



Evaluation of MindMatters at Kerry Bay Girls High School

(Fictional Name)

Report on a study from 2001 to 2003

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

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

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Summary

Kerry Bay Girls High School is an all girls Catholic school located in a metropolitan area. The school enrolls approximately 1,100 girls from years 7 to 12. A large proportion of students come from a non-English speaking or bilingual background. Very few students are Indigenous. Students travel from a wide geographic area to attend the school.

Pastoral care is a central focus of Kerry Bay High, and provides a foundation for ethos and educational practice throughout the school. Students are organised into home rooms for pastoral care. In years 7 to 9, each home room has two home room teachers to ensure that all students have the opportunity to form a strong and positive relationship with at least one of the teachers.

MindMatters was identified as a program that would complement the pastoral care program with a curriculum that would focus on building social and emotional skills, awareness of mental health issues, and promote help-seeking behaviours. There was a particular perception among the executive and certain year coordinators that mental health issues had been under-addressed at Kerry Bay and MindMatters provided an opportunity to change this.

There were two main aspects to the way in which MindMatters was adopted in this school. Firstly, the curriculum resources in the MindMatters kit were extensively used in the personal development and health subject which is compulsory for all students in years 7 to 9, with the principle focus being on the 'Bullying' and 'Resilience' resources in years 7 and 8 and the 'Stress and Coping' resources in year 9. Secondly, the school implemented a program of reaching out to external agencies and over the course of the evaluation many positive relationships were newly developed.

Despite the very positive school ethos that characterised Kerry Bay prior to the adoption of MindMatters, the staff and students reported many positive impacts arising from the school's decision to use the program.

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

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

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

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

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

Overview

Kerry Bay Girls High School was founded in 1904 and is located in the outer suburbs of a capital city.

The school's enrolment is around 1100 students in years 7 – 12, with an average class size of 30-35. A large proportion of the students come from non-English speaking or bilingual backgrounds. Approximately three per-cent of students are from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

There are 80 to 85 staff members, approximately 80 per-cent of whom are female.

The school itself draws its student population from a broad geographic area. Nevertheless, its location within a well-established and moderately affluent part of the city is reflected in a reasonable proportion of students being from families who have middle to high socio-demographic characteristics. The level of school fees does not however preclude students from lower socio-economic backgrounds attending.

Administration

The school is governed by a religious order of Catholic nuns and is lead by a principal, deputy principal and two assistant principals who are responsible for development and curriculum. Together these staff are referred to as the 'Leadership Team'.

Timetable

The school is timetabled on a 10-day cycle, with seven 45-minute periods per day.

Curriculum

While there is a traditional subject-based curriculum at Kerry Bay, the school offers a great deal of choice and a range of additional curriculum options including lunchtime and after hours sporting activities, musical opportunities (instrumental and vocal), debating, community service etc. Classroom teachers support these additional curricula by committing a great deal of their time out of hours and making themselves accessible to their students.

Religious Education is compulsory for years 7 to 10. Students are offered core (compulsory) and elective subjects in years 9 and 10. A subject called 'Personal Development' is compulsory for years 7 to 9.

Unifying themes across the subject areas are a commitment to fostering a love of learning, as well as the development of life skills such as empathy and understanding. Teachers are encouraged to create a climate in which students will become engaged with and take responsibility for their learning.

The school supports the curriculum by providing "well equipped learning areas and access to a variety of technologies".

Annual turnover

Student turnover is relatively low. The majority of student turnover occurs at the end of year 10, when a minority of students might enrol into the co-educational state system or enter the work force.

The numbers out of 180 that we would lose (after year 10), sometimes it might go up to 25 per year. Staff 2002.

In the years prior to the commencement of the evaluation period, the school had experienced a large turnover among the school leadership team.

Over the past eight years, I think we've had, I think it's four principals. We had a principal who ... passed away. The deputy principal took over for a year ... it was a quite stressful period ... at that time I think the staff carried and lifted on, knowing that we were in a very limbo situation waiting for a new, probably nun, to come in. Then we had (name). She was here for a couple of years but was really involved with the church and the church was having huge problems at that time ... and wasn't at school a lot. And again, staff were continuing to pick up extra bits and pieces and the deputies were doing a lot of work. And then we had (name) come in. Four people over that time and very big changes in leadership. Very big changes in focus. I think people are exhausted. People are starting to settle again now but I think some people are deciding to move on. Some people are deciding to stay ... all through that though I think the staffing had actually been a very strong point. If we hadn't been a cohesive staff and had definite beliefs in the ethos of the school, the school would have quickly deteriorated. Staff 2001.

The membership of the leadership team remained constant throughout the period of the evaluation.

Pastoral care arrangements

Pastoral care is a central focus of Kerry Bay High, and provides a foundation for ethos and educational practice throughout the school. Staff report being able to develop positive professional relationships with students and to discuss issues outside the curriculum.

It's a whole-school pastoral care approach. Staff 2001

Prior to the evaluation period of MindMatters, pastoral care arrangements were already extensively implemented throughout the school in Personal Development and Religious Education subjects, as well as in peer support structures. Students are organised into home rooms for administrative purposes, but this also enables home room teachers to identify and talk to students who may have problems and if necessary, refer them to year coordinators.

Everyone practically has a teacher that they can trust in and talk to and that teacher will help you. Student 2002

In 2001, each home room in years 7 to 9 had 2 home room teachers.

Behaviour management arrangements

In general, students at this school are reported to be well-behaved, although there are some complaints about students' behaviour at the station or on trains. This may be a function of large groups of students dominating public transport at the end of the school day, rather than a function of poor behaviour *per se*.

Kerry Bay High bases behaviour management on a hierarchal structure. Classroom teachers deal with incidents directly in the first instance. If this does not achieve a result the student is referred to the subject coordinator, and then onto a member of the leadership team. Staff indicated that the school attempts to separate responsibility for pastoral care (with the year coordinators) and disciplinary actions (subject coordinators).

The hierarchical structure is a good one here at school for I think each staff member would know to whom they could speak, if needed to, about a student. Staff 2002

Other welfare support structures

Kerry Bay High completed a survey assessing the needs of students three years prior to its adoption of MindMatters. This prompted a number of changes to the welfare structures, which were being established at the time of the first visit. In particular, a well defined peer support program was in place.

We have actually taken steps in pastoral care and peer support things and 'Big Sister-Little Sister' program. Year 7's as a part of their curriculum are matched with their year 10 students as buddies and that happens during the first semester and they meet once a cycle and have different programs that they run through with different issues and that's worked quite well. Staff 2001

In 2001, the school employed an external school counsellor from a local community centre on a part time basis for 12 hours per-week. This was extended to 15 hours per-week in 2002. Prior to employing a counsellor, the school had a pastoral minister who performed similar duties as a counsellor.

The use of the school counsellor is limited as the students cannot self refer to the school counsellor and must be referred to them by the year coordinator, who may be approached by the student, their peers, another staff member or parent. Whilst the school counsellor reports that teachers are good at identifying and referring students who are having difficulties, students suggest that it would be more beneficial if they were able to self refer.

In addition to counselling the school offers a vast range of other welfare support structures. A specific program for year 9 (known as 'Bridges') was being developed in 2001 at the same time as the school adopted the MindMatters program, and continued to be developed throughout the evaluation period.

I wanted to do something with year 9's because it is an icky year. Something that was uniquely theirs. We do RE here and we've got a fabulous program, we do personal development, we do terrific stuff there but mindful of the fact that kids don't transfer knowledge from one subject to another or subjects to life, I wanted to have a program that you could do life skill education and I want it done in their

*home room group a lot of the time and done by their home room core teachers.
Staff 2002*

Similarly, for year 10 a program known as "Crossroads" was developed and implemented in parallel with the MindMatters initiative.

Other programs adopted by the school either prior to the adoption of MindMatters or concurrent with it include: "Road Beyond the Gate House", "Knockout Violence", "Proact", "Seasons for Growth", and "Rainbows".

Yeah there's a lot of support in the school if you ask for it. Student 2002

Links to the community

At the commencement of the evaluation period the school had a number of links into the local community, mainly associated with their community service programs.

We actually do a heck of a lot out there in the community ... we have community service programs where the kids go out and work in nursing homes or do meals on wheels and my girls go out and help with the Special Development Schools swimming program. Staff 2001.

Parent involvement

In 2001, staff indicated that parental involvement in extra curricular activities within the school was limited

*Getting parents involved in the school and drawing them in is extremely difficult.
Staff 2002*

However communication between staff and parents concerning academic and behavioural issues was reported to be very good.

Student views of the school

Most students appeared to view the school quite positively and demonstrate affection for each other and also for their teachers, often with hugs, flowers or cards. While there was some bullying, the school was generally viewed as a friendly place and the students saw socialising as an essential part of schooling. Students enjoyed camps and other activities that brought them closer to the teachers and their peers. While classroom teachers appeared to be quite close to the students, the year coordinators and the leadership team were more distant, often only becoming involved in formal occasions or disciplinary practices.

I love it. Student 2002

They try and please everyone. They go for everyone's needs, like if they have trouble learning, then there's something for them. Student 2001

However students also reported additional social pressures associated with attending Kerry Bay High.

Well there's a big deal that everyone knows who we are. We always have to be ladies. We always have to be polite and considerate. Student 2001.

I was on the train one time and there was this couple and ... they were like 'oh rich snobs' and all this ... because we wear blazers. Student 2002

Staff views of the school

Comments from staff and parents suggest that while people may become disillusioned or frustrated over certain issues, staff generally viewed the school in a positive way. Most staff were happy and appeared to enjoy positive relationships with each other and with most students. Several participants described the school as having a caring atmosphere, among both staff and students.

New teachers and pre-service teachers on their practical placement were welcomed and assisted by other staff and often comment on the warm relationships within the school and the positive school ethos.

We have a very strong, cohesive staff ... No place is perfect ... but overall we enjoy each other as people ... we give concern and concrete support It's quite a compassionate school to be in. Staff, 2001.

A wonderful place to work. Staff 2001

Well I like coming every day. I'm just hesitating because at this time of the year it's the hardest time of the year, because this is when you've got a lot of (extra) work, timelines and things like that. I think sometimes administration in schools can forget what it's like at the coal face, but you know people here are approachable and most people, I think there's a good atmosphere in staff-rooms and certainly in the office I'm in and in the staff-room. Most people are accepting and willing to take on extra responsibilities and things like that. A bit too much sometimes. I like the ethos of the school. I like the (religious order's) traditions of welcoming people and that type of thing. Staff 2001

Community views of the school

Most of those interviewed suggested that the community generally views the school positively. The school was reported to have a good reputation compared to many in the area and attracts more applications than it can cater for in terms of enrolments. Members of the community approached the school to be involved in some projects and programs, such as meals on wheels, legacy badges and prayers on Remembrance Day.

Parents and the wider community generally perceived Kerry Bay High as a positive, educational environment that meets the academic and social needs of the students.

