



Evaluation of MindMatters at Oxford College

(Fictional Name)

Report on a study from 2002 to 2005

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

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

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Summary

Oxford College is a co-educational Catholic systemic school, catering for years 7 to 12. It is located in a rural regional centre. The enrolment is approximately 400 students, with only very small proportions of students having either an Indigenous background, or being from families whose language background would be other than English-speaking.

The school had, prior to the adoption of MindMatters, a well-defined pastoral care structure and philosophy. The school's purpose in adopting MindMatters was to enhance its pastoral care by placing a focus on fostering resilience and preventing mental health problems.

The school arranged for year coordinators (who manage the pastoral care) and curriculum coordinators to attend the two-day MindMatters training. Subsequently, the timetable was changed on Mondays to allow for an additional time of twenty-five minutes when pastoral teachers could spend with their pastoral groups. A scope and sequence for the use of MindMatters in this new period was drawn up with the year coordinators. Each curriculum coordinator was given time off teaching to prepare a plan for how MindMatters could be addressed in each curriculum area. Curriculum coordinators were made responsible for reporting on how MindMatters was taught in their area.

The energy and commitment of one of the deputy principals has been identified as a critical reason why this school adopted MindMatters in this way. Despite disruptions caused when this person retired at the end of 2004, the school continues to commit to MindMatters in 2005 and is taking steps to renew its commitment and to review the ways in which the school expresses this commitment in curriculum and other areas of school life.

Consistently informants from this school report that the culture of the school has changed. Staff and students have a greater understanding of mental health issues and more accepting attitudes towards people within and without the school who have mental health problems. There are changes in teacher's awareness that their teaching methods are important in promoting mental health. The school's focus on bullying has been enhanced and staff and students report greater awareness and greater reporting of bullying. Referrals to the school counsellor by teachers have increased and are more appropriate.

From a personal point of view, (because of the implementation of a MindMatters focus in my subject area) a greater awareness has also developed, a deeper understanding of possible adolescent mental health issues. I believe this has altered the manner in which I sometimes may have dealt with student issues.

Sometimes we've gone 'oh not another MindMatters thing', but it's achieved a little bit of status as an important aspect of school life. You look at it as a vibe, rather than (as) the particular activities within it. And the things that people are talking about. Like, I'm the same and I'm a little bit more aware that the way that you talk to kids might have some sort of dramatic impact upon their happiness. And yeah, it's a real vibe that not only goes into those particular activities, but into the way we look after each other. That's a lot to do with those in-services that we've had.

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

Overview

Oxford High is a systemic Catholic high school, located in a regional town.

The school enrolls approximately 400 students in years 7 to 12. The school is co-educational; less than 1% of the students are Aboriginal. There are fewer than five students whose language background would be other than English-speaking. There are just over 30 teaching staff and 10 support personnel.

This coeducational version of the school was established in 1975 with the amalgamation of two single sex schools run by two different religious orders. The school buildings are older, impressive structures in brick and stone. The majority of the buildings date back to the early 20th century and the grounds are extensive with easily accessed grassed play areas for recreation.

Administration

The school administration team comprises a principal and two assistant principals (AP). There is one designated pastoral care AP who manages the discipline and student wellbeing. This AP is supported by a team of six year leaders who in turn manage four to five teachers each of whom has a single pastoral group of approximately sixteen students.

The second AP is designated curriculum AP. This person is supported by coordinators of each of the key learning areas.

Educational context

Oxford High is located in a state which has a traditional curriculum model of separate subject areas. This school appears to comply with the curriculum model of the state and there is no indication of integration of learning across the curriculum areas evident in other states of Australia.

Annual staff/student turnover

Both staff and student turnover at this school is low. Of a staff of approximately forty only two to three might leave in any given year. Staff in positions of responsibility within the school tend to stay in those positions for extended periods of time.

Pastoral care arrangements

A long established pastoral care (PC) structure was already in place at Oxford at the commencement of this study and prior to the adoption of MindMatters. The essential ingredient of the structure was the relationship between the PC teacher and his or her students. Every morning, students spent fifteen minutes with their pastoral care teacher, during which time the roll is marked, notices are read and a prayer is said. It was also a time during which teachers and students could discuss incidental issues. In the afternoon, students also met with their PC teacher to have the roll marked again and to touch base with any issues that arose during the day.

In planning pastoral groups, an effort is made to allocate students to a teacher who will also teach them at least one other subject.

I think it's quite effective. Like you might not always go to that specific teacher, but you know that they're looking out for you. So you always do have someone to talk to if you have a problem. Student, 2003

Behaviour management arrangements

Behaviour management at Oxford is intrinsically linked to the pastoral care system. In the first instance, classroom teachers would deal with behavioural incidents. For serious incidents, subject coordinators would be informed and, if necessary the pastoral care teacher and the year coordinator would be consulted. All behavioural incidents are responded to in terms of care for the student themselves and for their peers.

Pastoral (care) is total in this school. It's how I teach, and how I relate to kids in the classroom and how I talk to them, and that's MindMatters too. We don't say 'Look son you're an idiot'. No we don't do that because that's not MindMatters. And good pastoral (care) is: 'Well, look mate, what's happened here? What's going on?' Staff, 2005

Other welfare support structures

There is a part-time school counsellor who works two and a half days per week. This arrangement appeared to be under some threat during the mid-term visit with concerns that there might be a move to centralise counselling support in the diocese, with schools needing to express demand for counselling support as required. Nevertheless, at the third visit the counsellor's time and role was still two and a half days per week dedicated to this school.

In an effort to ensure that students understand the role of the counsellor, he meets each year with small groups of year 7 students to introduce himself and to discuss the types of issues that students should feel free to speak to him about.

The school has a peer support program and peer mediation sessions where senior school students assist their junior schoolmates. These programs were identified by students.

Well we've got peer mediation sessions. Do we still do that? And that means there's some senior students and if junior students have any problem, like if they're having fights they can go there and ask for help and they'll resolve the problem. Hopefully both parties come out feeling better about themselves and each other.

Student, 2004

The students also noted the role of the SRC in providing students to initiate peer mediation or other support.

Links to the community

Staff mentioned some incidental connection with external health agencies in relation to cases of particular need or distress. Particularly favourable mention was made of the mental health support offered to students of the school since the incorporation of the MindMatters focus.

The school offers 'Living with Teenagers' parenting courses. They have a chapter of the St Vincent De Paul Society and link with the local group to work with and for the needy. There is a Red Cross initiative in the school.

There is a school board with representatives of the local community and a Parents and Friends organisation.

In addition, this school increases opportunities for a range of subject choice by working with other schools in the region to create a 'class' of students from the various schools.

Further links are explored by a number of sporting opportunities and the incidental connection of students with other schools provided by representative sport, cultural opportunities including an international aid project where a number of students from Oxford and other local schools go to a third world country to work with the local people for a short time.

Parent involvement

The parental involvement at the school was considered by teachers to be typical of secondary schools in that region. There was a reported high level of participation in parent teacher nights and parents were involved quite quickly with any serious breaches of school rules.

Those teacher parent relationships are also very high. Student, 2002

It (Oxford) has a history. Like a lot of our parents would have gone here and know the teachers and that kind of thing. Student, 2002

In addition in 2002 the school established the opportunity for parents to participate in the Living with Teenagers six week program, a library for parents, and commenced a regular insert in the school newsletter on parenting.

Student views of the school

Students generally held their school and their staff in high esteem. The following comments are quite typical of the views expressed across the entire period of the study.

I think it's like this student teacher relationship is very strong, very high.
Student, 2003

Because it's a small school, we know a lot of the teachers because we'll have had most of them for different subjects, so most students would probably have a favourite teacher they'd go to anyway. So there's usually someone you know that you could talk to. Student, 2003

When we're doing, for example, we're doing the HSC, in some big schools, like some private schools they just spoon feed the kids, and so they get really great marks or whatever in the HSC but once they get out into the real world no-one's telling them exactly what to do and how to do it so they sort of can't do things for themselves whereas here, they do sort of, they try and push us to the best of our ability. But it's up to us to do it, if we are not going to do it, then we are not going to do it. And then there's other schools who, if you don't want to do it don't do it sort of thing. Like they don't try and push them to the best of their ability or whatever. So we're sort of in between somewhere. Student, 2003

We're in between, we're approachable, we have respect for our students and our school and what we look like, we look respectable. Student, 2003

Staff views of the school

The stability of the staff and the general nature of comments across the three visits to Oxford indicate a high degree of commitment to the school and its community by the staff. There are a minority of voices of dissent; some staff seek or resist change in particular areas of the curriculum or school policy and procedure, but the vast majority appear to be very pleased with the way the school operates and with their role as educators within it.

You try to gauge it - like I think back to this, the kids that we have here at the moment are the best they have ever been, now I don't know why that is. It could be a whole lot of factors, I don't think they are any smarter than what they were - academically they are no better, they could probably - they are not as academic as they used to be in previous years, but the kids in the way they treat each other and the way they get on with each other generally is fantastic. It's the best it's ever been in 16 years that I have been here. And I guess they are starting to make a bit of a joke about it - I go to a school disco, and standing there for an hour and I get bored, because the kids get on with each other pretty well and there are very few discipline issues or fights.

It's like go to lunch - it's just boring cause most of the time, most of the time - there's not an issue.

You go down there and you've got two thirds of the school - 300 kids on the oval, sitting down. And even girls will be sitting in the middle of the touch football game, but it's not an issue. The kids play around them and I wonder why there isn't. And maybe some of this has something to do with it.

I think you will find it is the opposite in most schools. Staff, 2004

Community views of the school

The community appears to hold this school in high esteem. There were a number of comments from teachers that indicated there is an accurate and reasonable perception that Oxford creates competent young people who can move into the world of work but that there is a shortfall in the standards it achieves academically. Students' assessments of the way they are viewed in the community are summarised in this exchange:

How do you think the community and parents and people outside see this school compared to other schools in the area. Have you any thoughts about that?

I think they see us as pretty respectable. And places like K-Mart offer jobs, and like they ring the teachers and ask them to tell us to apply for jobs because they want specifically our school.

(Name) is always going on about that. This is the way, you know we're so good at dressing up our uniforms that the people from K-Mart called in here....Students, 2003

2 How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

Four school visits were made in February 2002, March 2003, March 2004 and April 2005. 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	4 th visit
Principal	1	1	1	1
Deputy or assistant principal	1	2	2	1
Senior teacher	1	8	12	11
Teacher or assistant teacher	5	6	4	1
Student	12	16	14	16
Counsellor, social worker etc	1	1	1	1
Parent	3	-	1	1
Community member	-	-	-	
Other	-	-	-	

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

At baseline, the following participation rates were achieved:

Year 7	70%
Year 8	55%
Year 9	44%
Year 10	49%
Year 11	29%

Results from first round of data collection are used as points against which results, after three years of implementation of the program, can be compared. These data are shown in section 11 of this report.

How the evaluation was undertaken at this school?

3 Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

3.1 Community context

Oxford is set in a regional university town; increasing numbers of local students are selecting this local university rather than leaving town choosing this 'cheaper' option as the cost of tertiary education increases and there is not enough money to pay for accommodation in the capital city as well as the costs of tuition. There are limited apprenticeships and traineeships with most part-time and full-time employment opportunities arising in the service industries such as hospitality, retail, hairdressing and beauticians, and also trades such as building and welding.

3.2 Student wellbeing issues

Mental health problems

The staff at Oxford displayed an increasing awareness about mental health and wellbeing during the course of this study. The general awareness-raising about mental health in the broader community along with the careful planning and incorporation of professional development in the school setting appears to be liberating an increasing awareness amongst the staff and students of Oxford that mental illness is in all communities – including school communities.

In the middle of '99 I started, and I suppose dealing with kids on a day to day basis with all their problems I realised that hey, we have got kids with issues and we have got kids with various degrees of depression and we have got things that other people aren't aware of so let's get on ... and see if we can raise awareness of what's happening in kids lives. Staff, 2001

Bullying and harassment

The reasons for adoption of MindMatters in this particular school arose in the context of the assistant principal's research for the development of a bullying policy. The school counsellor had noticed the MindMatters kit and following his own review of it recommended it. The MindMatters resources on 'bullying and teasing' gave impetus to further exploration of the kit by a core group comprised of the school counsellor, the physical education coordinator and the religious education coordinator.

(We) got our heads together and thought this looks really good, how can we try and implement some of it into the school. And that's what started then, and it just grew and grew. Staff, 2003

The students identified bullying and harassment as a significant issue within other schools in the region but relatively limited in their school. Most students and staff talked about the problem of bullying of their students mainly occurring outside the school grounds and on buses and at weekend times.

The trouble with a small town is too that quite often the stuff we deal with at the school happened at the weekend. Or it spills over and it's ongoing and the kids can't basically get away from it.

Yeah and between groups in different schools or down the street there are things happening. Last year we had a couple of incidences of kids getting bashed up by other kids from other schools down the street and that also spilled over with visits from other school kids to our playground and that sort

of stuff so you can't sort of escape. So quite often we're dealing with things that really aren't school based, we're dealing with the consequences. Makes for an interesting life. Staff, 2002

Staff and students commented on the different types of bullying observed within the school most noting that year 9 was a particularly torrid year. They saw MindMatters as a tool to assist them in the first instance in creating a relevant bullying policy.

Drugs and alcohol

This was not seen as a major issue at this school. Students and staff acknowledge binge drinking by adolescents is a significant issue in their town but that the impact of weekend alcohol abuse was very limited at this school. The town did hold a regional student drug summit and one teacher noted that the figures for the region were above the national average in smoking, drinking, and use of illicit drugs.

Students on smoking:

A few people and then as the years progress you sort of just think oh this is stupid I don't want to do it, whereas the other group branches out and says yeah, I'll keep doing it.

But it's sort of the same as if you go out smoking and you think about it. I knew a lot of kids who used to smoke but now don't or something. They're more aware and that sort of stuff.

It's kind of expensive to smoke and drink and that and probably people start realising that they need to spend their money on like cars or ... Students 2003

On drugs and alcohol generally:

I reckon people really do it because they reckon they're cool, not just to cope with stress.

I think in the younger years, like in year 8 and 9 it's like a cool thing whereas a lot more would do it when they're older and so it's more like a sociable thing then.

But they've also got a larger ability to make that decision, not based on peer pressure sort of thing. Like they're making that decision for themselves I think.

It's largely from year 10, 20% then year 11, 60% or whatever. I think it was a gradual thing but it has increased over the period.

Like we have 18 year-olds in our year and students who are nearly 18. I mean it's not going to be 17 you don't drink whatever, and then once you turn 18 you do it. It's a gradual process. It's more likely to happen in year 12. Students 2003

Gender specific needs

While not strictly in the adoption phase, this concern expressed in 2004 describes a reality at the school at the time of adoption. Two staff members identified gender specific need for

school critique of how the school could encourage boys to look after themselves better. There was an acceptance that there was a type of communication between girls labeled best as 'bitchy' that was worthy of attention too – but it was concern about the boys that dominated concern.

...boys come home so angry because they get at each other all day long. They're knocking each other. They are putting each other down. They're pushing, they're shoving. Girls don't do that. As I say there is bitchiness, but I think they really look after each other. Boys don't look after each other at all. Their way of relating is ... shoving, making a joke of someone, and 'Stop being a mother' they told me. Boys please, please look after each other better. But, 'This is how we react. This is how we get on.' You know, what, it's all a joke. But the fact is a lot of ... teenage boys can go home very angry. And I think sometimes we wonder why.

Well girls they sit and talk. They do. They support each other. If you see a girl crying there's three girls around her cuddling her. With a boy crying, they don't comfort him. Do you know what I mean? They get it out in their anger. I just think probably the real issue that has to be looked at is boys' education and how we deal with the boys and what we can do with boys. But I really do. I think we're not going to solve a health issue until we look at how schools can better cater for boys. Because they're not catering for boys.

You know because the boys don't just see the importance of doing the best they can in school. And I don't know how we can change that. But it's not cool to be a boy and do well. And I don't know if it's because girls are stronger so if they're high achievers, because it doesn't matter what sex you are, there's great pressure on any high achiever. And I don't know whether girls are just more resilient and so they can cope with having that position without. But for boys it's really cool to not do well.

How you get effective mental health services to men I reckon is one of the big challenges. And I think it starts in schools. Staff, 2004.

3.3 Adequacy of student support approaches

The staff at Oxford expressed no major concerns in this area. They clearly appreciated their counsellor and the level of student support that was offered across the entire staff from ancillary staff to the principal.

3.4 Consistency with school direction, ethos

MindMatters was an easy fit for this school.

I think with a Catholic school that it's very easy to (adopt MindMatters) ... because our whole philosophy is one of pastoral care and the dignity of the person and the education of the whole child and it fits in really well with MindMatters. So it wasn't as if it was something that was completely alien to us and we were trying to convince the staff. Staff, 2004.

The MindMatters program overlay was an opportunity to add to an already successful pastoral program described in these terms by a teacher who was relatively new to the school.

I've been here - this is my third year and it does get difficult to judge from anywhere else because it's so different, the culture of the society is so different. The change in the last four or five years - but I come from the State schools 1,100 kids and the pastoral care they had never heard of. Absolutely - I know it's a case with Catholic schools in general - we talk about the counselling things but we never own it as a staff member at all, even as teachers of maths or even as a roll call teacher we don't get to know our class - about four hours every day, so forget that. It's completely different here it is just so much more like such a ... (large) amount of pastoral care that we have in the school we have as teachers with ... our kids not just our pastoral class, but all our classes is so much better than other schools.

Staff, 2004

Another staff member supported these observations and spoke of the ease of fit of MindMatters with that pastoral structure.

MindMatters is ... consistent with what we were doing and what we wanted to do in the school. So it sort of strengthened that as well as, it was very compatible with what we were doing. I suppose it just led to creating a better program, a better pastoral program. Staff, 2004

3.5 Perceived need to emphasise student wellbeing

While there was no perceived crisis in student wellbeing and MindMatters was a value added measure building on an established and successful pastoral program one senior staff member described the 'flavour' that MindMatters brought to the school in these terms.

Did you need MindMatters? Given that you have that philosophy, that ethos?

Yeah. To a certain extent I suppose from the emphasis on mental wellbeing, I'd say yes. You know, bringing the whole thing to light and making it something that kids could talk about and staff could talk about. Because it's something that a lot of people are very uncomfortable with and some people are still a little bit uncomfortable with, but I'd certainly say, yes. But ... as far as thinking there's going to be any sort of major shift or major identifiable change in staff and students I don't know. I don't know. Staff, 2003

3.6 Organisational concerns

Staff mental health

A senior staff member mentioned the issue of change fatigue.

