would have preferred 'I was sick, I'm back - okay, catch up with this work.' So I found that a breach of privacy them knowing everything about why I wasn't here. - Student, 2003*

### **Behaviour management arrangements**

Highlands College has a system of penalties for managing difficult behaviour, as well as a system of merits to reward positive behaviour. Home room teachers and Deans have regular contact with the students in their care and their families, including a workbook that must be signed by parents, so emerging issues can be dealt with promptly. Respondents suggest that the school provides sound discipline while maintaining a caring environment and that most students display little problematic behaviour.

The penalty system is somewhat standardised, so that people in the school community have clear expectations about behaviour and consequences. A small transgression would result in a Student Behaviour Infringement. If a student accrues a number of these s/he may be given detention. A more serious issue would attract a Student Behaviour Report, which can be graded

for severity on a 1 to 5 scale. If a student collects too many points through Student Behaviour Reports, this may result in suspension or expulsion. Certain transgressions such as bullying and substance use are likely to attract more severe punishments, such as a high level Student Behaviour Report or a suspension.

*And if you do it, no one is really bad in here because you know you will get punished for it so you just don't do it. It's not worth it. - Student, 2002.*

*Student behaviour infringement - it's like if you have your shirt out or you are not prepared for class, or late for class, or any minor little thing. It's a little slip and it goes onto your record, and I think if it's 5, you get a lunchtime detention. After 9, after school and 12 is Saturday morning. And then after 13 you are not allowed on excursion, or camps or anything. And then SBR - they're Student Behaviour Reports - like they're for the really bad things, disobeying the teacher or like swearing or like throwing chairs, or really bad things. - Student, 2002.*

*You won't get an infringement for bullying, you'll get an SBR or you'll get a detention or suspension ... .. Like you have levels on the SBR, like level 2,3,4 and 5 and I think bullying's level 4. - Students, 2003.*

### **Other welfare support structures**

The school has a peer support program in which Year 11 students are provided with training and become mentors for either Year 8 students or primary school students. At the second visit the school had introduced learning support teachers who specialise in helping underachieving students and those with learning difficulties.

Highlands College does not have a school counsellor, but students are encouraged to go to teachers or their Dean with any personal problems. The Deans are chosen not necessarily on the basis of qualifications in this area, but with a view to their aptitude for such a role and their capacity to create positive relationships with students. The College also has links with a number of service providers in the community, including counsellors an mental health workers, and refers students to these as needed. The school pays the service provider directly for a designated number of sessions.

*So we've opted at [Highlands College] not to employ a school psychologist because we believe if you employ a school psychologist, then you're relying on one person to be many-faceted, perhaps beyond their capabilities. So we have a coterie of people we tap into, 10 or 15 I suppose ... these are experts from paediatricians to psychiatrists and child psychologists to counsellors and so on. We have an arrangement with them, kind of an informal arrangement, where the deans get onto the phone and can bring them into the equation - Staff 2003.*

*Well I've had friends who've had a difficult time with families and that, and the school's put them into counselling and stuff outside the school, and paid for all of that and stuff, so that's pretty good. - Student, 2004*

However students expressed concerns over confidentiality and the need to access such specialised counselling by first sharing one's situation with the school, which would then involve

the parents. Students indicated that in certain circumstances direct access to a school counsellor would be preferable.

*I don't really have anybody that fits the role. And someone who is available at all times. You might want to talk to someone and they might be in class, or they might not be at school and you have to organise a time to go and see them. But if you have a counsellor and the door was open you could go and talk to them, and leave. Much better. - Student, 2002.*

*That [the external referral system] is all well and good and sometimes you might say yes I do need help because you actually want it. In that case the parents are obviously notified but with some problems you don't want your parents involved. So therefore an in-school counsellor would probably be better. - Student, 2003.*

*I think there should be like a school counsellor. ... Yeah someone that you can talk to about anything. Not a teacher. ... Mostly we don't want to get our parents involved, we don't want them to know and we don't want the dean to know because teachers talk. You want someone who's going to keep it confidential and someone who does that job as a profession. - Students 2003.*

### **Links to the community**

School staff maintain close communication with students' parents. The school itself has links with the Church and with a number of health and welfare service providers in the community to whom it refers. There is little cultural diversity in the school community, hence little opportunity to develop links with particular cultural groups in the area.

### **Parent involvement**

The school has a system of student workbooks which must be signed by parents or guardians and by home room teachers once per week. It also maintains both formal and informal relationships with parents through newsletters and telephone calls, as well as structured parent-teacher interviews and reporting systems. Parents are specifically asked to contribute to the school through voluntary work and there is also a parents and friends organisation.

*We have like a work record. Every student has one that must be sighted and signed by parents or guardians once a week and then it must be sighted and signed by the home room teacher. Therefore teachers can write in the work record, you know, didn't do homework or a bit concerned or did a great job. ... Your formal reporting cycle, interim reports, we do parent/teacher interviews and we also do just informally .... Home room teachers will get on the phone, we keep lists of merits, we have a student merit system, we also have an infringement system. ... [There] is a fortnightly information newsletter that goes out and offers information, so we have all those things. - Staff, 2003.*

*We have a parent commitment scheme ... where the parents are asked to give 10 hours of voluntary service to the school in some regard and that encourages a lot of*

*parents to be involved with the school ... even if it's only to pick up a box of books to take home to cover, they've made contact with someone in the school. And they'll come in for sport carnivals, washing windows, working in the library, working in the classroom ... we've got parents who've done 200 hours in a year because they get involved ... - Staff, 2003.*

*P & F have guest speakers and they do presentations as well. When we run information nights in secondary school, the deans will spend some time actually talking about child adolescent issues and parenting issues. - Staff, 2003.*

### **Student views of the school**

Students generally have a positive view of the school and see it as being supportive, as well as being a place where behaviour is better managed than at other schools. Students report having felt supported when they first came to the school.

*When I first came I knew nobody but because everybody was so nice and the teachers are really good, like you made friends really quickly. - Student, 2003.*

*I didn't really know anyone but my brother knew heaps of people so I knew all of them so I just kind of became friends with them and I had like a good friend at the first orientation day - Student, 2003.*

In general, both students and teachers are reported to be friendly and approachable and there are positive student-teacher relationships. Students know each other well, including those in other year levels, partly as a result of peer support programs and the House system.

*Whereas, at our school like, it's usually like mainly with the younger teachers but you become good friends with them as well, not just treat them as a teacher. - Student, 2002.*

*The school has a real sense of community - it's like a family rather than a school. Most people get on really well with the teachers and there's very little violence... - Student, 2002.*

*Even if you're not like very good friends with someone you can still walk past them and say hello to them, and they know who you are. And you can just have, you know, a brief talk to them, whereas at say a public school, they may not even know everyone. - Student, 2002.*

Students generally spoke positively about the school's grounds, facilities and the curriculum, although one student would have preferred to attend another school in the area because it had specific curriculum offerings in which that student was interested.

*It's really good, you have really friendly teachers and really friendly students and you get along with everyone and there are really good grounds and it's very good. - Student, 2003*

*You've got the opportunity to expand your horizons because this school offers a good curriculum for your learning. - Student, 2003*

*Oh it's a reasonable school and it's probably better than [ other school ] socially but I don't think it offers the courses I would like. ... [ The other school ] has got aeronautics, photography and basically everything I wanted to do. - Student, 2003.*

Students have the opportunity to participate in decision making, through formal representation structures such as House Captains and a student council. There are also reports of students themselves establishing a delegation to approach the Dean or Principal about issues. The school seems to be consultative with students, although some suggested that this never actually brings about change.

*Student Council. Student Affairs. Even the House Captains have a meeting with the Dean to talk [about] problems ... - Student, 2002.*

Some students feel that the school is strict, while others report that it is not as strict as its reputation suggests. Certain students disliked some aspects of the uniform policy.

*I think it's a nice building, with nice teachers but the rules are pretty strict and some I disagree about. - student, 2003.*

*Well I thought it would be really, really strict but some bits of it are stricter than others. Uniform is really strict but some bits are pretty casual. - Student, 2004*

*I think the hat policy is stupid, because the only time you're outside in the sun is when you're playing sport, like football and then you can't see the ball because you've got your hat on and then you get more hurt when the ball hits you. - student, 2003.*

Certain students reported that the religious ethos of the school was encouraged too strongly, although on further discussion it seemed that this may apply only to particular staff members. Other students reported being quite comfortable with the level of religious content and culture in the school.

*Some teachers try and force it on you, like if you're not a Christian you're worse than everyone else or something like that. - Student, 2003.*

*I think it's a good school and I'm pretty lucky to be here. Talking to other people at public schools, I reckon I'm pretty blessed, like as a Christian to be surrounded with really good Christian friends and have the Christian emphasis from the teachers and the support from them as well. - Student, 2003.*

*I'm a Christian so there's no problem - like there are some teachers that do enphrase things and I think yeah people that aren't Christians are going to be put off by it and it doesn't help sometimes. There are teachers who generally care and personally it's okay for me if people aren't Christians because it's their decision, but some teachers are like if you're not a Christian they don't look down but they always enphrase that you should be and it makes you feel left out if you're not. - Student, 2003.*

*It think that even though it's like a Christian school, they don't force Christianity onto you ..... we learn about different religions so you can get a bit of an understanding on different ways that people live and stuff. Don't say oh Christian is the only way. - Student, 2004.*

Students in the senior years report that while the school and teachers are very supportive, some individuals feel stressed by the workload and an emphasis on academic success.

*Yeah it's pretty good, it's very busy in year 11 this year, it's a big step up from year 10, so there's lot of work and everything but it's good. - Student, 2004*

*Yes, there's a fair bit of stress there. I don't tend to feel too much of it but a lot of my friends do. But the school tends to be putting a lot more emphasis on us getting good grades and stuff this year more than they have in the past. Just working hard. - Student, 2004*

### **Staff views of the school**

Staff reported positive views of the school. Issues that were highlighted include the Christian ethos, the focus on pastoral care and the evidence of caring relationships between staff. In addition, staff felt that the school provides a rounded education for students and that most students are well behaved when compared with those in other schools. Staff turnover appears to be low.

*... I enjoy it. And I like being here. I wanted to work within the context of the Uniting Church and this is our only low fee school north of the river. ... and its co-ed. There are boys here, so I like that gender mix as well and I like the staff as well. It is quite good; I'm quite amazed most of the time that I like it as much as I do. - Staff, 2002.*

*The staff is just the most remarkable staff. It is not a smothering staff, but a very caring staff and of course that's become terribly clear to me in the last year and a half ... this is a special school. ... the sort of support I have received ... I am allowed to be my independent and 'bloody minded' self and still get all that care and support. - Staff, 2002.*

*I have taught in a number of schools, always in the independent system and predominantly Catholic, and this is by far and away the most Christian environment I have taught in. The pastoral care is outstanding. Academically I feel like I'm teaching for the first time in nearly 20 years. I felt that mostly in the past I was*

*managing behaviour, and if I got some good Art it was almost an accident. Often I felt that we didn't have a lot of parental support for what we were trying to do because Art is not often considered to be a very valuable subject because it doesn't often have a clear career path for a lot of the kids. I don't have that thing about [Highlands College] and I have been here about 5 years and right from the word go I felt I had support from the Principal for what we were trying to do. - Staff, 2002.*

*You always get people that try to get on the staff and the staff turnover is quite low. There are generally legitimate reasons for people to leave. So I think the indications there are whatever we are doing, we are doing it right. - staff, 2002.*

### **Parents' views of the school**

Parents hold positive views of the school and the level of pastoral care seems to be a significant factor in some parents' decisions to send their children to Highlands College. Student-teacher relationships are considered positive and issues of concern are generally handled well. Students and staff also reported that the school has a positive reputation in the community. Turnover is low and there is a waiting list to attend the school. Two parents reported that the school could be more strict when enforcing uniform rules, but felt this was a minor issue in the overall picture.