This school's characteristics at the beginning of the study

Well I really see it as positive. I think they really look after the girls and prepare them for the big world. Parent 2001

I feel like when I come in, almost like a part of the family because they know me. Parent 2001

2 How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

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

Interviewees	Number interviewed		
	1 st visit	2 nd visit	3 rd visit
Principal	1	1	1
Deputy or Assistant Principal	3	3	3
Senior teacher	2	2	2
Teacher or assistant teacher	6	6	4
Student	12	12	10
Counsellor, social worker etc	1	1	
Parent	1		
Community member			
Other			

Over the two years of the evaluation, two telephone interviews were conducted with the person nominated by the principal as the key contact person. A brief visit was also made to the school early in 2003 and a brief conversation that took place on this occasion was also taped.

Student questionnaires were administered in December 2001, December 2002 and December 2003.

At baseline, the following participation rates were achieved:

Year 7	74%
Year 8	54%
Year 9	53%
Year 10	39%
Year 11	25%

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. In this school, no data was collected from year 7 students in 2002 or 2003 so no comparisons can be made for this year.

Kerry Bay did not participate in the extension of the evaluation for a further year in 2004/2005.

How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

3 Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

3.1 Community context

Kerry Bay High is located in a moderately affluent suburb of a large capital city. The suburb is well established and median house prices are well above the metropolitan median. This reflects the moderately affluent lifestyle that is available through the range of shops and other facilities in the local area. This lifestyle was seen to be relevant to interpreting, in particular, the students' attitudes and behaviours in relation to smoking and alcohol use.

Staff reported that there are many social changes that impact upon the community and that schools are increasingly expected (by members of the community and through political change) to address these issues among young people. Such issues include drugs, discipline, driver education, social skills and personal responsibility. Teachers considered that families previously played a greater role in providing varied experiences for children and helping them develop their core values. Materialism and the decline of the extended family may have contributed to these social changes.

3.2 Student wellbeing issues

Mental health problems

The staff, students and school executives all reported that there were a number of students who were affected by mental health problems, and awareness of these problems was perhaps the principal reason for the adoption of MindMatters at Kerry Bay High.

Mental health problems often result in students missing school, an inability to concentrate in class, bullying and other behavioral problems. The incidence and awareness of mental health problems in the students has slowly increased over the past few years. Many staff believe that mental health is an important area that has not previously been comprehensively addressed in the school system or in the curriculum.

I think it (mental health) is an area that's been under-recognized in schools from the beginning. If you think about PE in terms of Physical health ... it's a whole subject. This is another component of health that ... involves a lot more at the time of change, with adolescents. It's an important part of life ... in terms of the whole identity and the amount of change and questioning of self. Staff 2001.

There was a growing concern among staff with the increasing trends of students presenting with mental health problems, especially in years 8, 9 and 10, and the implication these issues have on student development and learning.

I believe it is an area of the curriculum that hasn't been perhaps highlighted in the past. In my experience over the past few years there are more and more students, their mental health is not as it should be. It is a focal point for all learning. If a student isn't happy, no good, efficient learning will take place. Staff 2001.

Many participants, including some students, felt that young peoples' mental health problems were being triggered or exacerbated by social pressures and that the rate of change in Australian society makes it difficult for schools to continue to meet their changing roles. Societal concerns reported to be influencing the mental health of students included family problems, materialistic lifestyles, drugs, alcohol, sexual activity, peer pressure and pressure relating to school work.

You can see emerging so many issues related to teenagers, primarily to depression, family break ups, grief, separation of parents, loss of family groups. I think it's getting to the point where it needs to be definitely supported and taught, and (we should) encourage students to talk about it. Staff 2001

This statement reflects the opinion of both staff and students that there is a large need for a greater emphasis to be placed on mental health within the school and wider community.

Staff illustrated the need for students to be developing greater resilience, more positive coping strategies, greater willingness to seek help and improvements in behavioral problems.

Students articulated that they were sometimes unaware of mental health problems and the support services available to them throughout the school.

You don't notice, like at the beginning it's just like ... 'oh she's lost a bit of weight'... but you can't really tell ... some people use drugs to get away from their problems ... like family problems ... you can take drugs to get away so your mind's elsewhere. Student 2002

Staff also reported the need to promote the mental health of staff, and felt that this is often overlooked.

I would say that we need not only look at students but (also) staff. It concerns me always that the mental health of students is discussed freely and easily, the mental health of staff is never discussed. And it has as big an impact on the effectiveness of classroom teaching as anything else does. Staff 2001.

Bullying and harassment

At the commencement of the evaluation, Kerry Bay High had an anti-bullying and harassment policy that was well publicised with students and parents. This was largely the result of a survey that had been conducted at the school three years prior to the MindMatters evaluation period, which concluded that the majority of bullying occurred in the form of verbal harassment.

Bullying is a serious issue, but the school is working to address that ... there are bullying policies being implemented. Staff 2002

Students and staff reported that bullying seemed to arise largely from the changes in interpersonal relationships and friendship groups among the girls and not from any racial or ethnic discrimination.

Students were encouraged to report bullying and all members of the community reported that when there are interpersonal conflicts, the school tries to help students resolve them. However, students indicated that teachers do not always find out about these incidents and that a large percentage of students were reluctant to come forward for help.

MindMatters was seen as providing a way of supporting the bullying and harassment policy through integration of various elements of the resources into the curriculum.

Drugs and alcohol

All members of the school community agreed that there was significant drug and alcohol misuse among the student population, although this occurred rarely on school grounds. Some smoking incidents were reported in toilets behind buildings, but excessive consumption of alcohol on weekends was considered a greater problem.

Some use of marijuana and other drugs also occurred at parties and social events outside of school and marijuana was reported to be very socially acceptable and very accessible in the nearby suburbs.

At the senior levels alcohol is consumed as part of social life ... it doesn't mean every girl is going out and getting plastered every night ... but many are and further down in the junior schools, 9 and 10, where it certainly again is in wide use. Alcohol provides that social lubrication. It lowers the inhibition factor of course, social ease. Staff 2001.

Students reported a variety of reasons for substance use. They saw the use of drugs and alcohol in younger students as a way of gaining acceptance among peers, but in the older groups, students considered it more likely to reflect habitual use and social norms.

Students also reported other reasons for substance use including helping them to feel more comfortable in social situations and as being an escape from their problems. Staff and parents have expressed concern about associated risks of drink-driving, unprotected sex and the link between marijuana and mental health problems.

Even in year 7 I know there's drugs and alcohol you know ... its just a way of being accepted to each other: Student 2001

Everyone like the majority I have to say, have used drugs, have smoked, drink, like every weekend you go to a party, its like everyone brings drinks down, and everyone is smoking, and people have used harder drugs than tobacco. Student 2002

Everyone's willing to try like it's gotten to the stage if you haven't tried smoking, you haven't tried drinking, what's wrong with you? Student 2002

At the time of the first visit one teacher also expressed concern for students becoming addicted to large amounts of caffeine and stimulants through cola drinks and guarana in confectionery and drinks. The teacher reported that some students who used a lot of these were suffering from shaking, restlessness and irritability and were unaware of the source. The teacher also felt that this was increasing their anxiety and interfering with learning.

One of the things that concern me enormously is ... high caffeine levels and guarana I've just had my third student unable to sit in a chair blood pressure up getting increasingly agitated and missing school. Staff 2001

The school incorporates a harm minimization approach to education and includes drug and alcohol education in the Personal Development and Health curriculums. This begins in year 7 and is reinforced especially in years 9 and 10.

Behavioural problems

In general students were seen as being well behaved within the school environment, although some community complaints about students' behavior at the local train station had been received. Students perceived that they were vulnerable to complaints because of the distinctive nature of their school uniform.

Staff also reported that some students have difficulty in taking responsibility for their own actions and learning.

One of the biggest things ... is that they don't take responsibility for themselves ... its not accepting personal responsibility for actions and accepting the fact that you're learning through that. The barriers go up automatically and (they) make an excuse or push blame every where else ... the school ... Parents ... government.

Staff 2001

Truancy, attendance

Staff and students reported truancy as a minor problem at Kerry Bay High. When it did occur, it was attributed to student disengagement, out-of-school activities, or problems at home.

Some staff believe that the school could improve its response to students at risk of disengagement and should place a greater emphasis on providing alternative activities and pathways for students including apprenticeships, TAFE courses and contact with external agencies.

You do have a group of kids who are like that who are fine kids but they are a bit lost, they don't feel associated with the school much and the school's not addressing their needs. Staff 2002

Gender specific needs

A major concern of staff in regard to sexuality was the risk of unsafe and non-consensual sex in connection with substance use, as well as same-sex attraction. Staff suggested that sexuality issues and fears of pregnancy might be a stressor for some girls.

A number of kids (have been) coming to me with same sex attraction issues. It's obviously an issue with kids in the school, we need to look at it in terms of curriculum. School Counsellor 2002.

Staff reported that students do cover some material in the curriculum about sexuality, but felt that the education was too narrow in its focus and did not embrace the breadth of issues in heterosexual relationships, let alone same-sex attraction.

Teachers also feel that there may be some hesitation from the Catholic Education Office to endorse direct teachings about these issues.

The CEO has been reluctant to do anything about same-sex attraction although they're very aware that there an issue that needs to be addressed, but weren't quite sure how to address it. Staff 2002

I would say every Catholic school teaches absolutely straight down the line in terms of sexuality and we do the nuts and bolts, the plumbing bits and pieces and we do love and relationships and it's all 'draw this diagram'. It's unbelievably narrow.

Staff 2001

Curriculum Inadequacy

Staff reported that students' knowledge of mental health issues was inadequate. They asserted that students' needs were acute as they lacked sufficient knowledge and ability to identify needs, discuss mental health issues, engage in help-seeking behaviour or to identify when peers, family or community members might be at risk.

The staff was concerned that theoretical knowledge should become deeply held and transferable to student action. Consequently, they were determined to implement curriculum change that would support the transfer of knowledge out of the classroom and into practical application.

One of the things I see as a big educational issue is ... to get kids to intellectualize and relate different things they do, rather than compartmentalise them and rather, we're going to maths or we come into science and we can't do a graph because we only do that in maths. And so there needs to be some way ... of not being in a little box where we go to this class, we do this in PD ... that it (MindMatters) is some way across the curriculum, through the school. Parent 2001

Curriculum gaps were reported and attributed to a lack of careful programming and review. Some staff, for example, made assumptions that other faculties were covering particular content that was not in fact being covered at all. A further complication was that in some cases students received the same content in an unplanned way across two or more subjects. Staff reported that some students did not receive any information in some areas of mental health.

What you get happening is (that) RE (Religious Education) people think that's not RE, the PD (Personal Development) people will look after that and the PD people do the same sort of thing. Like one of the gaps was same sex attraction.

Staff 2002

Staff indicated that the curriculum is out-dated, and that the younger generations are in need of more relevant, fresh and innovative information.

Our kids are getting more and more advanced and we need to bring things down from what we taught in year 8 to now probably year 6 and it's an ongoing need to be - kids are smarter, they're ready - and the pace with technology and how quickly you can get through things in the classroom because of technology, is speeding up the process of when kids were ready for information. Staff 2001

3.3 Adequacy of student support approaches

Both staff and students reported that the school counsellor's role and the time allocation for this service was not adequate for the size of the student population and for the number of students who need this support. Staff and students believed the position should be full time and offer more variety of services to a wider population.

The policy of the school is that the school counsellor is accessed through the year coordinator who provides an immediate level of support and then refers on if necessary. It is assumed that such a policy was necessary given the demand on the counsellor's limited time. Nevertheless, students believed it would be preferable if they could self-refer, and that, if this was the case, more students might discuss their problems.