I've always been conscious, particularly over the last three to four years, just the amount of change the teachers have been asked to undertake, whether it's in curriculum or whether it's legislation or whatever, but in this case, all we've done is thrown up another possibility. We've stressed the whole idea of mental

health and I think it has been taken on board and people are finding it helpful and useful.

Staff, 2003

By comparison to concerns expressed about noticing and fostering student mental health, staff mental health and wellbeing was not really a significant factor identified in the adoption phase at Oxford.

Staff morale

The introduction of MindMatters was described as building staff skill and comfort in dealing with the concept of mental health amongst their students and for themselves and their colleagues. The morale of most staff appeared to be high on the first visit. The interactions between staff with one another and with students appeared to be open and trusting.

The descriptor of the school as a 'safe' place was attested to by both staff and students. This school has experienced very little staff turnover and while, for the majority, this seemed to support continuity, connection and community, for some staff this reality represented a staleness and a sense of long held disappointment in management decisions of which they disapproved.

3.7 Early expectations of problems

There was some anticipation in the planning phase of resistance from staff to change. The planners sought to prevent problems by providing resources in the form of professional development for the whole staff. This was supported by further professional development of individuals who were selected to ensure staff in a variety of subject areas and particular roles were developed and able to confer with colleagues on return to the school. The problem of time to incorporate new programming into the curriculum areas was anticipated and release time allocated. The problem of resistance to the pastoral period appeared to be anticipated but there was no clear plan to address that resistance.

3.8 Early expectations of impact of MindMatters

In October of 2001, the staff at Oxford undertook an audit of the school and created a report on identified areas of concern. There was a range of issues raised but only those issues identified as needing attention by more than 50% of the staff made it to the audit document. A summary of that audit outcomes are presented in the following table:

Why did this school decide to adopt MindMatters?

AREA OF CONCERN	OUTCOMES TO BE DELIVERED
Policies	Write Staff Health and Welfare Write Referral of Suspected Student Health Problems Rewrite Critical Incident Policy
Ethos and Environment	Maintenance of school buildings Students supportive of staff and others School caters for periods of mental illness Students participate in beautifying school
Practices	Staff members seek help when stressed or over committed Teachers have a clear understanding of emergency procedures relating to medical/hospital treatment Address issues of potential stress in transition from primary to secondary (school)
Curriculum	Sufficient time allocated to mental health Teachers supported by receiving information about availability and use of mental health resources Teachers experience professional development relevant to mental health and suicide Consultation with parents regarding mental health issues and curriculum
Students Basic Understanding of	Mental health Mental illness Community health resources and services Stress management
Partnerships and Services	Involvement of broad range of parents Curriculum activities regarding families Involvement of local groups in school activities Consultation between health sector and teachers regarding health curriculum Involvement of Aboriginal community health workers Up to date database of referral agencies

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

4.1 How MindMatters was identified

On arrival in the school the (MindMatters) kit was displayed and it drew the interest of the school counsellor who recommended it to the assistant principal.

4.2 Process of deciding to use MindMatters

In July 2001 the awareness that the kit supported the development of anti-bullying and harassment policy and procedures attracted attention. A local mental health worker whose role involved working with schools then contacted the school. Shortly after there followed an in-service for the year leaders, the assistant principal and the school counsellor.

At this point all of the year leaders were given a MindMatters kit to consider with the task of identifying any or all lesson material that they thought could be useful to supplement the existing pastoral care programs. This led to the development of a committee, a bullying survey and planning commenced for professional development of the entire staff on MindMatters.

4.3 Attendance at professional development

The professional development of staff was both formal and informal. There were many occasions in 2001/2 when the staff discussed the MindMatters programs and ideas arising from it at staff meetings. In addition, 12 staff were trained in that time. The selection of staff to attend training was deliberately structured to ensure that pastoral teachers, pastoral/year leaders and subject coordinators all received training and were then able to contribute to the planning and implementation in the school from a variety of perspectives.

The in-service at the school conducted by the state-based training officer in September 2002 appears to have been a turning point. Her demonstration of a range of sample units and her previous experience with the MindMatters program were instrumental in enabling the subject coordinators in particular to see that MindMatters was not only a good idea for the school but also that it was relevant to their own subject areas.

4.4 How school was informed or involved

Parents were invited to learn more about MindMatters via a PowerPoint presentation playing on a loop at a school open day. The students created posters that they put up around the school to generate interest and awareness for students, teachers and parents.

This was a deliberate effort to engage the whole school community with a clear vision of whole school implementation of MindMatters.

4.5 Formation of a core group or other planning group

The core group was formed initially by the assistant principal, the school counsellor, the religious education coordinator and the PE coordinator. In Terms 2 and 3 the group increased its familiarisation with the MindMatters material and by Term 4 2002 the group had expanded to include all the key learning area coordinators in a half day reading and writing session where MindMatters was actually written into the programs for all curriculum areas.

This was followed later that term by a team of pastoral/year coordinators working out the pastoral program for 2003 and incorporating MindMatters into those year level programs. As this group worked together it became apparent to the planners that if the material was to be truly owned by the whole school that it would need to find a place within the key learning areas too.

So I suppose we went that step ahead from looking at more curriculum focus as well as pastoral focus to make it broader, to get to all areas of the school. And with some curriculum areas it's more prevalent than in other curriculum areas but just to spread it around a bit, to make that link, that conscious links that the teachers who worked with their coordinators on that had more focus as to where the MindMatters fitted into the subject areas. I found that was a huge exercise to do that and to continue coming back to how it's relevant and how it can be put into place in those areas. Staff, 2003

4.6 Process of planning

An outline of the process of early implementation is included in Appendix 1.

The process of planning for incorporation of MindMatters in the curriculum programming involved creating release time for staff and supporting and guiding the careful insertion of MindMatters into the key learning area material without duplication. This is how it was perceived by one teacher:

The AP came to the group of released subject coordinators and said, 'Look, this is basically what we're hoping to achieve today and you've got this amount of time to do it', and I think the PDHP guy had already done a bit of work and I said, 'Well look this is the sort of thing that I want by the end of the day' and it just happened.

So people are fairly good. I think we probably take it for granted - and even the ones who were a bit 'iffy' about it just went along with it. Like the (subject) coordinator was a bit 'iffy' about the whole thing but he's made an effort to see where it can go into the curriculum and when it was up to them, we have curriculum meetings once a week. Staff, 2003.

Staff then met in faculty meetings to complete the programming. This process was designed to develop a joint ownership of the final program. The final phase of the planning was a cross check by a senior staff member of the pastoral period programs with the curriculum programs to ensure no duplication of material happened by accident.

The timing of this invigoration of the curriculum with MindMatters focus and resources was timed to minimise stress for teachers.

Mmmmm. It was a monstrous job. So there was no doubling up because otherwise the kids would say, 'Oh we've done this' and then it just goes flop. So everything that is done in that booklet is only done once in one area and even with things like bullying that happens more than once, we made sure that in year 7 they did this aspect of it and that in year 8 they did that aspect and in year 9 they did that aspect. Yeah. So we were fairly methodical about it. But that happened towards the end of last year and it was good because the year 12 exams - a lot of teachers were fairly light on as far as teaching load goes. So

you've got to pick your times. There's no way you'd do it in term 2 or 3. Staff, 2003

In addition the school planned to allocate more time to the pastoral care period to enable time for the delivery of the material. Some of the staff did not view this process as having been done in a consultative way but rather saw it as having been imposed by the executive.

If accurate this aspect of the process marks a contrast to the otherwise consultative planning that was undertaken in 2002.

4.7 Early plans for change

There were plans from early in the adoption process to ensure that the MindMatters entrée to the school was across the whole school and staff were encouraged to build it in wherever suitable in addition to the curriculum and pastoral areas where more formal planning had already been undertaken.

The following commentary from a teacher in 2003 indicates the breadth of adoption planned for and the level of change undertaken to increase the focus on mental health, wellbeing and resilience. It also indicates how broad-ranging the pastoral program became very quickly at Oxford.

The diary is something we all start off with, how to use the school diary and I'll show you that in a minute because that's got MindMatters stuff in it. Creating Connections, camp preparation, that's all about resilience and interdependence, looking after yourself and all that sort of stuff because they go on this camp. The retreats fit in really well with MindMatters because it's about you and others and how you relate to where you're going and goal setting and that sort of stuff. Year 9 team building and coping with pressure. We decided on picking up two themes so that everything sort of fits in with that. Year 10 that was an interesting one. The guy last year who was the year 10 leader noticed that when they had the year 10 formal a lot of them didn't know how to use a knife and fork so last year he took them down to the Ex-services' club and booked in for lunch and the guy came out and taught them how to set the table and where you start and what you do and everything else. That was a really good thing for the kids. Staff, 2003

4.8 Views of professional development

Two summary comments by teachers from Oxford reflect the general impression generated by those who had attended training and were available for interview in the course of this study.

I think it was very useful at looking at the parts of the kit. To just sort of see what was there. I actually was very familiar with it before I went but I found that if you weren't familiar with it, it would have been very useful for that and a lot of activities that were done during each session were activity – so you were doing some hands on for the type of activities you could actually carry out with a group of kids. Good networking. Found that that was really important to sort of meet different people who were different contact people, and actually realise 'look at how it all fitted together'. How, because we don't really have a good understanding of the health system and who's working in what area so you

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

know, we had someone there from Centrelink, but also a number of different places there. So in talking to teachers at other schools about what they're doing and seeing their enthusiasm and you know, or varied levels of ... and just sharing of ideas was I think a useful day, yeah a couple of days. And all our teachers who went came away having a fairly good understanding of what we were doing and why we were doing it. Presenters - I've been to two I think, I went to something right at the start I can't remember but very good presenters. Staff, 2003

And this one:

I thought it was a great workshop. I thought it was a very, very positive workshop. The things they did were very hands on stuff. It was really great, awareness raising, no I really enjoyed it. I think it was very, very valuable. I actually think every teacher in every school probably should be able to have access to that because, as I think we've been saying, a lot of health issues just have to be infiltrated through a high school and the only way you can do that is by having every teacher attend workshops like that and have developed that awareness.

Okay that will be fine. I was going to ask you about the presenters ...

I don't remember who they were, but they were fantastic, I know that. And they got us up doing things so it was a very ... like some things you sit there and have trouble staying awake, when you're a teacher because we're used to moving around. We had great fun. You were up and down a lot and it was very active. It was great.

Clearly, the opportunity for MindMatters professional development and contact with colleagues and health professionals was seen as highly valuable by these particular staff members.

4.9 Review processes

Review processes of MindMatters as such do not appear to have been planned in advance. Rather there appears to have been an anticipation that ongoing review of effectiveness and planning for further change and implementation would occur with the regular meetings of KLA coordinators and year groups and simply be another dimension of the ongoing review in those established forums.

At the close of 2003, a half day review, evaluation and planning meeting occurred. This review revealed that there had been a significant increase in the acquisition of resources and materials to support teachers with this new focus on mental health and wellbeing. There was a culling of resources that had not connected with the students and teachers and a replacement of those with new resources and topics were deemed appropriate.

As one teacher stated in the 2004 visit:

We had a half day when we were doing all our programming to sit there with the kits and our programs and flick through and say - that activity fits in this program - photocopy it, staple it to the back of the program - that's as simple as it was. And then, when you did the program, you were like - when you wrote MindMatters Enhancing Resilience page such and such, when people want to

access it, they can use it. So I think definitely, the attention is there - I couldn't go really close and tell you exactly what's happening but I think that is the same with everything. It's the same with literacy and numeracy - you have these things programmed whether you actually do them - you sort of have to sit down and find out I think. The biggest impact I think that you can actually see in the place, is the awareness raising. Particularly of staff - you know we had a couple of fellows who were quite, 'What's all this about' actually come out and say 'I'm worried about so and so, I think they might be suffering from depression' that sort of stuff. I think 'Wow' - these fellows are actually using that word and noticing these kids. So I think that has been a real bonus.

Problems with the delivery of MindMatters in the pastoral period emerged as a problem in the review undertaken in mid 2002. There was a small majority of very positive voices but a significant number of complaints about the level of practical support and preparation support offered to pastoral teachers by their year coordinators. A plan emerged in response to have the materials prepared in advance. One year coordinator planned for the entire year in advance. The popularity of this method appeared in the visit in 2004. Staff were appreciative of the advance notice and the coordinator indicated it was a more efficient way of resourcing and supporting his staff.

It also emerged that a number of staff expressed concern about the whole feeling of professional exposure of their lack of knowledge, confidence and competence in the mental health aspects and the variation in teaching style required to create engaging lessons for the students. There did not appear to be any plan to intervene with these particular staff other than continuing efforts at general staff professional development. One staff member did mention some team teaching that occurred informally in which more confident teachers worked with a less confident colleague.

It became clear that at the senior school level a considerable amount of time was being allocated to the skills of time management and study skills, as one teacher stated:

I reckon it's good for their mental health. Staff, 2004

An in-house evaluation of how MindMatters had been incorporated into the curriculum areas was conducted in November 2003. The evaluator described the responses as 'very positive'. There was only one KLA coordinator that indicated resistance to the concept and was likely to be avoiding delivery of the elements of MindMatters indicated in the overall program for that subject area.

A bullying survey was undertaken in March 2004. A local student undertaking year 12 community and family studies was to use the data for her research project into bullying and furnish a copy of her analysis for the school to use for further planning. No results were available at the time of writing.

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

5.1 Changes in pastoral groups

The school built on its existing pastoral care structure in which home room teachers were responsible for roll-call and administration with a group of students. The number of pastoral groups remained the same as did the staff to student ratios and the horizontal structure of the program ensuring students spent non-KLA time with peers of the same year level.

The major change made was the adoption of a program of lessons (largely taken from the MindMatters kit but including other activities as well) to be implemented in a newly created pastoral period. The decision was made to run this pastoral period once every two-weekly cycle on Mondays, alternating with a school assembly.

The year coordinators were charged with the responsibility of ensuring the preparation of resources for the pastoral period, providing such resources to the staff in their year group with sufficient time for preparation. The change represented an increase in the expectation of staff of their competence and confidence to create and support the delivery of MindMatters materials in the pastoral period.

5.2 Changes in policies

This elevation in the status and purpose of the pastoral group was a major policy change for the school. The nature of the pastoral period in the new configuration required a different level of preparation by pastoral teachers and year coordinators.

It reflected a whole school shift to a commitment to seek opportunities to create space and resources to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and a desire to provide time for skill and attitude development to enhance wellbeing and resilience.

5.3 Changes in timetable

This was one of the most significant changes implemented at Oxford. Following the adoption of the concept of a new pastoral period model, each scheduled class on Mondays was shortened by five minutes. So instead of 50 minute periods, each Monday morning class became only 45 minutes in duration. This created a 25 minute period prior to lunch, in addition to the other subject lessons.

The change generated significant discussion amongst staff. There were a range of views expressed by staff about this initiative and the timetable changes. Some were highly supportive of the concept and of the experience of more time with their pastoral group. Others simply accepted the change and made no significant comment about the impact. A small group of staff actually appear to be resentful of the changes, seeing them as breaching their industrial conditions (such as hours of face to face teaching).

Partly because as a result of the MindMatters being instigated in the school or implemented throughout the programs and stuff, part of our pastoral care focus has moved so that we have actually had to put in the time table a pastoral period. Which wasn't there a couple of years ago and a number of staff members including me on certain occasions, a number of occasions - resent that we have to be put in a position where we are doing an extra period of actual teaching time without any recognition for it in our load. There you go - I said it! How's that?

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

I agree 100%.

I think that is something that the school hasn't even addressed. Staff, 2004

5.4 Changes in support services

The school had an established link with the Regional and Extended Family Services which provided counselling to families experiencing difficulty. This service also supported the training and delivery of peer mediation. In the course of this study staff noted a reduction in the call on this service.

Now there are two ways of interpreting that, either the kids don't need it as much or the kids felt the whole thing was hopeless and don't bother using it. But I like to think the first one. And as someone said, because a lot of kids did the training they know the schools involved and were listening now so they mediate themselves. Staff, 2004

Nevertheless, the relationship with this service provider was ongoing and reciprocal:

A lot of kids left last year, who not only worked in the school but worked down at community health, being mediators, so we did - I said to the fellow last week, next time we'll do training, how about doing it here at the school and you can have our room free of charge and I said because last time we did that we had 20 kids. I announced it at assembly and they had 20 kids come. Staff, 2003

5.5 Changes in curriculum

Changes in pastoral curriculum

The introduction of a new pastoral care period and the use of MindMatters as a core curriculum for the period was an extensive change for this school.

We had just a review of the pastoral period because we introduced last year a 20 minute - it's actually 25 minutes - once a fortnight pastoral period where we would implement MindMatters or various other things, depending on what year it was.

Each year coordinator was responsible for the coordination and distribution of materials according to the program devised and coordinated by them. The core source of materials was from the MindMatters resource kit and additional materials were incorporated. The programs covered both opportunities for discussion of issues as well as self-help skill building to enhance resilience.

The school selected unifying themes for each year. These are shown in the table below:

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

Table: Outline of Original Mapping of MindMatters Curriculum Resources for the New Pastoral Classes

Year Level	Theme	Indicative Topics
7	Creating Connections & Introduction to Study Skill	Creating Connections Bullying Social Time Effective Reading Team Building
8	Cooperation & Self Awareness	Team Building – Introductions Team Building – Cooperation Team Building – Considering Others Valuing Myself Belonging Affirmation
9	Team Building & Coping with Pressure	Study Plans Bullying Controlling Anger Team Building Coping with Pressure Drugs and Alcohol Youth Accidents Law and Order
10	Goals & Aspirations & Coping Skills	Assessment Schedule Study Plans Goals and Aspirations Coping with Stress 1 and 2 Bullying Work Experience
11	Goals & Aspirations	Diary Management Study Plan Study Skills Research Skills Keeping Motivated Team Building/ Communication Job Guidance Student Stress Records of Achievement
12	Life Skills & Stress Management	Goals/ Plans and Reflection Bullying Looking After Yourself Study Skills

As can be seen, in the senior years, there was a significant emphasis on study skills which was largely delivered by the pastoral teachers. In addition the counsellor occasionally worked with students in the pastoral period on stress management. Further support for the staff and students came from specialists in the community who came into the pastoral period to work with year 12 students on time management and study skills.

All of these issues were seen as being supportive of the students' wellbeing and mental health.

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

So I like to think that all of that sort of stuff is under the stress management part of MindMatters. Staff, 2003

This opportunity in the senior school for the delivery of MindMatters and general mental health material to support student wellbeing is seen as an important opportunity given that health is not a compulsory subject at that level. Thus the pastoral care period is really the only ongoing opportunity for the delivery of such material. This being said, the staff concern at the increase the program creates in their workload must be noted.

