



# **Evaluation of MindMatters at Windermere High School**

(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

Windermere High School is a large government school located in a highly populated urban environment. The majority of the students come from low socio-economic backgrounds. The neighbouring community was established as a public housing estate, and is home to a large percentage of single parent and unemployed families. The nature of this population is constantly fluctuating with many of these families moving to and from nearby, larger cities. This and other factors results in a largely mobile student population. There is reportedly a high incidence of drug and alcohol usage in the community.

In response to the high proportion of students having a variety of needs of extra support and encouragement, the school had, prior to adopting MindMatters, been open to a range of programs and community support services. In 2000 it had established a new welfare support system in which the Year 7 advisor would spend a whole period, once per cycle, with each of the home room groups in this year, with the purpose of enabling the year advisor to get to know each student and to foster the relationship between the advisor and the students.

MindMatters was identified as relevant to the school for two main reasons. Firstly, it offered itself as a program that was relevant to the school's orientation towards supporting the social and emotional needs of the students. Many of the students were seen as suffering from mental health problems and it was known that many members of the students' extended family suffered mental illness as well. Secondly MindMatters offered a curriculum resource that the Year 7 advisor could use during the 'welfare period' to develop social skills, to raise awareness of bullying and to foster help-seeking skills.

Apart from use of the curriculum resources in this way, they are also used occasionally by health faculty staff, by teachers in the Special Education Unit and in a special two-week program for Year 11 (in which the 'Understanding Mental Illness' resources are used). The school has reoriented its internal training programs to include more training for teachers in supporting students. A one year program in which a mental health worker worked in the school part-time increased the school's awareness of mental illness and increased linkages to appropriate services.

*There's definitely a difference. The kids don't seem as bad as they used to...I've seen no chairs or anything going out the windows this year ... No one going out the windows either. Staff*

*I think their tolerance towards children who they might previously just have written off ... I think their tolerance towards children who might have poor resilience or mental health issues, is improving. Parent*

*This MindMatters kit I suppose it helped me to develop a rapport with the students, and it allowed me to see another side apart from just a facilitator of teaching and learning, of just teaching them whatever it is I have to teach. Staff*



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

### Overview

Windermere High is a Year 7 to 12 government high school located in a rapidly expanding coastal community.

The majority of the students come from very low socio-economic backgrounds. The neighbouring community was established as a public housing estate, and is home to a large percentage of single parent and unemployed families. The nature of this population is constantly fluctuating with many of these families moving to and from nearby, larger cities. This and other factors results in a largely mobile student population. There is reportedly a high incidence of drug and alcohol usage in the community.

The school population had decreased significantly over the three years prior to the commencement of the evaluation, from a very over-populated school exceeding 1400 students in 1999, to a population of approximately 1100 students in 2002. Of these, there are approximately 60 Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander students.

### Administration

The administration consists of the principal and two deputy principals. Students in each year are coordinated by a year advisor. The system is designed such that the Year 7 coordinator will remain with the student cohort as they progress through their school years. Of course, this system can be impacted by teachers transferring or taking leave.

### Timetable

At the beginning of the evaluation period (2002), the school day was organised around six 40-minute periods, with one recess break and lunch.

### Curriculum

The school is committed to providing high quality education programs that are relevant to the particular needs of their student population. Consequently, there is a great deal of emphasis on transitional programs and support for students with high welfare needs and or disabilities.

### Annual turnover

There is a significantly large annual turnover of staff at Windermere due to transfers imposed on the school as part of departmental policies or administration and also due to voluntary transfers.

*...You have teachers leaving - constantly coming and going from the bus stop. (That was our analogy - people coming and going just constantly). In the five years that I have been here our staffing has changed, the dynamics has changed, every year... Staff, 2002*

*The year I started in our staff room (this is the start of my fourth year here so it's actually sort of three years ago at the start of the year) with the exception of two people (and there's nine of us in our staff room) every single person was new - it's huge. Staff, 2002*

*I've got a lot of new teachers - most of the teachers aren't here long. Student, 2002*

Staff positions have also been lost due to the decreasing enrolment in the school.

As mentioned above, a large proportion of the student population can transfer in and out of the school during a school year.

*The kids will come and go too - like a lot of them come up - there's kids leaving from fringe areas of the city and coming up and staying with grandparents because their family units have broken down - and they come up to either aunty or uncles or grandparents to spend some time. Staff, 2003.*

### **Pastoral care arrangements**

At Windermere High, the year advisors deliver basic pastoral care to all students in each year. The year advisor generally stays with the same students from Year 7 through to Year 12 to create further support, and is responsible for providing pastoral care including organising trips away as a group, camps and personal development days.

*The year advisors are better than teachers people can go to them and talk to them and they understand, help them with their problems. Student, 2004*

*He's a God, takes us everywhere and stuff like that. He's cool. Student, 2004*

### **Behaviour management arrangements**

Windermere High has implemented a hierarchical behaviour monitoring system using colour-coded cards for different behaviours. Students can be placed on a monitoring card for a range of actions including attendance, uniform, classroom behaviour, smoking etc.

*Well depending on the severity of it, the teacher can monitor the student on a yellow card, which is just between the student and the teacher. So they have satisfactory, unsatisfactory, if they get say three, that goes over five lessons, three unsatisfactories they are then referred to the head teacher and put on a blue card. Parents are notified and the same process is monitored and then if that's not working there's the next step which maybe a green card, with the deputy, depending on the severity. They would have to report at lunchtime to a particular teacher and have a detention - they're sort of the really bad cards - there's the green one and then the red one - when you are on the verge of being suspended. Otherwise if it's sort of just an incident that happens in the classroom with the teacher, the teacher deals with it however they want to. Staff, 2003*

As indicated in the above quote, responsibility for behaviour management is with the head teacher of each faculty rather than with the year advisor although as the severity of behavioural problems increases, the year advisor is involved in decisions about the student's punishment.

### **Other welfare support structures**

Windermere High offers an extensive array of pastoral care and additional welfare support structures to cater for the extremely large and diverse needs of the students. These provisions are considered important given the low socio-economic status of the feeder

community and the need to facilitate and provided a stable, supportive environment for students.

*We do a hell of a lot of stuff here. This school does so much when it comes to welfare programs. Hell of a lot. Staff, 2003*

In addition to the year advisor and general pastoral care, the school has established a separate welfare team comprising of not only the year advisors but also other staff and community members, who organise and implement activities targeting a variety of troubling behaviours. This team is managed by the welfare coordinator. These behaviours include anger, truancy, drug and alcohol usage, pregnancy, and violence/abuse. Counselling services, career advice and additional schooling assistance is also provided.

As an indication of the wide net that this school has cast in attempting to provide welfare support, the following programs or services were mentioned as currently running or having been used in the past.

- Reality Check
- Angry Ants
- The Cabin
- Peer Mediation
- Peer Support
- Rock & Water
- The Oasis Centre
- ACE
- Problem Solving for Life
- GRAB
- Community Drug Action Team (CDAT)
- TAS
- Mentoring
- Planet Youth
- School Link

In addition to these programs Windermere High has integrated separate schooling units to cater for students with mild to severe intellectual and emotional disabilities. There are six units in total:

- ED – Emotional Disturbance
- CD – Conduct Disorder
- IO – Severe Intellectual Disability (x2)
- IM – Mild Intellectual Disability (x2)

Each unit has both a teacher and a teacher's aide for approximately five to eight students who are either partially integrated into mainstream classes or withdrawn completely. A small percentage of students who attend these units are actually enrolled at neighbouring schools.

*I think the CD/ED unit has made a huge difference and so the few children who were always being suspended for whatever reason, are actually taken up to the CD/ED unit where they can be dealt with or treated individually. And hopefully they overcome whatever problem and then they come back to mainstream. But it's not just this school where - you get students from (nearby town) and all around the district into the unit up here. Staff, 2003*

*So the ED kids tend to be kids that have had a lot of trauma and some kind of mental illness. The conduct in this sort of class, you get a lot of acting out type*

*behaviour and kids that have got a very bad record at school, they've all got bad records at school and for the most part a lot of unhappiness and sadness in their early life. So we run a program where they focus on their main area of the curriculum but with the focus on how they are behaving which we negotiate with them to see have they done these things, respect others, use appropriate language, stay in class, keep your hands to yourself, those sorts of learning behaviours that are essential. Staff, 2003*

In 2002, the school also employed two part-time counsellors, which it shared with neighbouring schools.

### **Links to the community**

Windermere High has a well-established link to the neighbouring Community Centre with which it implements a number of welfare programs including ACE (Adolescents Coping with Emotion) and Angry Ants. Senior students are also allowed to access the neighbourhood centre during the school lunch break.

*What it is, is we tend to utilise like the neighbourhood centre, a lot of community organisations and so forth, to withdraw like the students that we targeted at risk and take them out of the school environment and put them into the community. Staff, 2003*

*The school and I actually quite link in very well, the welfare team and I link in well because the schools are often governed by different rules and regulations, as opposed to me and the youth work. Youth work has a broader way of dealing with young people. So yes we both refer backwards and forwards without duplicating and I can pick up on a lot of the issues, stuff that is going on at home and it's not necessarily a DOCS case but it could be health in any aspect from hygiene to sexual health is actually a big one. We set a sexual health clinic up once a month and in between that I do sexual health issues like I do condoms practice and talk about that stuff. So it actually works quite well and also it works well because it's outside the school. Community worker, 2002*

The school has also opened the library for the local community to use, enabling access to the Internet and reading materials due to the limited local resources.

*It's opening the library up so they can use it, its something they really need, cause none of the families around here have got the internet access or computers, and they can get in here and get the information after school. Community member, 2002*

### **Parent involvement**

Staff indicated that parental involvement and support throughout the school is very limited and attribute this to the fact that many of the parents, themselves have a low level of academic achievement and do not place a high value on education.

*...On a whole the majority of the parents in this area, because it's a low socio-economic area they don't value the school, and if they don't go to school - they*

*don't think why they need to get involved in education because the kids aren't going past Year 10. So probably 50-60% - more than 50% don't have much support from parents because they don't value education - that's just the area you live in, if you go to a much higher socio area then a lot of the parents are ... they push their kids, and hence you get the extra support. Staff, 2002*

Others recognise the difficulties that parents face in making a commitment to the school.

*We tend to have a reasonable contact I suppose - we ring parents a lot of the times when kids are underachieving and not doing the right thing we tend to ring straight away. Generally they are supportive, but there is not the support at parents level so that you don't have that group of parents who are a large group of parents who are actually working within the school to achieve better things for their kids and the school community....You've got parents that are both working, and you've got others who are a single parent who are struggling and is working so they are trying and the others whose parents don't work at all. Staff, 2002.*

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

At the first visit, students generally expressed negative views of Windermere High and lacked pride in their school environment.

*Just coming to this school is depressing just the look of the school makes you feel depressed - the big fence. Student, 2002*

*I'd find somewhere else, but there really is nowhere else you are going to find. Student, 2002*

*It's got a really bad reputation because of past years the things that have gone on here...the school is over populated, there's too many people but they are not going to do anything about it...it's not as bad as it used to be. When I was in Year 7 it was like you would come to school and it...was like a party. Student, 2002*

Some students however were of the opinion that the school climate was improving and that the reality of school life was not as bad as the reputation.

*Yes I think things have changed a lot - like the school is better, sort of thing. But people still don't have pride in the school. Student, 2002*

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

Some staff in 2002 also expressed fairly negative views of the school, describing it as a challenging and demanding place of employment, which often led to high levels of stress.