*I think at the moment the thing that stands out more to me is the pastoral care. They're so strong compared to other schools that could have been chosen in the area for the children. It goes right through from Primary School to High School right through - it's incredibly strong but not over powering pastoral care ... there is always someone to listen, to go to for help. - Parent, 2002.*

*Pastoral Care - if the school knows that there is a problem and you approach somebody it will be dealt with and they are very willing to help you and to listen to the problems that you might have. - Parent, 2002.*

*And I guess the thing that really hits me is whatever teacher that I have spoken to at the various parent-teacher interviews, they all know my child. They all know. - Parent, 2002.*

*Well, it is well known that it is difficult to get into the school. We have waiting lists ... I think it has a very good name ... - Staff, 2002.*

*I mean there are some things that I think they could probably be a bit stricter on which are minor details ... I have a teenage son who comes to school looking like he's been dragged in by a cat and you're beating your head against a brick wall, saying 'Tuck that shirt in, pull up those trousers' ... I think the school then needs to enforce those rules of the uniform - Parent, 2002.*

*We think it's a great school. My sister's children, who are older than my children, came here so we were keen to get our boys in here and it took a little while but*

This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study

*we're extremely happy with it. The overall attitude towards the development of the kids we think is fantastic - Parent, 2003*

*We heard that [Highlands College] had a reputation for the overall care of the students. And that's what we wanted. We didn't want to just turn out an academic whiz kid or some really nice caring kid without academic talents - Parent, 2003.*

## 2 How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

Three school visits were made in April 2002, July 2003 and July 2004. 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 <sup>st</sup> visit	2 <sup>nd</sup> visit	3 <sup>rd</sup> visit	4 <sup>th</sup> visit
Principal	1	1	-	1
Senior teacher	3	2	3	5
Teacher or assistant teacher	4	3	5	
Student	18	15	20	22
Counsellor, social worker etc				-
Parent	4	3	-	-
Community member				-

Student questionnaires were administered in August of 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

At baseline, the following participation rates were achieved:

Grade 8	64%
Grade 9	57%
Grade 10	70%
Grade 11	47%

Results from first round of data collection are used as points against which results, after two-years of implementation of the program, can be compared. These comparisons are summarised in Section 11 of this report.

When the evaluation was extended from two years to three, the evaluator was asked to attempt to engage teachers in a discussion about their classroom experiences of teaching any of the MindMatters lessons. This was done opportunistically by asking all interviewees whether they had taught any of the MindMatters lessons in recent weeks. If they had they were asked to briefly describe what they had taught and their opinion of the process and outcome of the lesson in question. None of the teachers who were interviewed at the fourth visit at Glastonbury had taught MindMatters lessons in recent times.

How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

### 3 Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

#### 3.1 Student well being Issues

##### Mental Health problems

Broad concern for the pastoral care and wellbeing of students was one reason for uptake of MindMatters in this school. While respondents did not report particularly high levels of mental health problems in their school, there are individual cases of students experiencing difficulties with their mental health. Examples of relevant issues included bullying, depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders, relationship breakdown, family problems and stress.

*Some people - like there's this one girl, she has a really low self-esteem and the way she hides it is by being this bright, happy person but really deep down she's actually really low and sometimes she's really depressed and she just hides it by being bright, bubbly... - Student, 2002.*

*My best friend, she had an eating disorder, she was bulimic ... she hardly ever ate, but when she did eat, she just threw it back up again. I don't know why she did it and like she's still doing it now, but now she cuts herself. And that part is really hard to handle ... her boyfriend broke up with her and now she's all depressed and so now, she never, ever eats ... I've tried to take her to like a psychologist ... and she just wouldn't talk. - Student, 2002.*

*There's another girl in our year that's also bulimic. And she's also quite depressed as well. But her Mum - she's been so depressed she was in hospital, she was going to kill herself. Her brother has been treated for depression and her father she never talks about. - Student, 2002.*

*I don't think a lot of the students talk about it - how much stress they are under. Like there are specific students who have a close relationship with their teachers and talk to them about family life and what is happening at home ... Student, 2002.*

*I have had 2 occasions where a girl in Year 12, and a student in Year 11, have walked in - one of their friends has committed suicide and they have been very upset. They have left the class and they have come back and they have cried in class. - Staff, 2002.*

*I think for me the position I hold now, is that I deal with a lot of kids with eating disorders ... [and] some parents separating - it is huge and impacts on the kids differently - how they behave in the class and their homework. I would say there would be a drug use issue as well. It has come about. - Staff, 2002.*

*Well, we see plenty of incidences of students who are coping with all sorts of grief that result from relationships within their family or lack of relationships within their family. - Staff, 2002.*

### **Bullying and harassment**

Bullying doesn't seem to have been a major factor in the adoption of MindMatters, but incidences of bullying do occur in this school. It is predominantly verbal and social rather than physical, but there is a strong focus on preventing and resolving bullying. Bullying behaviour attracts high level penalties in the form of Student Behaviour Reports. Students reported that the school is normally responsive to incidents when they are reported but that it is difficult to completely eradicate bullying. They were also aware of the impacts of bullying on students' mental health.

*OK we'll just leave them, we won't speak to them, because we don't want to get bullied or shouted at. Like this school doesn't have such a problem with like physical bullying as public schools, but there is a lot of verbal bullying. - Student, 2002.*

*Well, actually, we have a girl - in year 8 she got bullied so much and stuff she thought she was depressed ... she couldn't handle that stuff ...she cries whenever someone says hi to her or something. ... But now in year 9, because people have actually tried to help her and stuff, she's not [as] depressed as she was last year and doesn't cry a lot. ... But she's got no self-confidence at all, or no self-esteem or anything - Student, 2002.*

*In a sense it can get to you before you get parents and other people involved - like it's not little. I think you should try and figure it out for yourself. There's different levels of it and if someone was threatening you and you were scared. ... Both of my sisters have been bullied and like in a sense both my parents have been involved and it's when it gets like - when a person is actually scared or they're coming home from school - Student, 2002.*

*It's more a mental bullying that goes on rather than physical ... mental bullying can actually affect you long term ... like mental bullying can go on and you can be still reeling from the side effects years after. - Student, 2002.*

*I think that the school, as far as it can do a good job, does a good job. Because you can't totally stamp out bullying, that's impossible. And the school tries really hard to stop bullying, but as far as it goes, you need a certain cooperation from the students to actually pinpoint and say, you know, are people bullying - let's face it, that's not always going to happen. In terms of the school I think the school does as good a job as it can in terms of bullying. - Student, 2002.*

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Substance use wasn't mentioned as a specific reason for the school taking up MindMatters. However there were reports from students, staff and parents that some young people use or experiment with cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs (mainly marijuana), particularly in year 10 and above. This occurs mainly outside of school grounds and hours. However, transgressions at school or on camps – or repeated transgressions – attract strong penalties such as suspension or expulsion.

*Well I know that somebody last year in my grade they talked about smoking and because they've got older brothers and sisters that did it. They had a go at it. They don't do it anymore I don't think. Probably didn't like it or anything. But some people like have a drink once in a while but it's not a regular thing in our grade and it's not that common. - Student, 2002.*

*Well, there's a group of people in our year and there's a few times after school and stuff, they've got some older friends - I don't know how old they are - but they're like dealers of pot and stuff, and they go to their house and they smoke cigarettes and stuff as well. And then on the weekends like, some people get drunk - Student, 2002.*

*Yeah, you can have a drink or you don't even need to drink. But I don't think drugs are an issue here at all. Maybe pot. I only know about the 2 people that use other stuff but other than that it's not a big deal around here. - Student, 2002.*

*There's no one that's badly on drugs. There are some people that will go out like weekends and stuff like that. - Student, 2002.*

*My daughter said to me [last year] 'its easier for me to name kids that don't smoke dope in Year 10 than the ones that do'. - Parent, 2002.*

*Turning up intoxicated - I can remember it happening once in fifteen years. However turning up tired on a Monday morning for the more senior kids, it's not a great degree of occurrence but we know it happens and we try to work in to see what is actually happening in the kid's life. - Staff, 2002.*

*I think it is greater than we know. My knowledge of drugs is limited but it is obvious that some students are coming to school "stoned," and generally it is our lower self-esteem type students ... But I think the situation is no more or no less than any other school. - Staff, 2002.*

### **3.2 Consistency with school direction, ethos**

This is the primary reason for the school adopting MindMatters. The program was seen as being consistent with the school's strong focus on pastoral care and with existing initiatives such as the PAVE pastoral curriculum and the peer support program.

*But early in the year, or the year before, the Mind Matters kit was presented and I thought, 'oh gosh there is some good stuff in here that I think would fit well in our Peer Support Programme' - Staff, 2002.*

*The other thing I like about it is we have got to get in kids' heads that mental health is not just about people who are 'crazy.' Just like we all get physically sick, we can suffer from some sort of illness, some sort of mental illness as well. It doesn't have to be acute, it doesn't have to be life debilitating ... we get stressed, we get depressed - we have to cope with that - Staff, 2002.*

*I think given the sort of things we are on about here at [Highlands College], it fits very, very well to go into Mind Matters, which gives a bit more of the depth of really what is our mission and unpeeling the layers - Staff, 2002.*

### **3.3 Characteristics of MindMatters itself**

Some aspects of MindMatters itself may have contributed to its uptake, although the impression is that this was secondary to the previous point, about the program being consistent with the school's ethos and direction. Two staff members specifically noted the quality curriculum materials and the whole school approach as being positive aspects of MindMatters.

*I felt the advice to do the audit, before you began, the audit was very worthwhile. I think the thinking was before we actually got involved in doing the programme that we would do the audit. But things happened in a big hurry. - Staff, 2002.*

*We recognise that the curriculum is one that has been written by professionals and is one that has been tested, and I have spoken to a number of people that I know and it is very well considered. - Staff, 2002.*

*I suppose I'm a health educator, so I'm interested. Health Education / Student Affairs, it sort of dovetails together and when I went to the course I could see the value in it and I could see that some of those health understandings that we try and get across in health and which I feel are largely ineffective because they happen on the fringes of the curriculum, it was actually a chance to address them at a whole school level ... - Staff, 2004.*

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

### 4.1 Process of deciding to use MindMatters

The school's leadership team made the initial decision to implement MindMatters, based on the recommendation of one of the Deans of House who had attended the professional development program.

*The leadership team will have a say in [implementation] because the leadership team was the group which initiated the investigation of Mind Matters initially. ... It's within the interests of the whole school for us to discuss [the Dean's] final plan, where we think it is best implemented so we will talk about it as a leadership team. - Staff, 2002.*

### 4.2 Attendance at professional development

At the first visit, only a single Dean of House had attended the MindMatters training – he subsequently transferred to the school's new campus. By the second visit, two or three staff in total had been to the professional development. At the third visit, ten or twelve staff members had recently attended training and this created a wave of interest and enthusiasm for the program. Some of these staff members had subsequently transferred to the school's new campus. At the third visit, it was suggested that the school would continue to send more staff to the MindMatters professional development sessions.

*I went to the tutor training programme last year and didn't really know anything about Mind Matters before that other than we had these boxes, these orange boxes. I sort of looked at the Head of the Department and said, 'look at this'. But after the 2 days ... I left that being really positive about the program. - Staff, 2002.*

*[Name] has done Mind Matters, a refresher, or update - and [another staff member] has done that. So yeah I've been trained in MindMatters. - Staff, 2003.*

*I went to the Mind Matters with two other staff last year ... I think about 10 or 12 [staff members] went last term ... . So I sort of feel like now we have a critical mass to implement some of that stuff. ... Because I didn't feel like enough people were aware of it - Staff, 2004.*

*Some of [those who were trained] have gone to [other campus] - so we've lost a couple of those - but I sort of feel like now we've got enough to really do something about it and I think if we do some things here with staff and they see their peers saying this was a great investment of two days, we'll probably have a lot of other people putting their hands up. - Staff, 2004*

### 4.3 How school was informed or involved

At the first visit, there had been some general discussion with staff about the principles of MindMatters at a staff meeting or retreat, but it seemed many people were largely unaware of the program. Knowledge spread more broadly shortly before the third visit, when a number of people had been to training and formed a critical mass of interested staff members. They were discussing a number of implementation strategies, including how other staff could be informed.

*So I sort of feel like now we have a critical mass to implement some of that stuff. ... Because I didn't feel like enough people were aware of it ... And we actually had a meeting with all the people who have been to Mind Matters now and they were just talking about how we could present it to the rest of the staff. So they're planning on doing something every staff meeting, you know, a short segment to continue to put it in front of staff for their consideration - Staff, 2004.*

*There's certainly enough of us now that can show you the stuff and give you examples and do demonstrations and talk with you the way you can click into this without necessarily doing the course. - Staff, 2004.*

### 4.4 Formation of a core group or other planning group

Highlands College did not establish a formal core group initially. The program was driven by one of the Deans of House, until he moved to the school's new campus around the time of the second visit. At the third visit, this Dean's successor and a number of other staff had recently attended the MindMatters professional development. On their return to the school they had discussed MindMatters further and were in the process of deciding upon future directions. A planning committee and sub-committees began to emerge spontaneously from this group.