Student 1: Like we have a counsellor at the school but they just make it for people with problems. I think they should make it a bit like open.

Student 2: Open for everyone. It's just like for people who have got family like problems, who bring it to school. It's like people who have got a problem at home and bring it to school and go see the coordinator and they get the option of going to see the counsellor. It's not open to like me and her, like I suppose I'd like to talk to someone but it's not open for us because we don't bring our problems to school.

Students 2001

Whilst the majority of students reported positive relationships with teachers, positive help-seeking behaviors were not always apparent, with students relying on peers.

You see high levels of anxiety among some students. You see students that work with their peers or go to their peers when they've got a problem but their peers are then at a loss because they don't know how to support their friends or work with their friends. You see students that avoid going to teachers or level coordinators or people in terms of the problem they've got. They are not seeking out the level of help that is available to them throughout the school. You see students that aren't even aware of what's happening to themselves. Staff 2001

Staff also indicated that there was a need for stronger and more functional links with the community to facilitate additional support for students due to the limited hours of the school counsellor, and the high level of demand on staff, particularly year coordinators, to provide aid to those in need.

We need to work towards ... that our links with external agencies could increase ... we've got (name) for some time during the week but not full time. ... but we need to increase that link with extra support because obviously you're having increasing numbers of problems and you have one year level coordinator for approximately 200 girls and have the role as disciplinary as well. It poses problems.

Staff 2001

3.4 Consistency with school direction, ethos

MindMatters was easily assimilated into Kerry Bay High School because of the school's positive ethos, with their large central focus on pastoral care and student wellbeing.

Our core mission is an educative one ... (of) the whole person and so forth, we believe in strongly, like in the model ... the two stick figures, hands joined, the pastoral and welfare curriculum connection. Staff 2002

MindMatters also enhanced the school's change in direction to incorporate a more inclusive education of mental health and improvement of student support.

I think it (MindMatters) is about the school changing direction from the way they looked at welfare and other health issues in the last few years. I think it used to be a pastoral care responsibility of teachers, now I think the school is seeing the issues for students are wider than just what impacts here. I think it's about giving more options to students. Skilling up teachers and actually a recognition about the vastness of outside issues and how they impact on students. Staff 2001

Because we are a 'Road Beyond the Gatehouse' school also, I think the two have dove-tailed into each other beautifully and a number of initiatives have been - both programs have really been the basis for moving on because ... their focus is ... the wellbeing of young people and that whole school approach to pastoral care.

Staff 2002

3.5 Perceived need to emphasise student wellbeing

Staff indicated the significance of adolescence as a time of significant change and perceived that more supportive resources should be implemented to assist students to negotiate these changes and to minimize turbulence.

It's an important part of life where it's recognized in terms of what the whole identity is and the amount of change and questioning of self and working out in a lot of ways who you are with increased freedom and the increased mental capacity of different things. The challenges you are faced with that you have to deal with a little but more in yourself rather than with your parents. Staff 2001

In addition to these developmental changes, staff perceived that students needed additional support because of the impact of an increased prevalence of psycho-social problems.

We've seen a change in our students. Our year 7's have gone back to a different kind of kid, but our year 8,9 and 10 kids at the moment currently have a more serious range of issues and we have seen a marked increase in terms of school refusal ... in terms of poor behaviour which results in internal suspension ... it's a whole questioning of behaviour ... we've got kids with an ongoing sort of problem, and kids with increased rate of depression and also some with more serious mental illness problems in the school. It's not just the individuals, but educating the girls in terms of how to deal with those people. Staff 2001

In particular, staff were focusing their efforts on year 9 as these students were seen as being particularly vulnerable.

We are trying to catch them at this age group. They seem to be straying a little bit at different times and need different sorts of challenges ... so it's a lot of programs that we are running simultaneously. Staff 2002

3.6 Organisational concerns

Staff mental health

Two staff members emphasised the need for the school to focus on staff wellbeing in addition to students' mental health. It was suggested that this topic is often avoided in the administration of a school and that staff training could be provided to produce a learning environment that is more conducive to learning and to positive mental health.

The mental health of staff is never discussed and it has as big an impact on the effectiveness of classroom teacher as anything does, in fact probably more. And I think that we are very bad at handling that, and very good at avoiding it ... at an admin level ... I think it's the staff who need training in this area to help them cope with this sort of stuff. It's one thing to talk to students about it and help them but we need it as well. So I think we need to be in-serviced in this area and assisted and that there needs to be structures within the school to facilitate that for staff and to help the staff too. And prevention. It's very much prevention.

Staff 2001

3.7 Characteristics of MindMatters itself

Staff reported that the MindMatters program provided a framework within which other initiatives could find a place, and that it was helpful to find a comprehensive external set of resources, which addresses many mental health issues that are easily and readily available.

I've actually utilized pages and they were very easy for teacher to access without having to spend bucket loads of time doing pre reading and drawing up your own activities so I found them very practical. Staff 2002

3.8 Early expectations of impact of MindMatters

Staff hoped that the implementation of MindMatters throughout their school would provide them with skills in assisting students with personal issues. In addition, it would allow staff an opportunity to evaluate their own teaching practices, and the effects on students' mental health.

We make assumptions about things that we are already doing in the classroom and ... that it's contributing to the students' welfare. But a program like this gives us an opportunity of learning more about the area as teachers, and (to) evaluate the things that we do ... that are contributing to someone's mental health.

Staff 2001.

I hope that teachers will have more skills with being able to deal with students and students would be able to deal with friends that have issues also. Staff 2002

While it is acknowledged that the school ethos at Kerry Bay was, at the outset, one that placed student wellbeing high on the school's agenda, there was some expectation that aspects of school ethos could also change as a result of the school's adoption of MindMatters, particularly in the area of increasing links with external agencies.

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

I think that the only change in ethos will be in terms of being a little bit more organised in promoting the professional development with teachers going and having a little bit more professional development in these sorts of areas and topics which I don't think there's been enough available of within our community, within (capital city) either. We are going to get people into the school at different times too, working with the PD teachers or RE teachers re-sourcing as well as educating with different elements. I think our partnerships work ... will be re ignited almost in terms of accessing things in the community. Staff 2001

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

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

4.1 How MindMatters was identified

Kerry Bay High first heard about MindMatters through an employee at the Catholic Education Office who casually mentioned the program to a few members of staff.

As well as this, a member of the leadership team also found out about the MindMatters resources through a friend who does not work at the school.

A friend ... was saying, 'has your school got it (the MindMatters kit) yet?' and 'it's terrific, you'll love it', and this started - was it early this year or later of the year before - and so just chasing it up and starting to have a look at it. Staff 2001I

4.2 Process of deciding to use MindMatters

The school's discovery of MindMatters was serendipitous in that the school had recently embarked upon a process of review and redevelopment of their curriculum and pastoral care programs. MindMatters was seen as providing a set of resources that could assist with this process.

It is in connection with us doing a revamp of our whole personal development program so I looked at it with (key contact person) in terms how it would fit into some of our existing programs. But we are in the process of getting together a team to try and fine tune that. Staff 2001

4.3 Attendance at professional development

At the time of the first visit, two teachers who were part of the group that was reviewing the Personal Development curriculum had attended the two-day MindMatters professional development workshop. The part-time school counsellor, although belonging to an external agency, also attended the workshop.

Other relevant professional development that was being held around the same time included the IDES Drug Education Program and a Catholic Education Office seminar dealing with sexuality.

A seminar on eating disorders was also being planned at the time of the first visit because of the prominence of this concern in the school.

At the first follow-up interview by telephone, the contact person had also attended a two-hour 'key messages' personal development session run by the state-based MindMatters officer. The session was conceptualised as a train-the-trainer approach in which schools could network and assist others with implementation. However, participants felt that it was difficult to transfer the MindMatters implementation from one school to another, because of contextual differences. The session became an opportunity for more general feedback and discussion.

The main contact person conducted in-house professional development with teachers in the area of Health and Personal Development. Many of these had not been trained in this particular area but they were able to overcome their lack of confidence in using the MindMatters material.

4.4 Formation of a core group or other planning group

Upon discovering MindMatters, members of the leadership team asked one of the year coordinators to investigate the possible use of the kit. This person was also nominated as the key contact for the purpose of liaison with the evaluation team. The key contact person provided further information to the leadership team, which decided to implement the program.

At the time of the first visit to the school, a team of four key staff members was formed to discuss how to implement MindMatters into the curriculum and school as a whole. This team consisted of a Personal Development (PD) teacher, the PD coordinator, key contact person and another member of staff who had attended the MindMatters training.

The core team planned to conduct a briefing for the school's KLA coordinators and convenors in regard to MindMatters material and its incorporation in the school curriculum.

4.5 Process of planning

During the initial stages of implementation the core team planned to meet regularly to discuss the adoption and integration of MindMatters

We're going to put a proposal together ... with our recommendations and work with the leadership team ... we actually have time allocated, one period per cycle which is in our ten days that we can do regular little meetings to get things moving forward a bit because our PD days suffered a lot this year because we didn't have regular times in our timetable ... We have four people with diverse interests but all work well together. So we are moving onto that next year and all willing to work as a priority. Staff 2001

While this amount of time allocation did not eventuate, the key person was allocated designated release time during 2002 and 2003 to work on MindMatters implementation.

The group decided that MindMatters was very well suited to Kerry Bay High and provided a framework into which all other pastoral and development programs could be incorporated.

4.6 Early plans for change

The incorporation of mental health education into Kerry Bay High had been unsuccessfully attempted approximately five years prior to the introduction of MindMatters. Staff attributed this to a prevailing lack of perceived need to implement educational resources concerning mental health.

*Well I did try about five years ago as a very lone voice when it wasn't popular.
Staff 2001.*

In the space of that five-year period there was a change in leadership at Kerry Bay High. With that change, and a call for renewal at Kerry Bay, staff had been strongly urged to rewrite and update all key learning areas in order to meet curriculum requirements. This process of change was closely monitored. In the course of that change a significant audit of the needs of the students occurred. This positive experience produced a change in staff attitudes and created an

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

opportunity for staff to become more open and accepting of the need to integrate programs such as MindMatters into the curriculum.

I mean it's a lot of work to change but then we had a new curriculum coordinator come in and she made us rewrite all the courses. As a result of that people became more open to professional development and they can see that there are good resources out there and that they won't have to invent everything. Staff 2001

Well we in-serviced some staff. We are aware of it, what we are doing about it, but we were not doing anything at the grass roots level. Individual teachers are, but a lot aren't because they'd be much more comfortable with some resources, so it's an area that really does need to be developed. Staff 2002

At the initial evaluation visit staff reported that mental health was considerably under addressed throughout the school curriculum, and that the mental health needs of the students continued to change.

At the time of the second visit the core group members had planned to integrate MindMatters directly into the curriculum and to use the resources to facilitate other programs throughout the school. It was envisaged that the MindMatters material would largely be accommodated into the Personal Development and Health curricula with the possibility of a small integration into other areas such as science and religious education.

Staff indicated that they planned to carefully allocate units of work to particular years and subjects to ensure minimal duplication.