*You could cry sometimes, you try and be the nicest, best you can to them, you can easily get depressed and stressed in schools cause you can realise that you feel like you are failing, you stay positive but you do feel like you are fighting a*

*losing battle against parents, against kids, against society, TV, against everything. Staff, 2002*

*I came here and cried for the first year. Staff, 2002*

*One of the things that this school lacks - and it would really be nice if we could change it - is just a positive school culture. And that's really disheartening to hear kids all the time being really negative about their own school and when that's reinforced by staff it doesn't really help. Staff, 2002*

There were staff, however, for whom the challenges that this school provides has led to a positive approach and to the development of supportive relationships within the staff.

*I think though people are, or some people anyway, were very supportive when I - like, last year when I became year advisor, I guess I started taking on extra things, and I found the welfare team really, really supportive. Like (name) was really fantastic - he had been year advisor the year ahead of me and he gave me heaps of information and that was like a new little group of friends really formed, but that really was a good support for me. I really liked that which was one thing I did enjoy. But I think some people in the school are definitely supportive of each other. Staff, 2002*

### **Community views of the school**

The school is generally perceived negatively throughout the community, having been associated with many past incidents involving substance use and violence.

*(Windermere) certainly out in the community does have a pretty poor name. Probably the worst name compared to other schools. Community member, 2002*

*There was a real public perception about the school and it was very negative and a lot of people still have that feeling. Staff, 2002*

*I live and work here and (Windermere) High School, per se, has a terrible reputation. It's like you say 'Windermere'- you know you just don't admit it. I'm really not quite sure why, besides the usual - violence, drugs and teachers. Like there used to be - it was pretty poor respect from students and from teachers. Community member, 2002*

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

Three school visits were made in February 2002, February 2003 and February 2004. At these visits, the school arranged for various members of the school community to be interviewed, and these conversations were audio taped for later analysis.

The following interviews took place:

Interviewees	Number interviewed			
	1 <sup>st</sup> visit	2 <sup>nd</sup> visit	3 <sup>rd</sup> visit	4 <sup>th</sup> visit
Principal	1	1	1	1
Deputy or Assistant Principal	1			2
Senior teacher	6	3	4	4
Teacher or assistant teacher	-	2	3	1
Student	8	8	16	12
Counsellor, social worker etc	-	1	1	1
Parent	3	3	2	
Community member	1	1	1	
Other				1

Over the two years of the evaluation, two telephone interviews were conducted with the senior teacher who was appointed by the principal to coordinate the evaluation and these were also taped for later analysis.

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

At baseline, the following participation rates were achieved:

Year 7	67%
Year 8	63%
Year 9	59%
Year 10	69%

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



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

#### 3.1 Community context

Windermere High is situated in a lower socio-economic area, with limited access to health facilities and other support structures.

*This community has an issue in that it has very little access to community mental health, adolescent mental health services, practically zero. Staff, 2003.*

Staff also reported a high proportion of single parent families and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This impacts upon the behaviour and academic expectations of students and the culture of the school.

*What we see here is just a reflection of society, that's what schools are. Staff, 2002*

*Having a low socio-economic community, like being a low socio-economic area you have the highest suspension rate in the state - so the kids are very trying and it's hard. Staff, 2002*

*I think being low socio-economic too, they've got enough on their plates too... You've got to understand their background I suppose, that's where by understanding their background you can see them differently and I suppose in a way, if you show them a bit of compassion, you will approach it differently and have a different outcome. Staff, 2002*

*It is a predominately low socio-economic group... the expectations of the kids are down - a lot of them don't build university into their focus at all... they don't have two income working parents. Staff, 2002*

The school has a poor reputation in the community and its presence is seen by many as reducing the value of surrounding homes. The negative perceptions of the school reflect other changes within the broader community, including a perception that the area now attracts residents of lower socio-economic status. Vandalism has been a significant issue in this area, prompting the construction of a large fence around the school. However, in the eyes of a number of informants, this has further detracted further from the school's appearance and enhanced negative community perceptions.

*Vandalism. ... it has decreased from \$70,000 to \$30,000 or something, but I think people's state of mind is more important and you talk to young people how they feel, and what they say. If they had just put the fence up to the car park instead of along the street, it might have looked a bit better ... which drops all the prices of housing and - vandalism is huge around here at the moment. Community member, 2002*

#### 3.2 Student well being issues

##### Mental health problems

Staff and students indicated that there is a significantly large percentage of the student population who are suffering with some form of mental health problem, perhaps attributable to their low-socioeconomic status and relative lack of security and support at home.

*The majority of the school, just about everyone at the school, has got some sort of problem - some worse than others. Community member, 2002*

*...they are anxious and that is either something to do with something in school, or it's a home issue. Anxiety, panic attacks. Community health worker, 2003*

*We have had a couple of issues here...there was a bit of self-mutilation type of thing, just cutting themselves and stuff like that. Staff, 2003*

### **Bullying and harassment**

In 2002, bullying and harassment was reportedly a significant issue at Windermere High, with a strong occurrence of both verbal and physical abuse.

*The bullying and harassment thing...is definitely a big issue here, and although there are systems in place in the school to try and assist it and that's an ongoing thing... If you look at all the things that take up your time as year advisor in Year. 7, I mean bullying and harassment I'd say are close to 90% of my time spent as year advisor would be dealing with issues amongst the kids about them basically being nasty to each other. Staff, 2002*

The fact that the MindMatters resources placed a prominent focus on the issue of bullying and harassment was an important factor in attracting this school's attention.

*I think I would be interested to see the effects of teaching MindMatters, especially bullying this year, and then seeing what the outcome is in Year. 8. I know you are still having a number of bullying problems, so I would be interested to see how they begin coping with that and how they handle what strategies that develop and if they are actually implementing those - that would be interesting. Staff, 2002*

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Staff, students and community members all reported that drug and alcohol usage is an immense problem at Windermere High. Both legal and illegal drugs are prevalent throughout the school. It has also been indicated that students also deal drugs from the school premises.

*We've got a huge pot smoking thing - and narcotics too, and they start in Year 7. They are not starting in Year 10 or Year 9. And it's such a peer group thing and the smokers down the corner, I mean I don't think we've addressed those smokers at all - they should have been stopped straight away. Staff, 2002*

*A lot of the kids who used to go to this school for example they come back and they sell drugs like reefers at lunchtime, actually at the fence, they push it through the fence, and then they are obviously selling for people in the area so the drug dealers send in the kids who used to go to the school back to the school to stand outside the fence, and push the drugs in push the money out - the kids on drugs, you can't get them off them obviously and then they run away - there are heaps of drugs in the school. Heaps and heaps. Staff, 2002*

*Alcohol I find, underage drinking is very, very prevalent. Like it's not helped by secondary supplying - there is a huge amount of parents who happily send their children, 16 and 17 year olds up to a party with a bottle of bourbon. That's the norm and they don't see a problem with that at all. And when it's a parent giving it to a child you can't - it doesn't fall under the laws of secondary supply.  
Parent, 2002*

*There is no single day that goes by that I wouldn't smell cigarette smoke in the school. Not a single day. Staff, 2002*

### **Behavioural problems**

Staff reported the frequent occurrence of difficult behavioural problems both in and out of the classroom. Again, the majority of staff indicated that they thought these behaviours were reflective of the low socio economic status of the area. As a result the school has a very high suspension rate.

*Having a low socio-economic community, like being a low socio-economic area you have the highest suspension ...rate in the state - so the kids are very trying and it's hard. Staff, 2002*

Staff indicated that the limited support offered to the students in their home environment and their need for stability was reflected in the student's behaviour. Staff reported high incidences of behaviour problems when the permanent staff are absent.

*There's discipline problems in every classroom in every school- its no different. These kids...do like the stable environment. If I've been away for two days, I'm then going to wear it with those kids for the next time because they feel they have been rejected or whatever. Staff, 2003*

### **Truancy, attendance**

Staff, students and community members all reported large amounts of truancy at Windermere High. Students are frequently seen at the nearby beach, or at home with unexplained absences.

One staff member saw truancy as one of the problems that may be impacted by the introduction of MindMatters, particularly in Year 7.

*I'm hoping that it will assist in the truancy because it's the whole addressing the underlying reasons for truancy, that feeling of disengagement and all those things. Although I must say all our work on truancy is largely condoned by the families, so whether this will address that or whether we have to take - or we are taking other steps, but yes I am very hopeful that it's going to be beneficial.  
Staff, 2002*

### **Gender specific needs**

Community health workers indicated that there are significantly different problems being experienced between male and female students. It was reported that female students are experiencing large amounts of peer pressure to perform sexually and are often experiencing difficulty coping with relationship stress.

*...especially in young girls who have broken up with their boyfriend, how do I cope with all this emotions, pay back time, revenge, which gets into some really awful situation - not able to cope... that sort of stuff... Community health worker, 2003*

### **Family Needs**

In 2002, a number of informants mentioned the need for school to provide additional support to students as one of the reasons why the school needed so many welfare programs and for the adoption of MindMatters. This need for support was seen as deriving mainly from the nature of families in the area, being either single parent or low-income working families or both.

*They (students) like to have to security I guess...I think it is to do with, a lot of them are coming from homes where there has been separations, gone through a couple of different families quite a few of them. Staff, 2003*

*They don't have the two-income working parents. Staff, 2002*

*The kids come and go - there's kids leaving from the fringe areas of the cities and coming up to live with their grandparents because their family units have broken down - and they come up to either aunty or uncles and spend some time... Staff, 2003*

*Id say the same sort of thing...moving population and very unstable sort of family lives - I'm not having a go at single parent families - but there is a high rate of that too and they tend to have associated mental health issues. Staff, 2003*

Staff and community members also commented on the pressure on students caused by relatively high level of drug usage among parents.

*... The problem (we're) dealing with the most is the drugs, alcohol, parents drinking...huge parental marijuana intake, and also allowing the young person to. Community health worker, 2003*

### **3.3 Adequacy of student support approaches**

Windermere High provides a large and varied amount of welfare and support structures. However, staff and students reported that the student need and demand far outweighs the current facilities being provided and hence, they thought MindMatters was needed to complement what the school was already doing.

*I was thinking about it and I just feel as far as integration, that we need to be teaching skills that they can utilise within the environment they are having problems in and I think sometimes, while it is still very beneficial to withdraw these kids out of the school, we need to look at doing something, being very active ourselves in helping those students develop skills within the school environment rather than always taking them out. Staff, 2003*

The school provides a school counsellor however students indicated that this facility was not as effective as students fear the breach of confidentiality.

*I've spoke to the lady, she's very nice. The only things that bugs people that go there, is they don't want to go there - like -some of the stuff they have to tell their parents. When I went and saw the counsellor she told us she wasn't going to tell anybody, but she went and told my parents all about my problems - she rang my parents without us knowing - told them it was time for somebody else to know about them. I thought it was going to be confidential sort of thing - I don't trust anyone. Student, 2002*

The health facilities in the local community are also inadequate to sufficiently meet the demand. Community members reported the limited amount of mental health resources, clinics, and accessibility to general medical practices.

*A lot of the local GPs have closed their books. So anyone moving into the area, like this forty turnover, have a lot of trouble accessing a family GP. I have spoken to GPs only a couple of times, speak to paediatricians, more often, or someone like that, but they are all based in (nearest city). It's not wonderful. They are too busy. It's a huge growth area. Community health worker, 2004*

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

MindMatters complements both Windermere High's direction and school ethos. The large focus already placed on welfare and mental health enables MindMatters to fit easily into the school.

*Well, I think the school was looking for help in that way to come into MindMatters. I mean, once we saw what MindMatters was offering, we wanted to be one of the first ones in there, so I think the school had a - like we were into it... Staff, 2004*

*This school is very strong on welfare. Like we have got so many programs going, and we've got an executive staff who is very welfare focused. Staff, 2004*

### **3.5 Perceived need to emphasise student well being**

MindMatters was adopted by the school to foster a stronger focus on student wellbeing. Because of the social disadvantage in the area, staff wanted to create an environment that would not only provide educational opportunities, but would also emphasise the personal development of students. Against a background of family problems and a lack of health and community services, the school can become an important site for providing students with support, discipline and structure.