*We actually had a meeting with all the people who have been to Mind Matters now and they were just talking about how we could present it to the rest of the staff ... as well as redesigning the student workbook to look at some mental health sort of thinking in there - so a home room teacher could say to a kid, well fill in the thermometer for the next two weeks and see how you're actually going about this issue.... So we've got about five little committees [of the group that have been to training] working on a few different fronts to sort of see how we can....actually create some change - Staff, 2004.*

### 4.5 Process of planning

Early phases of implementation saw some broad planning among staff involved in the design of the pastoral curriculum. Beyond this, there was initially little formal planning regarding implementation. At the time of the third visit, a planning group had arisen spontaneously among a number of staff who had recently attended training. They were in the process of establishing sub-committees to consider various approaches to implementation.

*Well they arose it [the MindMatters committee] themselves, they just said we want to meet and talk about how we can do this ... we've got some minutes. We've only met once and we just decided rather than having lots of meetings, we'd form*

*these sub-committees and they would go ahead and then on a needs basis we'd get altogether. - Staff, 2004*

*We've actually spent some time debating what we should do next ... we sort of just workshopped it and came up with several ideas. We feel like the staff need to understand more about it as a whole staff ... The second thing is [name] and some other people are ... looking at the Mind Matters curriculum and working out where it best belongs. ... There's a third group that's looking at how we could use our student work record... It's like a diary. The kids write in their homework and get them signed every week, etc. How we could use the work record as a resource for home room teachers to not so much explicitly teach but to encourage reflection and mental health outcomes. - Staff, 2004*

#### **4.6 Early plans for change**

The earliest plans for change revolved around changes to the pastoral curriculum which was then called PAVE: Personal and Values Education (PAVE). It was also suggested that there could be some use of MindMatters materials in training Year 11 students for the peer support program. There were early plans to complete the whole-school audit, but this did not occur.

*[Name] and I have discussed it loosely and he has an idea where the different modules will fall and I am pretty certain he has gone through it and picked the areas he will start. He started 'bullying' in Year 8 last year. - Staff, 2002.*

*I think the thinking was before we actually got involved in doing the programme that we would do the audit. But things happened in a big hurry. - Staff, 2002.*

#### **4.7 Views of PD**

The PD was seen as enjoyable and of high quality, with a focus on activities and practical understanding. It was considered helpful to talk with people from other schools about what they were doing and to go through some of the curriculum material. One staff member also emphasised the value of exploring the whole school approach during the professional development.

*What I really liked about it was that we went through the various components in the box, and we spent a good chunk of time with it and there were activities for us to do because just like young people we don't want to sit there and listen to a lecture. We'd talk about the things and we'd do it around the table and then we'd do an action. And so you are always reinforced ... I was energised actually. - Staff, 2002.*

*Excellent, really excellent. What was worthwhile too, was sharing what is happening in other schools. The appreciation of really what is out there because we are a bit of an island ... But it was great talking to people who are doing different things and they have far greater mix of socio-economic than we do - and how they are dealing*

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

*with those problems. And the professionalism on the day was excellent, nice lunch, great venue - it was a first class PD - Staff, 2002.*

*I thought it was really good. ... there's so much stuff there, that all you can do is just give a few insights into it - and for me it wasn't the different packages, interesting though they were, for me it was that whole school thing ... - Staff, 2004.*

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

### 5.1 Changes in pastoral care

Highlands College already had strong pastoral care practices before adopting MindMatters and these were maintained throughout the evaluation period. Throughout the evaluation period, students continued to report that the school was supportive, although some still favoured the introduction of a designated school counsellor position within the school.

*All the different teachers have different things about them and that helps. They either help you by themselves or they go to other teachers that you feel comfortable with. - Student, 2004.*

*Like here in class, some teachers do pick up if you're upset and they talk to you about it and stuff and if you don't want to talk about it they just leave it but they keep checking up on you. - Student, 2004.*

At the time of the third visit, one staff member reported that the school was considering reviewing the role of Deans of House over the coming eighteen months.

*[We] still have deans and that may change in the next 18 months. It probably wouldn't change before then but we have started talking about ways that ... our structure can better cater for changes that we see happening. ... The Deans here do a lot of the counselling, the deans are also in charge of discipline, Michael Carr-Gregg had something to say about that. We may change our structure - Staff, 2004.*

### 5.2 Changes in policies

The school already had clear policies to support its pastoral care ethos and there is no evidence of systematic changes in school policy as a result of taking up MindMatters. In a follow up telephone call between the second and third visits, one staff member did suggest a need to review the school's bullying policy, but it is not clear whether this occurred.

### 5.3 Changes in structures, processes or timetables

At the third visit, one staff member reported that the school was considering structural and curriculum changes for younger students, partly to support transition. This may not be a direct product of MindMatters but the idea is consistent with the whole school approach.

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

*Next year we're actually going to have a transition year 8, where they'll actually be all housed together ..... [and have] cross curricular tasks in their core subjects. One teacher would teach all the year 8s Science, one teacher would teach all the year 8s English, but in fact, by timetabling it that way, it means that they're all in a big block and they can decide how to cut it up and what to do in that big time. And I suppose we'll do that with year 8s but our hope is to do that in a 7/8 block and actually build a facility for them. - Staff, 2004.*

MindMatters was also reported to have formalised existing staff values and processes relating to the pastoral care of students. In this already supportive school, the program is likely to have been a source of reinforcement rather than an agent of extensive change.

*One thing it probably does though is support the way teachers think about what they may already be doing [that] works. It's a formalisation of values, of what they've been doing for a long time and I think that probably makes them feel more significant about what they do, people talking about that programme ..... and it generates an enthusiasm for their teaching - Staff, 2003.*

#### **5.4 Changes in support services and programs**

In general, the school was already highly supportive of students' wellbeing at the commencement of the evaluation. MindMatters was predominantly used in the curriculum rather than as an agent of whole school change, running parallel to other services and programs rather than influencing them directly. Some changes to support services or programs were reported during the evaluation period, such as the introduction of learning support teachers, seminars from Michael Carr-Gregg, input from psychologists on certain issues and the consideration of the *You Can Do It!* program. However it is likely that these were pursued by the school because of its existing ethos rather than as a direct result of taking up MindMatters.

*They've employed myself (at campus) and another learning support coordinator at [other] campus at the beginning of this year. We don't have a teaching load, which I think is a huge commitment to the students and the staff. We initially work with anyone who has a disability ... and with specific learning difficulties, like dyslexia and those sorts of things. - Staff, 2003.*

*So that and some actual mental health assessment stuff with the Deans. ... the Kessler approach, K-10 ... One of our psychs looked into it and spent some time with us on this campus showing us how to use it so we can be a bit more clear about who we can help and who needs other help. - Staff, 2004.*

*The You Can Do It! program, which has just really started in primary school, has excited quite a few people too. ... We went to the You Can Do It seminar last week and we think that Mind Matters and You Can Do It are very compatible under lots of different areas. You Can Do It is the umbrella and the Mind Matters stuff is more specific that you can actually embed under the umbrella. - Staff, 2004.*

## 5.5 Changes in curriculum

### Changes in pastoral curriculum

Highlands College initially used MindMatters mainly in the context of the pastoral curriculum, known as PAVE: Personal and Values Education. In Year 8, PAVE was delivered as part of Integrated Studies, with elements of English as well as Society and Environment. However PAVE was also delivered to other grades and was considered an effective way of reaching all students in the school with the MindMatters content.

*Mind Matters is run through our PAVE classes ... We do, in our year 8 courses, what's called Integrated Studies, which integrates English, Society, Environmental Studies ... and PAVE. - Staff, 2003.*

PAVE combined elements of personal development, health, spirituality and vocational guidance. However throughout the evaluation period PAVE was under review in regard to the range of issues covered and the philosophical approach to some areas of work.

*It needs to deliberately be broadened so that students understand that it's not a different name for Christian Ed you know, PAVE comprises aspects of Christian Ed, but aspects of Health Ed, .... also some vocational stuff ... I think the Christian aspects of that we have to present in a way that gives students permission to disagree ... - Staff, 2003.*

*I suppose I've been asking those sorts of questions and I suppose partly I'm concerned that some health issues that are essential - because PAVE can become a catch-all for everything, people will say, oh well we could do that at PAVE ... but we really need to be intentional about all the possibilities of what's in PAVE - Staff, 2003.*

PAVE sessions have incorporated MindMatters material as well as other models and concepts broadly relating to health and personal development.

*In year 10 we teach a unit called People Management, which is based on ... teaching kids personal resilience, but also an awareness of self-acceptance and what that involves ... the kinds of things that we teach in there are things like the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People but tailored for kids and ... self-acceptance through physical, social and emotional health ... - Staff, 2003.*

*I also teach year 11 with early childhood studies, which we call ... Families of the Future ... Health and child development, and looking at their own behaviours ... Adolescent lifestyle and pregnancy and relationships. - Staff, 2003.*

*I'm aware of [MindMatters] through ... teaching PAVE ... in year 11. ... I think on the whole they find it useful. I can hear sometimes when we bring up certain issues, I can see them listening. ... I had kids on the computers ... they pick an issue or a scenario from ... Mind Matters .... And they're trying to make a flier with all sorts of places where kids could go to get help - Staff, 2003.*

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

Broadly speaking, the following MindMatters components have been used: *Bullying and Harassment* with year 8, *Enhancing Resilience* with years 9 and 11, *Grief and Loss* with year 10 and *Understanding Mental Illnesses* with Year 12. However there seemed to be no formal review of how comprehensively these topics were covered. The program was changing from year to year and may have been different on the two campuses. It is possible that some students were exposed to several of these topics, while others may have received few or none.

*From about the middle of last year we recognised that our whole PAVE program - which is what the Mind Matters is part of, Personal And Values Education - needed reviewing. So we undertook a review about mid-year with a view to looking at some new directions for 2003, but mostly for 2004 and it was agreed that Mind Matters material would be extended in more areas with more year levels. - Staff, 2003.*

*We're building Mind Matters right through the PAVE program so we've got the bullying and the harassment stuff's being done in year 8 and the 2 units on enhancing resilience is done in 9 and 11, and also some of that stuff on family I think is done in year 9 and then we've done stress stuff and loss and grief for the year 10s. I've been teaching mental illness to the year 12s. - Staff, 2003.*

Students had mixed views about PAVE. The success of the sessions seemed dependent upon the teacher and the topic. Some teachers appeared to be more comfortable and competent with the PAVE curriculum and teaching style than others.

*I hate it this year but some years I used to like it and it all depends on what teachers you have for this subject. - Student, 2003.*

*It's a nothing period and my PAVE teacher this year is a good friend, and I've known him for years so that's okay ... and that's fine for me but some years I have shocking teachers. ... It's supposed to be where you can express your opinions but many teachers turn it into 'this is my opinion, this is the answer'. - Student, 2003.*

*I notice PAVE has been very wishy-washy this year for [my son]. I've asked him many times what he's doing this year and he's like 'mum we're just sitting there' - he can't tell me anything but previous years PAVE has been brilliant. He's in year 11. Last year PAVE was unbelievable, the year before as well but this year - it may be just a teacher thing, but I don't know. - Parent, 2003.*

*The relationships that happen in that class. Teachers can isolate themselves but I think PAVE is a tougher subject, you don't go to uni and study it to become a PAVE teacher, it's just something that's thrown on the side when you come to [this school]. ... [Teachers] should just let it flow. - Student, 2003.*

PAVE is an assessable subject and this is based substantially upon students keeping a written journal. Several students felt that this format disadvantages some people and discourages sharing and broader discussion of certain issues.

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

*I don't think we should be marked on PAVE either, we're marked on how much you write in your journal ... They mark us on how many journal entries we do and how much we express ourselves in our journal - Student, 2003.*

*I had the same PAVE teacher in year 8 and 9 and I wouldn't share what I had for breakfast with him, honestly - and then now year 12 I've got a good teacher I still don't write anything in my PAVE journal because it became a habit of not doing it because I didn't want to express myself with my former teacher. - Student, 2003.*

*Write journal entries.... that's all very well for people doing English Lit and like writing letters but people who find it better talking about things ... and someone might say something interesting that you never thought about, but if they write it in their journal you're never going to see it or hear it. - Student, 2003.*

At the time of the third visit, PAVE had been replaced by Faith and Values, with a particular focus on spirituality, personal development and values education. A Head of Learning Area had been appointed, according to a new structure adopted in the school. The content of Faith and Values was being finalised but it was envisaged that it may still utilise MindMatters curriculum material. It had been decided that Faith and Values would no longer be assessed through journal writing.