It's like an extra class they've got to prepare for too. You can imagine you've got a six period day, or you've got a five period day with all the other classes to prepare and you'd be consciously ticking over what am I doing next and I've got to do that pastoral period. Staff, 2003

Despite the level of effort to put this pastoral program together, the separateness of the program from the subjects (so often considered the 'real' business of schooling), was identified as a reality that was likely to impact on the effectiveness of MindMatters if it were delivered only through this pathway. As one staff member noted:

You can have the pastoral periods, but they sort of sit separate from the rest. . . of the school. Staff, 2004

For this reason changes in the health curriculum and that of other KLA's has always been seen as an important complement to the curriculum taught in the pastoral period.

Changes in health curriculum

During the course of the study the PDHPE coordinator and staff revised their program. They decided to incorporate materials they identified from the MindMatters kit that they saw as enhancing and supporting their program.

In the changing climate of awareness in the school about the importance of mental health and wellbeing, the PDH teachers decided to incorporate the units on mental health. This represents a change from a former focus on life-style diseases such as cardio-vascular disease. Students were formally assessed on their understanding of this unit.

With this particular unit, the 'Understanding Mental Illness', it has been a pretty successful unit because the resources are really good with it. The video that is with the kit is almost right on the money for that particular unit of work, and that's always a good sort of resource as a starting point for discussion and all that. So you'd have to say for that particular unit of work it's great, really good. Staff, 2003

While the most significant change to the health curriculum arising out of the interaction with MindMatters was in year 10 there was a review of the year 7 to 9 resources in the light of MindMatters being adopted in the school. Staff identified existing units of work that they did not want to particularly replace or change but were conscious of providing touch points for opportunities to provide a greater focus on the mental health aspects contained therein.

For example, one such unit was entitled 'Feeling Good', essentially a self-esteem building unit into which staff saw the incorporation of MindMatters material as possible and beneficial.

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

Changes in other curriculum areas

Oxford College has made significant changes in that the school has adopted a comprehensive approach to the introduction of MindMatters into other KLAs.

See Appendix for details of the way in which MindMatters material was mapped into the **English** curriculum area as an example of the type of planning that was undertaken.

In general there appeared to be almost universal support and acclaim for the changes undertaken and the comfort and effectiveness with which they were implemented in the curriculum areas.

The following comment is representative of the comments of many staff at Oxford and provides an interesting counterpoint to the comments above in regard to the pastoral program and adoption:

I think it works better as an integrated approach in the curriculum rather than one off in the pastoral period. I think that approach is far more – I think the teachers find it a lot more comfortable because they're using their own knowledge of their subject area to build it in which can often times be very difficult ...so I think it's far more comforting for the teachers than to do it in the pastoral period, because it has far more success. You've got time to build on it, you've got time to look at issues in a classroom environment. A classroom environment is much different to what a pastoral period environment is. I don't think this MindMatters material is designed for simply going 'Okay here's a 20 minute slot let's deal with loss and grief'. I think they're too big issues to be done one off like that so we'd prefer it, and certainly well I'd prefer it - the integrated approach is much more successful, and teachers have time to develop their thoughts and ideas, rather than through that pastoral period. Staff, 2003

In the **science** curriculum area the changes that were implemented were described in the following terms.

... it was curriculum driven and it was quality teaching driven but also at the back of the mind I think, and this is what's been the benefit of MindMatters, they were still thinking about the achievement of kids and the mental wellbeing of kids and so they organised a very structured 9 and 10 in such a way for those that want to pursue science – at 11 and 12 they're not locked into it at all, but those that have shown interest, those that are interested in science but don't want to follow it through as a career path, that's worked exceptionally well. And kids are a lot happier and teachers are a lot happier. Staff, 2004

Science staff also identified that the practical nature of the subject and the need to report on cooperation as an outcome of the course provided a platform for elevation of the status of mental health enhancing behaviours.

So they're actually being assessed on that and my class knows that I've given the outcomes that they've been assessed on so they know when they're doing prac work they've got to try to work together, which is one of the aims of science. Staff, 2003

In the internal school review 'MindMatters in Curriculum 2003', staff claimed that the changes to their content and delivery were still valuable. The MindMatters material and focus were described as 'useful in the context of teaching science and can meet the outcomes of both

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

science and MindMatters'. The hope expressed was that their efforts at curriculum level would lead to 'greater understanding and tolerance of those who suffer temporary or long term illness.'

Interestingly students commented that they saw maths and science as subjects where they just did the work required and where there were significantly fewer moments that they identified as MindMatters moments.

In the **HSIE (what is this?)** curriculum area staff indicated in their internal review that they considered the civics and citizenship strands were highly receptive to the incorporation of MindMatters material. They asserted that MindMatters was never treated as a separate entity and that the spirit of MindMatters was being included and addressed wherever appropriate.

The **TAS (what is this?)** area simply reported 'the spirit of MindMatters is met in group work and peer tutoring, with emphasis on helping one another.'

The **religious education** mapping of MindMatters into the curriculum areas was arguably the most extensive in the school. There were many comments from teachers of religious education (RE) that MindMatters was a particularly easy fit for this subject area. This is particularly important as most of those teachers who made such comments also taught across a range of curriculum areas with RE as a minor part of their load.

The internal review supported the views of teachers expressed in interviews during the course of this study. In addition the co-curriculum opportunities presented by retreat/reflection days at Oxford were described by staff in that review as 'powerful tools in the implementation of MindMatters issues.'

Students identified that the flavour of MindMatters happened easily and regularly within their classes arising out of the content of that course.

With the text book like we've got this new text book and just reading up on all different things, like issues that we are talking about -what was our last class? Abortion, we were talking about abortion - it was moral decisions and stuff and abortion came up and just people had their own say about it and big debate.'

'That was decision making (there were) steps how to do that?'

Students 2004

In addition to the curriculum area of RE Oxford has a significant liturgical and retreat program into which they have incorporated added dimensions in the light of the MindMatters initiative in the school.

You know retreats are very much a day for student growth and for really, responding to each others' needs and things like that so I suppose in those areas it was always part of the program.

... we have retreat days where years 7, 8, and 9 will go out for a day and focus on something related, as the pastoral teachers see fit to the group. So we try to tailor what's this group like in their dynamics? What's their need and we try to make at some stage a religious or spiritual connection there too. But, for example, the titles of the retreats of last year might mean something to MindMatters people, like year 7 their focus, the theme was called 'Breaking Down The Barriers'. In year 8 it was called 'I'm Okay, You're Okay'. And year 9 was called 'What's My Scene? What's My Dream?'. And year 10 was called 'Journey'. So there's a lot of connections there with the whole wealth of

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

material of MindMatters. But what it's doing is making us conscious of those connections

On one of the days of our visit to Oxford the sacrament of reconciliation was being offered to students. This is how the incorporation of MindMatters was described by one staff member:

...it was a matter of just talking to the kids - how do you think you would feel if you were able to unburden all your worries and have someone say - 'you're forgiven'. And just talking to the kids about that sort of thing. So it can be as simple as that. Just keep it in the back of your mind how things have an impact on mental wellbeing.

Staff identified that the adoption of MindMatters had affirmed and increased their sense of the value of many of the areas of study and opportunities for discussion and reflection provided in religious education.

MindMatters has affirmed, at least in one sense, that some things that we do (in RE) are very important to mental health...I don't think we were (aware of that before).

We probably thought it was good for the kids' wellbeing and you didn't actually relate it to other people.

It took on a new dimension and I guess a fuller and richer dimension. That is - some of the aspects that we would call spiritual are very much for the mind.

In relation to **English** many staff, both those teaching within and those who observed from without the faculty, identified this as a subject easily able to accommodate a MindMatters focus.

Some comments include:

(We) ... deal with human issues in English and language and alternate poetry and all that sort of stuff, it's an easy one just to pick out various aspects and relate it to MindMatters. So I think there was very little we had to do to incorporate it because we already had some programs around bullying and some around resilience was one of them. I think we added resilience in to the year 7 one for the novel that was appropriate to that. But it sort of, it's not so much a conscious thing when we do a unit that involves a text we don't go 'this is a MindMatters text' or 'this is from MindMatters' - it's just incorporated in our area, I think, and I think English is the easiest one to - PDHPE of course, but English and RE are probably the two easy ones to work in.

Students also noted that MindMatters material seemed to be a natural part of the humanities subjects. This is how they described recent experiences of MindMatters flavour in English:

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

... sometimes in English we have a period where the text we were studying - say it was a movie or whatever, we would just get into a whole - not like argue - discussion or debate about aspects of the movie and just gets people to sort of say - like say there's moral issues or whatever issues in the film that everyone can just have their say about what they think about it - sort of lets you know what other people and they can know you, cause you can say what you think about their future. Student, 2004.

The staff also reported that there was a change to the structure of English in years 9 and 10. This change was designed to enable the formation of different groupings of peers and response to different types of interest expressed by the students. The staff member who reported this change indicated that, while not directly attributable to MindMatters, such changes were indirectly attributable to MindMatters at Oxford:

You can't actually say that that (MindMatters) caused that, but I think it's made people aware of the needs of kids. Staff, 2003

In the subject area of **maths**, the maths staff indicated a high level of actual delivery of MindMatters following creative efforts by that department to find opportunities for inclusion.

Have you seen any benefit from implementing the elements of MindMatters in maths?

Yes I have in terms of the content of use, so I tend to look for a few (because of MindMatters) because it's harder to implement (in Maths) If I don't go out and look for things it's not just going to happen. So I find what it is, is activities bringing content that deals with issues that my students are trying to cope with like financial - it could be time, or money or mobile phones is a great one, because the kids get them - that causes real concern if they are on the phone all the time and also their bills are mounting up, so we'll use that stuff ... to look at different companies and that type of thing, so it's MindMatters but it's not in their face - oh we're doing something that's, what we're supposed to be helping.

In the internal school review on mathematics the report verified the information given at the interview.

The (MindMatters) program has opened the way to focus explicitly on the topics such as:

- *stress caused by poorly managed financial situations (eg mobile phones and credit cards)*
- *time management*
- *problems associated with gambling within the probability unit - stimulus material and subsequent discussion concerning real life data etc.*

Summary of curriculum change and impact

In summary then, and in contrast with the insertion of MindMatters materials into a dedicated pastoral period, the decision at Oxford to move to whole school implementation via the curriculum, has had a more consistent acceptance and, apparently, a significant impact. Much of this change appears to be deeply embedded across most of the curriculum areas and at least partially embedded in others.

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

.. once you get it embedded in what teachers are normally doing, then it's not sitting over there as something which is distinct and potentially something that's actually moving into the core (of what teachers do.) Staff, 2004

The support of certain KLA coordinators for intra-curriculum implementation of a mental health focus was very strong and this brought into question for them their view of the relative inefficacy of the pastoral program:

If you bring up a MindMatters activity in that 20 minute spot it falls flat on its face, the kids, I very rarely have seen the kids take off with it, it's like 'Oh here we go' and when it's lunchtime, it's the pastoral period - 'we're going to do bullying or going to do this' and it's a bit of a joke, but when it's brought up within the KLA as part of the content, and it's not in their face (that's when it has an impact).

Staff, 2004.

Their negative views of implementation in pastoral care periods is contrasted by quite positive views from the students and from most of the pastoral care teachers who were interviewed.

5.6 Changes in partnerships or relationships

During the course of the study the school continued its established relationships with other schools in the district. Notably the schools cooperated in staging a local drug summit which was facilitated by Dr Michael Carr-Gregg. The summit enabled the schools to The Living with Teenagers program for parents was established in 2002 in conjunction with a local community member from the Uniting Church. (Trevor this sentence doesn't read well).

5.7 Changes in other supports for student mental health

Oxford staff indicated a general openness to collecting and incorporating new resources into all subject areas to support the ongoing development of the mental health and wellbeing strategy they have adopted and that they call the 'MindMatters flavour'. They take up opportunities provided by visiting personal development and drama groups to supplement the formalised curriculum inserts discussed above.

Then we had on 17th September this drama production game called the Hurting Game and it's all about bullying, so that was offered to years 7 to 9 and that was followed up with discussion sheets in 7 to 9, so that was pretty good I think. That was a one-off thing. Staff, 2003

A further example of this type of initiative was the opportunity for students identified as needing help with anger management to undertake ikedo. Some students were clearly very positively impacted upon by this opportunity with noticeable and sustained changes to behaviour. Other students did not show any noticeable behavioural response to this intervention.

The student diary underwent some significant change. In one year there was a disk inserted with all the contacts for support agencies in the local area. In the following year, following feedback from staff that the emphasis on support services might be overly focusing on problems rather than tools for success the diary became a 'How to' guide to success in areas as broad ranging as health, safe driving, sport. It also included school policies on bullying and harassment.

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

The diary was perceived by staff as a valuable and useful resource and a good change for the school. One staff member noted that by making the information for help seeking available to students and their families, those who might be in need of assistance could make a choice for support without having to use the school as a mediator while still allowing them that option if they wanted school support.

For the Koori kids at Oxford a PCYC program, six weeks in duration, was implemented. Oxford referred the students in conjunction with the Juvenile Justice department to support students at risk of further involvement with criminal activity. A continuing education link opportunity was enabled with the employment of a casual aid worker who accompanied the Koori kids to the university when their parents refused to go with them. A community health Aboriginal worker also arranged with the school for a day of male role modelling by a Koori man who shared his life story with the Koori boys and taught them how to play the didgeridoo.

For the whole of the incoming year 7 cohort, a new mentoring strategy was adopted in 2003 in conjunction with the year 11 students. The older students were trained for their mentoring roles and time was allocated to enable the year 7 students to spend time with their male and female mentors. This was an adaptation and invigoration of the older peer support program in place at Oxford in previous years. The change in name was considered important as was the reduction of time allocated to this type of program:

'Peer Support'. It's dragged on and become a bit boring...so we've kept it short and sharp. We don't call it peer support because year 6s have been peer supported out. We call it 'mentoring' and they don't quite know with this. It makes it a bit more interesting. Staff, 2004

Another school-wide initiative to support the year 7 students and increase their comfort in seeking help from the school counsellor was the visit from the counsellor to all year 7 students and irregular but nevertheless purposeful contact with them in the school yard. As the counsellor noted:

It probably normalises you or humanises you to some extent. You're not just a person that sees that people are in trouble. Staff, 2004

The impact of this initiative was positive and students identified in an in-school survey that they perceived the counsellor as a source of support that they would seek or had sought because they felt the counsellor was approachable. Students supported this school finding in their comments during our interviews in 2004.

5.8 Efforts to include parents

The counsellor's comments in the school newsletters and the insert on parenting were ways that Oxford used to attempt to engage parents and to grow in their awareness about mental health, parenting, youth issues and school policy and action.

The impact of this effort was commented on by one staff member:

I'm not really sure whether this made any difference or not, but I think when I came here one of the things that I took on board straight away was that it was a service to be provided to the community and the teachers and the parents as well. And this just seems a good way of at least raising the profile with them. So if they wanted to talk they could. Staff, 2003

The Living with Teenagers course, offered for the first time in 2002 was attended by 20 parents who were very positive in their evaluation of the course. In 2003 the course attracted only three parents. The future of this course remains uncertain.

5.9 Awareness or reactions to changes

Students' awareness or reactions

Students indicated that they had a range of experiences of pastoral care and of the pastoral care program. They identified it as being quite distinct from other learning experiences at Oxford and varied in their levels of expressed support for the program.

This collection of student comments provides a summary of the opinions expressed in the course of our interviews in 2004:

Sometimes it is (good) 'cause the last time we had a pastoral group we did like a circle thing you had to put your hands together ... and get into a circle and that was good.

With the pastoral group - you get to know new people in your group that's another way to meet new people like people from other schools in your pastoral group, and you get to know them a lot better.

It's good (several agreed).

Pastoral periods are all right because sometimes they do heaps of different stuff.

People in our pastoral group ... I don't think anybody doesn't have a friend, everybody in our pastoral group has a friend. They hang around each other out of pastoral group as well.

I feel like pastoral time (is good) cause as you go on, then you get to know people, ... the pastoral period is probably the main one because you do like more activities together and stuff.

It's just like a routine now. Really used to it. Just go to pastoral (care).

Students were very frank in their assessment of the capacity of some of their teachers as pastoral care teachers. They acknowledged that variation in the subject matter delivered and the style and quality of learning opportunities provided by different teachers.

They were very clear in their articulation that while they affirmed the pastoral period and program in general, there were teachers other than pastoral teachers whom students could and did approach for assistance with any problems they encountered.

They commented that the repetition of bullying units did emphasise the anti-bullying stance of the school but, despite staff efforts to avoid duplication, students considered duplication was occurring in that topic area.

The senior students were highly appreciative of opportunities for the development of study skills, time management and stress management. They considered the opportunities for the provision of support in pastoral care periods as valuable.

No student expressed the view that the pastoral care period should be removed and support for its continuance was strong.

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

Staff awareness or reactions

It was acknowledged by all staff that some elements of the MindMatters initiative at Oxford have been more successful and more easily accommodated by staff than other elements of the change.

As mentioned above, the staff reactions to the pastoral program ranged from highly valuing the change to pastoral structures, the attendant timetable change and the program, to continuing profound negativity. This negativity seems to be associated with an expressed lack of competence or confidence in teaching the subject matter and the teaching methodology required to really engage students. Other teachers appear to have adopted a rather passive approach. They do not openly object to the pastoral program but neither do they implement the program in the way it was planned.

Some of them have just taken straight off and just used it. Other stuff they've just incorporated into that ... And I think the kids are used to the idea now. It was all very new and they didn't know what was happening and so I think now it's just - like today's an assembly today, last week was a pastoral period day, next week will be a pastoral period and then assembly and it just seems to be something we do now.

Staff, 2003

I'm comfortable with it but...

There are teachers who are not.

That particular structure has difficulties. The kids see it as a one-off because it happens once a fortnight - there's a content (problem).

It's not part of a subject - it's not assessed.

Staff group conversation, 2003

With regard to the actual implementation of these claimed curriculum insertions across the curriculum the following extract from the interview indicates that there is a high level of implementation. In the 2004 interview the essential question about the difference between what is claimed to be happening in a program and what is actually happening in the school was asked:

My question is, I know it (MindMatters for each KLA) might be in the program but is it really happening on the ground?

Well yes it really does.

Can I turn this off? (Laughter - the tape keeps recording)

Tell the truth

Because we have a program for each (of our) units, MindMatters is there. In one part of our course, it's related to particular drug use and that was happening but not in the written program and I thought later, 'that was MindMatters as well'. So, basically to answer your question maybe half of what's supposed to be done, if you asked me personally.