*I think it is important because we've got a very wide range of students... We have (a) certain percentage of students who have family problems and things that indicate to us by our statistics from absenteeism and from truancy and from suspension that we've got kids who definitely need help and therefore I think anything that we can do that is going to help that situation, then that's going to be good. And I think also that when we went to the training and I think*

*one in five people have at some stage in their life suffered from some sort of mental illness and when you are looking at a population of - I mean our school is around 1,000 kids and 100 something teachers, then that's a lot of people, and so I think it's really relevant for us to be involved. Staff, 2002*

Welfare staff indicated that MindMatters would help them to involve more people in promoting student wellbeing, by building stronger links between faculties, with the community, and with local agencies.

*The idea that really hit me was the more people that you get involved in welfare issues the better it is for the whole school. Because it tends to like, it's the same at every school the teachers think there's a welfare team, they're doing that, that's their responsibility I'm here to teach the subject. The community welfare doesn't cut off and on like that - so the more you get everyone involved the better. Staff, 2002*

*I like the idea that other faculties can sort of work on various aspects, but again that depends too, on the faculties as to whether they take - pick up and run as well. Sometimes, English for example, if they are doing something that they come across streamed, I suppose, you can sort of (use) these other strategies ... as alternatives and just different ways of dealing with it. Staff, 2002*

### **3.6 Impact of student well being on academic outcomes**

Staff indicated that the school is not focused on advanced educational outcomes, but has a more welfare approach to education.

*Generally they under-achieve - there's a body of kids who basically don't exhibit problems and who achieve as they should if you measure it on the basic skills test certificate - they do okay. But there's a fairly substantial group who under-achieve and then there is these children who have very, quite severe behaviour problems who haven't been achieving since probably Year. 2 and therefore their literacy and numeracy skills are very, very poor, so put them in a high school setting and bedlam. Cause they haven't got the basics and they - a lot of the children worry that they are dumb, they really are concerned about that so when they can't read, or they can't add up or whatever, they think they are dumb, and they go to great lengths in their behaviour to disguise it and they are the smart person in the crowd and the aggressor and all that sort of behaviour. Staff, 2003*

### **3.7 Organisational concerns**

#### **Staff mental health**

At the initial visit, several staff mentioned that the working environment at Windermere was very stressful for staff. Poor student behaviour, lack of motivation for education and the countervailing negative influences working against educational outcomes were frequently identified as causes of stress.

*So you can only do the best you can. It's hard work. You could cry sometimes, you try and be the nicest, best you can to them, you can easily get depressed and stressed in schools cause you can realise that you feel like you are failing, you stay positive but you do feel like you are fighting a losing battle against parents, against kids, against society, TV, against everything. Staff, 2002*

### **Staff morale**

Many staff members of Windermere High school reported the morale of staff was generally low. It was indicated that poor student behaviour, high staff turnover, limited interaction and feelings of helplessness attributed to this demeanour.

*People just don't get together, everyone stays in there own little faculties and I think it has an effect on the overall staff morale at the school. Staff, 2002*

*It's a young staff...If a major issue happens in terms of violence it has an immediate effect on morale. Staff, 2002*

### **3.8 Characteristics of MindMatters itself**

Staff reported that MindMatters was eminently suited to Windermere High as it complemented the programs already running. Staff indicated that the resources were effectively presented and easy to use.

*It's a very easy program you can just take it and run with it, everything you need is in there and you don't have to do much lesson preparation which means other teachers are going to implement it, teachers are so overwhelmed at the moment with the workload, that to give them something that has to do extra is a problem. But when you give them this kit, they can just take it and run with it and don't have to do anything about it because it's all there - just photocopy it and teachers just love that - easy to work with. Staff, 2002*

*I thought it was really good the way things were set out, I really like it - it just told teachers how to teach that particular thing, and I found that fact that it was prescriptive but not too prescriptive...there was freedom for teachers to choose but it gave teachers a goal to work down towards. Staff, 2003*

### **3.9 Early expectations of impact of MindMatters**

Given that Windermere had already established a wide range of welfare support programs, many staff expressed hopes that MindMatters would be an additional aid in helping to reduce the level of and impact of mental health problems throughout the school, for example through poor behaviour.

*I would like to see it has some effect on the kid's behaviour where there's not this BLAH! And then think of the consequences later but be able to think things through before they have a verbal or whatever it has to be and being able to accept each other for what they are and who they are. Staff, 2002*

*I think things from MindMatters work. Lot of kids need stability... Things like longer periods - and to me that's where MindMatters could be a help for a start... Because there is a lot active, hands on, interaction-type stuff in those programs in that kit. So I see that as a good opportunity to push MindMatters as a support to teaching. Staff, 2002*

Staff indicated that MindMatters would not only be beneficial to students, but also to staff, and aid in the changing of the role of the teacher.

*Not only will MindMatters benefit the students, but it's going to benefit the teachers as well because I feel that other teachers, you have it in your head why you go through Uni that you are just a teacher, a facilitator of learning of whatever subject you are teaching but it's not too often you sit there and think, hang on welfare is such an important part of teaching. So for a lot of teachers teaching MindMatters or having the opportunity to take some of the lesson out, and take it to whatever (period) they are in, is going to benefit them as well. Staff, 2002*

Staff reported that MindMatters will be used to help establish an understanding of mental health and illness throughout the school and to combat the negative stigma associated with it.

*When you say 'mental health' I think 'paranoid schizophrenic, suicide' and it's not really that is it? It's more just feeling good about yourself and being able to do the job properly... There is a real stigma attached to it, isn't there? Especially in teaching there are so many mental health issues in teaching, like as a profession that people would I think expect you - that's why we're trying not to get people too worried. What are the ideas of it though - surely it's to try and get rid of, break down that stigma - they'd be dancing around it too much - getting rid of a bit of that stigma I would see that as being a major goal. Staff, 2002*

### **3.10 Early expectations of problems**

Staff indicated that there were no significant expectations of problems implementing MindMatters, however one staff member expressed the concern for the continuity of the program.

*That's the only thing I worry about that I think it needs to be an on-going thing not something that you come in and you do this concentrated burst of one session for the next four weeks or what have you, once a week- if it's going to come in and going that way then it has to be followed up in a faculty situation. So you've, it's more of a concentrated thing that you think you know it's something that everybody is doing. I mean, there's times we try and work through various issues when you know there is something you need to be doing, particularly when there's various aspects. Staff, 2002*

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

### **4.1 How MindMatters was identified**

Staff at Windermere High saw the MindMatters kit when it was first released and believed that the program was well suited to the needs of the student population.

### **4.2 Process of deciding to use MindMatters**

Upon receiving the kit, the school administration directly linked MindMatters to the welfare group that was teaching Year 7. The state committee involved in planning the dissemination of MindMatters in this state invited applications from schools interested in becoming a 'focus school'. Under this program, schools submitted a plan for their use of MindMatters over a 12-month period. Windermere High was accepted as a focus school in 2001, receiving a \$4,000 grant towards implementing their proposed plan.

### **4.3 Attendance at professional development**

Windermere High places a strong emphasis on professional development and has sent a significant number of staff to MindMatters training, using the money received as a focus school to support the absence of teachers. It was hoped that by training more staff members, the school would be able to increase its focus on mental health and wellbeing.

*It's developing awareness... I think if everyone went out and did the training like those two days, I went along to, and the people then are more involved in it. Staff, 2002*

*The money went into basically training the staff and originally I was trying to sort of think, if I could have got one person trained in each faculty - because getting people interested in those... We still have those areas of maths and science that haven't been trained in that area. But we have got other areas of languages, drama, English and history. So I was trying to spread it out that way with actual training ... Staff, 2003*

*The priority was training the teachers and trying to get back to them a sort of broad group of teachers across the school. Staff, 2003*

### **4.4 How school was informed or involved**

Two teachers attended the initial MindMatters training, and then these staff presented the kit to all members of staff on a staff development day.

*We photocopied certain games, like some of the lessons, activities and so on. And we left the MindMatters kit in the library so if anybody wanted to come in for (the) teacher's resources, they could. Otherwise, if it was with me, because I was using it so much, they could contact me. And I had quite a few people ring me and say I'm looking at what you handed out at the staff meeting. It's fed through the school. Staff, 2003*

Later, other staff were assisted in attending the two-day MindMatters professional development workshop.

#### **4.5 Formation of a core group or other planning group**

The school's welfare team was given responsibility for the planning and implementation of the MindMatters program in this school.

#### **4.6 Early plans for uptake**

As the welfare team took initial responsibility for the program, it planned to implement it in designated welfare periods facilitated by the year advisors in Year 7 and 8. However, almost immediately, members of the team decided to involve other staff, particularly those within the health and physical education faculty.

*We had perceived it to be a welfare thing, so it was the welfare team that were looking after it, and then obviously it was relevant to the HPE people also - they are becoming involved. Staff, 2002*

*I suppose to an extent that's what I thought maybe a little confusing was that ... I was under the impression that it was specifically welfare classes we were doing it for and later on, through the training and everything, I realised it was actually for the whole school. The way we are going to approach that is leaving the kit in the library so that anybody from anywhere can go and use it. So now it's just a matter of letting everybody know that it's there and it exists - well, how easy it is to use. Staff, 2002*

*What you could do - in the future if you put it in the future kind of thing by taking the faculty you could actually get them to incorporate it in their programs, and once it's in their programs they wouldn't look at it as welfare it would be just another teaching aid. Staff, 2002*

#### **4.7 Views of professional development**

Staff indicated positive views of the two-day MindMatters professional development.

*It was good, it was fun...we got up and did some really fun activities. Staff, 2002*

*The training itself was excellent. Staff, 2003*

*I thought it was wonderful - the way it was presented was excellent. I think the diversity of what they are catering for was great, there's lots of areas that they're covering that will vary depending on the environment that you are in or the community so yes, I was quite impressed with it. Staff, 2003*

#### **4.8 Review processes**

As a focus school, Windermere High was required to report on progress made in undertaking its proposals. This was done in early 2002. No formal process has been used for reviewing the school's use of MindMatters.



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

This school has made a number of changes that relate to student wellbeing throughout the evaluation period. Because the student welfare committee pre-dated the adoption of MindMatters, and because there are several other programs running in parallel to MindMatters, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the MindMatters program has contributed to these changes. However, informants agree that MindMatters has supported and strengthened the school's overall direction and therefore it is likely that the adoption of this initiative has contributed at least indirectly to several of these changes.

### 5.1 Changes in pastoral groups

The school introduced an extended pastoral care period (known in this school as the 'welfare period'), once per cycle, for Year 7 in 2002 so that the year advisor would have the capacity to provide a greater level of pastoral care.

*..they've got to get to know all the kids and that's why that welfare period that we brought in, we were focusing on MindMatters, was really positive because that meant the new year advisor gets to meet every student personally and teach those people, and actually focus on personal issues. It's one period per cycle. Staff, 2003*

It was originally intended that the same would happen for Year 8 from 2003 onwards but this was not possible due to a reduction in teachers in the school and the demands of the timetable.

*We tried it again in Year. 8 and that's one of the things we were really focusing on when we went into MindMatters but because of the staffing really, we couldn't do it and that was a bit of a... Staff, 2003*

### 5.2 Changes in policies

Management of difficult classroom behaviour has always been an issue in this school. Staff indicated that the school had tried really hard to address this by creating more stability in the classroom for students. Seeing that the students have a great need for security and stability in their lives, the staff aimed to achieve this through the consistent enforcement of school policies and procedures.

*A bit of consistency. We try to be consistent in 'if you do this - this is what happens', cause if you keep changing all the responses, they get very confused and then they have different values at home to what we have at school, so we've tried really hard to make the school's discipline responses consistent. And I think that is starting to work. Staff, 2003*

During the third visit, however, staff reported changes in the behaviour management system and the use of the cards. Some staff indicated that the card system was being over-used and also because the system seemed to be a little inflexible making it difficult for students who have been suspended to make fresh start.