*I've got a whole lot .... of things that I can draw upon [for Faith and Values] ... I'd take a bit from MindMatters, take a bit from the You Can Do It stuff, I'd take a bit from here and a bit from there and put a package together. - Staff, 2004.*

*Because what I saw was girls - stereotypically girls - would love the journal and would write things and express themselves very well. Boys hardly at all, so if this is the assessment tool then we're disadvantaging one group and advantaging another. But kids say to me I have failed PAVE, that signals to me that we're not doing the right thing. ... We don't assess and to be honest I don't think we really want to assess because they get assessed in so much stuff. When you look at in the context of a student going to school, there are so much that they're assessed in, that why does this need to be one of those things? - Staff, 2004.*

### **Changes in health curriculum**

During the first two visits, selected health issues were covered as part of PAVE. At the time of the third visit, PAVE had been replaced by Faith and Values and it was unclear how much health-related content or MindMatters material this would retain. The school had been considering creating a learning area for Health and Physical Education and it appears to have been decided that this would proceed. Each was to be coordinated by a Head of Learning Area, according to the school's new structure. It was not clear at the third visit how much MindMatters material would feature either in Faith and Values or in Health and Physical Education.

*It's not a debate anymore, it's a decision that's happening because of our move to have Heads of Learning Area, so we went from Heads of Department to Heads of Learning area, and Health was always in PAVE. But with Head of Phys Ed and Health as a learning area, that will come under that whole role as well. - Staff, 2004*

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

*When I spoke to you last time it was PAVE, which deliberately included more health education. The school has made a decision that Health Ed will be done separately, especially in the lower school. - Staff, 2004.*

## **6 Sustainability of changes at the fourth visit in 2005**

### **6.1 Changes made in the first two years**

Overall, MindMatters remains a program that is valued by this school after three years of using the MindMatters resources.

#### **Status of changes to the role of Dean**

As reported in the previous chapter, the role of Dean (the person responsible for supporting the pastoral care system for each House) was under review in 2004. In 2005, radical changes in Administrative positions had been or were about to be implemented.

Firstly, as the principal of Highlands College is also the principal of the primary school on the same campus, and also for the primary and secondary school on another campus, a position of Head of Secondary School has been created on each campus. At Highland College one of the Deans had been appointed to this new position. Further, another of the Deans passed away early in 2005 after a long illness. Thus, at the time of the fourth evaluation visit in 2005, two of the three positions of Dean were being filled in an acting capacity.

Secondly, it is intended to appoint a Deputy Principal in charge of Curriculum, and a deputy in charge of Care. Heads of learning areas will report to the first deputy and the Deans will report to the second deputy. Hence Deans will no longer be de facto deputies, but will focus on their role as the person responsible for pastoral care.

These changes are designed to strengthen the already robust pastoral care system in the school.

#### **Status of changes planned for Year 8**

In 2004, it was planned to introduce changes for Year 8 to make it more of a transition year between primary and secondary school. Feedback during a telephone contact in 2005 indicated that these changes were not fully implemented due mainly to the unavailability of funds.

#### **Changes in pastoral curriculum**

The planned use of MindMatters in the Faith and Values (FAVE) curriculum was continuing in 2005 but was in some ways a little different than the program that was implemented in 2004. Year 10 were continuing to address the issue of 'Loss and Grief' and Year 12 FAVE classes included some lessons on 'Understanding Mental Illness'.

For Year 9, a new program has been developed (see below) and to fit in with this, the school is using the 'Community Matters' booklet.

*In year 9 we use the Community Matters portion because if we look at term 3 right now, it's about Community; so that's been really good just in helping the kids focus on what community is, so everything that they do for the term rotates around, or is focused on what community is and aspects of community and just decision-making within a community. Like they're playing a game right now. They're simulating being a town council, so all the year 9s, so there's a new cemetery being built and they have to decide where and how and they have to make these decisions together and you can see this groups (engaging with this). And Community Matters is really good with just defining community with the kids so that was good. Staff 2005*

In previous years, the Year 8 classes were taught lessons from the 'Bullying and Harassment' booklet in an integrated studies lesson. This seems to have not been implemented in 2004 and 2005 as fully as was intended..

*And the other thing that I'm a bit frustrated that it hasn't happened this year but I've sort of pushed hard for that MindMatters bullying stuff to be done systematically in year 8 because it was supposed to have been done in the last couple of years, but then I discovered that it actually wasn't being done well at all and I know, till this point in the year, they still haven't got to it, and what I was hoping is that the Head of Phys Ed and the Head of Faith and Values would really form partnership but lobby the other learning areas because the resources for English and other things, and actually set up a time in the year where we could have a cross-curricular approach to bullying, Staff 2005*

The Head of the FAVE learning area indicated that a review had been done and changes were now in the process of being introduced which should see bullying reintroduced into Year 8. Revitalisation plans for Year 8

*Now the place where we'll look at inserting some more of the MindMatters stuff, is in year 8 because year 8's a changed programme. It used to be integrated studies. So we didn't have dedicated Faith and Values teachers. But this year it's been ripped out and put on its own, but it's actually been combined with Health. Because the Head of Health and Phys Ed, she and I decided last year that we would just do this together so on the kids' timetables we'd, have one period of Faith and Values and one period of Health but it's the same teacher. So we just offer an integrated programme all the way through. So it's not a big deal. But we're developing it right now, like right now. So we're trying to weave together as much of the Faith and Values stuff with the Health stuff and I think it's just going to take us a couple of years to get that sailing along. Staff 2005*

### **Revitalisation of the Peer Support program**

Although the peer support program was in place prior to MindMatters, and is largely unrelated to the school's use of MindMatters, it is worth noting that in 2005, the school was reviewing and re-energising their peers support programs called 'Eights Mates' (For Year 8) and 'Prime Mates' (for primary students). This is mentioned here as it is relevant to the school's overall efforts to support student wellbeing.

*And that's good and in fact we've sort of made it a bit more rigorous this year. (one of the deans) has overseen the Eights Mates section of that and really asked the year 11s to do a bit more planning about what activities they're going to take the year 8s through. We just felt that last year there wasn't enough rigour and some groups just took the lowest common denominator of how can we fill in the time, rather than a more intentional how can we get the most out of this time. So I think that's been a really positive shift and we'll tweak it a bit more the year after. So the kids are submitting plans as to what we're going to do with their students and talking it through with their teachers and then evaluating it afterwards. So I think that's been a positive change. Staff 2005*

### **Less explicit focus on MindMatters in 2005**

A number of informants indicated that for various reasons, the focus on MindMatters in the school had been reducing during 2005. While certain elements are still present as indicated above, the program has not, generally speaking, been at the forefront of the minds of school leaders, largely due to the significant changes that were going on in the school and the fact that the school was engaged in a major review of curriculum (see section 8 below).

*I think there are certainly a few people who are doing that (using MindMatters informally in their subject teaching) and actually at the end of last year we ran some(activities). You know we started some staff meetings with a ... 'Get into groups like this, That's one way you could start your lesson'. Do you know what I mean? So we've also just sort of disseminated that idea along with the idea and in every House there's a MindMatters Kit and you can pick into it anytime you want. But those sorts of things; haven't really been done that this year. Maybe we should have. Staff 2005*

In 2004 when a group of 10 to 12 teachers attended the MindMatters training, a group spontaneously formed to think about ways in which the program could be more energetically promoted throughout the school. This informal group did not continue to meet in 2005.

*Well really that's sort of my disappointment because that has evaporated and partly I feel like if I'd been more canny I could have traded a bit on that but partly I'm sort of conceding that I think those people still believe in it but they're just swamped in other things and so I just didn't feel like I could push it too hard. So yeah there haven't been any more meetings. There's been some individual discussions. Some of the change that was instigated has actually been put into place but it's been more me doing it or me and a couple of other people doing it and me not. Sometimes you just feel like you can't ask people to do anymore than. Staff 2005*

Nevertheless there were instances where teachers who had been trained in earlier years indicated that they still used ideas from MindMatters training and the 'principals of MindMatters' in their teaching approaches.

*I think it's more the principles of MindMatters and inclusivity and acceptance in building those strategies whereby the kids feel comfortable in the environment, in the classroom environment. So feeding in the games to organise group work and the games to work out how everybody's feeling at a certain period of time and that sort of stuff. Staff 2005*

In discussing the reducing focus on MindMatters due to competition from other school business during 2005, it was pointed out that this same phenomenon had affected other programs.

*We're now using You Can Do It in a pretty minimal form basically. Staff 2005*

## 6.2 Teachers' experiences of teaching MindMatters

'Loss and Grief' is taught to Year 10 students in the FAVE classes, each of which is taken by the Dean of each of the Houses. The Dean responsible for FAVE 2005 indicated that his lessons were based only loosely on the lesson outlines in the MindMatters Kit. Rather he had designed his own approach based on showing well-known movies and using these as the basis for discussion. He believes this approach creates a safety in which students can talk about death-related issues without relating them to their own experience.

*I'll tell you how we do it. We talk about the stages of grief - Grief and Loss, but we actually use the film The Sixth Sense and so lots of kids go into it thinking oh this is a horror film, it's going to be scary, I've just seen it so many times now I know exactly what it is, but we talk about in terms of if people have lost a loved one and these people return and they're really nice. Sso the kids who are reasonably switched on can see by the end of the film - they can begin to make those connections and I can understand why schools wouldn't do it because of the potential of touching a raw nerve in kids but because we do it disconnected from their personal lives and looking at these characters in the film, we actually can talk to them - you know, talk about these characters where they're talking about their own stuff. Staff 2005*

*And for some kids - like is said earlier, especially looking at this Grief and Loss, for some kids it actually means nothing to them; they've never lost anyone, they don't have any experience of that and so all of this sort of washes over them, and what we hope is that it washes over them and some little nugget launches itself. So they at least know that these are the stages that people go through; that everybody goes through it. My thing is, to not have someone grieving as if they're the only person on earth that's ever done that and understand, yes you're a special individual but the behaviour you're exhibiting now is human and normal. Staff 2005*

Another of the deans reflected on his experience of discussing the issue of mental illness with one his FAVE classes, revealing that both he and the students appear to display a high level of comfort with discussing these topics.

*It's really interesting in my class in particular, because I had a girl who suffered from serious Depression, who eventually left school, but when it came time to talk*

*about it - the different kinds - Depression and Bipolar and those things, she was right there talking about what those things were, so she didn't shrink from it. And I've got to say, this group of year 12s are particularly cohesive and so it wasn't really a big deal for her to talk about it. And she didn't talk about it in terms of herself, she just talked about it, but we all knew that she'd been away from school for long stretches and back again. Staff 2005*

One of the deans revealed that in addressing the issue of the myths of mental illness, he felt he could disclose personal information and that this was very effective.

*And one of the things that I liked about the MindMatters is that they need to educate people. We talked about the myths and all this kind of stuff and on the literature, one of the worksheets, seemed to be open about it, and were willing to discuss it openly. So those kids do that. I share with the year 12s. I said; 'Look I'm going to share something with you but I respect you people and if you people take it outside this classroom to other people it would upset me, but if you say it in the right way, I don't mind it in an educating way". I said my sister has schizophrenia, she was schizophrenic and I said some of you might not realise that most people, the homeless people they are(mentally ill) but it hasn't been diagnosed. But she went into a broken marriage and later on she was diagnosed. And the kids started asking me questions about it. I said: 'She's in (my home country) and she's happy. Staff 2005*

### **6.3 New changes made in last twelve months**

#### **Whole-school approaches to addressing bullying**

In contrast to the fact that the focus on bullying in the year 8 curriculum had diminished in 2005, in other areas, the school's efforts to address bullying seems to have escalated in quite meaningful and sometimes creative ways. Firstly a cross-campus committee has been formed to ensure consistent approaches to dealing with bullying, and regular surveys are being conducted to monitor how the issue of bullying is being addressed.

*We've formed a committee, looking specifically at bullying and other sort of issues and so we've taken MindMatters material and applied that to the whole school approach, married that with some research from the National Coalition Against Bullying, Michael Carr-Gregg and stuff like that so that's sort of informed us. We're actually starting to do more on bullying research so we can chart bullying issues, you know on an annual basis and see if our programmes are having some effect and we basically use the MindMatters stuff to help us along with that; and you know, and basically the MindMatters questionnaire we just deliver it. So I think from a whole school approach we're doing it in bits. Staff 2005*

The committee has initiated a review of the school's bullying policy to accommodate data that shows that the ways in which this problem is exhibited is changing.