We're very conscious of not having overlap between subject areas. So it's been used extensively in the PD so we will not use it (in other subject areas) because the kids are quite on the ball and they would be saying 'we've already done this, so why are we doing it again'. So it is only targeted to that subject and so the materials are exclusive to it, and it is basically most sections of the books are used.

Staff 2002

There was also initial discussion of the possibility of cross curriculum integration with the collapse of PD and Religious Education (RE) into one subject allowing for an incorporation of MindMatters.

We've already done that sort of thing (whole school audit) ... but we will continue to review because when we speak to people in terms of what's written in the courses and what is taught sometimes is two different things and we recognise that as a problem so we are, as we go through and do year 7 and 8 as our PD courses, we're actually inviting people in from science, from PE...RE, PD and Health. And we'll be working on it that way ... establishing our courses in terms of looking at ... overlap ... and how they can possibly build in that area. Staff 2001.

Staff also indicated a desire to timetable the same teachers to teach PD and RE in order to reduce repetition and gaps, and to ensure consistency.

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

In terms of staffing ...it's not always easy, it would be ideal to have the person that teaches religion to also teach PD ... but of course that is not going to happen ... now we're trying to bring in and integrate PD and RE. Staff 2002.

At the same time as MindMatters was informing new practice at Kerry Bay, the Bridges program was being purposefully developed for year 9 and it was intended that this program would be another vehicle for incorporation of MindMatters resources.

We also have year 9 going into a new program next year which we call 'Bridges' ... tackling a number of issues in terms of mental health, resilience type of issues ... so we will be having a close look at that (MindMatters) and trying to develop materials for the project. Staff 2001

Staff expressed awareness of the need to support fellow teachers to ensure competence and confidence in teaching the content of MindMatters and employing the pedagogy to enable high level student interaction with the material.

That's one key area ... something we'll work on as well. To give people confidence in terms of being able to tackle issues that do come up in class, because they can be quite sensitive. Staff 2001.

There were, however, in the early stages, no established plans for ongoing professional development to meet this anticipated need.

In the PE areas staff felt that the curriculum focus had been largely limited to physical health. They indicated a willingness to change this to incorporate a broader range of holistic health concepts into their programs.

At the moment, we're looking at reviewing and adding and taking things out and the things that have been involved in MindMatters have been positive in that. I think it addresses a whole lot of issues that need to be addressed in this school.

Staff 2002

4.7 Informing the rest of the school

While the early plans did not necessarily involve all of the staff of the school, a great deal of effort was given over to ensuring that the whole staff were aware of the school's directions and intentions in relation to MindMatters.

It's been given quite a lot of publicity and (the principal has) given us a lot of time to hear about what's going on and just to know that people are understanding what that term (MindMatters) means and what the implications it has for curriculum, and I guess the wider community, our links and I suppose specifically for the courses we're teaching. Staff 2002

4.8 Views of PD

The three staff members who attended the two-day professional development for MindMatters felt somewhat disappointed with the workshop that they attended. Being very experienced teachers, they believed that more emphasis should have been placed on facilitating implementation and planning rather than exploring curriculum activities that were clearly represented in the materials.

It would have been better if there were less activities and more information about how it will fit into the curriculum and what it would look like to be in the school ... and those sorts of things Staff 2001

In particular, these staff indicated that it would have been more beneficial to focus on the practical issues of identifying school priorities, establishing a core team, setting goals and objectives, and exploring some sample plans from other schools.

Basically we thought that it was pretty poor ... if you can read you can do exactly what they have done ... we almost got to the point where we were quite bored and insulted in terms of the level that was pitched at ... we would have preferred to have ... a good look at the book and then really the rest of the two days ... sessions that are blanks sheets or grids or something like saying which areas do you think are the main areas? Who would you have in your core team? Here are some sample ones. Lets work on it and get you started. Staff 2001

I thought it was quite pathetic in terms of organisation ... it was a very crowded venue and a very quite uncomfortable venue ... it's just not professional.

Staff 2001

It should be noted that the teachers left the workshop mid-way through the second day and that the afternoon session was directed at the practical issues that they had identified as being important.

Despite the overall negative views of the two-day MindMatters professional development event they attended, staff were able to identify that one aspect of the workshop had been beneficial. They appreciated the time provided for PD which enabled them the opportunity to work together and to gather a broader appreciation of their own colleagues' views of MindMatters.

The fact that we could sit down - we don't often get a chance to have a chat to (our part-time counsellor) very often if ever - and I think it was really good to see from her perspective where our students are at the moment, and I think that was really beneficial. Staff 2001

Also, staff appreciated the opportunity for them to identify and discuss the culture and ethos of their own school, and to view the impact of the implementation of MindMatters from different perspectives.

The thing that I found really helpful was the activity that we did looking at ... the culture of the school. It was quite thought provoking and allowed me to actually see how the teachers saw their school, and it was fantastic for all of them to be put up and see different perspectives. Staff 2001.

4.9 Review processes

Staff indicated at the 2001 visit that the implementation of MindMatters into the curriculum would generally be reviewed at the end of each year. Thus MindMatters review became a part of an established process where KLA staff were scheduled to meet and review their program to ensure that they were meeting both curriculum requirements and the needs of the students.

The second visit at the end of 2002 coincided with one year of implementation at Kerry Bay. At this stage it was still intended to follow this review process.

Because there have been changes this year from say last year and we'll look at what we have done this year and if necessary make further changes for next year. We do that pretty much every year anyway ... but I guess there have been more changes for this year than there have been in the past but I think its important to look at how we see those changes and implications for next year's course. Staff 2002

The MindMatters program was also reviewed throughout year 9 in the Bridges Program. Both students and parents participated in the review process to evaluate the achievement of the set outcomes.

I've evaluated everything as I've gone along formally ... the kids have thoroughly enjoyed the mentor experience...and I've had a class of parents doing the evaluation as well, and I've moved that around the year level so they're not the same ones that have been hit and they have said the same things too. Staff 2002

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

5.1 Changes in policies

Staff reported that an extensive policy review had been undertaken immediately at Kerry Bay prior to the implementation of MindMatters

We'd already done a lot of policy change before MindMatters came in. So with the drug policy and that sort of thing in student welfare we'd done the IDES project ... so we have been through and done that really seriously. Staff 2002

Staff indicated that MindMatters influenced a small policy change in student welfare.

The Road Beyond the Gatehouse ... that policy had been looked at and had moved on quite considerably. Our communication of that policy has changed throughout MindMatters slightly, making sure some things that we thought were assumed were in different booklets. Staff 2002

Staff reported that Kerry Bay High had completed a large bullying and harassment audit and that dealing with bullying was a process of continuing policy reform. The influence of MindMatters in this is that, being in the curriculum, it prompted teachers to think about their own communication with students.

A huge specific focus for a year, we actually had outside assistance and a consultant come in. The consultant came to us ... did all the compilation and analysis, and it opened our eyes a great deal. That's when MindMatters came along. We'd already done the implementation and reviewed different processes of communication between staff ... we have probably done more in terms of policy of communication and recognising behaviours...there is probably more of a curriculum thing that we could put into too. We are doing it more thoroughly I think, because we're constantly looking at it and I think MindMatters has given us tools as curriculum materials (and) then (this) lead to other things in terms of the way that you deal with your class. Staff 2003

The focus on bullying was described at the visit in 2003 as having been a comprehensive one incorporating both curriculum as well as policies and practices.

Yeah but we're on to bullying as you say. We're just a no tolerance, no bullying, zone school. Kids know about it very much so. That would be probably one of the most significant areas that we really looked at in all levels. It used to be a kind of informal, you know you might do one or two lessons now but the programs now go right through and we've got the policy in the kids' planners, we talk about it at staff meetings, we try to be aware of any new videos or just reference material that's around, there's heaps of it around in media isn't there? Staff 2003

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

5.2 Changes in support services

The issue of the type and availability of in-school counselling for students was one that was under constant review throughout the evaluation period.

As previously stated, the school has a contract to use the services of a clinically trained counsellor from a local community agency. In 2002, the first year of the period, the school increased the hours of the counsellor from 12 hours to 15 hours.

As staff awareness of the prevalence of mental health problems increased, a review was undertaken of the type of work that the counsellor was undertaking:

This year I've been in more family work and that's been certainly supported by (the leadership team). So because I'm a trained family therapist, it's about trying to get as many members of the family in to deal with - there are family based issues that affect kids here at school, so I would say perhaps once a week, sometimes twice a week, I'm actually seeing mums and dads in here too, which is an enormous shift from what's happened previously. Staff 2002

By the end of 2003, a further review of the counsellor's role had been undertaken and a change in the way she offered support was being considered:

(The) counsellor who is here two days a week, is not a part of our staff, and she next year will be here in that same capacity of working with students, but an expanded capacity of actually working with groups of students with particular types of programs but also with staff but in particular level coordinators in allowing or providing I guess a sounding board, development of further skills and a support, you know, someone to debrief with too who has those skills. Staff 2003

5.3 Changes in curriculum

Changes in personal development curriculum

At the time of the first visit, it was envisaged that the MindMatters material would fit largely into the personal development / health curriculum but possibly also into some others such as science and religious education.

Personal development and health has been a core component of the curriculum for years 7 to 9. From 2002, it also became a core subject for year 10. It had previously been a successful elective at this level and some in the school had campaigned for it to be made a core unit for some years.

As implementation progressed, the MindMatters core team worked closely with the PD and health teams, aiming to integrate some MindMatters material into those curricula. The material was also seen as complementing other initiatives that were being implemented in the school such as the Bridges program for year 9 students and the IDES drug education program. (Year 9 is viewed as a particularly difficult year for girls in terms of behaviour management and self-identity.)

At the time of the second visit, staff had redeveloped the personal development and health curriculum for years 7 to 10 and had incorporated parts of the MindMatters material with a health promoting schools approach. Year 9 was somewhat flexible to fit in with the existing Bridges Program, which was adapted to include a stronger focus on resilience.

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

In year 11 and 12 the personal development subject area is not a core unit. The contact person had initially expressed some concerns about the material in the Understanding Mental Illness module, designed for older students. There was a feeling that facts and figures about mental illness are of little value on their own and may lead to self-diagnosis, unless carefully placed within context and supported by a positive school ethos.

At the second follow-up interview, the use of the materials in the curriculum appeared to be progressing well. The contact person met with teachers on a regular basis to ensure that they were confident about using the material. This was particularly helpful for those who had not been trained in the health area.

After discussion with staff, the team had decided to use the MindMatters material only in the personal development curriculum, rather than other areas such as religious education, to avoid overlap.

Some staff commented that a focus on integrating MindMatters curriculum was the most immediate priority for the school.

I think the curriculum is probably one of the most positive parts. It's been easy to implement. ... It was just a matter of deciding ... what sections would go to what levels. Staff 2002.

Despite earlier concerns, the team had also elected to use some of the Understanding Mental Illness material with year 10 students, carefully placing it within the broader context of health promotion. Nevertheless, one teacher who taught this area reflected a level of concern about teaching this material.

I'm nervous about teaching it in that we have some issues currently within our year 10 population that the students are under those sort of pressures ... We've got students here who are currently dealing with friends who are suffering from depression. We've had some students who are harming themselves. Staff 2002.

In other areas interviewees reported that teachers were finding the curriculum materials easy to use and helpful.