I teach robotics and in that we talk about cloning and then we talk about the moral and ethical issues involved, and then what it would be like if we were all

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

the same and the kids have opinions focussing on that individuals are all important and the fact that we've all got problems is a good one. Staff, 2004

These comments were supported by another subject coordinator who asserted that the written program overview (see Appendix for an example) was in fact only a limited and dated reflection of the level of MindMatters material that had been incorporated in that subject area. These comments indicate that at Oxford, MindMatters really has been highly integrated across the curriculum.

Staff responses to the implementation of the new diary model indicate that for some staff a deeply held life view about the nature of teaching and the need for people including students to be self-sufficient prevails. This comment describes a minority of staff at Oxford (also observed in other schools):

I suppose we got a couple of teachers in their fifties who have raised families and their kids have all been straight down the line, and have no problems and can't see why kids need any sort of help. Staff, 2003

6 Sustainability of changes at the fourth visit in 2005

6.1 Changes made prior to the fourth visit

The key features of the implementation of MindMatters at Oxford College were: the creation of an extra period in which pastoral care teachers can spend additional time developing a close relationship with their students; the comprehensive mapping of MindMatters into the curriculum for the pastoral care period and into each of the key learning areas.

At the time of the fourth visit in second term of 2005, these features were still in place despite wavering support for the pastoral care period from certain staff members, and some modification of the curriculum content of this period.

Sustainability of the pastoral period

The introduction of a pastoral care period has always been an issue of debate at this school. Its introduction and ongoing existence was supported by the leadership of one of the deputy principals, who retired from the school at the end of 2004.

Staff interviewed in 2005 revealed that the ongoing value of the period is now being questioned by some staff.

Well now that (name's) gone, I'm finding it a bit of an undercurrent to virtually get rid of it type of thing again. But I would say, for the most part, that they're the same people that were not in unanimous agreement with it back then, so you're still going to have some sort of residual dissent.

On the other hand, there is evidence that despite this, the period has become entrenched in the timetable. Indeed the school was, at the time of the fourth visit, debating ways in which the period could be made more effective by changing the timetable:

Our organisational structure in terms of Mondays, it fits in well with that because we have an assembly every second Monday and then the pastoral period is at the same time (on the alternate Monday). But we are discussing the relevance, and this is a big issue that is about the proposal to change that time of when that is. So at this very point there's a thing on the deputy's desk to just ask to change the pastoral period assembly time to directly after recess instead of just directly before lunch, because a number of teachers have said: 'Well the kids are hungry, they're tired. It's just not the time to talk deep and meaningful or whatever with kids, because they're turned off'. Whereas this morning, like my team were very supportive of moving it to say, after recess, where the kids are fed and watered, and they're more responsive to it. Staff, 2005.

One of the reasons why the pastoral care period is valued is that it gives a time in the busy timetable when teachers can be flexible in their response to particular issues that arise for students.

Last year we had all that problem with the girls and we took them to see 'Mean Girls'. It gave us a time where we could actually do a follow-up program with them and I worked with the girls and (another teacher) took the boys off and did something. If that pastoral period wasn't there, you don't even really have the time to do those kinds of things that crop up for a particular year that do need to be dealt with. Staff, 2005

One teacher's views was that MindMatters was covered so comprehensively in the curricula of the key learning areas that if the pastoral care period was dropped, the school's focus on MindMatters would still be sustained.

Whether the pastoral period gets dropped, it (MindMatters) is in the school now. That kit is going to stay simply because it is, with PDHPE, it's in the curriculum. Staff, 2005

MindMatters in the pastoral care period

A number of teachers commented that the focus of the pastoral care period had moved from being mainly focussed on MindMatters to now addressing a range of issues that seemed to be relevant to most students and which broadly impacted on their social and emotional wellbeing.

Partly this is due to the fact that, as MindMatters had been integrated across the curricula, there was a possibility of the students feeling that issues such as bullying were 'done to death'.

So I suppose it's an underlying thing that goes through the school now. The culture that goes through the school; so some of the initial MindMatters activities and things aren't as effective as they were. You could look on that as being a good thing; the positives of that is that kids now know that information, so for example, if you were to front up to a class and say today's lesson is bullying, the response of the student is 'not again' because they've heard a lot of that information before and we've been talking with the year 7 and 8 teams in the last 2 days about the need to make MindMatters issues specific to their needs. If it's not specific to the kids' needs and they don't see it as relevant, then there's almost a shutting down of and no response to it. Staff, 2005

It doesn't mean that those issues still don't occur, but the initial - like a lot of the sheets in the workbook, all those sorts of things, become a little bit irrelevant but that's a good thing because I think it's become a bit more of a culture. Staff, 2005

A number of teachers talked about how they were more likely to address the MindMatters themes in their normal teaching rather than relegate them to the special pastoral care period.

I wouldn't say it's gone off, but it's not as heavily emphasised and when we first started we ran regular sessions on things like self-esteem and those sorts of social issues and we probably don't bring them as a specific topic anymore. We treat those sorts of issues when they arise rather than putting them down as concrete in the program. A lot of these things are partly related to it. I think in year 9 I'm going to try and introduce a careers focus and a lot of the organisational stuff there obviously draws on some of the things that MindMatters would have in its program anyhow. Staff, 2005

Especially in practical situations where the kids are socialising throughout the lesson, like they're working but they're socialising and to me, that's MindMatters. So for me to wander around and help them develop skills. Staff, 2005

MindMatters in key learning areas

In 2005, each of the senior teachers responsible for key learning areas reported that the original scope and sequence for incorporating MindMatters into each area was still being followed although in some areas it may have been modified. An overview of the extent of use of MindMatters across curriculum areas is evident in the following quotes:

Health

I think the last time I talked to you we were using the MindMatters kit to fit in with the current, or the old syllabus, which was good. Particularly the 'Understanding Mental Illness' section of it; which for year 10 we're still using the old syllabus. In fact I've just come from a lesson there where we did the jigsaw activity with the 'Mental Illness'. But the new syllabus is not really adapting MindMatters kits for new syllabus because it's imbedded all through it. It's an absolute integral part of teaching that course. Yeah and already we've used the 'Coping with Change' and the 'Grief' section and some of the 'Resilience' stuff so it's absolutely vital. It's a vital resource to deliver that curriculum. Staff, 2005

Science

In terms of just that one thing, mental health, when we look at the syllabus and we look at what we have to teach in science, it's very functional. Just what the function of the brain is in different parts. This is what this bit does. I mean we do, maybe not everybody does, but we do now look at not just the mechanics but the function and malfunction of what can possibly go wrong. Not to a great extent, but we raise the awareness that there are disorders and it's not that this person is going to be written off, which is the MindMatters approach. It can be tolerated, understood and helped through. Not to a huge extent, I mean it's there. Staff, 2005

Mathematics

For each unit we need to try in some way put a part of the MindMatters component in that unit, whether it's looking at graphs, you do graphs of how drinking will affect your driving ability and just in a small, subtle way, things like that like bullying, which might not happen before MindMatters. But that's how it's affected mathematics. Not dramatically, I have to say. It's only small but in each unit it's a box in a program, at least we have something. I guess the problem with that is you don't always know if that's done. Staff, 2005

English

We still use some of the MindMatters, some of the specific booklets and exercises, when we do novel studies where the boys are talking about self-esteem and identity and bullying, as well. We don't talk about it much as a staff though; it's written into the program and the resources are next to where we need to use them. It's ongoing. Staff, 2005

Technology

MindMatters is embedded into our program. As (name) said it is mandated. But I perceive it as being very complementary to the ethos of the school and it's just one of the whole raft of thing that buoys up the attitude that we take kids on at the school. Staff, 2005

I don't see it as something that everybody rigidly goes through nor should they. It's just one more thing and it's a consciousness-raising attitude for the staff and also it permeates, hopefully, to the kids too. It's just one more thing that you can use or attitude that you can adopt in dealing with those sorts of things. It's an attitude ... We do a lot of group work because it's heavily practical and even in the senior years we have very much a collaborative or round table situation which is particularly designed to technology where other kids will contribute their ideas towards solving a problem and the same thing happens in textiles and, to a lesser degree, food technology, where there's less of a design and creative part to it. Staff, 2005

Social sciences

The main one we looked at was 'Grief and Loss' and 'Cultural Identity'. So various units when they arise, you know, we've got references to the MindMatters materials and documents. We're pretty pro-active in terms of citizenship. That goes across a lot of our courses, so it's buoyant with that sort of aspect I think, of being proactive and confident, resilient. Staff, 2005

Non-formal use of MindMatters in religious education

As opposed to that, there are times when we do it when it's not written up in that form. So, say for example, in our RE's (Religious Education lessons), it could be again that underlying flows that ... Most teachers will use these 'Chicken Soup for the Soul', if you're familiar with those stories, and a lot of

those stories are mental health issues and they're very MindMatters things. But you won't see that written specifically in the RE program. And we're just undertaking this restorative justice practices in the school and there's a lot of content which is exactly MindMatters sort of stuff that's going to be injected into the RE program. So in fact, you know like when you were saying, in the RE there's actually more, a syllabus is the opposite, it hasn't been written up formally because there's a lot more in it.

The final interviews also revealed a number of other instances, similar to the one above, in which teachers reveal that their formal use of MindMatters has resulted in their learning a range of concepts and teaching strategies that they utilise in the course of their teaching in an ad hoc way as the situation requires. Also there is a tendency for teachers to refer to MindMatters as a generic term for all that the school is doing that relates to student wellbeing.

School's focus on bullying and harassment

The school's whole-school approach to addressing bullying was evident in the continuing student reports about the use of the 'Bullying' curriculum in their pastoral care periods, the posters around the school, items in the school diary, and frequent mentions about bullying at school assemblies.

Students report that bullying is resolved by negotiation rather than by more formal disciplines like suspension.

Yeah, they don't because if you don't know, they sort of bring it in and they resolve the matter by talking about it and no-one is disciplined or suspended, they'll just tell each other about it; it's not really publicised, it's not shared around the school. Student, 2005

Parents interviewed in 2005 were also aware of the schools efforts in addressing bullying.

We know they talk about it, that it won't be tolerated, the kids are constantly told ... I actually saw an instance on what I regarded as bullying one afternoon and went to the school; it wasn't my child but it was a distressing incident, out of sight of teachers, and a couple of older kids went across to see if the boy needed help and I went up to the school and told them and it was dealt with. But they appreciate that, and the kids know bullying is not tolerated. Parents are fully aware too about it and we can't have it, we all know that. Parent, 2005

6.2 Adoption of new programs

In 2005, the school was commencing the adoption of the 'Restorative Justice' program to complement its existing bullying structures.

And we're just undertaking this Restorative Justice practices in the school and there's a lot of content which is exactly MindMatters sort of stuff that's going to be injected into the RE program. Staff, 2005

Staff see the Restorative Justice approach as being very similar to the approaches they had already developed over the previous two years through their focus on bullying since the adoption of MindMatters.

I mean you were talking about the Restorative practices that we're starting with - one of the approaches of that I think we've already used through the MindMatters in dealing with bullies, is confront the person who's doing the bullying in terms of them looking at the effect that they're having on other people, I find that's something that we'll carry on with and I think that's very effective. Staff, 2005

6.3 Changes in role of the counsellor

In response to a number of incidents of non-injurious para-suicide behaviours, the counsellor was becoming involved in classroom activities; preparing and delivering a lesson on the signs of depression and related matters.

The other thing that happens now is I'm in a process ... just prior to coming here I was preparing a presentation for year 10 and probably year 9 on depression and despair, and suicide prevention program in the school. And I'll be meeting with the classes; the year 10 class is first. And I'll be meeting with them - half the class - I would call gender specific groups - and do this presentation with them so they can all be aware of the risk factors and what they can do should a friend show signs of depression and suicide or ideation or whatever. I hope, is as a result of this program, is that kids get to recognise that friendship involves supporting the person into some kind of helpful intervention. Counsellor, 2005

Further, in 2005, the counsellor started attending the year coordinator's meetings in an effort to further raise the level of awareness of mental health issues in this group in ways that can then be disseminated to all teachers.

He will have a segment there where he tries to discuss issues with some students, such as ADHD, and he will also do an input on aspects that are fairly common in the school. Like this afternoon we are discussing depression in adolescents. Then they (the coordinators) will take that out to their year leaders' meetings and they will report back that (name) spoke to us about this and here are some signs and here's what we can do about it. Executive, 2005

6.4 Links with general practitioners

The school counsellor observed that as more mental health issues were being identified in the school, it was more likely now (2005) than in the past that the school would refer to the student's general practitioner. It was also now more common that general practitioners might contact the school in relation to a particular student's mental health.

With general practice, I've had more conversations with general practitioners in relation to kids at the school than I have in the past; and that's been both ways. In the first instance, if, for example, there's a kid who's depressed in my assessment, the next step in the process is to try and work with the kid in inviting others into the loop. Now if there's even a reasonable relationship with parents at home, I try and involve them and the second step in the sequence is to involve the GP. So there've been times when I've rung parents with the kid in front of me and said that I have concerns for the kid's mental health around

issues of depression and so on; and invite the parents to take the student to the GP and so on. And sometimes I've invited the parents in to discuss this and so on. So the referrals to GPs are more frequent and conversations the other way are more frequent too. And that says something because often GPs don't worry about anyone else who might be involved in the situation but a few times that has occurred. Counsellor, 2005

7 What issues did this school face during the implementation?

7.1 Issues that helped

Positive professional development

The staff of Oxford have been provided with many opportunities for ongoing professional development that include the formal two-day MindMatters training, but also include more specific in-house training opportunities. For example, in 2004, there was an in-house workshop on specific strategies for eliminating bullying and teasing by interventions with individuals and small groups of students.

The staff were exposed to the ideas of resilience with a Michael Carr-Greg workshop, and training and development in the Language of Affirmation and personal development in the form of a two-day session on personality. Thus the type of professional development is a balance of information-giving and genuine personal development and support of staff as professionals and as people with a knowledge of themselves. In the personality workshops staff claim they were asked to consider their own nature and how that impacts on the students, the staff, the whole community of people at Oxford and even the broader community. As one teacher summarised it the course called on them to seek answers to questions such as:

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

Professional development was designed and targeted to support the implementation of the MindMatters focus over the last three years. Careful selection of staff was a part of this planning and care was taken to avoid creating an elite group – rather the choice at Oxford was for opportunities for all teachers not just those in positions of particular responsibility.

Over the three years since the initial adoption of MindMatters, formal training has been undertaken by twelve staff members. One of those twelve has since left the school and there are plans for further MindMatters training later in 2004. The expressed intention will be to send newer staff to the next MindMatters training.

Staff considered that the positive impact of the MindMatters initiative of the school would be further enhanced by the training of all staff in MindMatters to increase understanding of the philosophies that underpin it and then implement that awareness through subject areas.

Positive staff attitudes or reactions

The most glowing testament to the staff at Oxford came from the students. Their comments included warm recollection of teachers spending lunchtimes playing cricket with students when they were not on duty, to identification that most of the teachers do not isolate themselves in the staff room at lunch time but interact with the students.

Students claimed that they could tell that the staff 'enjoyed' teaching at Oxford and that the majority of staff got on very well with the students. While they acknowledged there was a minority of staff they labelled as 'stressed' they considered that the staff at Oxford were 'slightly better' than staff in other schools they had attended or observed.

.. like they have fun, they are more, you can communicate with them better, talk to them, whatever. You can muck around and joke with them and stuff.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

It's very welcoming. You feel comfortable with it, not scared of anything or anyone.

*Oh, I think every kid could find a teacher. Not every kid would link with their pastoral teacher. Different personalities relate to different people. But if they don't relate to their pastoral teacher, I mean probably someone like (name) in the library, someone who all kids have access to, so they've got people like the librarian, you've got like the executive staff, you've got year leaders, you know kids really I think in our set-up have a lot of different people, or sometimes they just relate to a particular, for example, (name) the music teacher, and I know for a fact there are music kids who really she would be the person they would go to because you're, they're sort of ... you know the person, they could talk to so different kids relate to yeah They'd all find someone I'm sure.
Student, 2004*

Students also noted that they themselves went to school happy and confident that they would be able get assistance with academic work at lunchtimes if they sought it. One student related a story that when her bag was stolen, one of the teachers went to look for it.

One of the teachers went down to a creek looking for it - like out of her own time, she went down looking for it. Student, 2004

The student considered this a very big and unexpected effort by her teacher and she clearly was very touched by the generosity of the staff member.

Staff expressed attitudes to the changes brought about in the wake of the MindMatters audit and subsequent evaluation as beneficial to the school. While it is estimated that two or three staff members remained resistant to the pastoral period questioning its relevance and asserting that their role as curriculum deliverers was a more significant priority, the majority of the staff overwhelmingly considered the changes they had been part of implementing as beneficial for the students and for themselves. The particular benefit staff identified for themselves was an increase in self awareness of their own mental health and wellbeing and that of the students, staff and people around them in their life outside of school.

One staff member, critical of the pastoral period, was still highly supportive of continuing to seek ways to create a better experience of school for the teenagers. He simply stated:

... the low achievers are not going to have good mental health. So I think that's something we need to work out. Staff, 2003

The following comment summarises many of the comments of teachers and indicates a positive attitude in relation to MindMatters as a concept and the particular implementation of it occurring in this school:

... sometimes we've gone 'Oh, not another MindMatters thing', but it's achieved a little bit of status as an important aspect of school life, and some of the day you look it as a vibe rather than the particular activities within it and the things that people are talking about. Like, I'm the same and I'm a little bit more aware that the way that you talk to kids might have some sort of dramatic impact upon their happiness. And yeah, it's a real vibe that not only goes into those particular activities, but into the way we look after each other. That's a lot to do with those in-services that we've had. A lot of the time has been devoted to (MindMatters) ...one other point. I think everyone here's a bit more knowledgeable and can say 'Yes, you need help', like let's make that appointment

with the counsellor and see if um, we can sort things out. I think that as a result, the counsellor's been busier than he's ever been. Staff, 2003

The subject coordinators cooperation with the implementation of MindMatters across the curriculum and their commitment to ensuring that it occurred, was monitored, evaluated and developed is a key part of the success of MindMatters in this school.

Although it is not universally valued and managed to this level in all subject areas the critical mass of subject coordinators and their staff have taken their positive attitudes towards the concept of increasing mental health and wellbeing in their school through their pedagogical practice and the content they select and deliver.