*It's the card system. ... We had something like 600 referrals in Term 1 ... When you go back and check them, some of them are for tiny little things that a*

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

*teacher - I mean all of them have been dealt with, but really it's putting the focus on tiny little things that are not as important as the bigger issues. So we have got to re-focus it back onto the bigger issues. ... We probably will continue the card system but we do too much of it. ... When a kid is suspended, when they come back they go on to a red card and if they do all the right things they go on to a green card. ... What we are doing now, for a trial period this term, is: when they are suspended, they come back - they have a monitoring card for five days, but that is it - no more cards. ... hopefully they have learnt from what happened, that they shouldn't be doing that again. But we are just spending too much time trying to make them perfect... So it's a new start. Staff, 2004*

### 5.3 Changes in structures and processes

As a direct result of the school's involvement in MindMatters, the welfare team devised a new approach for students who were identified as more vulnerable, known as 'withdrawal groups'. The idea of these groups was to provide a structured way of providing more support and opportunities to build skills to enable these children to cope better with stressful situations and to learn to better manage feelings (often associated with bullying, abuse etc).

*We actually did that over a year - (teachers name) had the idea - she had the Year 7 this year - she had been talking to me and we ... were trying to focus on some kids who needed help and through counselling referral or we just may advertise for kids who may want to come who have things discussed in welfare and whether they wanted to focus on any sort of area. We had, like, kids who were being victimised and ... that was a regular sort of occurrence to them because of the way they operate to other kids, or situations that they were put in, they had become sort of regular victims those kids. So we have that as an ongoing program. ... You try to build up their esteem so they can get back in and they're not being victimised at lunch or they are more in control of what is happening. Those sort of kids would be kids that I can see (name) withdrawing and doing sections (of MindMatters) with instead of sport - because we have been trying to get that sort of thing up and going instead of sport.*

### 5.4 Changes in school environment

At the first visit, the school environs appeared (externally) stark and poorly maintained. Students and staff complained about the further negative impact of the construction of a security fence due to the previous history of vandalism at the school.

At both future visits, the external appearance of the school improved quite dramatically due to the school being successful in gaining significant capital works funding which allowed for the replacement of temporary buildings with new classrooms and also a program of beautifying the grounds.

*Well we are having a \$3.3 million capital upgrade which we have been fighting, pushing, all those things, for a number of years and it's finally happening and I'm absolutely convinced that the better the school looks and the better the facilities are, the better it is for kids to come here and feel positive about the school. If it's worn out and run down and the kids are already having issues at home, they come in here, they are going to feel a bit down themselves, but if*

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

*you are sprucing up the place and you spruce up the way the kids look, it's more than superficial, it's creating a positive environment and saying, look, you can live around here, and you can still have things that are really good and up to date, and I always say to the kids, it's just a personal value but I think it's an important one, looking good and being able to cope positively. They go together. So the better you look, the better you will be able to handle things. And that's how we pick up that the kids are not doing so well and they do need some help cause they start coming in and they look really down and out, and you look every day and they are out of uniform, and it's all those visual signs that something is going wrong. So it's all part of let's pick the place up and let's look really good. Staff, 2004*

*Basically, sort of half way through last year we had stage one and now we are into stage two, and by this time next year it should be finished. And a lot of it is superficial. There is a new block of classrooms, we'll lose a few portables, but major groundwork because when I arrived, the thing that struck me was just how bad the grounds were. There was not a blade of grass, overcrowding of kids, right, left and centre, and I think that having a better environment, physical environment for the kids is a major part of it. Staff, 2004*

## **5.5 Changes in timetable**

During the evaluation period there was a significant change in the timetable. The timetable was altered to incorporate four periods of 75 minutes, which are separated by two recess breaks and a lunch break. This enabled the staff to have greater control over students whose behaviour was problematic by reducing movement around the school between classes. It also allowed more time in class to get students on task and motivated within a lesson.

*We also changed to 75 minute periods and that's forced the substantial change because you can't go into a lesson 75 minutes without being well prepared...they actually have time to get their kids focused on one subject area at a time and staff support about 75 ... that reflects what I was saying about cultural change, the change how to approach kids that have a lot of behavioural or learning problems. Staff, 2003*

## **5.6 Changes in support services**

The school made a number of broader changes to its support services during the period of the study. While these cannot be directly attributed to the implementation of MindMatters, it is possible that participation in this program contributed to raising awareness of student support needs.

During the second visit members of the welfare team reported that they were establishing a 'gold room' and a 'safe room' for students to use.

*We have investigated the possibility of having a gold room established in our school to allow a safe haven for students who are experiencing bullying...sort of let's get away from it, let's cool down - how are we handling this, what strategies can we use...And that gold room will also be used for various other*

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

*projects throughout the school, such as withdrawal program that I'd like to use MindMatters with. Staff, 2003*

*I've got the gold room up and running...I've been running literacy groups...and student mentor type of groups in there. We have used it for things we are doing on discipline, case management of kids so it's a real handy space for that. Staff telephone interview, 2003*

The school has also enhanced its support services, offering assistance to the families of students, and to the wider community.

*We are working with (local community group) and we have a parent group, 'Riding the Wave', which is all to do with handling the stress of having teenage kids. It's a Uniting Church type thing. But they do a lot of community support things. They have counselling services and all sorts of things. We run a group once a term. It's a support group... Staff, 2003*

## 5.7 Changes in curriculum

### Changes in pastoral curriculum

MindMatters was directly programmed into the Year 7 pastoral care (welfare) periods, which occur once a fortnight and are facilitated by the year advisors.

*It started in 2001...one period a fortnight focusing on welfare issues. And MindMatters came in. We took that as a support to that welfare period and then it became a major focus of that welfare period. Staff, 2003*

*The people, the year advisors that are using this in their welfare period, thought so highly of it that they have approached us for two years running now about trying to get a similar period to run it through, to continue it on to run it through into Year 8. The problem has always been that you have to sacrifice something else out of the curriculum to fit it in, but that's how highly thought of it is in the school, that they would like to run it through. Staff, 2004*

Staff and students indicated that the teachers predominately focused on bullying and resilience activities during the welfare period.

*We are mostly dealing with, at the moment, friendships and bullying so they are the two main areas of MindMatters that I've used. Staff, 2003*

*Basically I concentrated on 'enhancing resilience' and also 'bullying and harassment' and those type of areas. We just worked through the booklets. We spoke about the areas that we were learning everything, and the students really seem to benefit from the course we were delivering. Staff, 2003*

### Changes in health curriculum

During the second year of the evaluation period MindMatters was extensively mapped throughout the personal development and health curriculum areas, for students in all years.

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

*It will all be new this year so we used some of it last year as each teacher sort of needed it to supplement what we already were doing. But we've done new programming this year. It's worked into that 'Understanding Myself' in the bullying part of it. And we've got some of the self-esteem in that as well (Year 7). Year 8 some self-esteem sort of things and some of the resilience type activities. Year 9 we do a whole unit on self-esteem and we have worked some of it into that and again some of the resilience stuff in there. Year 10 we have let some of the things into the mental health, like understanding mental health and understanding types of mental illness and that kind of stuff. And then in the Year 11 and 12 it's really just specific to the 2 Unit PE course and where it fits. Over the course of four years they (will) have pretty much done most of the MindMatters activity stuff. It works in pretty well. Staff, 2003*

### **Changes in other curriculum areas**

MindMatters has been also used for the Crossroads program in Years 11 and 12.

*The biggest area that I have been involved with is we do a Year 11 and 12 course... We use it for our 25 hours Year 11 and 12 course called Crossroads and we do a MindMatters seminar with them during that, and we call it Mental Health or something or other. And we just have groups of 10 or 12 kids and we just talk to them about MindMatters, mainly just discussing with them the prevalence of mental illness, and that sort of stuff... talking about it and just making them aware of it. Staff, 2004*

Staff noted that due to the incorporation of MindMatters into the health curriculum, non-health and physical education staff (who were teaching these periods) were also being familiarised with the program.

*It's a good thing in a way, because it spreads the knowledge a bit...we have 14-16 periods taught by non-PE people and all of those have to be theory based because they don't have the expertise, not allowed to do the practical. So there could be a math teacher teaching it, there could be an English teacher teaching it. Staff, 2003*

Staff also indicated that MindMatters has had an impact on the majority of faculties in the school, largely due to the extensive amount of MindMatters training and professional development that had been undertaken.

*Outside the welfare period, I know MindMatters is taught by the PE staff...but a lot of the people who have been trained obviously come from different faculties...dance, drama...history. Staff, 2004*

Staff also reported the use of MindMatters throughout the special education units.

*The IO (severe intellectual disability) and the IM (moderate intellectual disability) classes...and we spoke about discrimination and bullying and things like that as well on their sort of level that's appropriate for them. The IM's sort of responded well to that. That's because bullying is a real issue with the IM class, because we've got boys right from Year 7 to Year 12 - so it's like a pecking*

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

*order. The Year 7s come in and they have to watch out because the Year 11 and 12s will put them in their place and that's ... it's quite a lot of issues in the IM class. Because even though it's mildly intellectual delay, there's significant behaviour disorders as well. So I applied it throughout various places in the school. It's benefited a lot of people, especially in the ED/CD class. Staff, 2003*

One staff member from this unit described how she had integrated MindMatters into her everyday interactions with her students and her adoption of creative approaches to establishing effective communication about sensitive subjects.

*While we were bush walking, we spoke, and I sort of opened up the pathways for communication because I felt it's no use just me probing information out of them, how are you feeling about this? So I spoke about things in my life that I had to deal with my loss and grief - so we tried to open up a little bit, so we could speak easily about it and feel comfortable and develop a good rapport where we can trust each other to talk. And we did that for over a term. And I really think they responded much better to going out bush walking and doing it that way, rather than just spending 75 mins really intensive - right these are the questions I'm asking you - loss and grief - what is it? So we spent the whole day doing that - we were doing that probably once a week. That was really good. And I really enjoyed it. Staff, 2003*

## **5.8 Changes in partnerships or relationships**

Windermere High has extensive relationships with a range of government and non-government education support and welfare support services. Throughout the evaluation period the school continued to enhance its links to surrounding community facilities. Staff indicated that MindMatters directly facilitated this process.

Staff also reported that the school made a greater effort to engage members of the wider community through a variety of specific activities including an annual youth festival, parent help programs and a range of information nights.

*The festival... was linked closely with the community they had all the different people representing health workers, local clubs, police, they all had little sites out here where they were informing people what they do and where they are available. So it was a good way of bringing all those sort of support groups really to closer accessibility to parents and kids. Staff, 2003*

*They run a group once a term. And it is a support group for... 10 parents... and they'll do a five-week course. Community member, 2003*

*We get in guest speakers on HIV/AIDS and guest speakers on all sorts of homosexuality and all that sort of stuff, so they are going from seminar to seminar doing drugs, safe sex, AIDS, and the mental health one and we've got the MindMatters kit down there and we just pick out something that we think is going to be useful. Staff, 2004*

## 5.9 Changes in other supports for student mental health

In 2003, a new position of a school mental health worker was established to work at Windermere High (two days a week) and other nearby high schools. The role of this position is to identify the possibility of mental health problems and to establish effective referrals for support of the young person and their families.