People are finding those curriculum resources very easy to use. They are actually a gold mine. The one with mental illness is going to be used at year 10 ... we'll be using that quite carefully and creating our own context but using some of the stuff. We couldn't use it as a stand-alone document but we will be using sections of that. Staff 2002

From talking to the teaching team, the contact person also formed the impression that students responded well to the material. Teachers reported that students saw the material as relevant. The topics generated a lot of discussion and students seemed to enjoy the class.

They thought it worked well, they concentrated, they took it at their own level. I think it's very important in that sort of class to let them take it at their own level, what they're experiencing now. Staff 2002

The things that I have been involved in with MindMatters have been positive in that I think it addresses a whole lot of issues that need to be addressed in this school ...

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

I suppose in any school ... It didn't just talk about the issues, it was very proactive to get the students to be aware of these things and where to go for help.

Staff 2002.

The school received a brief follow-up visit early in 2003, at which time the integration of MindMatters into the curriculum was progressing further, with greater adaptation and use of different parts of the resource.

The Stress and Coping materials had been used in year 9 as part of the Bridges Program (see below), but there were plans to bring some of this material down to year 8 the following year and to extend the year 9 unit with additional material and more concrete activities.

Material about enhancing Resilience was divided across various year groups, with a strong focus on 'Creating Connections' with the year 7 group, to ease the transition into secondary school.

The 'Loss and Grief' materials had been used and had been adapted to cover the context of family break-up and the experiences of children. The school occasionally has students who have been affected by the death of a parent or loved one, so this material was seen as valuable in this context as well.

The curriculum material on Bullying and Harassment was described as being very good although the team chose to brand the unit under a more positive title about 'Friendship and Change', which also gave them a chance to incorporate some of the 'Resilience' materials here.

Changes in other pastoral programs

The adoption of MindMatters coincided with the development of a new program, known as 'Bridges', which is specifically designed to meet the perceived needs of year 9 students (see above).

We have year 9 going into a new program next year called Bridges, in which they are having a number of retreat days, or focus day seminar days per term and they are tackling a number of different issues, one of which are in terms of mental health are resilience type of issues ... and that has come from a bit of impetus from the MindMatters. Staff 2002

The Bridges Program also incorporated mentoring groups. Students were placed into small groups, which were facilitated by a female member from the community to develop leadership and social skills.

They were put into very small groups at the beginning of the year and they've stayed within those groups and planning certain things ... I've got 19 mentors ... fabulous women ... Id like by the end of the year, all kids to have been a leader of their group ... and then to have meetings with me as a part of their group ... We've got two leaders per group planning the next urban adventure next week and they have to do all the planning, the itineraries, the timetabling, contacting the mentor etc Hence they are practicing leadership skills, planning all that sort of stuff. Staff 2002

One of the main foci of the Bridges Program in 2002 was the provision of a drug education event at night for year 9 girls and their parents. Funding for this event in 2002 was available from a

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

state-wide drug education program. In 2003, the school repeated the program with its own resources.

Although the Bridges Program was developed separately from MindMatters, the links with MindMatters were very real, as indicated by the teacher who was responsible for establishing it:

Well I made up Bridges and then sort of discovered that what my gut instinct said year 9's needed, (then) 'Hullo, here's another program saying the same sort of stuff'. So I've used bits out of the actual Mind Matters booklet, the Promoting Resilience book and things like that plus the myriad of other bits and pieces you get. But a lot of what we've tried to do at year 9 is based on that establishing links with parents, establishing links with outside communities, teaching the kids life skills to develop their resilience and their leadership. Staff 2003

When asked to articulate what separates the Bridges Program from MindMatters this teacher stated:

It's all one. It's all one. Staff 2002

Changes in health curriculum

Staff reported that worksheets and additional parts of the MindMatters material was being implemented throughout the year 10 health curriculum, part of which involved the planning and implementation of a 'Health Expo' which would cover health issues relevant to year 10 students, including mental health.

In teaching health we use some of the MindMatters material and we are about to go on to ... the last topic we did was Mental Illness. Staff 2002

Staff and students indicated that the MindMatters program has aided them to create further opportunities for fostering leadership, peer support, and involvement of additional community support services into the health curriculum.

We also ... organise some of the girls to be trained in peer support. Training where we got in the (state-based) peer support group and they trained five girls in every home room to run a game called 'Big Night Out' and how to debrief students when these issues came up during the game. And the girls did all that themselves. They ran it in the health classes and the idea being that those girls will train next year's year 10 ... that's all within the health curriculum ... so in health we have been getting ... other sources and other groups and not just teach it in a sort of traditional curriculum style ... so I think its been influences really from the material that (staff have) taken up with MindMatters and the whole approach of MindMatters. Staff 2002

Changes in other curriculum areas

Staff reported that the MindMatters program, whilst not intentionally programmed into curriculum areas outside of health, RE and PD, had to some extent filtered into other key learning areas.

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

For example, the drama curriculum has incorporated mental health perspectives, performing plays for the school and wider community, with great success.

The drama teacher said ... it will be incorporated into the curriculum next year ... it gave the students a chance to explore some (welfare issues) this year and also get the students to step outside and look at them with the responsibility of presenting it ... it was very powerful theatre. Staff 2002

5.4 Changes in partnerships or relationships

Over the course of the first two years of adoption of MindMatters at Kerry Bay, the school was able to successfully increase the number of ways in which it acted in partnership with community agencies. These changes were attributed directly to the school's adoption of the MindMatters program and reflect an understanding of the Health Promoting School's model that underpins the program.

Yes... (it's) a part of the project ... the health promotion model with the connections and partnerships being a significant part of it. We recognise that that's something that we don't do as well as we could and we have started to do that. Staff 2002

As mentioned above, a parent and student night focussing on drugs was planned for year 9 as part of their Bridges Program. As part of this endeavour, the school was able to engage with eight agencies from the local community and drew a very high level of parental response and attendance, with almost every student turning up with at least one parent.

It was a huge success because we had over eight agencies and it's the first time that they've become involved in school projects. Staff 2002

The Health Expo for year 10 was also an opportunity for Kerry Bay to develop better links with the community, harnessing their expertise to engage further learning.

I've been working on a coordinated effort with (staff and community) for the health expo ... and we are getting involved with (local agencies) to try and organise a day of workshops for the girls ... in terms of outreaching ... it has opened doors for the number of contacts that the school already has and how to foster those contacts into the curriculum's use. Staff 2002

Staff indicated that the working relationships between teachers has been facilitated, with more staff developing partnerships with other KLA areas, and community agencies, strengthening the curriculum and school as a whole.

Things have changed so rapidly this year because people have found that they've got a support person, so in term of resources ... do you know of anybody that could come in and do a motivation talk, or people in the community who could come in and do this, this or this. So they have somebody to contact, a resource person.

Staff 2002

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

5.5 Efforts to include parents

As the school developed an awareness of the importance of creating connections with the broader community, it also became aware that it needed to do more in terms of the connections between the school, its students and the parents.

We have started also ... an increasing recognition of parenting being a difficult task that you don't necessarily have peers to talk to. Once kids get beyond a certain age it becomes less likely that parents will talk about different issues or problems that they are having with their kids. So it is hitting two targets in terms of parents feeling supported as well as trying to create conversations between adolescents and parents and getting them to see it from other perspectives. Staff 2002

This issue became a parallel objective of the year 9 Bridges event on drug and alcohol which students were encouraged to attend along with their parents. Staff indicated that participation in the event was excellent

So just the attendance as a part of that, was you know once a term the parents knew that they'd be coming out to something and they're quite supportive of it and they've enjoyed it. Staff 2002

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

6 What issues did this school face during the implementation?

6.1 Issues that helped

Positive school ethos

It is apparent that the environment at Kerry Bay High was an almost optimal one for the successful adoption of a program such as MindMatters.

The religious order of nuns which manages the school is itself very committed to providing an environment in which support for positive student development is as important as academic outcomes themselves, as revealed in the following quote from one of the school's curriculum documents:

"If we consider the needs of adolescents and the things they value most we can help them manage the 'growing up' that takes place during these formative years."

An understanding of this supportive school ethos is revealed in the following separate comments from staff and students from staff at the first, second and third visits.

I think because the school has an ethos of addressing personal identity sort of issues and we've had personal development here for as long as I've been here, and I've been here for ever. This school has a high priority on the development of self as much as the development of your English or your maths skills. Staff 2002.

They try and please everyone. They go for every ones needs, like if they have trouble learning, then there's something for them. Student 2001

I think here they really do emphasise the pastoral care side and I think it's very very important here. Staff 2001

I think you need to have in both staff and students a culture that says we accept this, we don't accept that ... from day one when they come here, this school does not tolerate bullying and it doesn't tolerate people hurting each other, physically, mentally or any other way ... I think it's really important that we maintain that.

Staff 2003

In terms of ethos of the school ... I think the school is quite prepared to take on board changes that are happening and to follow them through. It's a very caring and willing to accept change type of ethos in the school. Staff 2002

Positive staff attitudes or reactions

Given the school's underlying philosophy of pastoral care, and the reportedly very positive relationships between staff and students at Kerry Bay, it is not surprising the introduction of MindMatters was generally received with support from the staff of the school. A number of informants supported this view of the staff's genuine concern for students' needs and the priority of pastoral care.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

I think the majority of staff see pastoral care as a high priority in the school and I believe that is taking place. Staff 2001.

Most people are more than happy to really be with kids in terms of pastoral care.
Staff 2002

The level of pastoral care that is offered here is second to none. If I had a daughter I'd send her here because I think they are a very, very caring staff.
Staff 2002

Most people here, all people really, really care about the students' welfare.
Staff 2001

Teachers indicated that all members of staff further advanced the facilitation of MindMatters through continuous support.

This an amazing school where the staff just support each other so much. They're so friendly and they are always supporting me in anything I do ... I guess in a way they believe that if you support each other that you'll get support your way ... but everyone's so positive and just so wonderful especially the level coordinators, which is where you need to start. Staff 2002

One particularly helpful attitude was that teachers need to be continuously open to change in response to the needs of their students. This was very well expressed by one staff member:

I think sometimes we get to the stage where we think 'Oh God I don't have to write another course! Let's not bring in a new initiative. All we seem to be doing is that.' But I finally, after 30 odd years of teaching, came to the realisation we constantly need to be doing that because you can get stale and kids are changing. Society's changing. You need to be ready to meet the needs and to be ... and I think that's what Mind Matters is all about. It's that health promoting framework. What do the kids need? What do the kids need here at Kerry Bay? Which might be very different from what they need at (another place). Staff 2003

Students reported that the staff create an accepting atmosphere for all students and are positively promoting equality.

They are always saying that they embrace diversity and from what you see, they do do that. Student 2002

Because of these attitudes and approaches of the staff, there was no indication of any resistance at Kerry Bay to the introduction of an emphasis on promoting mental health and wellbeing.

Helpful leadership

Leadership at a number of levels has been an important feature of the way in which MindMatters has been adopted at Kerry Bay.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

Firstly, it is noted that the school leadership team expect the staff to be innovative and support them in their efforts to be at the cutting edge of education.