Staff expressed a sound understanding of the limitations of their capacity to deal with mental illness but expressed their willingness and increasing confidence in actively monitoring students, talking with them about mental health issues and proactively asking students if they wanted help or support in going to see the counsellor or other support people in the community. The intimacy of the relationship between staff and students is best expressed in this comment by one pastoral teacher:

I know this one particular student at the moment who's very sad but I've just noticed that this person was very sad. And I think that might need to be dealt with, I don't know how though but I think if it's monitored I think it's the first step. Staff, 2003

Helpful leadership

The initial impetus for the uptake of MindMatters at this school came from the assistant principal in charge of discipline and pastoral care. Her attitude to the implementation of the program was very determined:

Yeah, probably. This is my baby. I'm retiring in two years. I reckon if I say it enough it will happen. And this has got to be up and going and going in spite of me by the time I leave. We're half-way there. Executive, 2003

The support of the leadership of the principal in the implementation of MindMatters was described also as:

Wonderful. Unqualified. Wonderful. Staff, 2004

The leadership nevertheless saw the need for teachers to own the program and a supportive and consultative approach was taken. With regard to MindMatters and associated initiatives, change and adaptation proceeded after consultation and evaluation involving staff, students and parents.

The leadership support for teachers manifested itself in the allocation of funding and time to conduct the training for MindMatters, and associated professional development over the course of this study. The use of release time to support planning and preparation of changes across the curriculum areas was a strong indication of commitment to the program and practical support for the staff charged with the responsibility for its implementation.

Generally, leadership at all levels in the school appeared to be characterised by professional consultation with peers, and respect for differences. Staff leaders were conscious of not imposing on teachers but were mindful that some teachers could see any change as a burden. Timing for the review and development of the MindMatters initiative was deliberately arranged to occur when staff were likely to have more time to consult and work together - such as at examination times or in term 4 when year 12 students had left and staff loads were reduced.

Adaptation occurred in response to emerging priorities and needs. One example was the timetabling of year 7 camps; these were delayed following evaluation of the previous year's experience to ensure the highest level of comfort for new students.

Availability of resources

The MindMatters kit was readily available to staff and carefully distributed to staff to ensure that all stakeholders were well resourced at critical points of planning. School leaders supported teachers committing significant funding to the purchase of additional resources. Resources other than MindMatters were selected and purchased to further support teachers in classes and in leadership roles implementing MindMatters.

Availability of outside help

Staff identified those 'expert trainers' who had provided in-house workshops at the school as significant sources of 'outside help'. The willingness of presenters to be contacted by staff at a later time or to arrange further visits to the school to work with students was noted and seen as a significant support to the ongoing implementation of MindMatters and the overall benefit of the school. Some staff noted that, although a guest speaker cannot follow-up with individual students, they do have 'authority' to raise consciousness about issues (such as bullying or drug abuse or mental health maintenance), that school staff themselves do not have.

Staff also mentioned an increasing awareness of the support of community agencies to assist with students or staff experiencing periods of mental illness.

Usefulness/suitability of MindMatters:

Staff identified changes in the PDHPE syllabus that placed a greater emphasis on mental health awareness than in the old syllabus.

The new syllabus has - it's a lot more explicit in terms of what's required for students to know about and the mental illness and mental health is a pretty large component of the new syllabus ... (this is the second half of the new syllabus and I think they must have read MindMatters). I mean there are all activities that are 'supporting other, supporting yourself, strengthening resilience, recognising abusive situations, harassment, bullying, mental health', so it's really part of the fabric of it now. Staff, 2004

Other staff members commented on the goodness of fit for their perceived vision for value-adding to what the school could offer in terms of student mental health and wellbeing.

Staff 1: We got exposed to the material and there were a couple of courses available for us.

Staff 2: And we liked what we saw.

Staff 1: Yes. We recognised (a) that it was important, and (b) that we could do it. We could actually do it.

Several staff commented on the suitability of the games and certain other activities suggested in MindMatters and how these were very easily accommodated into the Oxford school retreat program. In fact there was a recognition of long standing mental health elements of the

retreat program that had been in place for years. Formerly seen only as supports for spiritual development there was an unanticipated recognition that:

In a way a lot of the stuff has already been on a level pegging with what was happening in MindMatters. Staff, 2004

Staff noted that the school's liturgical and sacramental program were opportunities to easily incorporate certain MindMatters ideas.

... there's a lot of inherent relationship - common ground with MindMatters ... They had the opportunity (in the sacrament of reconciliation offered once a term) to think about the benefit of forgiveness with each other and the sense of what that can do in a healing of a person, like the other - so there's that aspect to it, and we go right out from there to the restorative justice ... and they actually consider that. As a way of people being healed both the offender and the offended in these situations. And they get a chance to think about that so it's a whole gamut of that. That's just an example.

That theme of reconciliation does go through the year 7 retreat which is in term 4 where the kids actually - it's modelled on a basis of feeling as well, where anything to do, particularly with their friendships with each other and how - cause year 7 is a very up and down year, and to do some ritual way of looking at how that hurt others and make (a change/peace ...) Which could be the burning of something that's written down - we use a ritual or something like that. Tying and untying knots, that sort of thing. Different sort of ways of doing things. Staff, 2004

Positive school ethos

While some staff expressed personal concern with particular details of the implementation of the pastoral system, all staff interviewed expressed a high regard for the general nature of the pastoral mission of the school.

Staff reported that visitors to the school commented on the laughter and the friendliness of staff. They identified that the size of the school was a factor in enabling a high level of effective pastoral care and a strong sense of community. They appreciated the physical environment of the school which was mirrored in an emotional tone described by one staff member as:

... a fairly gentle sort of environment ... so I think it would have been reasonably easy to take on something which was building on kids inner resources. Staff, 2003

The following comments from two staff members indicate the high level of esteem in which most staff hold this learning community:

I come from the state school with 1,100 kids and the pastoral care here they had never heard of. Absolutely - I know it's a case with Catholic schools in general. We (in my state school experience) talk about the counselling things but we never own it as a staff member at all, even as teachers of maths or even as a roll call teacher we don't get to know our class - about four hours every day, so forget that. It's completely different here. It is just so much more like such a huge amount of pastoral care that we have in the school, we have as

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

teachers with our kids not just our pastoral class, but all our classes. (It) is so much better than other schools. Staff, 2004

I was in a (suburban) Catholic high which was completely different to this place because it was the whole multi-cultural aspect. We had pastoral care, but it wasn't to the extent of what this one is now at all. It certainly didn't have the same amount of care that you do here I think, and I think it's reflected a bit in the culture of the school. Staff, 2004

Ways of checking implementation

Oxford's careful implementation of MindMatters was characterised by a process of ongoing evaluation and reflection which informed further action and adaptation.

In addition to this broad brush evaluation, the health curriculum had built in assessment of formal instruction in the unit in year 10 that was based on the 'Understanding Mental Illness' unit.

In one other curriculum area, the KLA coordinators describe the method in place which provides both an impetus for implementation of the MindMatters layer in the subject area and the method of overseeing its delivery.

Well, in our programming now, we actually have a section that makes us conscious of related MindMatters and (subject). We have a pro forma to complete and to keep our eye on during each topic and then to complete it at the end - there is a section in there, how does the MindMatters program fit in with this particular topic. So that the point is made that, that needs to be taken into account of from the beginning of the year to be conscious of it and to record that.

So it's like an on going evaluation of implementation that is happening?

Yes, being conscious of how MindMatters programs and the MindMatters philosophy is taken up, in the topic, with each teacher, and they finish their topic as an evaluation sheet and there's a section there - what have you done about MindMatters? Staff, 2004

Good staff communication

Staff expressed disappointment that, despite their best efforts to ensure that students' needs are noticed and support is offered, some students still choose to leave the school and some had claimed as they were leaving, that they had been bullied. This revelation prompted the following explanation of the type of communication stream that exists in the school:

We can't be more approachable than we are now, with the year leaders and the pastoral system and ... That's what I was going to say earlier about the pastoral care hierarchy and how it works here. (Name) ... tells a year leader something and the year leader tells the pastoral teacher something, about a particular kid, particular issue and they find out exactly what happened straight away. Generally it works. Information consistency here is better anyway than I have seen (anywhere else). Staff, 2004

Participation in MindMatters evaluation

Awareness of the evaluation did not drive the internal school evaluation, however, the occasion of the interviewer's visits to the school did prompt some review of the implementation and record keeping of initiatives undertaken at or near the times of interview.

Financial resources made available to the school as part of their participation in a 'focus schools' program and as part of their participation in the evaluation process were used by the school to purchase resources, to provide release time for planning and review, and to release staff for training.

7.2 Issues that hindered

Staff anxiety about implementation

There were a number of comments about the anxiety that several staff expressed about expectation arising from the professional development and from their experience of implementing MindMatters (or avoiding it).

They (the executive staff) need to recognise that even though MindMatters is a good idea, that the implementing and the programming and the actual instigation of it across the school has caused stress for certain people and I also think because we are not experts in mental health issues, definitely not me, that some experts running things with the kids would maybe more valuable than extra classroom things, I don't know whether that's - because then it gets too - a mix of both maybe. Staff, 2004

I went to one of the education days for MindMatters where they had lots of exercises about what you could incorporate into your lessons and they were fantastic, however, my concern was then, and is now, because I'm not trained in counselling in any area at all that the issues that we raised during the exercises, like dealing with grief and dealing with self esteem, things like that - couldn't be resolved in the short period of time ... and that's what we get - a 20 minute period so that you don't undo Pandora's box, it's all very, it's superficial. It's not actually addressing the kids real needs, nor my needs as a teacher of students who I know need particular nurturing or extra help. Do you know what I mean?

So - and only that a few people had been trained - seemed to me that the expectation was those people that had been trained would become experts, but it doesn't go any further. Maybe, I've got it inside my head and I enjoyed the day and thought the exercises were great, but when it actually came to applying them in a classroom context I was ... (gesture of discomfort). Staff, 2004

A similar point was made by staff who trained and developed skills and were concerned about their limited time and competence to hand on these skills to staff they were working with in the implementation of MindMatters:

Well, we're not qualified to teach it so much because we're beginners. Staff, 2004

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

I wanted to do it that's the thing, it's sort of - it's very difficult to do, you can't talk to people for 5 - 10 minutes and get them to change their way of thinking at all. Staff, 2004

One staff member expressed anger at the lack of consultation with staff about the type and range of professional development opportunities for staff in the period of the implementation of MindMatters. This staff member's negativity towards MindMatters at Oxford was further reinforced when there was no formal opportunity for staff evaluation of a recent professional development session that had been undertaken at Oxford.

Negative staff attitudes or reactions

One parent described concerns about comments by some staff members who have made comments or placed students in situations where they were emotionally distressed. The parent indicated that these incidents were isolated but they did occur.

... sometimes and it's just horrifying what a teacher has said to (my kids) and I think teachers have to become very aware of how they treat kids every day all day.

... teachers don't realise (their) impact sometimes because they (students) may not show it (their reaction) straight away.

Staff claimed that there were a small number of staff they termed 'dinosaurs' who remained sceptical that mental health awareness was even a part of a teachers role. Such teachers, it was claimed, held attitudes expressed in phrases such as:

All they need is a good kick up the bum, and that sort of stuff. Staff, 2004

The expression of these negative views and attitudes towards the implementation of MindMatters emerged in the internal school evaluation as well as during interviews. One teacher noted that the negative voices were strident but few in number:

... people who are disgruntled are the loudest and so you start to think 'Oh, everybody hates it'. So when we actually did the review, there were more positive comments from teachers than negative. There certainly were some negative ones. A lot of it had to do with things like you know, 'If I'm giving up 25 minutes of my time - and that's a free period then ... (industrial matters arose). (Staff2003)

The internal school evaluation also indicated that in 2002/3 the preparation of materials for the pastoral teachers to deliver their program had not been adequate to meet teacher's needs.

In addition negative comments about the student diary and incorporation of data sources for access to mental health support in the community drew this anecdote from staff.

I basically had to say to these people, 'Even if you don't agree with it wholeheartedly please don't white ant the whole thing. You know keep your opinions to yourself. You've said you'll support it, don't white ant it.' Staff, ????

Lack of resources

Staff acknowledged that the MindMatters initiative had been well resourced but that there had been a loss of resource allocation, in particular, funding to the training of peer mediators. This was seen as a failure to maintain established supports for student wellbeing.

Another resource considered lacking by a staff member was the lack of 'safe' places and procedures to remove students from classes when their behaviour was unacceptable or a risk to themselves or others. This teacher thought that a 'time-out room' or the establishment of new procedures was needed to help teachers deal with students with disruptive behaviours, particularly students in practical subjects where there is high risk if students are sent out of the classroom.

Change fatigue

The timing of the MindMatters initiative alongside reforms to syllabi drew negative comment from some staff who described themselves as being 'bombaraded'. Two teachers identified the ongoing calls for change in the profession as a permanent stress in their lives and they implied that there was a lower level of concern about staff mental health than student mental health.

I think in the last year or so we've had such an overload on our staff that I think there are mental health concerns for a lot of staff members at present. And I think it's reached a stage where everyone really is trying really hard and there's all these different things coming from every direction that you often feel like you are split into about ten things. And you will talk to the students about being caught up in things and signs of stress and coping mechanisms etcetera but I know there would be a lot of staff with everything that has happened, that would feel like I can't go to work today. Staff, 2004

Crowded curriculum

One staff member complained that overlays of programs such as 'Aboriginal Perspective' and 'Sense of the Sacred' had preceded MindMatters. She considered that the curriculum was being swamped by fashions of thought.

Another teacher also noted that the 'Sense of the Sacred' overlay in subjects was similar to the MindMatters initiative across the curriculum and he expressed some concern that staff would simply see it as an overload and walk away from MindMatters. The resistance towards MindMatters and its potential to push out other important elements of the curriculum were limited but best summed up by this comment:

We've got to cover all this and how do we cover that as well? Whereas we're trying to say well we'll try and integrate it into there and there are other things that we integrate such as 'Sense of the Sacred', and our computing and literacy, numeracy, there are so many things that have got to be looked at in a program now that it's, well how do you fit in any content? Staff, ????

Difficulty in seeing concrete results or benefits

Some staff expressed the view that the outcomes of MindMatters might be subtle and that teachers may not see the impact or benefits of what they are teaching. The following comment sums this up succinctly:

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

And I guess it's a fault of all teachers is that we want to, irrespective of how quickly the changes go, that it is the nature of the teacher to want to see a result and to be able to quantitatively evaluate what that result is. And this is the hazy one. We might not see a result for - we never may be able to mark it off and say, well okay this class got A's for whatever work that they were doing - it may not eventuate until that kid in twenty years time makes some comment about saying 'I'm glad the staff took the time to do it'. Staff, ????

Industrial issues

The adjustment to the timetable to create the pastoral period was clearly a major issue of concern for some of the staff at Oxford, even after two years of implementation. There was no actual agreement on whether a breach of industrial conditions had occurred and there were no indications of involvement of the union in establishing the reality of the impact of changes and claims of working overload asserted by some staff.

Partly because as a result of the MindMatters (program) being instigated in the school or implemented throughout the programs and stuff, part of our pastoral care focus has moved so that we have actually had to put in the time table a pastoral period which wasn't there a couple of years ago. And a number of staff members including me on certain occasions, a number of occasions, resent that we have to be put in a position where we are doing an extra period of actual teaching time without any recognition for it in our load. There you go - I said it! How's that?

I agree 100%.

I think that is something that the school hasn't even addressed.

The concern seemed to be fuelled by perceptions of shift to a focus on student wellbeing over student academic success:

If it was in the school's capacity to create the pastoral period time surely it's within the school's capacity to recognise it - but the thing I would like to point out is that MindMatters, Sense of the Sacred and pastoral care are of welfare area and there's been very good recognition given to that. We go back to what I said, we come from a curriculum point of view and we're trying desperately to (achieve recognition of our subjects as a priority). Staff, 2004

Competition from conflicting priorities

Despite the systemic changes involved in creating a new time for pastoral care, there were on occasions conflicting priorities and these sometimes interfered with the planned program.

So I think it is nice to have that time to do that, but it's still only really every second week and then things happen that (it) doesn't even happen then, too. So it tends to be the sort of thing that can go when something has to go. Staff, 2004

The lure of a 'spare' 25 minutes to enable year assemblies and opportunities for housekeeping seemed to be about the only threat to the integrity of the pastoral program.

7.3 Student reaction to introduced change

The change to the pastoral period drew large numbers of positive comments from students and limited negative ones. Students particularly liked the opportunity to engage with teachers in a more relaxed way than that offered in their subject areas. They appreciated the social opportunities incorporated such as class visits to Pizza Hut and generally approved of the course content seeing the topics as relevant to their age and need.

Year 9 students saw bullying and teasing as a major focus for years 7 and 8 as more appropriate for the needs of the junior students. They appreciated the study guide support in later year 8 and year 9. Senior students confirmed that some teachers were more prepared and more committed to the pastoral period than other staff. All asserted that the opportunities provided by pastoral period in senior school to discuss and develop study and time management skills were valued but more valued by year 12 than year 11 students.

Teachers noted that year 12 students in particular valued these issues.

I've been a pastoral teacher of senior students for the last few years (since) that development has come through. Particularly with year 11 - they seem to have the attitude that year 11 is a time to enjoy oneself and not get too hung up about their subjects. And so they haven't received the pastoral period in very good light in many ways. However, year 12 (students) seems to discover something about the value of pastoral periods and getting together and discussing situations and topics that might be thrown up. Staff, 2003

Students could clearly articulate the school bullying policy and identify the diary as the place where it was officially recorded. They acknowledged opportunities to feed into evaluation of their physical safety in the school and noted changes in practice such as the placement of a supervising teacher at the canteen to prevent bullying. Students noted with sadness the loss of their canteen during the course of this study. This was a change they wanted reversed as soon as practicable.

In 2003 one teacher claimed that students in one year of his pastoral class seemed embarrassed by the content of the pastoral program and he countered this by talking to them one on one. In another year he perceived a very positive response to the program which he attributed to the students being better known to him through other subjects he had taught.

Students verified this 'embarrassment' element of the program:

A lot of the kids also don't want the teachers to be like nice to them in front of (the class) ... don't want to be singled out.

They don't want to get the teachers involved, otherwise the students come up and make it worse or something.

*Or if something is happening at home they mightn't want their teachers to get involved because they might think it could get worse at home or something.
Students, ????*

This situation seemed to have altered somewhat by 2004 when students asserted that they did not want to see the pastoral period disappear and there appeared to be an increasing valuing of the time with staff who were prepared and actually delivering the program.

Students also raised doubt about the capacity of their teachers to actually intervene and support students with mental health needs.