*So having the (area) mental health worker in the school is already, even though it's been very recent, it is proving to be very, very good for our families. To know that there's another way of accessing those resources if they want them. And the kids find that fairly useful too. I haven't yet had a knock back from a kid when we've said: 'look, we now have a mental health worker in the school'. ... none of them have rejected that help. Whereas, when I came into this school four years ago, I think the response that I might have got is, 'What do you think I'm mad? I'm not doing that'. So there's more understanding and more acceptance of the kids' (needs). Staff, 2004*

## 5.10 Efforts to include parents

While the school's general aim is to involve parents as much as possible, the evaluation was not able to identify any specific initiatives to increase parent involvement in the school's MindMatters initiatives, probably due to the fact that essentially the school's adoption of MindMatters has concentrated on classroom strategies.

## 5.11 Awareness of reactions to changes

### Students' awareness or reactions

All of the students interviewed said that the school has undergone many positive changes to both the physical environment and climate.

*I think it has gotten a lot better. Student, 2003*

*The Year 7's who are coming here now feel more safe than in previous years. Student, 2003*

*The students have changed. There's not as many fights anymore. Student, 2004*



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

The main features of the school's use of the MindMatters curriculum resources were firmly in place at the time of the fourth visit in 2005. It was the view of one member of the school executive, who himself had not attended MindMatters training or used the curriculum resources, MindMatters had become an entrenched program of the school, due to the fact that enough teachers valued the resources and continued over three years to use them in their teaching.

*That's what I'm saying about the MindMatters; it had to have those intrinsic merits so that it will stay, that it won't just... You can have somebody come in and say let's do MindMatters and whip them through or whatever; and if that's the impetus, if that's the sole impetus, once that person goes, then it falls over. In our case we're finding that it's maintained itself. Executive, 2005*

Another member of the school executive confirmed this view that MindMatters was continuing to hold value for the school, not only in the utilisation of curriculum resources but also in that it provided a focus of continuing staff and student awareness raising. Her comments reflect the comprehensive use of MindMatters from the earlier visit was ongoing.

*I see MindMatters as being really important in the school as part of that whole continuum of developing staff awareness and student awareness, particular about mental health issues, but also all the other facets of the MindMatters kit, particularly that first kit, you know, with all the bullying stuff and right through to the assisting kids in Year 12. We just found the whole range of it really useful. Initially we used it for staff development training and we still do, we use it in the Year 7 year advisor period and so it's embedded absolutely into our curriculum and that's actually taking the Year 7 stuff and, I think, quite a bit out of the Year 8 program, some of the units that are there. And, of course, there are other areas of it that are embedded in the PDHPE curriculum and that's been a very effective way of utilising the material and the whole concept of it, the understanding of it. Executive, 2005*

### Use of MindMatters by the Year 7 advisor

Continuance of MindMatters in Year 7 home room classes was confirmed in interviews with the Year 7 advisor, the welfare coordinator and the students. The debate about whether the year advisor's period could be extended into the second year of high school was still ongoing with certain teachers convinced of the value of doing this. This was seen as a piece of evidence for the value of the MindMatters program.

*If nothing else, the fact that people express a desire to persist with the program would be heartening. I mean that would have to be anecdotal but it would have to be some evidence in support of the fact. In fact there was a push and I think, in our previous conversation, when we spoke about that, about having a Year 8 period to specifically run MindMatters through into that time. Executive, 2005*

### Use of MindMatters by the health teachers

Ongoing use of MindMatters in 2005 by health teachers in the personal development health and physical education periods was confirmed although the particular focus it was given at

the commencement of the evaluation period seems to have diminished. In particular, teachers have adopted the use of the 'games' that are designed to build cooperation and teamwork.

*(We use it but) to a lesser extent than we were. A couple of years ago, obviously, it was still fresh with everyone, and we were implementing it into a program and all that sort of stuff. We're just given new focus areas every month or so it seems so everything seems to get shoved to the back but we still use it especially with Year 7 and 8s. We still use a lot of the games out of 'Enhancing Resilience', that's a good book for games that one. Staff, 2005*

This teacher and another both confirmed the ongoing use of the Understanding Mental Illness unit in the Year 11 Crossroads program.

*I'd say it will stay part of the Crossroads course. Just because, I think our head teacher, she organises the Crossroads course, I think she thinks it's fairly important and we also need stuff to fill up the two days worth of time, so I'd say it's part of that. It would be harder to take it out than anything else.*

Despite this ongoing use in the health curriculum, it was acknowledged the fact that the health teachers are continually being asked to address a variety of health issues suggests a certain level of vulnerability to its longer term use. This highlights the need for a continuing emphasis on the program including training.

*A couple of years ago, when we just had the MindMatters in-service course and everything in it was fresh and had been spoken about at staff meetings and all that. We were going through the books and when we were doing our programming for the year or the units of work and we were actively trying to insert lessons out of it into our various programs. That's not happening anymore because we do road safety stuff and (other topics).*

*Yeah. It's like everything in our staffroom. We've got shelves full of thousands of resources that we've got over the years and hardly any of it is used as it was intended or as a whole. But we just pick and choose bit from here and there to suit our needs. Staff, 2005*

#### **Use of MindMatters by the counsellor**

Interestingly, one of the counsellors has adopted elements of the MindMatters resources in her work with groups of students.

*I have used components of MindMatters in my counselling with kids and kids have come to me and talked about... there were some girls here whose father had had a breakdown and they were giving... he was having shock therapy and so I got all the stuff out of MindMatters and talked to them about what was actually happening with their father and I got the literature out of that. I've used the literature out of MindMatters in my ACE groups, when talking about depression and mental illness and how it affects you, so I have taken bits out of it. Counsellor, 2005*

### **Connections with mental health services**

At the end of the third visit, the school was about to participate in a program with the local Area Health Service (AHS) whereby a mental health worker was employed to work across a number of schools including Windermere High. This program was coming to an end at about the time of the fourth and final visit. The main focus of the worker in this school was to work on raising the awareness of staff about mental health issues and the services available in the local area.

*Yes, we've still got the mental health focus because of community need and working with (local) area health we've been able to do quite a lot of professional learning for the staff to increase their awareness of teaching strategies when they're trying to teach kids mental health issues, or kids coming from families where there are mental health issues, so that's been a good complement. That program finished now and I expect that the benefits of professional learning and the community awareness, that the increase will stay for about two years. Executive, 2005*

Feedback from the mental health worker involved is that MindMatters is better integrated into the whole school at Windermere than it is in other nearby schools.

A focus on MindMatters was seen as one way in which the school could capitalise on the outcomes of the additional awareness created by the mental health worker.

*But what we'll be planning on doing for the rest of this year and next year, is probably upping the ante on MindMatters to fill the gap because we've really discovered that the need is huge and the more that we can do to raise awareness about mental health issues and support kids and support teachers, we just find it really essential. Executive, 2005*

### **Further training of staff**

The school further increased its focus on staff training by providing staff, with support from one of the school counsellors, with opportunities to learn how to modify their teaching to better respond to the needs of the students.

*(Name) has been working quite closely with staff on classroom management; he's been doing an afternoon a week, working with staff on classroom management in a group. And he's now expanded that program into cooperative teaching practices where they've got...he's arranged for another teacher to come in and observe a teacher in action and to learn and that sort of stuff. It's been a really positive thing. Counsellor, 2005*

Improvements to the physical environment were completed by the time of the fourth visit, including the provision for the first time of a facility for the staff whereby they can meet and have breaks as a whole, rather than having separate faculty staff rooms.

The counsellors continued to use the ACE program (mainly with identified Year 9 girls) and were planning on introducing a targeted drug and alcohol program as well.

### **Access to general practitioners**

The issue of the school's relationship with general practitioners was raised for the first time at the fourth visit. It appears that the school has little contact with general practitioners and that the school's use of MindMatters has not had any impact on this practice. The welfare advisor indicated that she encouraged parents to involve their GP when discussing the possible causes of behavioural problems.

*We often provide information to parents and say look there's probably a medical factor in this child's behaviour, we'd advise you to go to a GP, show them the record of behaviour, talk to them about what they're doing at home because what they're doing at home is no different to what they're doing at school; in many cases it's worse, and ask for advice or referral but I don't get much feedback. I can't think of any feedback I've had from parents that indicate that that's actually happened.*

This lack of involvement was confirmed by the counsellor:

*I have rung them but it's very difficult to get through to them because you're very mindful of how busy they are and I found them - one of them I found to be quite rude, actually a couple I found to be quite rude, like what did I know sort of thing... I felt that sort of feeling. We do work with paediatricians and they're much better to work with than the GPs and they're happy to write to us and we send reports to them and that's who we tend to deal with mostly in the medical profession; not the GP. It's straight through to the paediatrician or the psychiatrist. And I have seen a lot more of Area Health (community mental health) people here this year.*

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

### 7.1 Issues that helped

#### Positive professional development

Staff reported that after attending the MindMatters professional development, they were enthusiastic and eager to incorporate the program into their curriculum. The fact that other staff and community workers noticed this positivism indicates the level of motivation that was created by the MindMatters professional development training.

*I think it was definitely good for us, it was very motivating...and we all came back and said it's really good. Staff, 2002*

*They come back quite enthusiastic. Staff, 2002*

*The teachers that had been trained...you could really tell they were really enthusiastic about the program and really fired up. Community health worker, 2003*

#### Positive staff attitudes or reactions

Windermere High's strong focus on student welfare created an environment that made staff receptive to the adoption of MindMatters and its philosophies. Staff valued the contribution that MindMatters could make to the school environment and felt that it would enhance their current approaches to student wellbeing.

*They are pretty receptive here... and there's not a lot of complaints from staff about that, there's evidence of we'll give this a go. If it works and makes this place better, if we can teach in a more stable learning environment, it's worth the extra work. Staff, 2003*

*It's really shown that the teachers here understand our clientele and their needs. The fact that they are not only accepting, but they value it. Staff, 2004*

Community members also supported the pastoral care focus of the school and staff.

*They are lovely and that's what needs to be and (the principal and executive staff) have got an open door policy...it's informal...it's respectful. Parent, 2004*

#### Helpful leadership

Staff identified the welfare team as the key people who have been influential and supportive in the implementation of MindMatters. The welfare team were reported to be very proactive and enthusiastic about the implementation of MindMatters throughout the school.

*The welfare group is really driven and pushed towards MindMatters. Staff, 2003*

The staff and community view the executive body of Windermere High to be supportive in building an environment conducive to positive mental health, and promoting staff development and training in relation to MindMatters.

*We'll see a budget, we'll find some time...to help staff through implementing MindMatters... We are aware of the needs... and we make sure we find time and money for things we think are going to be of value. Staff, 2002*

### **Availability of resources**

#### **School size**

Staff indicated at all visits that the school was downsizing. The reduction of numbers has decreased teacher turnover, enabled the implementation of more welfare-based programs and aided the facilitation of better lesson delivery and classroom management.

*Just the fact that we are tending to downsize the school, still. We are down to 1,000 this year. When I came in, it was about 1,200. Specifically because this school was too big. At 1,450 it was much too big to be workable. And having a smaller youth population, smaller staff, they don't need as many teachers to come in each year. So it's much better to have that smaller teacher turnover. It's definitely a positive and if we could maintain that, that will make things easier and we should be getting positive results quicker when you've got that smaller staff turnover. Staff, 2004*

*When the school's bigger the students were much closer together (physically), therefore, you had lots more friction because there'd be someone bored, or do whatever, and kids would impart on someone else's territory, so the school becomes small. It's made a huge difference to the playground because the kids have more space... it's enabled them to be a bit more relaxed...they are not fighting for their territory. Staff, 2004*

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

Staff immediately recognised the potential contribution that MindMatters could make to their existing support programs and implemented MindMatters directly into the welfare and PDHPE curriculum areas. Staff who had been involved with the MindMatters training and teaching the materials commented positively on the program.