*To be honest, the bullying policy was embarrassingly out-of-date and I don't think it had been renewed for something like ten years. Certainly in my first year I just didn't want to take on things like that. We basically started looking at that and initially we've gone for some stop-gap measures really and things that we are sure will be part of our overall policy, but we wanted to just wait here and see if there were any other findings released by Don Cross or Ken or the National Coalition Against Bullying. So we didn't want to jump in and re-write a policy. Well actually we went off half-cocked so we put several things in place and, again, these are I suppose we'd basically taken that whole-school MindMatters approach and stole a few ideas from different places. Staff 2005*

One of the most innovative of the committee's new initiatives is the establishment of an internet site about bullying attached to the school's web-page. The 'Bully Stoppers' web-site allows students or parents to log on and report bullying. There is an open letter to parents about the school's approach to bullying and there are links to other websites where students can get information and also to help-lines.

When students click on the button to report an incident of bullying, it opens up an email to either the dean or the deputy head of the primary, depending on where the student is enrolled.

*So we've implemented an electronic bully box; basically a website that you can email and it's had a little bit of a bedding down period but I think the students are using it. I probably get one a week and some of them are really good and it's interesting that kids are actually using it for other things apart from bullying. I had a year 12 email me and said oh 'Hi (dean's name) it's (student's name) here. These three year 8s were jumping up and down on my car. They've been calling me names and, to be honest, I want to thump them. Maybe you can talk to them before I do something silly.' And it was sort of, so he just saw it as rather than having them walk into my office. Staff 2005*

To promote the awareness of Bully Stoppers, the web-site is actually the wallpaper on each of the computers in the secondary school. This served as an ongoing reminder to students about the school's position on bullying, even if they do not access the site to make a report.

Younger Students reflect that they think this is an acceptable way to report bullying, reinforced by their experience that the identity of informants is kept confidential by the deans when they respond to the reports.

Older female students however see the possibility of the web-site being misused:

*I think some people are misusing it. I've been dobbed in and I don't know what for. Somebody said that I got dobbed in by somebody because I kicked that person at the back of the chair accidentally in a class, like stupid things.*

*I know some people who have actually seriously put it in and it helps...*

*Because you know which students it is for. And the teachers know that as well.*

*The only problem is some kids would be like "He looked at me funny". The teachers will have to do something about it because that kid's just a woos and really upset.*

Male students actually admitted to making a false report as a joke.

*I think it's a good idea but it could be misused. Someone could falsely write in...*

*We got busted for it.*

*For misusing it?*

*Yeah just seeing if it works. Well we know that you can trace it now.*

As reported above, the school has instigated a new process surveying the students about bullying every term. One of deans described how they were able to do this without students feeling self-conscious about reporting the names of people who were bullies or perhaps victims of bullying. The school is in the process of developing an on-line way of implementing the survey in the future.

*We've instituted a regular - about every 3 months - we go into all the home rooms - we ask them to do a home room bullying survey. There's an A4 piece of paper they have to fold in half so that people can't see what they're writing and they're simple questions like name your favourite singer or name somebody who bullies other people, so everyone's writing something down and name your favourite TV star or name someone that you see being picked on, and then we basically collate those and look at patterns and follow those patterns up and, often when you don't hear, then you ask around the group that he associates with and work from there. Staff 2005*

The school has been particularly creative in first of all understanding that students are reluctant to 'dob in' their fellow students for fear of recrimination, and for devising ways in which students can report bullying without being concerned that they will be identified as the 'dobber'. In one instance, for example, following a report of bullying, the dean interviewed around twenty students, gathering information, before approaching the alleged bully. In this way, the identity of the originator of the report could be protected.

*But you know when you talk to kids - sometimes we have to talk to 20 kids - but at the end we feel like we've got a good picture, and if we get something on Bully Stoppers, to protect the person, we will interview 20 kids. Between the three of us. So that no-one knows who says what to whom and then we will talk to the kid and then sometimes the kid and the parent and say, look this is what your peers are*

*saying, some of these are your friends, some of these aren't. They're all saying this and again, first step is a no blame approach. Staff 2005*

*This happened about a month ago, someone put one person down in Bully Stoppers and they chased it up straight away and then one of the deans interviewed heaps of people and then straight away it was fixed. Student 2005*

### **New ways of involving students**

Although unrelated to the school's adoption of MindMatters, the school has instigated new formal ways in which students can have an effective voice in school planning and decision-making. Nevertheless, because this initiative is likely to impact on the students sense of autonomy and connection to school it is worth noting.

*And we're now inviting the actual 6 House captains plus the Chair of Student Affairs, to school leadership meeting once a term where they can talk with the deputies, principal, head of secondary, that issues of those seen as significant in the school and you know we ask them questions about their perception of things, so I'm trying to include them more in informing us about decisions we're making. Staff 2005*

This seems to have proved both very popular and very effective in that some changes to school uniform have been made as a result of the initiative. Although a small change, the students interviewed were greatly pleased with the outcome.

*Well some aspects of the uniform have changed and basically we've completed the first half of the uniform review and changed the whole sport uniform which will roll in next year. The kids are actually now wearing sport uniforms to school on Sports days to save time in terms of changing, to save problems with locker space, to solve problems with gear going missing, and all of that. I think that's been a positive change. There have been some ripples from parents who would like the really formal thing, but universal student approval, and particularly actually for some of the kids with body image issues, getting changed in change rooms where they feel embarrassed or some of our learning disability kids have - and particular their parents - issues of them always losing their gear or because some of them just take a while to get changed and then they end up out to sport late and then they have issues with the teacher and stuff. Staff 2005*

### **Changed program for Year 9**

The school has instigated a program of taking Year 9 students into the city for a range of activities including: learning to use public transport; learning to value and access the facilities in the city; activities related to understanding relative disadvantage (eg homelessness) and diversity (eg Aboriginality). It is relevant that this school is located twenty kilometres from the city centre in a more or less self-contained satellite suburb.

Again, while this initiative is not one that emerges directly from the school's implementation of MindMatters, it is relevant to a range of well-being issues for students of this age, and is seen by the school as contained within their overall approach to wellbeing that include MindMatters.

*We have also instituted a year 9 In The City programme. That's happening one week a term, this year and I think there've been some really good positive things but there are issues in terms of staff workload that we're going to have to see how we can do that smarter so that it's not just quite the drain on staff. Maybe we won't take them out a whole week, maybe 3 days, but we're not sure yet. But that has been a success. I think the kids have had to engage in different things, and particularly it's an advantage because we can take them and show them things that are in this sort of middle class very homogeneous area they don't see. There are basically 5 groups in different places doing different things and one group each time has been looking at aboriginal issues in the city. And stuff like that and learning about Aboriginal culture and stuff and I think those sorts of things have been really helpful in broadening the kids' vision. Instead of hearing it from the media they're actually hearing it from an Aboriginal person's perspective. Staff 2005*

*It's a programme where to start off with the first term we go to the city for a week and just find out a bit about the city and what things you can do there and just learn stuff in the city. But now we have topics we can actually choose; before it was a set thing, and now we can choose to walk around the city and look at things that go on in there. Student 2005*

### **New position of school nurse**

In response to a range of issues, including some comments that were critical of the school's policy of accessing community-based psychological services rather than having an in-house position of counsellor, the school has decided to employ a school nurse.

*I started to think, maybe we should have a psychologist at school. Are we taking a risk, and all these sorts of things are going through my mind and meanwhile, I've always been worried that many of our staff have senior first-aid and our front front office ladies do make all the judgement calls on kids who... We've got kids, not so much now, but last year we had a girl who was a very severe epileptic and she had huge fits and so on. And we're asking our clerical people to deal with these things and then when there's a serious injury, we did have a boy who took the top of his finger off in a Design and Tech class and all this, and there's blood everywhere. And so the legalistic part of me thinks about all the potential risks and litigation and all those sorts of things, which unfortunately you do, in a school; you, worry about all those things. And so I thought well, I remember when I taught in the State system, the school nurse was a person that kids went to, to get a Panadol. But really they weren't after a Panadol, they were after someone who was independent of the teaching staff and just another person who could be part of the care team. And that's what we've done, and it's working well. Executive 2005*



## 7 What issues did this school face during the implementation?

### 7.1 Issues that helped

#### Positive professional development

Attendance at the MindMatters professional development appears to have been helpful in creating support among staff for the MindMatters program and its principles. This was particularly evident at the third visit, when a larger number of staff had been trained and there seemed to be a wave of enthusiasm. There was now a critical mass of people who were all engaged with the ideas. During the evaluation period, the school had also undertaken other elements of professional development consistent with the concepts of MindMatters, such as sessions with Michael Carr Gregg and other professionals, as well as attendance at You Can Do It! seminars. Professional development is likely to have augmented the school's strong focus on pastoral care and student wellbeing and helped to sustain its commitment to MindMatters. .

*Even with bringing in [name] now, she's going to address each house, for a House meeting, and just let you ask questions. ... Some of us spoke to her about, you know, I don't know how to handle this or give me the key to be able to handle this sort of scenario and she'll walk you through that and say well most times, she actually said, you're doing it alright, you're going fine, keep doing what you're doing. But it was good to have that affirmation from a child psych being able to say that and perhaps then offer some other things so I think that's another thing that helps Mind Matters, it helps our House structure, it helps our Dean of Students, it helps our home room teachers - Staff, 2004*

#### Positive staff attitudes or reactions

As previously discussed, staff at this school have always been seen to be caring and supportive toward students and their families. Many staff seem to have a strong professional and personal commitment to helping young people. Positive staff attitudes have no doubt contributed to the school's ongoing commitment to implementing MindMatters and other wellbeing programs.

*Also they sort of do a lot to try and solve it. One of my friends needed to talk to someone on the staff, like when the staff were on the year 11 and 12 retreat, they spent a lot of time trying to find someone that we could talk to because none of the deans were there, so yeah eventually one of the teachers they pulled her out of class so we could talk to her, so they went to a lot of trouble just to solve our one problem. So they're very supportive. - Student, 2004.*

#### Helpful leadership

The early implementation of MindMatters was dependent in large part on the activities of a longstanding senior member of staff, a Dean of House whose position involved significant pastoral care and discipline roles. The commitment and leadership of this person in regard to student wellbeing issues was widely acknowledged by staff, parents and students, many of whom expressed a sense of loss when this person transferred to the school's new campus. However, after a settling in period, his successor was able to provide a similar leadership role and other leaders emerged when additional staff attended the MindMatters professional development.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

*And [name] having moved from this campus to [other campus] that was a very difficult - difficult's not quite the right word - but there were some students who felt, I guess, grief ... well not just students, families as well, because [he] has been on the campus since the first day of the school. So there were certainly some families and one or two students in fact ... - Staff, 2003.*

### **Usefulness or suitability of MindMatters**

MindMatters was seen as being very suitable for this school because Highlands College already had a strong commitment to pastoral care. The curriculum materials were also considered practical and well-written, able to be photocopied and used even by staff with no previous background in a similar area.

*I think that's partly because the school's always looking for what can we do for students so we're always ahead of the formal programme so you're always doing something there anyway so when a formal programme like Mind Matters comes along, you're like that will fit in just nicely here and it's already happening. - Staff, 2003*

*Having the Mind Matters stuff is fantastic resources, it's great to work with, it's down to earth, it's a ready-to-go package and that's the thing I've loved about it. To me it's been pretty relevant so that's what I loved. If you haven't taught it before, if you haven't been teaching it for a few years, it's really hard, like where do you go? - and here it is, all in a bundle ready to go and you can start with that .... Then you can pick up other stuff as well as you go along. - Staff, 2003*

*It's fresh ideas as well. ... The most dedicated teachers always taught about stress but here is a package - you can stop thinking for a while... - Staff, 2003*

### **Positive school ethos**

A pre-existing positive school ethos was a significant factor at Highlands College and this would have facilitated both the uptake and the implementation of MindMatters. The school has always placed strong value on students' wellbeing and pastoral care and continues to do so.

*I think it's not easy for schools who don't have that culture of looking after students to implement Mind Matters ... it's like oh let's do this subject and it goes no further, just with the staff or students, but I think here it's really emerged. - Staff 2003*

## 7.2 Issues that hindered

### Lack of resources

Reports suggest that in the early stages of implementation there were few copies of the kit in the school and there were few staff sent to the MindMatters professional development. As a low fee paying school, Highlands College may have had resource constraints which influenced the purchasing of curriculum packages and the capacity to secure release time for staff. In addition, the school would have been committing considerable resources in terms of finances and staff time to the upcoming opening of the new secondary campus.