*So teachers do know heaps. I think they try to do something about it (student needs), but half the time it doesn't work out (responding to that need).
Student, 2004*

7.4 Staff reaction to introduced change

As previously identified, staff displayed a range of views about the value of the pastoral period. Some staff expressed confidence in their own competency to explore issues that range across mental health while others were still clearly feeling almost completely incompetent. Similarly, while some staff expressed concern at the varying quality of support offered by pastoral team leaders, others considered the program well supported and very worthwhile.

Some staff considered the time to have turned into nothing more than a free period while others considered it a valuable opportunity for interaction with students as an adult support person liberated of the constraints as subject teacher. While there was no unanimous voice of assent for the changes undertaken at Oxford the voices of outright opposition were few.

In terms of the actual content of the pastoral program, a few teachers noted that student's readiness for some of the material in the pastoral program was not matched with student needs at that time and indicated that further and ongoing review should be undertaken. With regard to the time allocated to the program, most teachers considered the changes to be adequate and worth keeping. One staff member valued the content of MindMatters very highly and considered the current time allocation of 25 minutes as inadequate. Those staff who were less supportive, were not critical of the program per se but were either highly critical of the imposition of the program on their time or concerned about their competency to teach the content.

This comment is a good indication of the general mood of the majority of staff at the time of visit three to Oxford:

Has anything been gained by your pastoral care periods being extended and has that got anything to do with MindMatters?

I personally quite like it because I think it does give you just that little bit more time with kids one on one, and I think a lot of the activities - team building, resilience and things like that are quite valuable. And probably things that we wouldn't get time to do otherwise - do you know what I mean? Staff, 2004

The curriculum change undertaken drew positive comment from all but one of the teachers interviewed. The process of implementation appeared to have been well supported and teachers fluently explained the way in which they had, and continued to incorporate MindMatters awareness, into their teaching across nearly all key learning areas.

Several comments about increased awareness of their role in creating a learning environment that engendered health and wellbeing indicated that teachers were reflexively reviewing their teaching practice in light of the content they were encountering in professional development and in the materials they were actually teaching. It would be fair to consider the MindMatters curriculum change was well embedded.

7.5 Other issues

Students leaving the school

Staff expressed concern that a number of students left the school voluntarily each year. They were particularly distressed by incidents where students revealed their reasons for leaving only as they walked out the door. On at least one occasion the reason given was bullying. Other reasons cited were the usual movement of families out of the area and students seeking contact with better-known peers from feeder schools who had chosen to go to other high schools.

Staff also noted that students who had completed some of their secondary education at other local schools where they had experienced some difficulty, were likely to leave Oxford after a short stay rather than comply with expectations about behaviours and attitudes that exist at Oxford. One staff member noted that both parents and students were increasingly comfortable with moving from one school to another if they considered a better option might be available. Staff noted that as problems arose and consultation with parents increased, some families became increasingly uncomfortable with the articulation and enforcement of high standards of behaviour at Oxford.

Students were also mindful that some of their fellow students had left the school. Their assessment of why students left was quite simple:

I don't necessarily think it was because they were getting teased or anything - I just don't think they liked school.

What do you think the problem was for them?

Probably the rules Students, 2004

The majority of students present agreed with this assertion.

7.6 Incidental issues arising during the evaluation

Theft

In contrast to the issue of bullying, which students at Oxford considered to be almost non-existent, there were expressions of concern about a spate of bag thefts. The story of one teacher who spent her free period looking for a student's bag was an indication of the kind of support students appreciated. They expressed a high level of confidence that the offender would be located swiftly and that justice would be done. This was a specific indicator students' confidence in the staff at Oxford to care for them and to look after their safety and wellbeing.

Impact of leadership team gender

The pastoral leadership team at Oxford in 2004 was entirely male. The experience of professional development on that team had raised awareness of gender difference in the nature of bullying. The men were mindful of the need to continue to develop awareness of gender difference and to work more closely than they had considered necessary before with female members of staff on the issues of female harassment and intimidation of other females. This experience raised consciousness amongst this leadership team of the limitations of having only one gender view in their ranks.

8 Issues Identified at the fourth visit

Leadership issues

The main proponent of MindMatters in this school from 2001 was one of the deputy principals. This person used the status of her office to instigate and support quite wide-ranging strategies in support of MindMatters and in doing so held out strongly against a minority of teachers who were not in favour of certain strategies (such as the introduction of the pastoral care period). This person retired at the end of 2004 and at the fourth evaluation visit in term 2 of 2005, this position had not been permanently filled. A temporary hiatus in leadership was compounded by the absence of the principal during term 2 as well. One informant believed that these changes created a level of vulnerability for MindMatters at Oxford College.

Another thing that's happened was that for MindMatters to take root, and I'm not convinced that it's actually got deep roots at this point. For those concerns of it, concerns that are expressed in a MindMatters program to take root in a school, I think there needs to be somebody on the executive to have oversight of it and to keep it in people's faces, if you like, as an important part of their work. We were fortunate because (the former deputy) made it into a personal project and I think that now that she has left the school ... I was talking to (name) just yesterday about the need for somebody else to be the named person; a senior person, or even a person who aspires to be a senior person as a way of reaching out to take it under their wing and to actually make it part of their work in the school. Staff, 2005

Low staff turnover

Despite this risk, the fact that so many of the staff have been exposed to MindMatters, either through training or through implementing the curriculum changes, and also the fact that there was very low staff turnover at Oxford, were factors which would support the ongoing sustainability of MindMatters, even though its focus may change over time.

That's what I think the future of MindMatters is too, is maybe we'll probably see in five years again, repackaged under a different name but basically the same sort of stuff. It's got to always be there and the problem is of course, when you have, in a place like here, we have a pretty stable staff, and these things persist. But if this is was in say a Sydney school, where you have a much bigger turnover of staff every year, then it would disappear. Staff, 2005

Overexposure to MindMatters curriculum

A number of informants in 2005 reflect that the very comprehensive mapping of the MindMatters curriculum into the pastoral care period, and into the key learning areas, may have resulted in the students being overexposed to certain aspects of MindMatters; particularly the issue of bullying.

While the retirement of the former deputy principal may result in less focus on MindMatters in the pastoral care period, from the point of view of these staff, this may not be a bad thing.

I wouldn't say hijacked but it's original aim from (the former deputy), has changed. I think you'll find within the year there'll still be elements of MindMatters and in particular activities from MindMatters used, but not to the

point where - and I think this is a good thing - where it's rammed down kids throats, once a fortnight in the pastoral period. Staff, 2005

Role of the year coordinator

The implementation of MindMatters in the pastoral care period has always been under the coordination of the year coordinator who develops a plan for the pastoral period and provides curriculum resources to the pastoral care teachers. It was reported that on too many occasions, the coordinator would not provide the lesson material until the recess break before the pastoral care period, leaving little time for the teacher to adequately prepare.

I want to comment on the pastoral period system, there's so much emphasis on the year leader to organise it. Because that's the way it's done ... Year leaders themselves; or a stage leader, which is where this is changed a little bit, is responsible for organising that pastoral period and if the quality of pastoral periods varies dramatically, there are plenty of times where pastoral teachers are wondering in two hours time, 'What am I doing'? And at the last minute you receive a hand out, read through it, fill it out, and it might be on study skills or something. But the pastoral teacher didn't have any time to look at it or anything. Staff, 2005

In contrast when pastoral care teachers have plenty of time for preparation, the lessons were more effective.

The lessons that were really well organised and given to the pastoral teacher beforehand, were the ones that the kids really got something out of. I always, as a year leader, made sure that the kids knew that it was me, the year leader, is the one that's organising these, and I always sort of talk to kids whenever I saw them afterwards, find out what they thought of it, talk to the teachers about it. Year leader, 2005

With the retirement of the deputy principal, in 2005 the responsibility fell more fully on the year coordinators to make sure that the pastoral care curriculum was working. In response to feedback from the teachers, the coordinators were now planning a program that was relevant to the issues that were arising for students and teachers. One teacher observed that things had improved.

Yeah, I think they got better though as the years went. The initial thing was to get a chapter out of the MindMatters books and have to do it with the kids. They quickly worked out well that's not going to work. They recognised other ways of doing it and year leaders again began to develop their own programs which suited that particular year but that's got along now. I think it's improved a lot since the initial years. Staff, ????

Student reactions to pastoral care

There were frequent comments from teachers that students did not like the pastoral care period, or did not engage with the content. These perceptions were born out in interviews with the senior students who, for the first three years of their high school did not experience a pastoral care period. They seemed to perceive the period as a waste of time.

For me, it hasn't really (any value). Like you go there and you sort of like oh, this is a bit of a waste of time and the stuff that's there I think (that) not many people are interested in it. So I think – especially when you get to year 11 and 12 – you feel as if you may as well be out studying or learning rather than just wasting time.

I also question its effectiveness, like every student goes to a pastoral period and heaps say, 'Oh, I'm doing study skills', and everyone's like 'Oh'. I think straightaway kids are looking for a bit of a bludge, so they're not going to take in all the knowledge and the study skills that a teacher's trying to teach us. So I'd question its effectiveness as well. Students, 2005

Whereas students in years 7 and 8, for whom the pastoral care period was part of the high school experience from the outset, attitudes towards the period were much more positive.

Yeah, it's good We just like come together as a group.

Yeah, and we do different activities so it's good.

It's alright. It's like what do we do in our pastoral lesson kind of thing.

Because you see them (the pastoral care teachers) in the morning and the afternoon, but it's only for a short period. So you want to make the most of that time. You feel that you can sometimes talk to them because they're much more fun. Sometimes they're fun. Student, 2005

Parent views of the pastoral care period

One parent interviewed in 2005, had formed very positive views of the PC period and was supportive of its retention by the school. This parent believed its value lay in the opportunity it provided for the PC teacher to develop close relationships with the students.

Well they can't (form a close relationship with students) and the older kids, particularly, because they're getting older and they've got free periods – of course they're not supposed to but I know they do. And, even my own kids, who are fairly good about this sort of thing, used to wait at the door and get marked off on the roll and that sort of thing, and that does happen – I know that does happen – so you can't get to know your kids or recognise any changes when they're just marked off on the roll, so I think the longer time is important. Parent 2005

Teacher attitudes

As identified in earlier visits, the issue of teacher resistance to the school's approach to implementing MindMatters was evident still in 2005. Some teachers interviewed in 2005, simply believe that the school has gone too far with asking all curriculum areas to incorporate MindMatters.

I reckon there was a fair bit of overkill with it, because we were asked, as faculties, to write MindMatters into all our programs. And I'll tell you straight,

that the content of our program is completely overloaded already. So subject areas which don't require the syllabus to go into MindMatters areas, I think it's complete overkill to try and put it in. For example, Science for the most part, if you try to insist in MindMatters going in there, you're going to stress the teacher out trying to complete the curriculum in other areas and I don't think it should be tried to be put in. If it can come out in very specific areas, and just a few instances and so on, then it will. But the kids get good exposure from PDHPE, you know, they all have to PDHPE, and it really fits it in. So my personal view is, okay we've written it in, I understand the rationale behind all of that, but realistically, I bet it's not being taught, except where the curriculum actually specifically addresses mental health issues. And I think that's where it should be taught. Staff, 2005

On the other hand, other teachers are wary that in response too such attitudes the school might not place enough emphasis on MindMatters and that this would disadvantage future cohorts of students.

I agree with what you said (name) but I'm a bit worried, that we could say 'been there, done that' and then a whole generation of kids that come through and not get it. Staff, 2005

Yet other teachers defended the integration of MindMatters across curriculum areas and, indeed argued that it was better placed here than in the pastoral care period.

I don't necessarily think pastoral periods for MindMatters works. I think it works best when it's embedded and becomes part of the ethos if you like and the curriculum, and it's not.. 'Oh we're doing the MindMatters thing now', it's best when it's not done that way I think. Staff, 2005

If it hadn't been written into the (KLA) programs I don't think it would have made a difference. But because of the amount of work people put in, and I don't know that it's MindMatters necessarily, the ideas of mental health are more sort of where we're at now, we're just making it a package thing. Staff, 2005

A separate issue is that some teachers, while supporting the underlying philosophy of MindMatters, are wary of engaging in wide-ranging and open discussions with students as they do not have the personal confidence that they could manage situations where students might disclose personal problems related to mental health.

What happened when I did the training was it made me recognise how vulnerable I was to encouraging discussions about depression or mental health in the classroom when it might go some place, I don't know how to draw it back. Like I'd send someone for somebody else, but I wouldn't know how to deal with the issues. That's work I assumed I could deal with, just because I'm a teacher of English, do you know what I mean? I don't have any psychology. I don't have any training in psychology. But that was one of the things that the training actually highlighted more and I didn't ever feel that was resolved.

So three years down the track - or two years down the track since that training, do you still have that sense of vulnerability?

Oh yes. All the time. Because they tell you stuff. I don't know but they like to tell me stuff a lot and it scares me because I don't have the skills to deal with it. Staff, 2005

Importance of training

At the fourth visit, senior staff identified the value of their training experiences in building their understanding of the need for the MindMatters program and in helping them to understand how to implement it into their curricula.

I've worked in welfare areas and I've got a Social Science background, but I still found it useful. I found the training useful, and I think to really get people familiar with it and understanding it and so forth, like you have to have that training. Just to simply drop the resource off isn't good enough. You have to actually go into it and explore it and go out and get your two bob's worth.

Yeah I agree, it think it was useful, as an awareness tool. And I think, a Dave said, it's really the only way you can get a resource established in a school is give people the training and try and be a little bit passionate about it.

Yeah I feel roughly the same. I don't see how you could implement something like this without having actually your awareness raised by some sort of introduction. Staff discussion 2005-

The MindMatters training was seen as a crucial factor that resulted in the MindMatters Kit being given more prominence than it would have otherwise been given; thereby increasing the impetus for its uptake.

But any kit - like because as in PE, we get untold amounts of kits delivered to us each year, if we don't have training with those kits, they collect dust on the shelf. But apart from that, I think the training - a lot of the training - gets forgotten or whatever but it's still important in that cultural shift, you know. Teachers are aware and deep down in their psyche know that this is an important thing. So it does leave some... training gives the concepts some credence. Staff, 2005

Value of the Kit

A number of teachers report that their experience of using the MindMatters Kit has been a very positive one and that, having used MindMatters curriculum resources, they had developed new insights into the meaning of pastoral care and were experimenting with the incorporation of other resources into their PC period.

The kit itself, I think talking from a PE person, is great. But it's almost like we're confident now to look for other resources, to say oh you know that fits in with what we're trying to do or that doesn't and I mean I think that's been a good thing about the kit too. S-

And we're better able to define what is pastoral care and thus maybe better be able to deliver it. S-

9 What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

9.1 Improved student wellbeing

Supports for students

The main change in the provision of support for students at Oxford was the introduction of the pastoral program. This program and the time allocated to it certainly provided more time for discussion of particular issues relating to mental health, wellbeing and skill development in pro-social behaviours and life (study) management. The counsellor remained accessible but staff and students reported increasing awareness of his presence and increasing acceptance that help-seeking was a healthy behaviour.

One teacher noted that students' response to the increase in awareness about mental health resulted in a greater likelihood that students would access help from the counsellor.

I think they've responded in the best way they possibly can. When you think that they would be apprehensive about anything to do with mental health. I think they've accepted that that's part of their overall health and if they need to see the counsellor, they need to see the counsellor. Rather than 'I don't want to go. Staff, 2003

Other teachers noted that not all students who might need it took advantage of the support offered by the school counsellor.

Several teachers reported an increase in their own capacity to support students without necessarily referring them on to further help.

I think we realise (from) MindMatters training, or exposure so far, that we can't solve problems for kids, but we can help relieve some of them ... we can simply help by saying to the kid, 'You don't look so happy today'.

Yeah!

(you say) 'What happened?'.... (Student talks about friendship or other problem.) ...'Oh I'm sorry about that.' ... You've noticed and you've told them and it brings some relief. You know you can see it in their eyes. They're saying, 'Well thanks for noticing'. Staff, 2003

Bullying and harassment

A focus on bullying and harassment was central to this school's initial interest in MindMatters. By 2004 one student described the situation regarding bullying and harassment in these terms:

This school - when I was in primary school I used to think of High School as really scary and you would get picked on, and bullied and head flushed, but now being at High School it's nothing like that, it's not scary at all. And if I went to another school I think I would have been scared but this school has made you really confident, comfortable and you want to come to school in the morning.

Does it affect how you feel?

Yes (all agreed)

Happier

Similarly one teacher claimed that while bullying was the initial concern that led to engagement with MindMatters it was no longer a significant issue at Oxford except when the new year 7 students arrived and had not yet been acculturated into the anti-bullying culture established in the school by 2003.

I'm certainly dealing with a lot less incidents of the bullying. I mean you can interpret that in whatever way you want but – if kids aren't telling – its one of those hard ones. But I'm just thinking that I think we've got the message across very clearly that bullying won't be tolerated and I think we've been able to let the kids know what bullying is ... (except) ... Year 7 and they're the only kids in the school who haven't been exposed to this bullying policy in MindMatters as of yet. Staff, 2003

Staff and students supported these views. They accepted that some bullying did occur but that the school took bullying very seriously. Students noted the anti-bullying posters around the school, the repeated mentioning of the school policy on the issue at school assembly and in pastoral time. Students described an opportunity in pastoral period to write down any incidents of bullying they were concerned about. The students made it very clear in the interview that they felt very safe undertaking this process and they were completely confident that confidentiality would be kept. They indicated that they would most likely report incidents of bullying to their pastoral teacher or year coordinator or any staff member with whom they had formed an attachment.

Staff also reported that changes had occurred at the school in response to student comments about a lack of safety such as a general clean up and repair of the boys toilets to ensure doors locked and toilet seats were in place and a change to playground policy that saw footballs banned in the quadrangle. There were indications that such conversations about safety were ongoing and that change occurred in response to identified needs.

The bullying policy is in the student diary and parents are frequently informed about the bullying policy at the school via the newsletter and by the policy being sent home. Some staff suggested that this distribution of the policy to parents should be repeated each year to maintain the high level of awareness that had been achieved in the entire Oxford school community.

Another change noted by staff was in the way staff viewed and managed the blending and reformation of friendship groups. Instead of remaining separate from that process of friendship formation and dissolution in the playground staff actually talked to students about the fact that friendship groups would change and continue to change throughout the whole schooling experience. This more proactive approach was new to the school. As the teacher noted, it was difficult to directly attribute this change to MindMatters but that the awareness that underpinned the change had arisen from MindMatters.

Drugs and alcohol

Students and staff at Oxford did not see this as an issue impacting on the school in any significant way. Students did identify that alcohol was a general problem for teenagers in that region and that students from Oxford went to parties and out with peers where they drank alcohol unsupervised. There were no indications from either staff or students that illicit drugs were a problem at the school or for any members of their community.