And being a big school, you've got lots of people to bounce off with ideas or to get together to work as a team, but I suppose it's a networking sort of approach. The leadership team would support you because they have heard about it. You might say to them 'have you heard about MindMatters? Have you got any letters because I think some in servicing is coming up'. And they chase around, and say 'yes, do you want to go? Yes. Who would you like to go with you?' Staff 2002

Having endorsed the broad directions of MindMatters, the leadership team provided ongoing support to the teachers who were driving the project. Formal mechanisms were established for reporting back to the school leaders and, as problems arose, these could be taken to the executive members for their assistance. As one of the core team members said in 2003:

They're supporting 100 per-cent basically anything that I bring up.

It is important to note that in 2002 and 2003, one of the members of the leadership team became part of the core team that was planning the implementation of MindMatters. Other members of the team saw the presence of an executive member on the planning team as a very important factor.

The core team. Yeah there has been and that's I think in part because (name), who's the deputy principal on the team itself, on the core team and I think it's handy when you've got somebody in the leadership team to do that and they can then bring up issues in admin meetings whereas you've saved yourself the step of having to go and report to admin. They already know it because they've got a presence there. And so that's had an impact in that way as well. Staff 2003

Leadership from the MindMatters contact person was also very important. This person showed herself to be very committed, resourceful and energetic in her efforts to implement the changes associated with the adoption of MindMatters. She was really responsible for giving the program direction and focus.

She (contact person) is highly organised and motivated ... and drives us crazy making sure that everything that has to be done, will be done. Staff 2001

The contact person's efforts during 2002 resulted in an even greater level of support from the leadership team and also from other staff in leadership positions in the school.

We've got far more people on board and they're coordinators so they're sort of like your principal, your DP, assistants to principal, level coordinators, so they're sort of second tier to a leadership team. So I think that has made a huge difference in terms of the acceptance as well. Staff 2002

Availability of resources

In 2002, the core group faced the difficulty of finding time to meet, given their full teaching loads and the additional work that most teachers at this school contribute in supporting extra-curricular opportunities for the girls. While the team may have preferred that each member be given time

off teaching to accommodate the required meetings, the leadership team responded to this problem by allowing the contact person an allowance of time to work on issues related to implementing MindMatters.

As previously mentioned, the school was very successful in attracting the support of external agencies to support them in their MindMatters activities, including successfully applying for funds to support the Drug Education Night for students and parents.

The school responded to the uptake of MindMatters across the years by purchasing additional copies of the kit.

A further indication of the commitment of resources to back up the school's commitment to pastoral care is that in 2001 and 2002, each homeroom in years 7 to 9 had two home room teachers. In 2003, in response to a perception that this cohort were particularly needed, this practice was extended to year 10.

You know, I would just have to say, I've not taught last year 10 as a home room or a subject teacher, but you do need two people, even though in all my other experience, I've been the only person. I guess you can't go back to losing what you've had, it's just wonderful to have and the needs are greater. In my own experience with kids who are coming to talk to me about things or they come to school and they're crying just this morning, and it's all time and it's also that personalities, three people - the coordinator and two other people - that they can go to and it might be that this one is not the one they want to go to so there's that one, which is terrific. A wonderful, wonderful thing to have. Staff 2003

Availability of outside help

Staff identified that recent changes in government policies and funding arrangements with community agencies, under which they are directed to develop partnerships between their services and schools, were instrumental in ensuring that the school's own efforts to engage with the agencies were successful.

(Previously) funding wasn't tagged ... people could see the needs but they didn't have time and they didn't have funding and now that the government focus has changed and that means they will get their funding and it's a directive ... funding those organisations to help ... There's been a mind shift with principals and people in education. We had a number of things come out all at once and it was to do with the MindMatters I think and a few other government directives. But they all blended nicely. MindMatters was a key part of that ... in terms of directives to outreach schools and support schools. They don't have to be big. Staff 2003

Usefulness or suitability of MindMatters

Staff interviews at the second visit to the school indicated that most were generally very positive about their first experiences of using MindMatters. They found it a source of accurate information, and found that the suggested teaching strategies were very helpful in creating positive learning experiences. The resources were useful in terms of preparation for teaching and as a structure for guiding discussion.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

I think the other thing I like about them (MindMatters resources) is you might choose something or pick something out but it seems to generate lot of discussion ... you tend to have the thing in front of you because you've got this material, you have a bit more structure about it ... I think it just helps you to focus before the lesson and say well this is where I want to get them to and this is really what I want to impart. It make's you a bit more structured in your approach to the lesson which is good. Staff 2002

It was very good because it was factual but there was also some good teaching ideas and things in it as well which was good. Staff 2002

It's almost skeletal but it actually brings a lot of discussion ... they (students) were talking about positive ways of supporting a friend in grief ... and then the kids just chatted and chatted and chatted. It took a whole lesson, lots of ideas coming from them so it's good stuff. Staff 2002

Compatibility with other programs and initiatives

In addition to MindMatters, the school had also been part of the Gatehouse project and the 'Road Beyond the Gatehouse' initiative. The fact that the school was undertaking these initiatives was seen as value adding to the impact of MindMatters in the school.

A great deal of value has been in the fact that it's worked in conjunction with Road Beyond the Gatehouse, another program for our whole school approach to pastoral care, and of course the mental health aspect is an important part of that (program) as well. Staff, 2003

Further, a number of staff at the school (including one of the executive members of staff) were undertaking post-graduate studies in areas relating to adolescent development and mental health. These staff had insights and a deep understanding of the research base and philosophical basis for MindMatters. For example, it is one of these staff who was actively developing the Bridges program in year 9. These people were important advocates for the implementation of MindMatters and useful resource people within the school.

Ways of checking implementation

The successful adoption of much of the curriculum resources is facilitated by the fact that one of the assistant principals who is responsible for curriculum has an oversight of the processes of curriculum modification. This person has an active role in reviewing and modifying the curriculum of each of the KLAs including personal development where much of the MindMatters resources were used.

The process of annual curriculum reviews also assisted the school to ensure that what was included from one year to another, took into account feedback from teachers and ensured that any overlap between different year groups was minimised.

Participation in MindMatters evaluation

There is no obvious indication that the school's participation in the evaluation process had an impact on the way in which the school went about adopting and implementing MindMatters although it is possible that this did occur.

6.2 Issues that hindered

Reservations about the changing role of teachers

Staff indicated that there was a significant lack in professional development to cater for the changing role of the teacher.

The move from a more knowledge-based schooling philosophy to the increasing inclusion of pastoral care and provision of social support for the students is creating confusion among some staff. Staff indicated that the changing role of the teacher needs to be defined and adequate training be provided to ensure staff can appropriately perform their duty of care.

I think we have to be clear about where our goal is. Very clear. And we are taking on a social service role where we are becoming counsellors and welfare people which we are not trained. Where does our responsibility start and finish because I think it is a huge area. If you've got a kid who's having terrible problems at home because of a marriage break up or because they feel threatened or what ever the problem is, what am I as a staff member expected to do? What can I do? Where do I draw the line? And I think that needs to be looked at very, very clearly because the school increasingly is taking on that role and indeed the archdiocese information that I'm getting across my desk increasingly talks about the school in that role yet there's nothing to say that the school is in that role. In any official documents we talk about it vaguely so I think that's a whole area that we need to look at. Staff 2001

Constraints of education policies

For a small number of staff, the issue of same-sex attraction presented certain conflicts. For them, this topic should be raised in discussion with the girls in relation to MindMatters' focus on coping with differences and bullying. They reported however that it would be difficult to incorporate such discussions into the curriculum, whilst still developing the Catholic perspective guidelines set by the Catholic Education Office (CEO).

No one is denying for one minute that that situation doesn't exist (same sex attraction), but because we are governed by the CEO and those directives come out and you've got to write things in this way ... we have to address these issues but we've got to try and think of a way of couching them in a language that we understand what it really means ... That concerns me a bit because it's a convention we know about, but other people don't ... How do we get around that or do we address the whole issue in Catholic education? And do we make more of a fuss about being more open in a written way so we all know where we stand. Staff 2002

Discussions with the school executive revealed that they were very aware of the need to not avoid these issues and they were able to point to a number of examples of programmatic

approaches that had been taken to ensure that the issue was raised in constructive ways with the girls. They also indicated that, given the size of the staff, not all teachers would necessarily be aware of the full range of activities or initiatives of the school. It was reported that the counsellor had seen a number of girls who were dealing with issues related to same-sex attractedness, and had commented that these girls found the school a safe and supportive environment.

Negative staff reactions

A number of staff did indicate that they had experienced a level of personal discomfort with the idea of having open classroom discussions about issues that might be sensitive. These staff sometimes cope by overlooking these topics and this could lead to incomplete or inconsistent implementation of MindMatters.

Some staff tend to think more things are important than others, so they tend to gloss over issues they may not feel comfortable teaching, or areas in PD that they are not quite as comfortable with, so that in itself creates gaps in the curriculum. Staff 2002

The vast majority of teachers haven't (had any exposure to MindMatters) and so they feel very awkward about it. Staff 2002

One observer, at the outset, indicated that she expected that some teachers may react negatively if they experience dissonance between their normal teaching style and one which may be required in teaching some of the MindMatters lessons.

A resistance to changing of style, if it involves changing of a teacher's style ... it not easy to change your style as a person, you know. It's not easy to do all those sorts of things that require habit changing. And even to confront yourself and recognise that your way of interacting could be damaging. Staff 2001

Reflecting on this in 2003, one staff member reported that these difficulties had been encountered but, in her opinion, staff had coped with it quite well.

Some of the material from the Mind Matters program went directly to the child and how they were feeling emotionally, whereas it may have been that people were more comfortable using the material that looked at those issues but in a more discrete kind of way, gave them a bit more space. And it also asked for a different way of teaching and setting up the dynamics within the room and that obviously means that the teacher then is in a more vulnerable position where they may have to teach or share a bit more about their own personal stories from experience and things. And they also run the risk because then that class has opened it up. I'm not as sure what's going to come up so that child bursts into tears and tells the story about the brother ... of a car accident and Different issues to deal with it. So I'm not saying there was resistance but there were certain stresses, there were certain ways in which teachers took a risk in taking on some of that material and it has proven to be sort of worthwhile and ... and people really had to build up a bit of trust with the teachers to get them to take a different tack. Staff, 2003

Crowded curriculum

As previously mentioned, Kerry Bay offers many opportunities for students including both core and elective subjects as well as a range of extra-curricula activities. Teachers are required to support this and, as well, to be prepared to play a pastoral role with students in their care. This positive aspect could nevertheless pose a level of threat to the complete adoption of MindMatters in that there was considerable pressure already on teachers and something new might be seen as an optional extra.

I think most people are more than happy to really be with the kids in terms of pastoral care. Its just the time thing that we've got so many other things on our plate that you get kind of frustrated and I think you know if somebody weren't willing to help in terms of mental health of kids in a variety of different ways, it would be not because they don't want to because they are saving their own mental health because they don't want to take on more than they've already got. That would be pretty universal I would think. Staff 2002

I think that you would find some resistance ... the curriculum is so crowded. Finding spaces for all these new things that eat in to teaching time ... because teachers do everything. Staff 2002

Time is the biggest thing. Staff 2002

7 What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

7.1 Improved student wellbeing

Supports for students

Staff and students reported a significant increase in the support for students being provided by the school, and the individual teachers. Staff indicated that redefining reporting procedures has increased staff awareness of mental health problems, and helped to identify students who are in need of support

In developing a defined process, staff are more aware and ... there's been an improvement, in being able to identify more of these students and look more carefully at their needs and work towards meeting them ... it has really been worthwhile and many students have been able to gain some sort of support, sometimes it's on a short term basis, others it's long term and it may involve people with staff but it can also involve agencies outside. Staff 2002

Kerry Bay High has, over the period of the evaluation, established a wide variety of support networks for students, outside the school. The school has incorporated peer support programs, mentors as well as enlisting the help of local community support groups to deliver a wide range of information and services as preventative measures as well as those in need.