### Lack of formal planning and review

As previously discussed, this school did not establish a formal mechanism for planning and review in the early phases of implementation. The dependence upon individual staff members for planning and review processes may have limited the whole school application of MindMatters and the potential for feedback and improvement. However when more staff had been trained at the time of the third visit, this seemed to spontaneously generate a focus on more systematic planning which may change the future direction of the implementation.

### Changes of staff

Staff changes may have impacted upon the implementation. The opening of the new campus resulted in the transfer of many staff members to that site, including the Dean of House who had been driving the MindMatters implementation at the school's original secondary campus. There may have been a lack of continuity during the period in which his successor was being recruited and becoming familiar with the role. There is also some evidence that similar staff changes caused delays in the review of the pastoral curriculum.

*It [the review of PAVE] is still a work in progress. Partly the Head of PAVE here is now moving to [other campus], and probably at this stage, until the next person's appointed and we can start working with them ... there's probably going to be a couple of months, you know, in limbo. There's no point charging ahead if the new Head's going to come in and go, 'oh what about this?' - Staff, 2003.*

At the second visit, a key member of the school's leadership team had been absent with a serious illness, which may have affected processes of change and management in the school. In addition, between the second and third visits, the school undertook restructuring that resulted in some staff losing their positions or having to adapt to different roles. Personal issues, such as concern for an ill colleague or uncertainty in the workplace, can lead to a reduced commitment to issues or tasks that are seen as non-essential aspects of one's role.

*I think another impact has been [name's] illness and I think that's had an effect on some of the students ... [and] the parents ... I think that kind of touched a lot of students and parents and obviously the staff and I think that's kind of under the surface but it's quite an important thing that's happened. - Parent, 2003.*

*The big thing I think that has impacted on the school as a whole is having [other campus] open and that's what a lot of people have felt - that a lot of good resources have gone from here ... - Parent, 2003.*

*And there were some key things, you know, [name] left [this campus]. [He] was a key mover and shaker ... so we had a new guy take his role and ... the whole move from Heads of Department to Heads of Learning Area has been a big shake-up. - Staff, 2004.*

### **Changes in educational context**

Some school changes may also be driven by external changes in the education sector, particularly in regard to curriculum and the reporting of student outcomes. One staff member reported that the school's shift to Heads of Learning Area was driven in part by national curriculum changes.

*We're in a restructure at the moment too ... we've got 13 curriculum leaders at the moment who are known as Heads of Department and we're reducing them to 9 Heads of Learning Areas and some of the Heads of Learning Areas will have to reapply for their positions, so it's a streamlining if you will because of national curriculum [changes]. - Staff, 2003.*

Both internal and external change can have a significant impact upon teachers' workload and the completion of administrative tasks. This can have the effect of limiting the time teachers can spend on student support or on the establishment of new programs. Staff reported an increased workload in 2003 associated with changes in educational context, which may have mitigated against their active involvement in the implementation of MindMatters.

*There's been a huge increase in workload. We've picked up all of those roles ... there are compulsory necessary meetings for those processes to take place in the transition, so there's a greater round of meetings ... [and changes] to outcomes reporting in year 8 and once people realised how much work was involved with that and the school realised that in order to meet the commitments with the curriculum framework ... I know it will [improve what's going on in the classroom] in the future and I think it's really great, but there's that short time where all the work and the energy is being expended in other directions - Staff, 2003.*

*I think, although we had email last year, but that's been a big change. I would say email just about takes up nearly 2 hours of my day, by the time you read them and deal with them and deal with everything on them it's a lot of time. - Staff, 2003.*

### **Change fatigue**

While change fatigue wasn't specifically mentioned as a factor that hindered the implementation of MindMatters, it is noteworthy that the school has experienced many changes. As previously discussed, these include staff changes, the opening of the new campus and a major restructuring that involved a shift from Heads of Department to Heads of Learning Area. It is possible that the implementation of MindMatters became a lower priority as the school dealt with such changes, or that people were temporarily less likely to commit to a new initiative.

## 8 Issues identified at the fourth visit in 2005

It appears that between the third evaluation visit in 2003 and the fifth in 2004, there has been an apparent waning of the school's efforts to use MindMatters curriculum resources in a concerted way. On the other hand, the school has adopted a whole-school approach to dealing with the issue of bullying and harassment. The school remains committed to the MindMatters principles and will continue to use those elements that were still in place in 2005.

A number of factors are identified as important in understanding why the school remains committed to MindMatters and why it is implementing it in its own characteristic way.

### Consistency of MindMatters with school ethos

Highlands college is highly committed to providing a safe and supportive, indeed caring environment. One anecdote from 2005 concerned an inter-school event in which two students from each school attended and gave brief speeches about what was good about their school, and how their school would help them achieve their ambitions.

*But as (name), one of our captains commented, when that girl said about being a prime minister or a palaeontologist, I wanted to stand up and say, well our school doesn't care what we do, they just want us to be happy.*

This emphasis on putting value on the students' school experience being a happy one was also a feature that emerged as being very important to the parents.

*We put together a new strategic plan and one of the things which we did was run forums with students and forums with parents, and so on, and I was surprised actually - and people told me that I shouldn't have been surprised - but guess what the number one thing the parents said that they wanted for their children coming to our school, they wanted them to be happy. Executive 2005*

Given these values, MindMatters is seen by the school as a program that supports their general direction. It seems to have contributed curriculum resources to support issues that the school thinks is important including bullying, diversity, loss and grief and mental illness. The idea of whole-school approaches also seems to have risen in the awareness of certain staff.

### Helpful leadership

The principal of the school, the head of secondary and all three deans are supportive of MindMatters and provide helpful leadership to support its adoption. Indeed, the issue of caring for students is seen by the leadership as an essential component of a good learning environment.

*But the way that I'm seeing it is that care and learning should be of equal importance in the school. Well they go together; it's like good teaching. When I was teaching, which I don't do now to my regret because I love it - but it's just not possible working over 2 campuses - I always worked on building relationships with kids first, because I think once you've got that right and they know that you're going to give them respect, you're going to give them their due. You will listen; that they know where the boundaries are - you know, what's okay in your classroom and what's not - then you can start the teaching. Not that you'd do it quite like that obviously, because you've got to start teaching straight away, but lots of*

*opportunities to get to know the kids, to get alongside them to find out what their interests are, to be able to have a conversation with them, which is why people like (Dean) and (other Dean) are so good because they're really good at that sort of thing. Executive 2005*

### **Training issues**

The issue of the MindMatters training was raised a number of times. Firstly, the observation from the 2004 visit that MindMatters training energises the people who attend, was restated at the fourth evaluation visit. The importance of sending a group of people to training was also highlighted.

*Actually I do recall last year when that big group went because, to be honest, I was quite surprised at how many went, but I thought well that's fine. I oversee it but it's not my territory - (names) have got the running of it, so I have to trust their judgement. And I was quite surprised but when that group came back they were alive and that builds energy too when you've got a big group. I know that about PD, if you send one person, they come back and it's very hard for them to make a difference. You send a group of people and it usually has a much better uptake. You think of it costing more but if you want to make a difference it's the best way to go. Executive 2005*

Despite the benefits observed from sending staff to training, none had been sent in the twelve months prior to the last visit, largely due to the considerable impact of a range of administrative and curriculum issues that had been impacting on the school.

*This year, no (staff have gone to training). I'm sort of disappointed about that but with new courses of study, basically there are five PD days of training for every subject so we've had all our English teachers will have been out for five days. This year all of our media teachers and all our French teachers, and plus some of the others. There's a whole stack of other stuff and we just have so many teachers missing classes; and if one of the days lined up where there was minimal impact, I'd go for that but sometimes you look at the day that it's offered and you just think well in our school there's nothing wrong with the day that's offered, but in our school with what's happening around here, all it will do is create angst. So I've sort of regretfully sort of conceded. Staff 2005*

### **Impact of other school change**

The state in which Highlands College is located is undergoing major changes in curriculum frameworks requiring the curriculum for all subjects to be reviewed and re-written. While previously the school's agenda was determined around the pastoral care policy, in 2005 the predominant issue was the restructuring of curriculum and staff attending training related to this.

*I suppose we had to concede that everything, you know feedback from staff and students and even some of this research tells us that our Pastoral Care is pretty*

*good whereas we've got some pressing curriculum issues and so that's sort of where we're at. Staff 2005*

This pressure of change has impacted on the extent to which the school leaders can continue to push for new initiatives under MindMatters.

*One of the problems for teachers is usually when we ask them to do something new, it's loaded on the top of what they're already doing. And even if it's going to eventually replace something, so let's say it's a new course - and as it is in (our state) as in the papers, there are lots of new courses; but the problem is how do you sustain the quality of what you're doing while you're actually spending lots of time coming to understand the new systems. And other people, particularly in the case of these new courses of study, the curriculum council, like the Board of Studies, they focus on nothing but that and they forget that back at school, whatever new programme you're trying to do, you're still having to sustain all of what you would normally do and layer extra on top. It's very rare that something is actually brought in and something taken off the bottom. And that's where it becomes really hard to keep on asking staff to do more and more. Executive 2005*

### **Changes in school structure**

One of the major impacts of the focus on curriculum reform was on the way in which teachers were located into classrooms. Prior to 2005, teachers were located in the staffroom attached to the House in which their home room was located. Thus subject teachers (eg mathematics teachers) would be located in all three house staffrooms. This system reflected the primacy for pastoral care in this school. In 2005, this was changed and staff are now co-located in staffrooms associated with their teaching discipline. There are some concerns that this may result in a diminishment of the House system and an undermining of the pastoral care system as well.

*We had a different model here where staff sat in a staffroom with the House... well now we have basically resat staff in departments, so in a House staffroom there are two departments sitting. So where you sit may not be where your home room is; you know we haven't changed House allocations but you walk to your House, have your home room there, and I think some staff are very happy with that. With the pressure to design a new curriculum, course of study actually being with their colleagues in their learning area has been positive but some have found it quite dislocating in terms of there's not the breadth of conversations and some staff that are situated, or were already in departments like Science, now feel like they don't know where they belong in terms of coming and sitting with other staff, because 'Is this the (name of House) Area or is this the English Phys Ed area?' Do you know what I mean? And so 'do I belong or not, and can I come (in)?' So probably half the staff are happy with the change and half the staff are unhappy and I think it's had some effect on Pastoral Care, not a massive effect, but it's certainly had an effect on how I have to work just with my staff spread all over the school. Executive 2005*

### Issues related to bullying

As in other schools, students believe that they perceive bullying somewhat differently to their teachers. Teachers are reported to have rigid ideas about what behaviours represent bullying, whereas students feel that behaviours need to be interpreted in terms of intentions and effects. The following student seems to have really thought about this and was able to articulate it quite succinctly.

*One thing that I think the school kind of neglects in a way is the fact that, in regard to bullying, when you think about it, I think there are 3 types of bullying: there's friendly bullying, when you mates punch you, that's bullying-ish and then you have the second type, which is unintentional bullying, when you say something to someone; you don't mean to hurt them but they actually get hurt and then there's intentional bullying where your intention is to hurt them. I think the school kind of in a way neglects that fact and they kind of generalise it as just one thing, which I think is a bit of a let-down in a way. Student 2005*

Failure to see that certain behaviours may or may not have the intention or even the effect of bullying, may lead to students believing that the school's punishments for bullying could be unfair.

One interesting issue that emerged in 2005 was the emergence of peer pressure among students around the issue of church membership. In a school which is Christian in orientation, but in which church membership or attendance is not a pre-requisite for enrolment, certain group hierarchies seem to be emerging based on just these issues.

*Going back to the Christianity thing, there are a few people who really are into it and stuff, but it's not just the non-Christians who feel it. Like I'm a Christian and from some of the other Christians I get this that I'm not doing it right or something.*

*I follow the same religion but I'm extreme in my own way and they're like always pressuring me to go to their church and I'm doing it my own way. And it's not just the non-Christians; the Christians feel it too.*

*They believe everything and all you guys believe little bits and pieces but they're so involved with the whole thing that if you don't believe in part of it then you're not good enough for their standards.*

*And it's just like if you're not intense as the full-on kind of Christian people then you're kind of looked down upon. It seems like you're doing it wrong, like (Name) said, or you're not completely Christian.*

*You're still going to hell anyway. And there are some people that are just full-on Christian and they tell other people that their churches are bad and stuff like that, and that's not right. Student discussion 2005*

### Students attitudes towards the Faith and Values Education periods

While this program of lessons is central to the school's program and despite the fact that it is a reportable subject, the senior students interviewed reflect a widespread attitude that these

periods are not as serious as other subjects. As it is in the Faith and Values Education periods that MindMatters curriculum is used, this undoubtedly might affect the potential for any impact on the students.