Mental health problems

Staff identified a few cases of students at Oxford experiencing a mental illness. While they did not indicate that there was an overall increase or decrease in such cases, they did indicate an increase in their own confidence and capacity to acknowledge mental illness, an increase in understanding of mental illness and mental health, and attendant positive changes in their behaviour in interacting with a student known to be suffering from depression.

Behavioural problems

There was a low level of concern about problem behaviour at Oxford at the commencement of the study but the following comment indicates a general view that, if anything, the situation had improved in recent years:

You try to gauge it - like I think back to this, the kids that we have here at the moment are the best they have ever been, now I don't know why that is. It could be a whole lot of factors, I don't think they are any smarter than what they were - academically they are no better, they could probably - they are not as academic as they used to be in previous years, but the kids in the way they treat each other and the way they get on with each other generally is fantastic. It's the best it's ever been in 16 years that I have been here. ... The fundamental differences in the kids has changed - basically the same variety area, the same families, I was thinking more of what we are doing must be (working).

Attachment to school

At baseline, students expressed very positive views of their school and their teachers (sometimes describing them as 'our friends'). These positive views persisted throughout the period of study.

One area in which students felt more positive about the school was in relation to school uniform. At baseline, the students were unhappy with the strict enforcement of a uniform that they did not really like. During the course of the study there was a change to the uniform allowing an element of student choice. The former uniform required shirts to be tucked in; the new uniform rules permit students to choose between having their shirts in, or their shirts out (with different styles for each choice). At the end of the study period, students indicated that wearing the uniform was something they were happy to do.

*... you get here and everyone is wearing the same thing and that feels OK.
Student, 2004*

Students indicated that the mood of assemblies was positive with teachers commenting on how the year group school was progressing or achieving.

Yeah they try to motivate us a lot. Encourage us.

Along with that though comes more freedom to be able to leave (the school confines)

Yeah, it would be nothing worse than trying to cope with the HSC at the moment and then treated like you're in year 7 or something. That would be just so frustrating and stuff. So they give us more freedom and more responsibility, which is good. Senior students, 2004

Opportunities for leadership

The type of leadership most frequently mentioned by students at Oxford related to assisting other students to form friendships, to develop a sense of belonging and develop a connection to the community at the school. One student described such a situation and her willingness to take on this type of role:

.... (Staff) tell me who to look out for and who's not having fun, stuff like that, then they sort of give me the hint that I need to be really nice to them and try and get - reach them. Student, 2004

There is an active student representative council that remained the same in structure across the course of this study.

Communication and cooperation

There did not appear to be any major changes in the communication structures at Oxford other than the increased opportunity provided by time in the pastoral period and opportunity to discuss MindMatters issues as they arose in curriculum areas. Students reported a sense of ease in communicating with teachers and support staff. There was certainly a mood of cooperation evident in the overall tone of comments from both staff and students.

Help-seeking

The staff noted that there was a strong sense in the school that seeking help from teachers or the counsellor was increasingly acceptable at Oxford.

....there's kids here who don't necessarily believe you've got to be totally nuts to see the counsellor. Like some of those pamphlets with the MindMatters Kits, you know the Dumping Depression, and we use those with year 11 and 12 and, I think, a couple of sick kids as a result, went and saw the counsellor because they go 'Oh well this is the way I'm feeling'. They want to do something about that. It's like, as I've said, it might be just somebody that's not happy, whereas before they would have just tried to live with it and work it through themselves. Staff, 2003

They're a little bit more prepared to see someone about it. It's okay, it's almost cool to see the counsellor and that's a big move from what it can do and what it has been doing and 'You're really screwed up if you go to the counsellor'. Staff, 2003

One staff member commented on their perception of the impact of the new pastoral period on feelings of attachment and belonging:

As you said before (name), I think probably it's meant that the pastoral teachers have a better knowledge of the kids in their group over time but also

it works the other way around as well, that the kids have a better understanding of who their pastoral teacher is and each other, and the potential to actually approaching them in the pastoral teaching.

Talking about mental health or illness

Many staff and students indicated that in the time since MindMatters had been adopted as a tool to increase awareness of mental health at Oxford, staff and students had significantly increased their awareness and willingness to talk about mental health and illness.

Probably the thing that's happened is that the level of awareness of kids and their mental health, mental wellbeing, is probably higher than it was before. That's my subjective sense of things. And I think there is, therefore, a wider range of things that are talkable in the school than before. So it's okay to talk about mental problems.

Yes. Because I get that feeling too. Like if you walked in and said, 'Today we're going to talk about mental health', the kids wouldn't go 'What! What are you on about?' It would be 'Yeah, okay.' Staff, 2004

One staff member reported teaching the year 10 Mental Illness unit in which he had a student who had suffered depression. The student and teacher negotiated for her to self select time out at any point of time where the course material was too close for comfort.

She found some of the stuff hard and obviously revisited a few things that she'd been through but generally, yeah she was okay. I think she appreciated the clinical knowledge behind the way she had been handled. It was also comforting to her to know some of the statistics, that it's not just - it's a relatively common occurrence. And I think it was an eye opener for the rest of the class too - that it's as common as measles. Staff, 2003

Another staff member expressed surprise at the openness of students who seek out a staff member to talk through issues that relate to mental health. She noted that students indicate that while they might not talk about these issues with their parents there had been an establishment of a point of conversation at school.

I know that they probably feel more comfortable talking about those things here at school than some other places. So I think it's that kind of permission that seems to underlie the (MindMatters) program that I think is making a difference. Staff, 2003

Staff reported that in curriculum areas where content brought up mental health issues and in the pastoral period where it was part of the program most students were very comfortable talking about the issues – indeed there was some concern about over disclosure. An interesting anecdote reveals how the pastoral period content at Oxford was, in a way, giving permission for issues to be more openly discussed in other curriculum areas.

I had a couple of really interesting discussions when we brought it up in the pastoral period that we talked about it in class later, when people were talking about a family's mental health. Like how many people had experienced people that had had nervous breakdowns and we talked about people who had drug abuse problems and alcohol problems ... and when we came to our English (period) we were reading a novel that had stuff about a kid who was sent away to a camp

because he was a bad boy. And a lot of the kids who were talking about their experiences at having families who had uncles, or fathers or men it seemed to be, that had had nervous breakdowns and alcohol problems and things like that. And the discussion was quite lively, very open and people weren't being judgemental. It was probably only a couple of lessons but it was - if it hadn't been for that figure at the pastoral period we would never had got into all those things that terrify me. Even then I was very aware that there might be some kids in there who weren't raising their voices, who weren't contributing, but they were all very attentive when I was going on and I thought that was an interesting sideline to it. Staff, 2004

Other statements that support this perception of increased awareness and acceptance of mental health issues are:

I see what's been accomplished here is all those kids who may never need any assistance with their mental health, I reckon there's a genuine understanding now that there are a lot of people that need help. ... I know kids here understand that it's just a normal health problem like other health problems. Staff, 2004

(I think we have achieved an) ... awareness raising that kids can suffer from these sorts of things. We have got a girl in hospital at the moment, who's in hospital with depression, so there is more of an acceptance that this can happen to people and a lot of support is being given by kids in the school, that sort of thing. Staff, 2004

Students supporting each other

Students talked about engaging in supportive behaviours to build connections with and for fellow students who didn't quite fit in, as well as the positive outcomes of their efforts.

Students claimed that one of the qualities they developed at Oxford because of the supportive culture of the school was confidence and an understanding that of the positive aspects of school life. They cited incidents where teachers encouraged them to assist others into friendship groups or with other social skills.

Teachers sort of talk to you and say this person is feeling really left out, do you want to be involved and that's what we did with three people. Student, 2004

Yes, the atmosphere at the school kind of helps you to go in and help people. Student, 2004

Stress management skills

Stress management is taught explicitly as a unit that is part of the pastoral program for year 11 students. In addition the religious education teachers provide opportunities for meditation practice by providing quiet time for reflection in liturgical settings as well as in RE class time. The quiet time could be structured as a guided meditation or simply quiet music.

Staff report that once introduced to this stress management technique in the context of prayer, students request opportunities to meditate. One staff member described the experience of creative visualisation for those who chose to participate as

... really powerful. Good healing stuff. Staff, 2004

Awareness of MindMatters

Overall, while use of MindMatters has inspired much change in this school, the term is not explicitly used and the curriculum elements used both in pastoral care and in curriculum areas are not explicitly labelled as coming from MindMatters.

Teachers reported that students in the higher grades (particularly those who had studied the Understanding Mental Health Unit in PDHPE) were likely to be familiar with the term MindMatters.

Teachers also expected that younger students might associate MindMatters with the school anti-bullying strategies adopted.

Junior students who were interviewed identified MindMatters with the student questionnaires they had completed and with a bullying survey they had undertaken.

9.2 Negative impacts on students

No specific examples of negative impacts were mentioned. Two issues arose that some staff felt had the potential to have negative outcomes.

One staff member raised a concern that talk about mental health and wellbeing had increased in the school to such a degree that it was possible that students who might formerly simply have described themselves as sad were now likely to attribute clinical terminology and engage in self diagnosis. No instances of this were specifically reported.

Other teachers pointed out that students had reduced curriculum time to accommodate the pastoral period. When the pastoral period was poorly prepared or the program not undertaken students appeared to resent the waste of time that could have been better used in subject areas. These perceptions represent an underlying and ongoing debate among what appears to be a minority of staff concerning the school's having sacrificed some commitment to academic outcomes for the sake of increased commitment to pastoral outcomes.

9.3 Positive impacts on staff

Increased knowledge and skill

Teachers were consistent in their claims that their knowledge about mental health, mental illness and wellbeing had increased in the time that this study was undertaken at Oxford.

I learnt a lot about mental health from it (MindMatters). I didn't realise I was so ignorant in terms of how common it (mental illness) is and how it's in certain categories. Staff, 2004

I think it's probably making a good contribution. I think through the staff professional development occasions and through the work that was done in programming in the curriculum teams and so on, suggest that it's at least got a level of ownership amongst the adults in the school. I don't know about the kids. I don't know to what extent they are now more familiar with these areas of concern. Probably the teachers are better placed to know that than I am. Staff, 2004

Staff claimed that the process of taking the whole staff through a considerable amount of shared professional development was beneficial for the school and the general adoption of MindMatters. The opportunities to engage in further, more detailed, engagement with the ideas of MindMatters was provided at the programming phase for each subject area. This process enabled the knowledge gained in professional development to be used quite quickly after training. By engaging staff in both curriculum and pastoral contexts there was little choice but for staff to engage with the implementation of the MindMatters initiative at Oxford.

While all staff engaged with MindMatters to quite a significant degree, certain staff continued to question their skill in delivery of MindMatters content. This concern appeared to be declining over the course of this study as staff developed increasing familiarity with the content and experienced further professional development and collegial support at Oxford.

Positive changes in approach to teaching

One area of particular interest was the Mathematics subject area. Maths is often seen as an area with very limited capacity to accommodate an issues-based curriculum flavour. At Oxford, however, the staff indicated that while they would never force MindMatters into the curriculum they did find many opportunities to build that perspective into the materials they presented.

In maths - so how have you - have you seen any benefit from implementing the elements of MindMatters in maths?

Yes I have in terms of the content of use, so I tend to look for a few (because it's MindMatters it's harder to implement in Maths).. if I don't go out and look for things it's not just going to happen. So I find what it is, like activities bringing content that deals with issues that my students are trying to cope with. Like financial - it could be time, or money or mobile phones is a great one, because the kids get them - that causes real concern if they are on the phone all the time and also their bills are mounting up, so we'll use that stuff ... to look at different companies and that type of thing, so it's MindMatters but it's not in their face - oh we're doing something that's what we're supposed to be helping.

How do you feel about putting that into the context of maths in the way that you teach - do you think it's a good thing to be doing?

I think it's an excellent thing and it's what we should be doing with the syllabus, so it fits in clearly, but I also made a decision that when it's not possible to put it in there, I'm not forcing it. I mean, I might program - there are a lot of cases where I don't have MindMatters for that particular activity filled in, in that 2nd week or 3rd week.

Because it just doesn't fit?

Cause I would be ... it would be rubbish. But at the same time it's also, like I develop more of an empathy towards the students in terms of that, like I will stop and check myself... instead of coming down on a kid like a ton of bricks - like I will think, 'is it something else going on here?' So my awareness of mental health issues has affected my teaching.

The closing comment indicates the type of positive change that teachers were undertaking with regard to their pedagogical practice in the light of their increasing understanding of their potential impact on students mental health and wellbeing. Staff in this faculty indicated that they had developed a commitment to the MindMatters elements in their curriculum area to a degree that it was embedded. They saw such value in it that they expressed the intention to continue to develop resources that brought MindMatters concepts into the examples that their students would be working through. They also indicated that if the major leaders of the program were to leave the school that the ethos would remain:

The formality of it may be less rigorous and adhered to I think ... (MindMatters) may not have it's name attached, but the ethos would remain there (within the KLA's). Staff, 2004

Staff attachment to school

Two staff member related conversations they had recently had with other teachers from another local high school. By implication, these staff felt that working at Oxford was a rewarding personal and professional experience and that they had a community in which they were valued and treated respectfully.

I have a very old good friend that is the same age as me teaching at (school) and he's just about given up on bullying from the upper levels. He talks about the things that have happened to him in terms of harassment - to him as a teacher, and he has sort of basically gone - 'No, don't want to have anything to do with it I'll just go and teach lessons, and just do this now. I won't get involved in anything else, just do the bare minimum.' It's really sad, because he's a very talented teacher but that's the way (it is there). Staff, 2004

My colleague, I talked to at (School) ... and I said 'How was today?' and he said 'Well, I haven't been called a 'F... so and so very much' And I said, 'What?...' He just said the issues at that school are completely different to what we face here.' Staff, 2004

Staff indicated a high level of attachment to and pride in their school. The staff turnover is very low and staff considered this significantly different from teaching colleagues in other schools – both locally and in other regions of the country.

I believe that the staff, are much happier here than in other schools around town ... we have difference, we definitely have people who you find harder to get on with and all that sort of thing. It is a workplace – it's got human beings in it. But I think we are actually quite a happy supportive staff generally speaking. Staff, 2004

Increased teacher awareness

The increase in teacher awareness about mental health and wellbeing concepts and the role teachers can play in the creation of a healthy environment for their students and themselves was one of the major outcomes of the changes made at Oxford. Many staff mentioned this raised consciousness about mental health, wellbeing and mental illness had occurred as a direct result of the MindMatters initiative and professional development opportunities experienced at Oxford.

Staff reported taking student's concerns about peer relationships more seriously and indicated an increasing likelihood to intervene, contact parents, consider the level of support a student may need to work through issues and seek support for that student.

One staff member indicated that many situations in the school were viewed through a new lens, a 'MindMatters frame of reference'. Such a perspective was described by one teacher in these terms:

.... you sort of know the kids who can't cope on their own, who have to have that person with them . Instead of meeting a student's request for a class change with 'bad luck you're in that class now', you change your mind, you put the human face to it more and think, 'How is that kid really going to cope without having friends?' -because peers are just so important. ...(to help them know)...that they fit in and that they belong. But then again you try and make them resilient too and ... we really have to look at the big picture ... and say 'well, we've got to toughen you up and help you cope when you do leave'. Staff, 2004

So while acknowledging the limitations of the school to meet needs, the staff at Oxford are mindful of leading students to independence as well.

Several staff noted incidents where staff, who were originally resistant to the notion of a role expansion for teachers into MindMatters awareness, admitted to having changed their views and practice. This resulted in staff increasingly reporting concern for students.

There was surprise at Oxford at the level of change in staff behaviour by staff who previously would not have noticed or reported concerns about students. A typical exchange was described by one staff in these words:

He said 'I'm worried about (student name). I think they might be suffering from depression'. I think 'Wow- these fellows are actually using that word and noticing these kids'. So I think that has been a real bonus (of the MindMatters initiative at Oxford.) Staff, 2004

This observation was supported by other staff who noted that the knowledge gained in the MindMatters and related professional development at Oxford had increased teachers'

confidence to act on their observations and feelings about students who might show even mild signs of mental ill health. As one teacher asserted:

I think everyone here's a bit more knowledgeable and can say 'Yes you may need help', like lets make that appointment with the counsellor and see if we can sort things out. Staff, 2003

The MindMatters initiative was described as enhancing this type of action which had always existed in the school but with fewer staff actively engaging in observation, intervention and referral prior to the program coming to Oxford.

These statements from a range of teachers in a variety of roles indicate the many ways in which awareness was raised and interactions at the school were altered:

I suppose in a way, people are becoming more skilled at sort of recognising that kids are under stress and being able to guide them a little bit more and show a little empathy. Staff, 2003

I know that it's not my role to deal with them because I'm not trained in that area. However, maybe just a bit more awareness for me (has happened because now) ...you wonder - 'Well am I saying the right thing or am I doing the right thing to help this child?'. I mean you hope you are, you're doing the nurturing kind of thing anyway, but ... Staff, 2003

I think there's more of an awareness amongst the staff about kids being happy, safe, settled, that sort of thing. Staff, 2004

I think in a way you're a role model firstly or foremost and I suppose that's the best lead kids can take in view of their mental health. Staff, 2003

If you're teaching and the way you teach kids... you're going to have to know where they're coming from and work with that otherwise you're wasting your time. Staff, 2003.

I think it's just completely being part of a teacher making each child feel 'I'm valued'. You know taking different considerations for different kids, and it's not making excuses for kids though. I often think kids only grow if sometimes you put quite firm guidelines on them. I do certainly think you've got to have expectations but you've got to treat them with dignity. You know I think there are different ways of doing things. I know my own kids have come home sometimes and it's just horrifying what a teacher has said to them and I think teachers have to become very aware of how they treat kids every day all day. Staff, 2003

We don't realise our impact sometimes because they may not show it straight away, but occasionally they might say something and you think- 'Oh something I said had an impact on that child.' Staff, 2003

Adoption of a language of mental health

Much of this report already indicates a high level of adoption of the concepts of MindMatters and a newer and broader language based on observable behaviours and medical terminology came into place.

The staff at Oxford indicated that prior to MindMatters there was already a strong pastoral ethos in place where care for students was delivered within a framework of a sense of religious mission. The shorter time allocated to pastoral classes prior to the adoption of the pastoral period meant that there were fewer and less articulate expectations on staff to notice and attend to student mental health and wellbeing. To a degree, it appears that the 'medicalisation' of concepts, formerly encased within a faith perspective, allowed many staff to acquire new knowledge about mental health and a language with which to discuss concerns with colleagues and students. With this increase in their knowledge base and in undertaking the changes such as the extended pastoral period and with a MindMatters 'flavour' in curriculum areas, it appears that a number of staff at Oxford have re-envisioned their role.