*I found it very beneficial ... I think you can use it for any age bracket...you could adapt it. Staff, 2003*

*We only use MindMatters because it has everything in it that we need to address. It was complementing what we were already teaching. Staff, 2003*

*It's a great package. It's a fantastic package! Staff, 2003*

*It's simple to use...because it is so well laid out, it's not difficult to incorporate. Staff, 2004*

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

*Anybody that works in a high school are constantly aware of the needs and finding solutions that are genuinely beneficial to kids can be very difficult. They can be very expensive. I like the fact that it (MindMatters) was so well resourced, it had come out of research. There was reading that came with it so you could get the whole picture. When we put the people through training, there was that whole structure. It gave the teachers the confidence when they are dealing with often tricky stuff, that sort of resourcing and structure is very difficult to find. Staff, 2004*

Staff indicated that they thought MindMatters was particularly well-suited to Windermere, encouraging a high level of student participation and understanding. Staff reported that the content of the MindMatters resources was directly applicable to the needs of their students and provided an easy and effective way for staff to tackle these issues.

*I think MindMatters has been useful, and got off the ground because MindMatters deals with, and I think there are a few students that possibly have, mental illness. There's also a lot of kids who use drugs. We are not necessarily aware of them. Staff, 2003*

*You recognise students are stressed or students coming through with depression or have anger management problems...and they can't cope with things and need coping skills... some exist in MindMatters. Staff, 2003*

*It's easy to understand and it's interesting. It gives variety to the kids... They want to interact and talk about experiences, and have discussions. They like learning in a variety of ways, and that's why MindMatters is so effective, because it provides for that. Staff, 2004*

Staff felt MindMatters was also applicable to the special education units at Windermere High.

*I like using the resilience part of it, enhancing resilience. It talks about the skills the students need to overcome some of their issues, especially in the ED/CD classes. Staff, 2004*

### **Positive school ethos**

Prior to the adoption of MindMatters, Windermere High was a school with a strong welfare focus which had implemented a number of programs aiming to support and promote student wellbeing. This positive school ethos facilitated the adoption of MindMatters.

*The staff are very supportive of the range of welfare, and they just see MindMatters as intrinsically a part of that. Staff, 2004*

## **7.2 Issues that hindered**

### **Negative staff attitudes or reactions**

Because of the social and economic difficulties faced by this community and the school, many staff members experience stress and fatigue.

At the first visit, this stress was seen in one teacher to turn into very negative attitudes towards certain of the students. It is possible that such views, frankly expressed in this

interview, could impact negatively on a teacher's willingness to adopt programs that aim to create an understanding and acceptance of underlying causes of difficult behaviour.

*I'm on patrol period and I'm not going near those people (students), why come along and expose yourself to that. I'm not dealing with those scumbags, honestly they're so revolting... absolutely... in the end, I got very depressed, and I put in my transfer directly related to the fact that I had two D blocks and having to be exposed to the scum of the scum of this school down there, and the only good thing is that by smoking they will die before me. Staff, 2002*

This teacher also indicates the need for the emotional needs of staff to be recognised and supported, particularly in schools such as Windermere that serve a very needy student population.

Some teachers find it difficult to negotiate a balance between their role as educator for a whole class and the need for them to cater for the diverse needs of individual students.

*There is so many of them that have been ear-marked as having issues, and no you can't do this, that and the other. It is making it very difficult for staff. Where you might have four very difficult children who have all got to be treated differently, who are then treated differently to the other twenty six kids that are in your class. These other twenty six kids are then saying, 'they get away with that, why can't we?' The staff find it really difficult to handle. Staff, 2004*

Staff indicated that while the school as a whole had an emphasis on wellbeing, some teachers would not be comfortable discussing the content of MindMatters lessons. In particular they might be discomforted by open disclosure of emotional content.

*There's a lot of staff who don't feel comfortable in dealing with any sort of - once the kids start to open up, they sort of back off, this is an area - 'go see someone you can talk to'. Staff, 2002*

*Some teachers that will turn around and say 'but I am just a teacher.... I'm not here for welfare reasons'. Staff, 2004*

*There are staff that you know that you can't give anything that's a bit difficult or challenging to. I mean, if you said to one of them you'll need to go with the sexuality stuff and talk about contraception, 'What! No Way!' Let alone grief. Some of them just don't know how to cope with the kids. Staff, 2004*

During the initial phases of the MindMatters implementation some staff suggested that certain faculties could not foresee any benefits of MindMatters being incorporated into their specific curriculum.

What issues did this school face during the implementation?

*In our initial training, when we first - I think we went to training in 2001, at the end of 2001 I think it was, there were a couple of us who went then and it was brought up about the possibility of sort of putting it into science, putting it into maths, putting it into all different (subjects), and the people who went on that day, I remember there was a science teacher there, and she immediately said, 'Look this is impossible, I can't put this into my science course, no way in the world, I've got to cover too much'. And that, there is a common view of that. Staff, 2004*

### **Lack of resources**

During the first two years of implementation the school had only one kit, for which there was a lot of demand. The package was used extensively. Staff reported that the whole kit would often go missing or have sections removed.

*I think the fact that you've only got one kit in the school is pretty awful. Particularly when it's not in the library to be accessed. It's usually up in welfare. But it's a matter of trying to get hold of it because when somebody borrows it they take the whole kit, where perhaps it should only be the areas of the sections they are using at that time, and perhaps put it on a limited loan. Staff, 2002*

*One kit in a school of, I don't know, 80 odd teachers. Everyone is not going to get to use it. Staff, 2004*

Despite investing in an additional kit for the health and physical education staff, the problem of demand overtaking supply continued.

*They were all running around using one kit so I bought another for PE. They are doing lots of programming based around it. And I still see that that one gets moved around to places that I wouldn't even know about. I've noticed other teachers borrowing it. Staff, 2003.*

### **Changes of staff**

Windermere High has in the past significant teacher turnover and this continued throughout the evaluation period. Staff reported that this has a considerable effect on the implementation and continuity of MindMatters and other welfare programs.

*We train people up in the MindMatters and then we lose them, so they take those skills and ideas to another school. Staff, 2003*

*It's much better to have that smaller teacher turnover. If they come into this school and they don't know about MindMatters, and they don't know about our behaviour unit and they don't understand that system, it can take them six months to figure it out. Staff, 2003*

### **Crowded curriculum**

Participants reported that the emphasis on programs for student wellbeing, combined with the need to promote sound educational outcomes, makes the curriculum extremely busy. There was reluctance among some staff to adopt further initiatives.

*Teachers are so overwhelmed at the moment with the workload, that to give them something that (they) have to do extra is a problem. Staff, 2002*

*It is just a matter of the amount of stuff we have to cover. It's ridiculous for the time you get to do it. Staff, 2003*

*Because there is so much already that they have to cover in the syllabus they start feeling overwhelmed. You know? 'I'm not just an educator, I've now got to teach welfare and I've got to do this.' And it's not so much that they don't want to do it, but they are so overwhelmed with the amount of work that they have got already. Staff, 2004*

*A lot of people were worried at first. 'Oh my God - the syllabus is packed full, as it is, how am I going to be able to - this is something else that I'm going to have to do, I'm already over burdened.' The work load is too much. Staff, 2003*

A concrete example of how this has impacted on MindMatters is in the failed attempts to create a welfare period for the Year 8 students as a follow on to the welfare period they had in Year 7.

*The senior advisors would have like to have taken it through to Year 8 but it just can't be done with this staffing issue. Staff, 2003*

### **Difficulty in seeing results or benefits**

Staff indicated that due to the large number of additional welfare programs, it would be difficult to attribute the impact on students specifically to MindMatters. This perception may also hinder the uptake of the program in areas other than welfare or health.

*Convincing other faculties that it's something that they should do I think would be a much harder task. Staff, 2003*

### **Unplanned duplication**

Staff and students reported incidents of MindMatters material being repeated across subjects and between year levels. Staff attributed this to lack of interaction between faculties (such as health PE) and the year advisors. Students indicated that unplanned duplication of materials leads to decreased motivation and aptitude for learning.

*We learnt the same thing every year since like kindergarten and no one ever uses it. They just teach the same thing over and over again. Student, 2004*

*I don't like the fact that it's called something different. I find that really difficult because so much of our stuff we've got resilience, there's self esteem, there's all these sorts of aspects of it - already a part of our program and ... there is no coordination between any of them, and they never come down*

*anywhere near us and say 'these are what we are doing'. And then you'll say to the kids 'we are doing such and such' and they say 'we've done that'. Staff, 2004*

### **Industrial issues**

Staff indicated that the size of the school impedes the implementation of many programs. Limited staffing and resources constrain Windermere High's ability to facilitate MindMatters programs to the extent the welfare team had envisaged.

*We tried it (implementing a welfare period) again in Year 8...but because of staffing really, we couldn't do it. Staff, 2003*

*Well the issue is the number of teachers you have to teach the number of periods all around the school, but a number of periods each curriculum requires is different...And so you are taking it from somewhere and there are a lot of things being added into our curriculum ... And then that squashes up the number of hours that they've got to do the other subjects. Staff, 2003*

In regard to the collection of quantitative data for the MindMatters evaluation, staff reported that the socio-economic setting of Windermere High created difficulties in collecting student questionnaires and in obtaining consent from parents or guardians.

*Well certainly the questionnaires - they were quite hard to get the kids and parents to do - we had battles here. Staff, 2003*

### **Lack of staff interaction**

The majority of staff reported that there is limited interaction between staff of different faculties, which often leads to unplanned duplication and curriculum gaps. Staff also indicated that the large staff size inhibited communication concerning students' wellbeing, disciplinary actions and welfare programs.



## 8 Issues identified at the fourth visit

### 8.1 Issues that helped sustain use of MindMatters in the school

#### A program that emerged at the right time

It would appear that for Windermere school, MindMatters became available at just the right time. The school was at a point where it had made a decision to focus much more on student wellbeing and MindMatters provided it with the opportunity to implement this decision in very practical ways. In being available and in being in line with the school's needs at that time, MindMatters was seen as a catalyst that enabled planned changes to the school's direction to be successfully implemented.

*I felt it's been a very important catalyst in the first instance; we were doing a whole lot of stuff but once we had that year advisor period and the MindMatters was just such a good find really to build that out and the structure and all those other things. ... Research basically said that those one-off things don't have a great deal of impact and there was just such an enormous amount of work that we felt well, if it's not going to have an impact, then we're going to do something else. And so we were heading towards the year advisor period; we were very conscious of the fact that that's a serious block of time and we really had to make sure it's effective and when all that MindMatters stuff came out, it was just absolutely what we were looking for.*

#### Support from mental health services

The availability of a specialist mental health worker in the year between the third and fourth visits resulted in a much stronger focus on staff training which helped to reinforce if not highlight the school's use of MindMatters.

*When I did a training-needs questionnaire here, I identified illnesses plus resilience factors, risk factors, I can't think what else and those things came up as issues. Staff stress, I think, was another one. So it varied with the school what they identified as being their priority but certainly in all schools, understanding depression and anxiety and I was pleased to see resilience and protective factors were all up there. So we did put it within a resilience framework and they responded very well to that.*

*And so it's been over, I think, six training sessions over that period of time. So there is certainly much more interest from the staff here. Where they have choices (about whether to attend training), there was always a reasonable size that came, that chose to do this, especially the last one. Again, I think there were probably about thirty people. Mental health worker, 2005*

#### Positive teacher attitudes

The willingness of a teacher to see MindMatters as a resource rather than as a proscriptive program that must be slavishly followed, together with skilful pedagogical skills seems to result in a positive experience that results in the teacher valuing the contribution of MindMatters.

*Yeah, they (the resources) were good. We had a good time in year advisor's lessons; they were supposed to be very joking and getting to know each other; seeing how they were relating. Sometimes I found it a little bit difficult to control them because the activities were all sort of energetic sorts of things, quite a few of them, but the outline that I did I used the best bits out of it, just to adapt it to the class and I think the kids reacted quite well to it. I mean they've all had experiences of bullying and we did a lot of stuff on 'You're great and don't you forget it'. Staff, 2005*

As well as this less formal approach, it does help to ensure longer term use if MindMatters is written into formal curriculum documents.