The school has further enhanced the support for students by increasing the hours and availability of the school counsellor. Students and staff indicated that there is an ongoing need to continue to increase this position to full time.

She (school counsellor) has been given more time to be here and there certainly is a presence in the school of someone who can talk to the students who might need to see someone. Staff 2002

I think the fact that we now have (the counsellor) here regularly, means you can refer when you've got an issue or a kid you can't help yourself and she's got a finger on the pulse then shoot people to wherever their needs can be met, that's one big thing that has happened. Staff, 2003

It is notable that, in addition to increasing the hours of the counsellor, the school has undergone a change in the role of the counsellor in which she is to provide a broader range of services (group work) and also providing indirect support to students by supporting the efforts of the year coordinators.

A further change that's about to take place too, in relation to the wellbeing of our students is the expansion of direction through our school counsellor who is here two days a week, is not a part of our staff, and she next year will be here in that same capacity of working with students, but an expanded capacity of actually working with groups of students with particular types of programs but also with staff but in particular level coordinators in allowing or providing I guess a sounding board, development of further skills and a support, you know, someone to debrief with too who has those skills. Staff 2003

Bullying and harassment

Staff and students indicated that whilst bullying is still a problem within the school, students are now more likely to come forward to seek assistance.

Lots of bullying happens on the way to school, from our own ... they also seem to be using the internet a little bit more with bullying, sending emails, setting up web pages of photos of each other and there's been a little bit of mobile phone messages. Text messages are quite threatening ... so I guess there are changes ... I think my students...year 7's in particular, know it's OK to go and say something; you won't be seen as a dobber or what ever. Staff 2003

This observation was supported by a teacher who said, in relation to students in year 10, that she had observed a change in the way students respond when there is bullying, and that there is more understanding of the issue and a greater level of reporting.

I think probably the approach. Looking at the person who is bullying and the person who is bullied and they'd be considering practising assertive behaviour strategies, maybe trying to be proactive. I mean as I say, it has been going on but looking at it from a positive slant and practising behaviours that will allow us to see that we can be assertive and we're not going to be bullied and the fact that bullies are aggressive and they need to alter their strategies so that they're not. But I guess we're probably proactive about it at the beginning of the year. I think kids now know that it's not okay to be bullied and if there are people who will support them, either their peers and certainly the teachers. So perhaps in the past they mightn't have mentioned it, they put up with it, but not now. Staff 2003

Other staff agreed with this conclusion:

Well, you know, you don't take it but you can know it's okay to talk about it with a trusted person and that there will be consequences in place for that person and the bully won't come back and say well, there'll be something in place for you at the end of all this too but it's OK to talk about it, to share with it and something will be done and you will be protected, if you like. Staff 2003

One staff member indicated that teachers were able to be more effective in their responses to bullying because the issue had been raised as a general issue in the classroom:

Yeah. Prior to those issues coming up with prevention and home room teachers because their home room teachers are usually their PD teachers, have been through it with them and so they'll come to those home room teachers if there are issues that are starting to come up. But teachers feel empowered to do that because they've just been doing it in their classes too. Staff 2003

Drugs and alcohol

All members of the school community reported smoking cigarettes and binge drinking is still a significant problem amongst students and that little had changed in this area over the evaluation period, despite the fact that the school had directed considerable effort towards this issue. The

description of the problem and the reasons for it seem similar in 2003 to those that were given in 2001.

Informants among students and staff indicate that the level of smoking and drinking among the girls at this school would be no different to the levels in other schools in the surrounding suburbs, and that in this part of the city there is a culture that supports these behaviours in young people.

No I don't but I think that's a societal thing. It was like the thing on television the other day about the kids lying out and frying themselves in the sun. The whole message of melanoma and skin cancer. They're just not computing it, they don't want to compute it and their parents aren't pushing it either but I know there's high alcohol use but I don't know that it's any different from any other kids in the area. Staff 2003

Yes. I teach year 8 as well, not PD but I teach year 8 and I would say that that's true that there are weekend binge sessions. I think as a parent, you would probably know too, it's very difficult. I know with my kids, I took the tack of allowing drink and were letting them have drink if I was there. I mean you never know whether you're doing the right thing do you, but again, now I think we have had incidents here, being on the staff you hear about where staff have been shocked or have had to speak to kids about alcohol abuse and so you know, you hear it around, so I would imagine we're no better or worse than anywhere else though. Staff, 2003

Attachment to school

Staff reported an increase in support being provided for students at risk of disengagement at the end of year 10 by using a range of teaching strategies within classroom and developing positive and supportive relationships with parents.

Some have gone 'I'm out', we're hoping fewer go down the tube. It's easy to be dismissive of kids that drive us nuts with not doing work and so forth ... but people are really making big efforts to do everything to get those kids through their studies, you know, rather than saying, 'tough luck kids' ... the staff are really doing their best ... it's also with a bit of partnership with parents, the coordinator contacts the parents of these people who are at risk of failing a subject or subjects and then that partnership of working together to get the student through. Staff 2002

We usually have a fleet of kids leave the school ... but this year we've got fewer kids seen to be hitting off ... it might be something to do with how we're trying harder to be open to the lifestyles and the problems of those kids ... but you also think well the kids are in the school. That's the main thing. Staff 2002

Opportunities for leadership

The Bridges Program has given extensive opportunities for year 9 students to develop sound leadership skills.

The implementation of the health expo also created opportunities for students to increase their leadership abilities.

We have involved them (students) more in the planning of the Expo ... we thought this was really important because they already have this distance from us and unless they owned this Expo they weren't going to take it well, so I've had a core team of one student from every home room working with me and they come regularly at lunch times and they've gone out and sourced the materials and they give me feedback on what the girls might be interested in going through with drug and alcohol workshops or with nutrition workshops ... and they come to planning meetings with the teachers and community centres ... they are quite good at that and until they are a part of it they don't see it as relevant. Staff 2003

Help-seeking

Staff and students indicated that students have become more open in discussing their problems within their friendship groups, and have indicated that more students are seeking assistance from the school counsellor and other staff members.

Some kids are actually saying to the coordinators or teachers that they want to see (the school counsellor). Staff 2002

A lot of girls go to teachers. Yeah heaps of girls go and talk to teachers about different things ... about problems at home. Student 2002

I went to a teacher, a teacher I was close with, and spoke to them. But mainly I just speak to my sister and my best friend about it. I've got full trust in my sisters and my best friend, and I get their advice on what to do. Student 2002

Staff also reported that students are now more aware of the support services and resources available to them.

It (MindMatters) was very proactive in getting the students to be aware of what they could do about these things and where to go for help. So the resource factor is very good. Making students aware of the resources available to them, what they could tap into. So I think that is really positive. Staff 2002

I think the kids talk to a trusted friend more often, perhaps than they might in the past and hopefully they will talk to, I mean I have kids talk to me on a regular occasion. Hopefully they'll talk to a trusted person, whether it's a home room teacher or a subject teacher, and of course the coordinator. But I reckon kids talk to their mates, a trusted person, more frequently. But they do know that the coordinator's there or the home room teacher. I mean we say that regularly to them and that's why we have two home room teachers in the lower level so that if they need to talk to someone, confidentially, that they can do that. We say that to them. And I believe that there are many kids who act on it. Staff, 2003

One teacher described the link between the use of MindMatters curriculum and the subsequent outcome of increased help seeking in these terms:

You're giving students opportunities through the curriculum, say you talk to them about health issues for the society, you talk about mental health, people with same-sex attraction and you talk about media issues. When you talk to them about making decisions and consequences and listening carefully, there's a lot that you're doing that might be regarded as straight curriculum, but it's actually about them having some sort of power when they do go outside for some sort of assistance or consultation where they can articulate their needs ... without feeling they're being judged. Staff 2002

The school counsellor noted that, although her time was limited, and that the available time is allocated to referrals by year coordinators, some students had started to seek help from her directly.

Some kids I understand are actually saying to the coordinators or teachers that they want to see me and they're being put on the list without any questions asked about what's going on. I have had a couple of kids that have come down here like at recess or at the end of lunch and have said, 'can I see you', and I'll say 'yes, that's not a problem but I will have to inform your coordinator that you're going to have an appointment next week'. I don't have to say why but it's certainly not advertised that it's a service that they can just freely drop in. Staff 2003

One staff member felt that the real value of MindMatters lies more in terms of encouraging strengths in students that will equip them for dealing with future challenges:

That working together. They feel empowered. It's a real empowerment thing and they feel that they can come to you or to teachers or with parents, and be able to discuss and negotiate so I find that we've got kids that are armed with knowledge prior to events happening for the majority of things. So we're talking about issues with friendships, issues with relationships, issues with parties, are very much being covered. Staff 2003

7.2 Positive impacts on staff

Increased knowledge and awareness

Several staff commented that, in the process of preparing and delivering lessons to the students, staff themselves had gained new insights into the nature of mental illness and were more sensitive to these issues when they arose with their students.

In a specific example, a teacher indicated new insights into the mental health issues relating to same-sex attraction. In seeing this issue in terms of the person's wellbeing, it was easier to respond within the Catholic education environment.

We had a little foray into sort of same-sex attractiveness issue and I suppose that's been ongoing then and it would be that notion that some students' mental health is affected by some of these things and so their operation within the school

is also affected. And I guess that we would continue to look at some of those strands of interest that we've begun to develop and hopefully that would be sitting as part of the normal curriculum and normal options. Even before the Mind Matters it would have been very difficult ground to walk on with staff, like if you've got that notion as a whole healthy person then it's more and more imperative to (do so).

Staff 2003

Increased teacher awareness

Teachers reported that the school now saw behavioural issues more broadly and that there was a greater awareness that life events have an impact on the emotions and behaviours that students display at school.

I think there has been a shifting that the school's actually started to see that (behaviour) is not in isolation. That what happens to kids here is a result of a lot of other things that are happening outside and it's family and community ... that most issues that happen with kids in this school are not actually about school ... whether they are behaviours or what ever, it's actually about other stuff. I think that's what's been the difference. They have been proactive. Staff 2002

The total staff have had their awareness raised by the importance of it (MindMatters), what it's about, what some of the terminology means, what our aims are ... it's been given a lot of publicity and (the principal) has given us a lot of time to hear about what's going on and just to know that people are understanding what that term means and the implications it has for our curriculum. Staff 2002

At least, we've raised the awareness more amongst PD and RE teachers and people are keen to do more. Staff 2002

Impact on teaching

Staff reported that, in some circumstances, the insights that they gained from engaging with the MindMatters materials had led them to an awareness that they needed to modify their teaching in flexible ways to accommodate issues when they arise in class.