9.4 Negative impacts on staff

No direct negative impacts of MindMatters on the staff were identified other than an indication that some staff found the extra demands on them stressful at times.

I mean we're struggling too, there are a lot of bloody things happening. A lot of expectations. MindMatters is great but it's another thing we've got to do. Not to quite put it that way but there's a lot on our plate. Our plate's getting bigger. I just feel that sometimes it would be nice to be noticed too and say you've got it tough and teachers here usually do that. Staff, 2004

This statement is a clear indicator of how MindMatters has impacted on some staff and how, for those whose own stress levels are possibly already high, the expectation of adoption of MindMatters has put further pressure on the teacher's own mental health and wellbeing.

9.5 Impacts on whole of school

Creating a common language for wellbeing

Staff and students at Oxford have many opportunities in the pastoral period, in curriculum areas and in the extra curricular contact to consider mental health and wellbeing. In the course of the adoption of MindMatters initiatives at Oxford, staff and students acquired and continue to develop awareness and a shared language for the consideration of mental health and wellbeing. The language is used in abstract ways as concepts are explored and discussed in the context of the pastoral program and the health curriculum in particular, but also arises in almost all curriculum areas.

This increasing abstract knowledge appears to be raising both student and staff awareness of mental health and is facilitating practical discussion of concerns about particular students and staff. This exchange summarises the level of adoption of a new language and the flavour of acceptance it now has at Oxford:

Well, resilience is in the language of the school now. Concept building and self concept building they're the bits.

Yeah, they're a bit foreign - yeah they're sort of

MindMatters

I've only heard resilience from MindMatters

But it's part of (Oxford now) - everyone knows what it is now.

An exchange between Staff, 2004

And this comment:

It's just the same terminology is used all the time, self esteem, resilience. I was dealing with year 11 Business Studies calls today, (using) our school mission statement ... and there are the world dignity, self esteem, blah, blah, blah - the whole confidence thing, and I was thinking, ... this is all the stuff we do all the time, and here it is in our Mission Statement. And that is what MindMatters is all about. Staff, 2004

Increased priority to student wellbeing

Staff noted that, at this school, MindMatters was not adopted with the expectation that it would bring about major change because as one staff member stated *'it fitted so nicely with what we were doing anyway.'* (2004)

Yet, despite the ease of fit with the culture of the school prior to its adoption, staff attributed to MindMatters an increased awareness of their role as individuals to notice and attend to student wellbeing. This indicates a re-envisioning of their role and an elevation of the sense of importance of the human interactions between staff and students.

For staff who resisted the initiative, this increase in focus on students as people appeared to represent a challenge to established notions of school as a place for the transfer of knowledge and the development of academic skills and capacities. For these few it appeared a focus on student wellbeing and academia were rather at odds.

For the majority of staff the increase in their awareness of and growth in their sense of their capacity to influence student wellbeing appeared to be very affirming and an increasingly embedded part of their everyday practice at Oxford.

Students expressed a high level of esteem for their teachers, and a high level of confidence that any student in need would find a 'support' person at Oxford. Students asserted in response to the question 'to whom would they go to seek help if they thought they or a friend had a problem?':

Anybody - any teacher.

Cause we know what it's like.

*In our religion class at the start of the year, this girl she always sat in the back corner like all by herself. And the teachers said she needed some friends and that was the religion teacher and a couple of other teachers hinted as well.
Students 2004*

This view was shared by a most of the staff interviewed:

Oh I think every kid could find a teacher (if they needed help). Not every kid would link with their pastoral teacher. Different personalities relate to

different people ... sometimes they just relate to a particular (teacher) ...Yeah they'd all find someone I'm sure. Staff, 2003

Creating stronger links with parents

The regular newsletter inserts on parenting and regular updates about MindMatters indicate an effort to engage parents in the process of change undertaken at Oxford. While there did not appear to be any major change in either the opportunities for parents to increase their involvement with the school in any strategic way, staff talked about an increase in their level of contact with parents and at earlier points of concern about students.

Staff also reported negotiating with students to inform parents about concerns that students had expressed at school but felt uncomfortable raising at home without the support of another adult. As one staff member described this shift:

MindMatters has woken me up a bit in terms of my experience of just noticing and saying something like. 'I'll ring your parents up and talk about this'. Staff, 2003

Plans for future use

There were no indications of any further major change to occur with regard to MindMatters at Oxford. However, it appeared the changes made were embedded and likely to be subject to ongoing evaluation and improvement. One staff member suggested that for the benefit of the staff who deliver the program and provide a high level of support for students that some attention to MindMatters for staff mental health would be a good way to move forward.

I think we're not too bad with each other here as teachers, but maybe if we did a MindMatters for us (staff) too. (It might lead to) a bit more awareness sometimes I feel. Staff, 2003

10 Further Views on Impacts at the Fourth Visit

10.1 Impacts on students

Overall, the comments made by staff and students at the fourth evaluation visit in 2005 reflect the same issues that emerged at the previous visit.

Talking about mental health or mental illness

Given the school's integration of the 'Understanding Mental Illness' module into the health curriculum, students seem to have reacted positively to being given the opportunity to research and discuss various types of mental illness. One teacher in 2005 reflected similar comments from 2004 that open discussion of mental illness among both students and staff was now quite common and that there was a degree of comfort about this that was not previously present.

So things like depression are no longer a voodoo subject, so that kids are likely to talk about depression, they'd talk about things, even as our discussion yesterday in the staffroom about suicide. They were about 5 to 10 years ago, the subject, was probably off limits. Staff, 2005

Bullying and harassment

Generally staff and students interviewed in 2005 report similar observations about bullying as those reported in 2004. It is clear that this is a major focus for the school and that it is having considerable success in raising awareness of the issue, communicating a strong anti-bullying stance, encouraging students to report bullying and to support each other when bullying occurs. While this has not resulted in completing abolishing bullying, generally students do feel safe about coming to school and demonstrate a willingness to discuss it openly.

And as kids, they're more aware of what bullying is and what affect it has on people. I'm not saying that it doesn't happen here because it does but the kids and the teachers are more aware of that mental health, bullying and all that MindMatters stuff. Staff, 2005-

Getting back to what you said (name), that you don't know if the bullying has gone down or not, I think bullying is a fact of life; everyone knows that and no program like this will (stop it). But what I've noticed over the past couple of years is the fact that the people who are being bullied are more open to talk about it, whereas before they'd be ashamed to admit it because they would see themselves as being weak. Now they don't. So if that's a result of the program, then it's a positive thing. Staff, 2005

One teacher described the ways in which the staff have changed in their responses to bullying and the perceived success of their approaches.

We have been able to successfully deal with, I think, issues like that so the victim has felt empowered, and all the cases I've dealt with have gone back into 'How do you feel?'. You know? The first time a person would say; 'Look I don't want anything done'. It's the first thing that people say. 'I just want to tell you about this incident of bullying but I don't want anything done. I don't want it raised with the person or anything else like that'. And that's a very common

thing from parents and of which we now – I suppose half of us are saying ‘No. The first step is we need to deal with that’. Now going back on those (cases) I think the success rate has been quite good. Like going back, ‘Has that dealt with the problem?’ And the kids go ‘Yeah, everything’s fine now’. And we’ve said, ‘Well did all those things we did work?’ And yeah they did work. And that’s from bullying on buses. So that direct approach, I think, has worked, been very successful. Staff, 2005

Staff see approaches to bullying such as that described above as very complementary to the Restorative Justice program that the school is in the process of adopting.

I think one of the approaches – I mean you were talking about the Restorative practices that we’re starting with – one of the approaches of that I think we’ve already used through the MindMatters in dealing with bullies, is confront the person who’s doing the bullying in terms of them looking at the effect that they’re having on other people, I find that’s something that we’ll carry on with and I think that’s very effective. Staff, 2005

10.2 Impacts on staff

As with the previous section of students, the fourth visit confirmed and reinforced the statements made at earlier visits about the impact of MindMatters on the staff.

Increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues

Generally staff see themselves as being much more aware of mental health as an issue, and of the impact of mental illness on individuals, attributing this directly to the training and to the use of MindMatters in the classroom.

When I reflect back to that I think it was great because it certainly opened my eyes, (my) awareness to mental health issues and brought them out of the cupboard if you like. And personally I’d be more aware of depression and the effects of depression and all those sorts of things now. Know where to, you know, a person’s personal circumstances, there’s been stuff where I’ve gone to the MindMatters kit to get information, which has to be a good thing, so it’s generally my awareness has been good. Staff, 2005

Changing views of the role of the teacher

This increased exposure to mental health and mental illness, seems to have had an impact on some teachers in terms of how they see their role; extending this to include a responsibility to notice whether their students are well and to respond to them if they suspect that they may have problems.

It brought, if you like, (an awareness that) before or prior to me being a History teacher, I'm a teacher of kids. I'm a teacher of students; and that it's my relationship with them that is foundational to anything else that might happen. And, as part of that relationship, there is a duty of care to notice, to be aware of the wellbeing that my students have or seem to have and to enquire when I'm concerned about them. Staff, 2005-

The experience of pastoral care teachers seems to have led them to the view that awareness of their students needs would impact on their approach to the PC period itself. The pastoral period can become an opportunity for teachers to focus on whatever issues are arising for the students, even if that is just the need to have a rest.

Oh yeah, because when that pastoral period isn't there, then there's just no time for anything else. And that's the issue we have in the school. We just don't have time and that's a big issue in education. We're all saying all our curriculum's with everything, we just don't have the time. And sometimes the time to stop and think, as opposed to other people... I think there's a value in the pastoral period for just sitting there and putting your head on the desk and having a break. I think it would be justified with MindMatters because again it's mental health, and mental health is about wellbeing

Use of the term 'MindMatters' as an umbrella term

On many occasions during the fourth visit, the staff discussed MindMatters as if it were a term to describe their overall approach to supporting the wellbeing of students, rather than simply referring to a particular program or Kit. One example is that staff saw the introduction of the restorative Justice program as part of their 'MindMatters approach'.

The following quote from a teacher reflects this generalisation of the term to include all that the school does to address wellbeing.

I'm a believer that MindMatters is about kids being happy. So anything that we can do to help them have a happier existence, such as organisation and less stress and feeling that they know what's going on and feeling that all these sorts of things, because there's a bit of an emphasis we use through diaries and things like that, is all MindMatters. Staff, 2005

Increasing responsiveness to the mental health problems of students

At the fourth evaluation visit, the counsellor reported that the increased awareness of staff of mental health issues has resulted in an increasing level of referrals for further assessment and support.

More referrals (are) coming my way. More conversations that I have with people, who even if they're not making referrals, are wanting to have a conversation around what they're currently doing in relation to something that's come up. So that's been good, I've appreciated that. And that, I suppose, broadens my consultancy role in the school, as distinct from only the face to face counselling role. That's been good. Counsellor -

This increased capacity of teachers and their willingness to make referrals is also reflected in the following comments from one of the teachers.

Even though it's been difficult at times, you know, whether it's an extra thing or something else that we have to put into the curriculum, I firmly believe that there's been a cultural shift in regards to the Understanding Mental Illness or mental health in the school and I think we all teachers here are more able to detect maybe signs that somebody might be going through some difficulty. I think the status of our school counsellor has been raised considerably. Staff, 2005

A parent who was interviewed in 2005 also reinforced this general perception of greater responsiveness, linking this change to the school's adoption of MindMatters.

My second daughter went through a rough patch - in year 9/10, she went through a rough patch - she harmed and scratched herself and there were a few kids in that class - it was like it was sort of catching. She was fine. And I think maybe (it was) the MindMatters. It was picked up on quite quickly and I think maybe MindMatters could have had something to do with that because the staff were very aware and that was good. Parent 2005

10.3 Impact on the whole of school

Given this school's comprehensive approach to the adoption of MindMatters, both through timetable and curriculum changes, through investment in sending key staff to external MindMatters training, and through persistent leadership and advocacy, this school seems to have reached the point where MindMatters is valued as a catch-all term for all that the school does to support the mental health of students.

I just want to add one more thing, you just mentioned there that we're more aware of - or more likely to pick up the signs of someone that is experiencing difficulty, but I think as a staff too, I think the school and a lot of the decisions that we make are for promoting things that promote mental wellbeing, as opposed to dealing with difficult kids. I think, as I said, there's been a culture shift, even though it's been, for some, hard work. Staff 2005

11 Indicators of change from student questionnaires

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

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

Note 1

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

Positive or negative changes in variables are described as 'little' if they are between one and two (should these numbers be written) standard deviations of the national mean (calculated at baseline), and as 'moderate' if they are between 2 and 3 standard deviations. Changes greater than three standard deviations 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.

Note 2

Whereas in 2002 the school administered the questionnaires in August, in 2005 they were administered late in November of 2005. By this time, year 10 students had left the school. It is therefore only possible to present comparisons for years 7 to 9.

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 shows the differences in these variables for males and females in each year in 2005 compared to students of the same sex and year in 2002 (statistically significant differences are shown in bold). The table indicates that there were a number of comparisons between year and sex cohorts in 2005, compared to 2002, which were statistically significant. These were:

- male students in year 7 in 2005 had a moderately lower mean score for 'school attachment' compared to students in the same year in 2002 ($p < .05$);
- male students in year 8 in 2005 had a lower mean score for 'school connection' ($p < .01$) and a moderately lower mean score for 'self esteem' ($p < .01$) compared to students in the same year in 2002; and
- female students in year 9 in 2005 had a lower mean score for 'self esteem' compared to students in the same year in 2002 ($p < .05$).

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

		School connection	Autonomy experience	Self esteem	Effective help-seeking
Year 7 (2005)	Males	Moderately lower	A little lower	A little lower	A little lower
	Females	A little lower	No difference	No difference	No difference
Year 8 (2005)	Males	Lower	A little lower	Moderately lower	No difference
	Females	A little lower	No difference	Moderately lower	No difference
Year 9 (2005)	Males	A little lower	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	Moderately lower	Lower	A little lower

Other comparisons which were not statistically significant were:

- female students in years 7 and 8, and males in year 9 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean score for 'school connection' compared to students in the same years in 2002;
- male students in years 7 and 8 in 2005 had slightly lower mean scores for 'autonomy experience' compared to students in the same years in 2002;
- female students in year 9 had a moderately higher mean score for 'autonomy experience' compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- male students in year 7 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean score for 'self esteem' compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- female students in year 8 in 2005 had a moderately lower mean score for 'self esteem' compared to students in the same year in 2002; and
- males in year 7 and females in year 9 in 2005 had slightly lower mean scores for 'effective help-seeking' compared to students in the same years in 2002.

Changes in help-seeking intentions

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

'Willingness to Talk to Someone at School'

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

'Positive Attitude to School Counsellor'

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

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

One comparison was found to be statistically significant, namely: a moderately lower proportion of males in Year 8 indicated that they would talk to a teacher or some other adult at school, compared to students in the same year in 2002.

Other changes that were not statistically significant were:

- female students in Year 7 were moderately more likely to indicate that they would talk to a teacher or some other adult at school, compared to students in the same year in 2002 (although low numbers make this result unreliable),
- female students in Year 10 were a little more likely to indicate that they thought a school counsellor would be helpful.

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

		% who indicate they would talk to someone at school	% who indicate that student welfare would be helpful
Year 7 (2005)	Males	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference
Year 8 (2005)	Males	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference
Year 9 (2005)	Males	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference

Changes in drug and alcohol use and intentions

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

‘mean number of days of drinking in last three months’

‘mean number of days of smoking in the last three months’

‘mean number of days of using marijuana in the last three months’

Table 3 shows the mean number of days of use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana for students in 2005 compared to students of the same sex and year in 2002.

One of the comparisons was found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$) namely the mean number of days of using tobacco was slightly higher for males in year 8 in 2005 compared to the students in the same year in 2002.

One other change which was not statistically significant was that the mean number of days of using marijuana was moderately lower for males in year 9 in 2005 compared to students in the same year in 2002.

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Table 3: Drug and alcohol indicators, 2005 compared to 2002

		Mean days of alcohol use	Mean days of tobacco use	Mean days of marijuana use
Year 7 (2004)	Males	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
Year 8 (2004)	Males	No difference	A little higher	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference
Year 9 (2004)	Males	No difference	No difference	Moderately lower
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference

Comment

12 Key Learnings from this school

MindMatters can be **deeply embedded into curriculum areas**. To achieve this at Oxford staff were supported by professional development, the provision of relevant resources, adequate release time to undertake change, ongoing evaluation and revision and high levels of expectation of delivery supported by monitoring of implementation.

MindMatters can **significantly enhance a faith based pastoral program** and engage staff in ownership of mental health and wellbeing issues in a way that faith-based programs can sometimes fail to do.

External training for a one quarter of staff members in MindMatters, supported by the provision of training to the whole staff at the school, **can provide a solid base** for the adoption of MindMatters change in a school.

Industrial issues about loads and responsibilities that impact on the adoption of MindMatters initiatives need to be addressed early in the adoption phase or the resentment that builds has the capacity to destabilise change and detract from other successes that may arise out of the implementation of MindMatters related change.

Staff rapidly accommodate language that enables them to describe their observations and concerns about student wellbeing. Where language acquisition about mental health is provided to a whole staff, and staff are engaged in programs where they are required to hand on this knowledge to students, the language and concept embedding appears to occur quickly.

Exposure to the MindMatters and related professional development for RE teachers at Oxford appears to have raised their **sense of the value of the curriculum** and the personal skill development opportunities that RE, liturgy and retreats provide for the betterment of student and staff mental health.

Exposure to MindMatters and related professional development at Oxford appears to have **challenged a significant number of staff to critique their pedagogical practice** and make changes that are likely to generate a safer and healthier environment for students.

Appendix 1 - MindMatters in English

What follows is a description of where we will integrate MindMatters worksheets into the current 7 to 10 English Programs at this school.

Worksheet Title	MindMatters Book	Page (s)	12.1 Year	12.2 Topic	12.3 Focus
Writing A universal experience	Bullying and Harassment	71 - 74	7 & 8	Holes The Game of the Goose	Bullying, friendship, optimism, hop
Stress under the surface	Enhancing Resilience	46-49 31-32	7 8	The Silver Sword Hetcheft	Meeting the Challenge
Resilience	Changes & Coping Friendship & Belonging	67-74 56	9	Tomorrow when the War began	Family, friendship, networking Loss and Grief
Understanding Mental Illness	Changing	57-64	9	Peeling the Onion	Identity
Understanding Mental Illness	Seeking Help	74-86	10	Catcher in the Rye	Finding help and developing resilience

Appendix 2

Outline of process of implementation and review for 2000, 2001.