*Oh well, because I've written up a lesson plan; you know a unit of work based on it; and it's nice and easy and it says go to this page and do this and do this after that and whatever. You know, we (teachers) don't like to reinvent the wheel so I think it will be used. Staff, 2005*

Given that MindMatters encourages students to be open in their communications and to confide in teachers their concerns about bullying and other issues, it is very important that they receive a sincere and open response from their teachers if they do decide to implement help-seeking behaviours.

*I think it becomes too hard a topic; you know, the too hard basket. If you just go in and do your chalk and talk and walk out again you don't have those problems but as soon as you take it on and are recognising it, then you've got to take the risk that comes with it. I mean our office is constantly a stream of students because we've got that kind of empathy, not just (name) and I but in the office. So we've got some really good role models in the office, so we get this stream of students because they know that our door's always open. Staff, 2005*

Positive attitudes towards supporting students is also important and is evident in the following statement from a teacher.

*I wonder you know, that's what we argue all the time, that we've had this wonderful home life. Our own upbringing was just so good compared to what the kids face, some of these kids. And when you look at some of the kids getting here in the morning, you feel like just giving them a pat on the back for arriving here on time with what they had to do before they went to school. So we feel like we've been really spoiled and maybe that's why we're educators. Staff, 2005*

### **Exposure to MindMatters training**

The fourth visit provided yet another opportunity to gather evidence of the positive effect of the exposure of staff to the MindMatters training.

*I think very much raising the awareness of those issues; like I hadn't been to anything like that before so that's definitely one thing. I became aware of everything. The actual day they went through a few of the lessons and that, but they were playing games and it was all a lot of fun and that was good because they obviously had the experience of that.*

*I think mainly just raising the awareness; obviously they couldn't go through the whole thing with us but we got a good general understanding of what was involved and the issues facing the kids too, which I wasn't really aware of because I hadn't been trained in psychology or anything. So that was good. And also the whole MindMatters coming into the school and being promoted so much raised the awareness of that amongst the teachers and this is what, you know, gave you focus. Okay this is what we use, have a read, it's got the information there for you to swat up yourself because let's face it, I've (been) preparing a few lessons before hand, and that was valuable. Staff, 2005*

## **8.2 Issues that may work against optimal use of MindMatters**

### **School size**

The large size of the school was an issue at the time of the first and second visit (in 2002 and 2003). While the school experienced a drop in students in 2004, this seems to have been reversed in 2005.

*No, I think we're 1,020 this year, which is bigger than we were last year. The downsizing has stopped; we've plateaued and we're just building again - slowly. Executive, 2005*

A particular feature of this school is very large enrolments in Years 7 and 8. Managing to assist such large numbers to settle into school and to establish effective attachments and learning environments is quite challenging.

*Year 7 and 8 are bigger, we have sitting in Year 7 and 8 now, nearly half of the school's total student population, so we've got probably 440 out of 1,020 kids in Years 7 and 8; and that's going to require a refocusing on pedagogy and just exactly how we teach those kids and a lot of resourcing for those, because if you do the resourcing early in terms of getting sorted out how these kids learn. Executive, 2005*

Large class sizes in Year 7 was identified by the year advisor as being problematic when trying to use certain of the MindMatters 'games' activities.

*Where I could use them, there's a lot of activities in there that are for small groups and I've got a class of 30, in a classroom. And there was no real place that you could take them, like the passing the ball things... Well you could sort of do it in the classroom but I had to be very aware of next door ..... a senior class or something - the noise was too much. We've now got the common room, so we could probably use that and maybe to do some of those activities but that was (a) limitation I found with them is it's all based on small groups and there's no way you'd ever have small groups. I mean even looking at the discrimination,*

*harassment, vilification days, we're looking at groups of 30 at the smallest because we just don't have the teachers to divide them up. So that's one thing that was not good about the MindMatters. Staff, 2005*

### **Student turnover**

As well as high enrolment figures, the school is faced with the difficulties involved in a reasonably mobile population, often due to the impact of social disadvantage.

*They're changing slightly but we've still got a sky high parent mobility rate, around 24%, it's gone back up; increased quite dramatically last year. Yeah, coming and going; last year we had more coming than going. We all noticed, of course, and it's probably the same in any school, that families who move in during the year tend to have a lot more issues and including many health issues. Executive, 2005*

### **Needs of students in care of the state**

It was also observed that there was an increasing proportion of students in the school who were under the care of the welfare department in that state.

*And we're also finding that (the department) is also locating a lot of families - carers - I should say. Children who are under care of (the department) are tending to be relocated from (the capital city) up here and from the southern end of the (coastal area) up to here as well, and that's creating an issue for me, as the principal and the school, in that a lot of the children have quite severe mental health disorders. Executive, 2005*

### **Staff turnover**

While annual staff turnover was not seen as unduly high, the cumulative effect of constant staff turnover was acknowledged as a difficulty in ensuring continuity of the school's programs.

*It sort of chugs along; in any one year, I'd expect maybe eight to ten maximum changeovers out of 75. So by the time you take it... One year's not significant, but you go three years down the track and there's been a substantial change in the staff, a third of the staff might have changed, then there's the professional learning that you've done on teaching children mental health issues. It's starting to be significantly diluted.*

Lack of resources has also been an issue throughout the period of the evaluation at Windermere. Due to certain changes in socio-demographic characteristics of part of the school's catchment area, the school lost access to a source of special funding in 2005.

Access to kits arose again at the fourth visit as an inhibiting factor.

*It's not something that's always at the front of my mind to do because I don't have it here; it's not a resource I have in my office and when I have gone to look for it around the school, it's been segmented around the place because they're*

*all using bits of it and so then I've got to go on a paper chase to try and find out who's got one. Counsellor, 2005*

### **8.3 Issue of concern**

One teacher revealed that as well as using the 'Understanding Mental Illness' unit, he also taught a unit of work on the issue of youth suicide and identified that this was part of his implementation of MindMatters.

*That's where I get most of my information and go through all that with them and also we do - we did one block on the suicide one as well with Year 11 and that's pretty much the extent to which we're using it at the moment.*

It is not known whether this teacher had access to the 'Educating for Life' resource from the MindMatters Kit.



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

MindMatters has been well received in this school as an education and wellbeing program and as a result of the adoption of the resources, there has been an increase in the awareness of student wellbeing issues throughout the school and in the responses of students and teachers to the issue of mental illness. Because there are a number of other concurrent programs and processes in this school, it is difficult to attribute these changes specifically to the MindMatters initiative, however informants are confident that the school's use of the curriculum resources in particular has definitely contributed to them.

### 9.1 Improved student well being

#### Supports for students

Staff reported that, throughout the MindMatters evaluation period, Windermere High had undergone significant changes to support services, including the introduction of a variety of new welfare and pastoral support programs, resulting in greater support being provided to students generally and in particular to students who are experiencing problems or at risk. One example not previously mentioned is the school to work program.

*80% of our kids don't even want to see the inside of the University and the new HSC is thoroughly into kids who want to go to University so what we are doing now is looking at exit outcomes for kids who don't necessarily want to be highly academic learning outcomes. And we are relating it to communications, problem solving, literacy, numeracy, all those things because we know very well that there is an employment problem in the area for the kids and we figure that's going to be more relevant and more valuable for them than worrying why they are not getting a band five or six of the HSC. Staff, 2003*

#### Bullying and harassment

All members of the school community noted that while bullying is still a major problem the students' behaviour regarding bullying and harassment has improved. Staff and students suggested that the vast array of preventative programs have enabled students to implement a variety of coping strategies and that they are also more likely to report incidents and to seek help.

*I think the Year 7s - like the people that are coming now to the school, the new Year 7s are a lot more secure...like most people would try and help them out, except you get the three or four who don't accept that... I think they learnt to deal with it first. Student, 2003*

*I used to deal with Year 7 bullying almost non-stop in term one. And that doesn't happen now - because there is another place for that, the year advisors. ... And there's a lot of education for the kids ... who to go to, what to do, what to say, etc, etc. And that's all very much part of the MindMatters kit, and very much part of this whole range of things that we do in this school to try and help kids know what to do correctly in situations and to be resilient and to get help. All those things. While I can't identify as a single thing - it's happening, it's certainly working. Staff, 2004*

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*I spent about a term, a term and a half, on bullying and harassment...and I think it was very successful. And I have to say, looking at this year, the number of kids I've had coming with problems in terms of bullying and harassment has been low... The kids have been able to deal with it. Staff, 2004*

*I think they've definitely learned from it. Just different strategies, talking about it, sort of everyone in the same boat... Staff, 2004*

### **Drugs and alcohol**

Staff, students and members of the wider community reported no improvement in the usage of drugs and alcohol. From the students' point of view, the school is not seen to be actively enforcing the policy against cigarette smoking, possibly due to an acceptance of its high incidence.

*They don't do much to stop it...there could be a teacher down there, and people could be smoking and get away with it. Student, 2004*

### **Behavioural problems**

Staff and students reported a significant change in students' behaviour during the evaluation period. This was attributed to a number of factors, including the reduction of school enrolment and class sizes, and the implementation of more effective behaviour and anger management programs. As previously mentioned, MindMatters is seen as having made a supporting contribution to these changes.

*There's definitely a difference. The kids don't seem as bad as they used to...I've seen no chairs or anything going out the windows this year ... No one going out the windows either. Staff, 2004*

*I was going to say about the playground having more space- the girls actually participate...kids can run off their energy...and have other things to do. Staff, 2004*

### **Truancy, attendance**

Staff reported a small improvement in attendance and a reduction in truancy, but in general attendance was still an issue.

*Low attendance is still high. Staff, 2004*

Executive staff indicated that suspension rates had also decreased due to the availability of intervention programs to deal with troubling behaviours.

*Because...they are taken out of the situation and therefore, I think the suspension rates have dropped heaps. Staff, 2004*

### **Increased autonomy**

Staff reported that the school has a number of programs aimed, directly or indirectly, at increasing students' ability to function both independently and in the wider community. While this was seen as positive, staff suggested that it would make it difficult to attribute any improvements in resilience solely to the MindMatters initiative.

*We've got other programs, lots of other programs, which are helping build that sort of resilience type of thing. Which is now supporting kids not just academically but in all ways across the school. Right down the exit pathways...So there's a whole lot of stuff happening in having them realise that yes, there are other things that I can do well at, I could be good at, I could be doing some part-time work, I could be doing this, that, the other. But again, that's a not direct MindMatters thing, and that's where I think MindMatters does get swamped. Staff, 2004*

### **Communication and cooperation**

Staff reported that students have been more forthcoming in communicating their thoughts and feelings.

*It's effective. I mean even I think just with the ED/CD kids how it's affected them and how they started to communicate about their feelings. That's a significant change really, because the ED/CD kids are prone to keeping everything inside and not being able to communicate in sort of a socially acceptable way. Staff, 2003*

### **Empathy**

There appeared to be a change in the school in regard to understanding people with mental illness.

*Yeah they respond fairly well...and they don't have any big issues, or that 'she's a nut case' response anymore. They just go 'Oh yeah, fair enough'. Student, 2004*

*I think their tolerance towards children who they might previously just have written off ... I think their tolerance towards children who might have poor resilience or mental health issues, is improving. Parent, 2004*

### **Help-seeking**

All people interviewed reported the increase in student help-seeking behaviour and attributed this both directly and indirectly to MindMatters.

*A lot of kids have this belief that they have to handle it themselves...And so we spoke about some of the ways in which they could handle the situation and one of them was first of all, come and speak about it and speaking about it to a staff member does not make you weak, and a staff member can help you. And it really surprised me by how many students were actually feeling comfortable*

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*enough to come and speak to me, which was really good. And that included the boys too. Staff, 2003*

Help-seeking attitudes extended to seeking help on behalf of friends.