*We've got a bad timetable. I mean Mr (Name) has tried to give us some worksheets on it (mental illness) but everyone goes into PAVE with the attitude, it's a free period.*

*The teachers do what they can I guess but students make it difficult because we have this attitude that this is a free period so it's a bit difficult for them.  
Students 2005*

Whether this is an attitude that was unique to senior students cannot be determined as they were the last to be interviewed. The attitude did not emerge in interviews with other students.

### **Support for MindMatters from other policy initiatives**

The introduction of the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is seen as a support for the school's adoption of MindMatters, as the initiatives that the school has adopted under MindMatters are relevant to the NSSF as well. Further the linking of MindMatters training to the NSSF was seen as valuable.

*It's interesting I saw the latest one which I'm going to try and go to is talking about MindMatters in the context of the National Safe Schools Framework so I'm really pleased that they're sort of linking those two together. Staff 2005*



## 9 What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

### 9.1 Improved student wellbeing

#### Supports for students

This school already had a strong pastoral focus and provided many support options for students. These were maintained throughout the study period. At times new support programs or initiatives occurred, but these seemed to happen in parallel with MindMatters rather than as a result of its adoption. Comments from students reveal that they continued to view the school and their teachers as supportive, throughout the evaluation period.

*I find most of the teachers are pretty supportive. If you go to them with something they'll help you as best they can. - student, 2004*

*Well some of my friends we went to the deans about certain problems and they were like .... Our dean Mr [name], he listened and gave us advice and everything. - Student, 2004.*

#### Bullying and harassment

Student comments suggest that there was no substantial change in the types or levels of bullying and harassment at Highlands College throughout the evaluation period. However it should be noted that even at baseline the students felt that their school had a lower occurrence of bullying than other schools in the area and that Highlands College managed bullying fairly effectively. Students could recall addressing the issue of bullying in classroom discussion.

*In the lower school it was a bigger issue, and they dealt with it pretty well then, but now there's a little bit of bullying and stuff that goes on and that's what teenagers will do when they're together as a group but most of it's not too serious. - Student, 2004*

*There's always going to be a bit of bullying between people, like not everybody likes everybody, that's life. There's always going to be a bit, but it's how the school deals with it. It's not really serious. - Student, 2004.*

*Oh yeah, we did a project on bullying. We had to do 4 minutes about bullying and stuff and the teachers talked to us about a kid in our year that has autism and they were talking about bullying and taking advantage of her disability. - Student, 2004.*

#### Drugs and alcohol

There was no evidence for a significant change in the use or reporting of drugs and alcohol throughout the evaluation period. Students at the third visit could still cite individual cases of substance use. There was a suggestion that the school's drug and alcohol policy had become more stringent or that it was enforced more rigorously, possibly as a result of an incident involving a small number of students.

*The drug policy's changed. If you do get caught with any drug at school you're gone, they've changed the policies. At first, I know some guys who were suspended for using marijuana on a camp but now they've change the policy so if you're caught with it you're straight away.... They get rid of you. - Student, 2004.*

As at baseline, most of the substance use occurred among older students and was predominantly alcohol consumption, sometimes under parental supervision.

*I reckon the whole smoking/alcohol/druggy thing is kind of with year 11 and 12, not in junior, lower school. - Student, 2004.*

*Yeah like my group of friends we don't really go to parties and none of us have been drunk or anything. - Student, 2004.*

*Yeah I know a few people whose mums buy like say a pack of cruisers for them if they wanted to have one in the week they could have one. Quite a few, like a few of my friends, their parents do it for them. - Student, 2004.*

*Well with my family - because I've got older brothers and sisters and stuff - if we go out for dinner, I'll have half a glass of wine - Student, 2004.*

There was also some evidence of marijuana use by a minority and occasional experimentation with other drugs. However the students seemed to discourage their peers from excessive substance use, rather than condoning it.

*Most people who smoked it [marijuana] in our year got expelled. - Student, 2004.*

*It's pretty common. It's more like this social, idle chitchat, a bit of fun. There are a few people that obviously do drink too much but the ones that do become really stupid, they're not really like oh they're a hero. A lot of my friends and I, we kind of like frown - Student, 2004.*

*A few of my mates started this year [on drugs other than marijuana]..... drugs purely experimental only, they wouldn't stay on it, mainly by us telling them they're fools for doing it. - Student, 2004.*

### **Mental health and behaviour problems**

There did not appear to be any significant change in the reporting of mental health problems or behaviour problems. Disruptive behaviour and issues of truancy remained fairly uncommon at Highlands College throughout the evaluation period.

### **Support for students with disabilities**

As previously discussed, the school introduced learning support teachers shortly before the second visit. Their role was to assist students with disabilities and learning difficulties. However

there is no evidence that the appointment of these positions relates directly to the adoption of MindMatters, which was seen in this school as essentially a curriculum resource.

## 9.2 Impacts on staff

### Positive changes in approach to teaching

In the early stages of implementation, few staff at Highlands College were explicitly aware of the MindMatters program, although some may have had opportunities to use curriculum resources in the PAVE sessions. However at the third visit there was evidence that those who had been to training had begun to think about how to apply MindMatters principles in their teaching, regardless of learning area.

*I'm still sort of playing around with it myself ... I'm trying stuff with them ... with science or any of our classes, so get into groups of three or get into groups of five and the kids will go like that, and there'd be some kids that are left out and there'd be some kids that don't know whether to go with that group or that group and neither group's actually asking them. So we're trying to remove that approach, there are some strategies that you can do. ... and all the kids have got to go around and they talk and they laugh and they chat. All of a sudden three minutes later, you've got a group and you say right, get into groups, this is what we're going to do today and so it's really non-threatening. - Staff, 2004.*

*Actually those books are about resilience ... where to go if they're feeling like this or what sort of instant strategies can they adopt if they're in a situation where they're dealing with loss or they're feeling threatened ... so you try and build up an infrastructure, I suppose, for them themselves, without necessarily even talking about the issue. ...I mean you can work across any subject area. I'm using it in my year 9 SMA purposefully all the time at the moment. And the kids don't even know that I am. That's the beauty of it. They're having fun and they love coming to class and they don't know who they sit with now or which group they're working with because they know anything can happen and that's cool. - Staff, 2004.*

## 9.3 Impacts on whole of school

### Supporting existing values and processes

MindMatters was seen to support existing values and processes in the school even though it wasn't used in a systematic way as a whole school program. This may change in the future, with a larger number of staff having attended the professional development and thinking about using the program in a more whole-school fashion.

*I think you'd find in this school, is when you're going to introduce a programme [such as] MindMatters, but then when you look at it a lot of it's already happening and I find - this is my 17<sup>th</sup> year at this school - that what happens here is things infiltrate. I mean sometimes people say, oh we should get such and such going and then when you look at it it's already going. - Staff, 2003.*

*I think that's partly because the school's always looking for what can we do for students so we're always ahead of the formal program so you're always doing something there anyway so when a formal programme like Mind Matters comes along, you're like that will fit in just nicely here and it's already happening. - Staff, 2003.*

### **Plans for future Use**

At the third visit, there were plans to inform the school more broadly of the program and to consider various ways in which it might be used. The use of the curriculum materials was also under review, with the advent of separate learning areas for Faith and Values, and Health and Physical Education. One of the staff members more recently trained in the program felt that there was scope to approach the implementation in new ways, now that several staff had attended the professional development.

*To this point it hasn't contributed a great deal because we really haven't let it. ... I mean it's contributed curriculum, which we've run and I think that's been good - but in terms of impacting on staff understanding, well the staff haven't known about it. ... I think now it has a chance for that to happen. ... I suppose one of the big things that I think Mind Matters can contribute is a change in staff perception of mental health, because if staff have a different perception of mental health as a result of Mind Matters, then their teaching will be different as a result. You know, the sort of jokes that they allow and don't allow in class ... that value-laden language that they do or don't use or allow ... all of those really very subtle things, I think, make massive change to student perceptions. So I suppose, in some ways, the best thing is that we've got a group of staff that want to tell the rest of the staff about what they thought was important. - Staff, 2004.*

## 10 Further views on impacts at the fourth visit

The comments from interviewees about the impact of the school's adoption of MindMatters reflect a general perception that these are indistinguishable from impacts that may have arisen from their pastoral care initiatives anyway. This is understandable given that the adoption of MindMatters in this school is seen as simply an extension of pastoral care. Nevertheless a number of interesting observations were made and these are reported notwithstanding that they cannot be directly attributed to MindMatters.

### 10.1 Impacts on students

#### Sense of safety and belonging

Students at this school consistently reflect that the impact of the school's efforts to provide care and support and to protect them from bullying are successful. They see the school as a very safe place and one to which they are very happy to belong, and feel as if they truly do belong.

*You feel confident. Like coming to the school, you don't feel nervous like some other kids might do, and maybe different private schools or public schools or something like that. You know that nothing can go wrong because the security of students and teachers are all really great.*

*Well they basically take care of you a lot and you can tell by their personalities.*

*And also the grounds are really good; they've got nice gardens and stuff so it makes you feel nice.*

*And there are different programmes like Bully Stoppers dot com and we can go in, in private, and tell them what's happening if there is a certain issue that arises and it will be confidential; it doesn't break your trust or anything. Students 2003*

#### Bullying

As with previous visits, students and staff report that incidents of serious bullying that result in strong discipline are very infrequent.

*I don't think we have as big a bullying issue at this school as they have in other schools. I mean we certainly deal with it but I think we're dealing with a very narrow end of bullying - a lot of children came and complain that they're being bullied but when you look at it, it's very slight. Not that we ignore it, if they feel bad enough to come and talk to us we make sure we deal with it, but we don't always suspend kids or expel them for it. Very often it's just a case of getting a child out and saying look can you watch the language you're using around the playground? You need to watch what you're doing in class because you have been noticed by several people or staff. We usually try and blame the staff for dobbing on other students. Staff 2005*

Nevertheless, there is an ongoing level of bullying that requires the school to maintain a constant effort to address it.

*And at the moment I think we've got a cap on it; it reared its head last term, in particular with year 8s. There was a bit of annoying, insidious sort of stuff; not people actually going out and physically bashing, but it's all the verbal, the sniping, that sort of thing. So I think we're fairly on top of it, but it's certainly something that the deans have to continually attend to, you know. A couple of boys here, a couple of girls there, address the issue and go on and see whether it raises its head again. It's certainly been a year for the 8s. And one that I probably haven't encountered for a while. Maybe it's because I'm at the coalface more now, having to chase the kids up and shake it down and speak to parents. Staff 2005*

### **Increased access to sources of help**

The website known as 'Bully Stoppers', as well as being a method whereby students can safely report bullying on-line, is also useful to students as an easy way to access sources of information and help.

*We also have links to other areas on the Bully Stoppers site. I do believe that secondary kids have actually gone to some of those to deal with depression and things like that and have actually looked at it and thought well that's relative to me, and have sought some sort of help. So those sorts of things have come through as also you know, I think have been quite effective and as (name) points out, if it's helped one kid and that in itself is a very important thing. Staff 2005*

### **Increase student autonomy**

A number of changes implemented during 2005 have given students a greater sense of autonomy. One student related that the main benefit for him in the new 'School in the City' program for Year 9 was that he had learned how to use public transport. This is significant in that students report that as they live in a more or less self-contained satellite suburb, they rarely visit the city and have not had the opportunity to learn these skills. Such skills bring greater autonomy and independence.

*My favourite's been with learning to use the train, getting passes for the train and stuff because now I have a bit more freedom and I can go to the skate park a few kilometres away and get the train there. Student 2005*

Students also feel very positive about the changes they have effected in the school's policy in relation to the wearing of sports clothes on days when they have a sport period. And from changes in uniform policy.

*If we want something changed like our uniform or something, they'll listen to it because we have a council. We have a representative from every home room who talk to the teachers once in a while about things, they're kind of like in-between the teachers and the students.*

*Yeah we got to wear these uniforms because of the... like we complained because we had to wear our winter uniform and then for sport we had to change every time*

*right after but now they take into account we can wear this the whole day.  
Students 2005*

### **Student involvement in pastoral care**

Senior teachers also acknowledge that senior students have become much more keen to take on responsibilities for caring for younger students, although it is acknowledged that this may be a cohort effect.