The last 12 months have taken a global concern that really impacts on our students. We don't talk about it a lot. But there's suddenly no security. So I had a lesson...and I just decided, no I won't teach my set lesson today, well just have a chat. We talked about fear - and the fears that emerged. Fear of going to sleep, fear of dying ... I felt it was a real eye opener for me and it was worth doing for me so I know those students just a bit better. Staff 2002

Positive self-worth

As well as greater insights, some teachers indicated that their increased familiarity with mental health issues gave them a sense of being able to be more helpful to their students.

A program like this gives us an opportunity of learning more about the area as teachers, and also reviewing and evaluating the things that we do, and we presume we are contributing to someone's mental health. Staff 2001

The experience of being part of the team that was planning and implementing MindMatters also gave one teacher a sense of personal satisfaction.

I think it gives you a lot of heart to think that it's a coordinated approach and it's something that we're not just dealing with it at one point. It's consistent and it's clear and it's coherent and I think you feel sort of perhaps rewarded because you think oh well I'm part of this team and we're all in it together and that's the way it should be. Staff 2002

7.3 Impacts on whole of school

Enabling the change process to occur

Members of the leadership team and other staff indicated that the process of planning and implementing MindMatters, and other related programs in the school, had complemented and facilitated a change process. While the school had always had a positive orientation, a greater awareness had emerged of the need to accommodate social and emotional aspects, led the school to focus more on issues globally rather than seeing student difficulties as isolated cases.

So I guess you were affirming that the structures and the pastoral dynamics and all of those with the school, but you do need to have opportunities through something like MindMatters to think again and to re-articulate and to identify the things that you've got that are working but also to get the strength or to sort of see the possibility of let's try something else. And the staff are far more open to projects like that. Whereas if I think back to about two or three years ago, there had been maybe one or two programs and they were seen as special kids that had problems rather than that you'd generally offer to within the population because across the population. Staff 2003

Creating a common language for wellbeing

The focus on MindMatters in planning meetings, professional development sessions, curriculum meetings and in classroom teaching itself had the effect of creating a common language that was useful in enabling discussions among staff about student wellbeing.

(MindMatters has provided a) shared language among the staff and within the school so that we're using the same sort of language or making the same sort of observations about students. And that's important because we also have a whole range of strategies and otherwise you tend to be flapping around in the dark and you're not sure what you're saying and how you're describing students so the language and communications are set up.

I: Can you just give me a couple of examples.

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

Staff 2003

Creation of shared understandings across the school

The effectiveness of the implementation of the MindMatters curriculum across grades was apparent. One staff member identified that the way in which this was done enabled teachers across the grades to have a shared understanding of the program and that this fostered a sense of continuity of effort from one grade to another.

But the team itself and with the leadership (name) was able to give with this, and her experiences in the senior end of the school so that that team brought teachers together from different curriculum areas and traditionally they may not have met. So that's a unique opportunity. But also in the team itself we found that we had teachers then with experience from 7 to 12 and that meant that they could share their knowledge and it also ensured with the program that (name) developed had ... a bit of continuity. And there was this fantastic consciousness of what was happening on the way to ... and the progression of sort of students' knowledge, let alone some of the stuff relating to attitudes and things like that. Staff 2003

Increased focus on health generally

The increased focus on students' social and emotional wellbeing led to a greater understanding of the impact of general health on wellbeing. As a result, the school had gained a renewed commitment to promoting general health. This awareness emerges in practical terms such as a focus on healthy eating.

But the process of different key learning areas coming together to look at the health problems of the kids. I think there's been a much greater attunement to the mental health and I know it's sort of one and the same but there's different approaches to it. So, the Mind Matters I would see has given us, in addition to the greater awareness, some more structured approaches through our learning program and in some of the other related support ways. So one of those in the health area was the canteen/healthy food aspect but also looking at a range of ways in which our curriculum can encourage sort of healthier practices, more activity and then some extra sort of suggestions which some have already begun doing.

Staff 2003

Related to this is the formation of a group of teachers taking a more specific interest in the issues of student health.

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

And we were looking at professional reading groups, and ways in which staff would come together and pursue a particular issue. So a group of staff opted to take health as their issue and (they) ran a workshop for themselves and have then set themselves some goals and some ways of pursuing and looking at that issue. So that was terrific that they felt there was an opportunity for them ... and also again to put a follow-up on the initiatives that were there and the groundwork laid. But practically they sort of got stuck into the issues, which was good.

Staff, 2003

Creating stronger links with parents

The schools emerging focus on student wellbeing through curriculum and community connections has had an impact on the way in which the parents relate to the school. Both the programs for year 9 and year 10 that are mentioned above, had a specific focus on involving the parents and families. Parents generally have become much more aware of the range of support services that are now available. Parent participation in events related to student wellbeing has increased dramatically.

And now parents are actually starting to ring and say that they would like someone to see their children. Staff 2002

I think a lot more people, including parents, know what we're doing and feel that the school is an approachable place and a place (where) they are wanted and nights that they come along would be deliberately - we'd try to set an atmosphere that it's not intimidation. Because I think that being such a big place and religious that we can be intimidating. Our (year) 8 and 9 parents' nights are very much geared in terms of being us working together. So I think that's a significant change breaking our routine of how we do things, and so trying to find things that work and having parents attend. Our parent attendance for nights is almost 100 per-cent and knowing with other schools and what we've had previously, it's a significant change. So I think overall, our relationships have changed. So it's a relationship thing and a communication thing - how, who and that sort of thing has been a very big part of it. Staff 2003

Creating stronger links with the community

Perhaps one of the most dramatic changes that has occurred in Kerry Bay High is that it has become increasingly open to forging links with community agencies that can provide support to students.

While the ostensible purpose of events such as the 'Big Night Out', and the 'Health Expo' was an educative one, the increased participation of community agencies resulted in the forging of new relationships with these services.

I've got such a community network out of MindMatters - unbelievable. Staff 2003

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

The staff who have coordinated MindMatters and those staff that initiated and supported the parallel programs Bridges and Crossroads are now seen as having well-established networks with community agencies.

The different community resources that are available ... I guess I wasn't aware ... I think now that I know that if I felt a student needed some sort of help ... the year coordinator ... would have a list of people and community agencies that they could call on. Staff 2002

Plans for future use

Executive and teaching staff agreed at the third visit that both the curriculum changes and the extended relationships with community agencies that had emerged during the evaluation period would be ongoing, as would the focus on student mental health and wellbeing.

Well yes, in that I suppose in terms of courses and resources and in terms of the mental health of students being able to access outside resources and of course, hopefully, we'll get some more parent involvement, which is always one of those hard things. But I guess in terms of keeping the ball rolling, I suppose, but probably in terms of courses and resources, including human ones, but just the general sort of ethos of the school and of course the canteen and all of that, just the general array to raise awareness of the mental health of students. Staff 2003

8 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 in the two years since MindMatters was implemented at Kerry Bay Girls High School, the scores in each year in 2003 are compared to the scores of students of the same sex and year in 2001.

Note

Differences between age groupings in 2001 and 2003 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.

Although questionnaires were collected from year 7 students, the girls in year 7 in 2003 were not issued the questionnaire.

Changes in protective and resilience factors

The Healthy Kids Survey has two 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, on the whole, there were statistically significant differences in the scores for students 2003 compared to students in the same grade in 2001.

Year 8 students in 2003 had a little lower scores on "autonomy experience", while girls in Year 10 in 2003 had a little higher scores for "effective help-seeking" compared to students in 2001.

Table 1: Resilience and Protective factors in 2003 compared to the control group.

		School connection	Autonomy experience	Self esteem	Effective help-seeking
Year 8 (2003)	Females	No difference	A little lower	No difference	No difference
Year 9 (2003)	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
Year 10 (2003)	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference	A little higher
Year 11 (2003)	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference

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 students in each year in 2003 compared to students of the same year in 2001. None of the differences were statistically significant. Indeed the scores in both years were essentially the same.

Table 2: Help-seeking indicators in students in 2003 compared to the control group.

		% who indicate they would talk to someone at school	% who indicate that student welfare would be helpful
Year 8 (2005)	Females	No difference	No difference
Year 9 (2005)	Females	No difference	No difference
Year 10 (2005)	Females	No difference	No difference
Year 11 (2005)	Females	No difference	No difference

Changes in drug and alcohol use

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 2003 compared to students of the same sex and year in 2001. Overall, these data show no statistically significant differences between the year cohorts in 2003 compared to 2001.

Table 3: Drug and alcohol indicators, 2003 compared to 2001

		Mean days of alcohol use	Mean days of tobacco use	Mean days of marijuana use
Year 8 (2005)	Females	No difference	A little higher	No difference
Year 9 (2005)	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
Year 10 (2005)	Females	A little higher	Moderately higher	No difference
Year 11 (2005)	Females	A little lower	No difference	No difference

The mean number of days of use of tobacco was slightly higher for Year 8 students in 2003 compared to their counterparts in 2001.

The students in Year 10 in 2003 had a slightly higher mean number of days of drinking and a moderately higher mean number of says of smoking than their counterparts in 2001.

For year 11 girls in 2003, the mean number of days of drinking was slightly lower than those in the same year in 2001.

Mean number of days of marijuana use was low for all years in 2001 and 2003.

Comments

These data indicate very few changes in any variables over the two years of the implementation of MindMatters at Kerry Bay Girls High.

The baseline scores for resilience factors, protective factors and help-seeking were higher at baseline than for most other schools in the case study, reflecting perhaps, the high level of support and pastoral care that is provided to girls at this school, even without MindMatters.

It is interesting to note, that there were non-significant increases in alcohol and tobacco for year 10 females. A number of times over the three visits to this school, this year cohort was referred to by teachers in terms of their being somewhat different to previous grades. These comments suggest that the observed phenomenon is most probably related to a cohort characteristic.

9 Key learnings from this school

A pre-existing positive ethos in a school, with a strong commitment to pastoral care and social development, facilitates both the uptake and implementation of MindMatters.

Positive staff relationships and communication may be helpful when schools want to promote the uptake of a program like MindMatters.

MindMatters has many natural links with other programs designed to facilitate wellbeing; it can become the basis for an overarching framework which embraces other activities within the school which relate to student wellbeing.

Implementation of the MindMatters program can stimulate a school to develop more and stronger partnerships with external agencies and to place greater value on such partnerships in their contribution to student wellbeing.

Providing information and support for those staff who will be implementing the curriculum material is important to successful implementation - particularly for those who have not had formal training in a relevant area or who may be uncomfortable with discussing sensitive issues in the classroom.

Leadership during the implementation is important and may be sought from both the school's executive team and from a group or individual given formal responsibility for implementation. Sound leadership facilitates more effective and complete implementation across the school and should include a mechanism for review of the process and a change of direction if needed.

Implementation may be more effective when schools can allocate specific resources to the program, such as providing release from duties for an individual or group to manage the implementation. Other commitments may include supporting relevant professional development or purchasing additional copies of resources.

The implementation of MindMatters approaches in a school can have benefits for students in terms of encouraging openness about social and emotional wellbeing and fostering a willingness to seek help.

The implementation of MindMatters can lead to a greater awareness among school staff of the issues which affect the social and emotional wellbeing of young people and can provide a shared language which facilitates discussion of relevant issues within the school.

For some teachers, using MindMatters resources can inspire a change in teaching style and new ways of relating to their students.