*We just have an exceptional heap of year 12s this year. In my opinion they're the best year I've seen in all the schools I've been in as a year 12. So I think that's had an impact on Pastoral Care issues in a positive way; bullying issues, year 8s and 9s being isolated because the year 12 see it in the playground. They sort it out if they can and often it's year 12s dragging younger kids into my office or other offices saying this kid's upset and I've told them that they can talk to you and that they'll be safe sort of thing, or coming to me on their own and saying I'm concerned about so and so. It's not just one or two it's a whole range of the class. Staff 2005*

### **Effectiveness of peer support**

Senior students interviewed also reflected very positive views of the peer support program, based on their experiences as younger students.

*I reckon Eights Mates was probably one of the better things because I came to this school not knowing a soul. I came to the orientation and I didn't know anybody else. I felt very intimidated because everyone here had already been in little groups and stuff and that kind of helped. On the first day I got lost in the school and the school's not that big, but I managed to get lost. Student 2005*

*I remember coming in year 8, and was a bit nervous and the year 11s, I had (boy's name) and (girl's name), they were so good. It wasn't so much like they taught us things but we just had a good time and it made us think that we could relate to the year 11s at the time. I sort of stayed mates with them until they left. And I just think it was a really good introduction into the school. Student 2005*

## **10.2 Impacts on staff**

### **Ability to identify mental health problems**

In identifying impacts of the school's adoption of MindMatters, one staff member speculated that staff may have become more adept at picking up on any mental health problems that students might have and referring them to the dean for further support.

*They've got so many issues and particularly the girls and the rates of depression and that that we're now encountering. I don't know whether it was always there or*

*whether we're just more able to identify it now; we're better at picking it up now but there's so much there, that can only be of assistance. Staff 2005*

### **10.3 Impacts on the whole school**

#### **Whole-school approaches**

Given the difficulties that exist in distinguishing impacts of MindMatters from impacts of the school's pastoral care ethos, it is pleasing to at least identify one area in which the school acknowledges that MindMatters has assisted them to take a slightly different approach. MindMatters training emphasises whole-school approaches, and this school has applied this principle to whole-school approaches to bullying.

*I think that's helped us but I suppose we had a whole school approach to care in that we as a school thought it was important. But the whole school emphasis of MindMatters has helped our thinking, and certainly helped me, in planning for continued development and change, so under that umbrella - and some of the tips and ... and how do you roll things out, you know all of that resource I think is very important and I think our anti-bullying committee, has really grown out of that sort of let's plan for whole school, what things do we need in place to get this to happen. And before we roll this out what do we need to do. And things like surveys and stuff are in the package. Staff 2005*

#### **Use of a shared language**

Further, one of the impacts of a large proportion of the staff attending MindMatters training, and the emphasis on MindMatters during 2003 and 2004 has contributed to the development of a new set of language terms related to bullying, resilience and mental health.

*And language. That's what I've noticed I think in our school that we now use the same terms. Executive 2005*

## 11 Indicators of change from student questionnaires

Two questionnaires (Healthy Kids Survey and Help-Seeking Questionnaire) have been used to assess key outcomes from the school's use of the MindMatters resources. From these questionnaires, a number of variables have been selected to indicate changes in: protective and resilience factors, help-seeking intentions; and drug and alcohol use.

To examine whether any of these indicators have changed since MindMatters was implemented at Highlands College, the scores for each sex in each grade in 2005 are compared to the scores of students of the same sex and grade in 2002.

### Note

Differences between age and sex groupings in 2002 and 2005 were examined for statistical significance. For Tables 1 and 3, the *t*-test for independent samples was used while for Table 2, Chi-square was used.

Positive or negative changes in variables are described as 'little' if they are between one quarter and one half of the standard deviation of the national mean, and as 'moderate' if they are between half and three quarters of the standard deviation. Changes greater than three quarters of the standard deviation are described as simply 'higher' or 'lower'.

Please note that it is not possible to attribute with certainty any positive or negative changes in these indicators simply to the school's use of MindMatters. It is likely that other important factors might also impact on these variables.

### Changes in protective and resilience factors

The Healthy Kids Survey has 2 main scales each of which has six sub-scales. Not all of these are considered to be target variables for the MindMatters program. Four key variables have been selected for the purpose of this report, as likely indicators of changes that might be attributed to MindMatters. These are:

- the "School attachment" sub-scale;
- the "Autonomy Experience" sub-scale;
- the "Self-esteem" sub-scale ;
- the "Effective help-seeking" sub-scale

Table 1 indicates that there were a number of statistically significant differences (marked in bold) between students in 2005 compared to 2002.

- Female students in Year 9 in 2005 had moderately higher mean scores for "School Connection" compared to 2002 ( $p < .01$ );
- Male students in Year 9 and girls in Year 11 in 2005 had slightly higher mean "School Connection" scores compared to 2002 ( $p < .05$ );
- Female students in year 10 in 2005 had moderately higher mean scores for "Autonomy experience" compared to 2002 ( $p < .01$ );
- Male students in Year 9 showed slightly higher mean scores for "Autonomy experience" compared to 2002 ( $p < .05$ );
- Male students in Year 9 in 2005 had moderately higher mean scores for "Self-esteem" compared to 2002 ( $p < .05$ );
- Female students in Years 8 and 9 in 2005 showed slightly higher mean "Self-esteem" scores compared to 2002 ( $p < .05$ );

- Male students in Grade 10 in 2005 had slightly lower mean “Self-esteem” scores compared to 2002 ( $p < .05$ );
- Male students in Grade 9 in 2005 had moderately higher mean “Effective Help-Seeking” scores than 2002 ( $p < .01$ );
- Female students in Grade 10 in 2005 showed slightly higher mean “Effective Help-Seeking” scores between 2002 and 2005 ( $p < .01$ )

**Table 1: Resilience and Protective factors in 2005 compared to the control group.**

		School connection	Autonomy experience	Self esteem	Effective help-seeking
<b>Grade 8 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	A little higher	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	A little higher	<b>A little higher</b>	No difference
<b>Grade 9 (2005)</b>	Males	<b>A little higher</b>	<b>A little higher</b>	<b>Moderately higher</b>	<b>Moderately higher</b>
	Females	<b>Moderately higher</b>	A little higher	<b>A little higher</b>	No difference
<b>Grade 10 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	No difference	<b>A little lower</b>	No difference
	Females	No difference	<b>Moderately higher</b>	A little higher	<b>A little higher</b>
<b>Grade 11 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	A little higher	A little higher	A little higher
	Females	<b>A little higher</b>	A little higher	A little higher	No difference

The table also shows a number of non-significant differences between the data collected in 2005 compared to 2002:

- Female students in Years 8,9,and 11, as well as boys in Years 8 and 11 all showed small, slightly higher mean “Autonomy experience” scores;
- Female students in Years 10 and 11, as well as boys in Year 11 showed slightly higher mean “Self-esteem” scores
- Male students in year 11 had a slightly higher mean score for “Effective Help-Seeking”.

***Changes in help-seeking intentions***

In the Help-Seeking Questionnaire, students are given a scenario depicted in a cartoon format and are asked to indicate what type of help-seeking responses they might use if they were in the situation. For the purpose of this report, two variables have been examined for change. These are:

*“Willingness to Talk to Someone at School”*

Students were given a list of individuals (friend, mother teacher etc) or organisation (eg Kids Help Line) and asked to indicate whether or not, if they were confronted with the problem depicted, they would talk to anyone on the list. They could select as many as they wanted. This variable identifies the students who had indicated that they would talk to a teacher or some other adult at the school.

*“Positive Attitude to School Counsellor”*

Students were asked to indicate whether they considered that a school counsellor, student welfare teacher or pastoral care teacher (abbreviated to student welfare) could help with the problem depicted in the questionnaire. Those who indicated that a counsellor would “help quite a lot” or “would definitely be helpful” were classified as having a “positive attitude to the school counsellor”.

Table 2 shows the differences for males and females in each grade in 2005 compared to students of the same sex and grade in 2002.

**Table 2: Help-seeking indicators in students in 2005 compared to the control group.**

		<b>% who indicate they would talk to someone at school</b>	<b>% who indicate that student welfare would be helpful</b>
<b>Grade 8 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	No difference
	Females	A little higher	No difference
<b>Grade 9 (2005)</b>	Males	A little higher	No difference
	Females	A little higher	No difference
<b>Grade 10 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	<b>Moderately lower</b>
	Females	No difference	No difference
<b>Grade 11 (2005)</b>	Males	A little higher	No difference
	Females	A little higher	No difference

Only one of these comparisons was statistically significant. There was a moderate, statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) decrease between 2002 and 2005 in the proportion of Grade 10 boys reporting that they thought a “school counsellor would be useful”.

Differences which were not found to be statistically significant were:

- Male students in Years 9 and 11 were slightly more likely to indicate that they would talk to a teacher or some other adult school, compared to 2002, as were Female students in Years 8, 9 and 11.

***Changes in drug and alcohol use and intentions***

In the Healthy Kids Survey, students were also asked to indicate the number of days of drinking, smoking and use of marijuana they had experienced in the previous three months. Three variables are reported as potential outcomes of the MindMatters program:

“mean number of days of drinking in last three months”

“mean number of days of smoking in the last three months”

“mean number of days of using marijuana in the last three months”

Table 3 shows the mean number of days of use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana for students in 2005 compared to students of the same sex and grade in 2002. Overall, these data show some positive changes in frequency of use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

**Table 4: Drug and alcohol indicators, 2005 compared to 2002**

		Mean days of alcohol use	Mean days of tobacco use	Mean days of marijuana use
<b>Grade 8 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
<b>Grade 9 (2005)</b>	Males	<b>Slightly lower</b>	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
<b>Grade 10 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	<b>Slightly higher</b>	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
<b>Grade 11 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	Slightly higher	Slightly higher
	Females	Slightly lower	Slightly lower	No difference

Two comparisons were found to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) namely:

- Male students in Year 9 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean number of drinking days compared to students in the same grade in 2002
- Male students in Year 10 in 2005 had a slightly higher mean number of days of smoking compared to students in the same grade in 2002

Other changes which were noted but which were not statistically significant were:

- Female students in year 11 had a slightly lower mean number of days of drinking compared to their counterparts in 2002;
- Male students in Year 11 had slightly higher mean number of days of smoking tobacco, whereas female students in Year 11 has slightly lower mean number of days smoking, compared to their counterparts in 2002
- Male students in year 11 had a slightly higher mean number of days of using marijuana compared to students in the same grade in 2002

**Comment**

Scores at baseline for resilience factors and protective factors for both boys and girls reflect what was learned qualitatively; i.e. this school is purposefully designed to provide for the social and emotional needs of students. Given the high baseline scores, it is surprising that there were a number of cohorts in 2005 who showed higher mean scores than their counterparts in 2002.

While MindMatters is rated as important in this school, in practical terms it added very little to the school's existing structures and systems for supporting students. While use of MindMatters is ongoing after three years, the level of use has declined a little over three years.

Positive changes in students may have been assisted by the school's use of MindMatters but it is difficult to conclude that the contribution of MindMatters was a significant one. In this case it must be seen as one among many strategies that the school is taking to maintain a high level of care for students.

## 12 Key Learnings from this school

*Consistency of MindMatters with the existing school ethos and direction facilitates the uptake and implementation of the program.*

*In schools that already allocate a high priority to student wellbeing, it is difficult to distinguish the impact of MindMatters from the impact of other programs, structures and policies; however adoption of MindMatters under these circumstances is likely to reinforce the school's focus on student wellbeing.*

*In schools where there is a relatively low baseline incidence of student difficulties - such as mental health problems, bullying, truancy, substance use or difficult behaviour - it is difficult to identify tangible impacts from the adoption of MindMatters; this does not mean that the program is not valued by the school community.*

*Support from school leaders is important in establishing wellbeing as a priority and/or in the adoption and implementation of MindMatters. In this school there was an opportunity for formal leadership through the roles of the Deans, who have responsibility for student pastoral care and behaviour management.*

*MindMatters can be a useful addition to the curriculum and provides comprehensive, easy to use materials for teachers, with or without a previous background in mental health issues.*

*When a small number of staff are driving the implementation, the process is particularly vulnerable to staff changes and competing priorities within the school.*

*When a small number of staff are driving the implementation, it may be difficult to instigate a truly whole school approach, so that implementation may occur only in certain domains (such as the curriculum).*

*Attendance of a critical number of staff at the MindMatters professional development facilitates the development of formal or informal planning groups and may aid in a more comprehensive approach to implementation*

*Attendance of a critical number of staff at the MindMatters professional development can result in renewed enthusiasm for the program within a school*