*You get a lot of friends coming up and saying 'Hey Miss, I'm really worried about blah blah blah'. And I go off and have a talk to them. Staff, 2004*

Staff indicated that students now have improved knowledge about options for seeking help.

*We've set out very determinedly to talk about mental health just like a health issue, as any other, to create that as a platform across the school so that the kids are a little more comfortable in dealing with it, and in particularly to try and get them to know where the help resources are, both in the school, and in the community. Staff, 2004*

## **9.2 Increased student skills and/or awareness**

### **Awareness of MindMatters**

There was no specific evidence for an awareness of MindMatters per se among students. However, staff and community members indicated that students' awareness and understanding of mental health has improved throughout the MindMatters evaluation period. Students may be covering relevant material without conceptually linking it with the title 'MindMatters'.

*(Without MindMatters) we wouldn't have had the curriculum backup so we wouldn't have the kids understanding of mental health issues and awareness and acceptance of that, so that would still be a major difficulty in terms of a cultural characteristic of the kids... Staff, 2004*

*I couldn't tell you whether MindMatters had something to do with that or not, is actually having (a mental health worker) here... all the people that we have passed on to (name) - I've had not one problem. And some of that, and to what extent, I put that down to this awareness level where doing in the school, of raising the idea that you might have asthma, you might have a mental health issue. That kind of stuff. Staff, 2004*

### **Talking about mental health or illness**

The majority of the people interviewed suggested an increase in discussion about mental health and illness among both teachers and students.

*Kids are more willing to talk about, if they have a problem, to a teacher, if they are stressed or whatever. Or if they have a problem at home - kids seem more open. Community member, 2003*

*Because MindMatters is also about our welfare, it is about the teacher sharing experiences and talking to them and helping and encouraging them to speak and talk about it. Staff, 2004*

### **Students supporting each other**

One staff member reported an improvement in students providing support and positive reinforcement for each other in sporting classes.

*Dance is a fairly confronting subject, they have to wear tights and expose their figures and that sort of thing, and they're teenagers and going through that whole changing process. Most of the kids are supportive of one another. I mean, I don't know if it's just the kids or it's that they've learnt through PE and those sorts of subjects. And they certainly do, some of them with me. But they are more considerate and don't tend to make comments about sensitive things like figures, and what you look like and how well you dance, or how bad you are - they're fairly good to one another. Staff, 2004*

## **9.3 Positive impacts on staff**

### **Positive changes in approach to teaching**

A number of the staff interviewed commented on the positive influence the MindMatters program had on their approach to teaching. Staff noted that MindMatters had enabled them to develop a more compassionate role in the classroom and connect with the students on a personal level.

*This MindMatters kit I suppose...it helped me to develop a rapport with the students, and it allowed me to see another side apart from just a facilitator of teaching and learning, of just teaching them whatever it is I have to teach. Staff, 2003*

### **Positive self-worth**

One staff member reported that the MindMatters kit made it easier to develop greater rapport with students and that this was personally rewarding. This supports the possibility that engaging with MindMatters may increase some teachers' self-worth and role satisfaction.

*It (MindMatters) gave me an opportunity to see the other side of it and how to take a more compassionate role and sort of look inside students' feelings and you know what I mean. That was really rewarding. Staff, 2003*

### **Improved morale**

Staff indicated that participating in the MindMatters evaluation played a significant role in increasing teacher morale. The collection of student questionnaires and the provision of feedback to the school allowed teachers to reflect on their own practice and perceptions. The data gave them a further insight into the students, and confirmed their suspicions about reasons for troubling behaviour.

*They understand that the children from this school, a significant proportion of them from this school have a various range of problems, so when you put up your data and it gives them concrete support to what anecdotally they feel, then that makes them feel good. Staff, 2004*

### **Increased teacher awareness**

All staff that were interviewed reported a significant increase in teachers' awareness and understanding of mental health issues. Some staff indicated that this awareness had also led to the enhancement of classroom delivery and behaviour management techniques.

*I think there is a real awareness of mental health issues and of things that affect the kids in front of you, while these issues affect the fact that these people aren't conducive to learning or even be affected by something so that the expectations of how that person learns be flexible. Staff, 2004*

*I think there is a greater awareness about mental health issues with staff. I don't know whether it gets translated directly (from MindMatters). Because we have so many other programs that we do to try and cover all those areas too. But, I like all the tools that it provides. It heightens your awareness that there are a whole variety of problems out there that kids are facing and will have certain effects on them, and will cause illnesses. But it also - the staff, myself having done it too - realise that there are a lot of tools there that can help you along, with kids specifically and classes in general, within MindMatters. Staff, 2004*

*I don't know whether it's just because of the people that are having (MindMatters) training or because of other welfare systems that we have got set up here, but a lot of the teachers are starting to realise that a lot of the kids that we have a lot of trouble with aren't just 'arsehole kids' that they're actually behaving the way that they are for a reason and a lot of teachers are having a fuller understanding of why the kids are doing what they are doing. I think whether it's because, I'm sure the MindMatters training is part of it and all the other welfare procedures that we have got in place as well, but teachers are starting to realise that most of the time, the kids aren't just trying to be painful, they're sort of behaving that way for a reason. And it all stems from the MindMatters thing I think. Staff, 2004*

*I know it has raised awareness among staff. Community health worker, 2004*

## **9.4 Impacts on whole of school**

### **Increasing commitment to a whole school approach**

Some staff reported that MindMatters has helped Windermere High to develop a holistic and coordinated approach to policy and program implementation. Staff also suggested that it has enabled the welfare team to gain insight into the needs of students and develop steps by which those needs can be met.

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*I guess the realisation through MindMatters, is a lot of our kids do have a lot of issues to deal with, whether they are their own or at home and that it is no good plonking on a system based on how we run our lives - like a welfare and discipline system - and not looking, or not monitoring how it's going in terms of outcomes for kids. And I guess the MindMatters thing and the focus on resilience and teaching kids how to be healthy mentally, eventually comes down through the school, and we have to make sure that our systems are aligned with that. Because I think we are wasting our time if I've got a welfare and discipline system that isn't going to try and maximise student outcomes including mental health outcomes for the kids that counters everything I've been doing and clearly we've got to do a bit of adjusting to make sure it's all running in the same direction. Staff, 2004*

### **Creating a common language for well being**

Staff and students indicated a change throughout the school in regard to the context in which mental health issues are discussed. Staff noted that in student conversations there appear to be fewer negative associations in regard to mental health problems.

*The kids approach it... 'that one's not crazy miss, he's just got learning difficulties'. Staff, 2004*

*Yeah they respond fairly well...and they don't have any big issues, or that 'she's a nut case' response anymore - they just go 'Oh yeah, fair enough'. Student, 2004*

*I know that a lot of teachers are using it, more people are picking it up...so it's just kind of having this - this osmosis. Staff, 2004*

### **Increased priority given to student well being**

Staff and students reported that Windermere High now placed an increased priority on student wellbeing throughout the school. All staff interviewed commented on the growing number of student welfare programs and support structures that are becoming available to students.

*I guess what we have done is recognise that resilience is the real issue and MindMatters proving that to kids, like a therapeutic program...and then that might help them achieve a lot better. Staff, 2003*

*Before I think they tended to talk about problems...and then not connect up to the school system to take things into account...now rather than just talking about them more staff are getting in and assisting with, well not resolving them, but making sure we are doing the best we can for the kids. Staff, 2003*

### **Creating stronger links with the community**

Windermere High already had a well-established relationship with the local neighbourhood centre. Throughout the evaluation period the school continued to enhance its links to surrounding community facilities. Staff indicated that MindMatters directly facilitated this

process. MindMatters increased the school's awareness of the need to engage with community partners, in order to facilitate school development and provide further support for students.

*Since MindMatters there's been a lot more general sort of awareness and development of, through the health agencies, a strong profile. Staff, 2004*

*It's a difficult thing to do. Community and school together. Very difficult. But (the community) were thrilled to bits to have been able to be part of it...next year they want to get more involved ... so eventually the community owns it. Staff, 2004*

*I see it's a real partnership for sure. Community health worker, 2004*

### **Plans for future use**

Staff suggested that the use of the MindMatters program will continue beyond the end of the evaluation period. Having already strengthened the culture in regard to student wellbeing and established a number of support pathways, the school hopes in future to encourage staff in other faculties to become more involved. This may mean encouraging them to incorporate some of the philosophies of MindMatters into their teaching and perhaps using material in other subject areas.

*It will continue. Because we see such a lot of value in the year adviser period and the assistance to seniors and what's going on in the PE curriculum area, that's for sure. It's, to use that terrible word, embedded, it's already in there. Staff, 2004*

*Now that we've got these very clear support pathways and mechanisms for the kids, is to take it back to the staff and look at what more they can do as teachers so that perhaps they don't need to refer as much on, and they are more aware of the need to keep the kids' self-esteem intact and they're a little bit more tolerant. Also think of the kid and keep the self-esteem in tact or ... build it up. And I think that's probably our next challenge and the next development that we are heading into. So I think we've got as much support as I can possibly manufacture, drag in, create in this school, now we've got to go back and just do some more foundation work I think at the teacher level. Staff, 2004*

Staff suggested that providing training for educators in the area of mental health would be important to the continued implementation of MindMatters and the promotion of mental health in the school.

*If mental health awareness is going to increase, which is predicted, then there needs to be more invested in it... There needs to be teacher training in that area, much greater training I think. Staff, 2004*

What impact did the changes arising from MindMatters have?

*I don't think it will taper off...that's why I keep on trying to get people trained  
-, any opportunity to keep involved and have training extended for other staff.  
Staff, 2004*



## 10 Further views on impacts at fourth visit

### 10.1 Impacts on students

#### Positive relationships with teachers

The fourth visit provided further evidence of the value of the year advisor's period for the students in Year 7; with students in Year 8 reflecting very positively on their experiences and revealing an appreciation of learning about open communication.

*When we were in Year 7, we'd have our year advisor, which is (name) and we had that welfare class every two weeks and we'd be taught about drugs, our diet, bullying, discuss and watch a movie.*

*It's just really a chill out class.*

*Talk to each other. Yeah have a bludge.*

*Yeah you could just talk to anyone you wanted and get to know all the people but we knew everyone.*

*And discuss problems that we had.*

*And everybody really knows everybody and they can talk to each other and stuff. There aren't that many fights anymore or anything; there's the occasional fight with people and stuff. Year 8 students, 2005*

The main outcome of this period seems to be in establishing a trusting relationship with the year advisor in which students can feel free to discuss issues of concern to them.

*If you don't know your year advisor you can't go up to her and tell her your problems you have. If you know her very well you could go up to her and tell her your problems.*

*It opened us up to someone apart from our parents that we could speak to about our problems.*

*Everybody I know had fun in the welfare period because it was basically just a bludge where we could say our problems.*

*And nobody would judge you in there.*

*There are people at the school that don't have a lot of friends and they're kind of the loners in the school and they don't talk to their parents; sometimes they come from bad background, like they don't live with their parents and things like that, so the year advisor and the counsellor would be all they had to talk to. Students, 2005*

#### Development of social skills

One member of the executive who was instrumental in introducing MindMatters into the school observed that the current Year 9 students revealed a higher level of social skills than

she has seen in earlier years. She believes that MindMatters has had an impact not only on the students directly but also indirectly through the creation of a more constructive classroom climate.

*I think so. I've just had a Year 9 group - just period one - we were doing something with them and I came back down the front and I said how good they were. I think it creates that classroom difference, because it just gives the year advisor the time to focus on one thing and that really is those kids as individuals. You know, the year advisor isn't dealing with the demands of his or her curriculum and the syllabus and blah blah blah. The bottom line is those kids and so that underlying strong relationship that the year advisor develops between themselves and the kids, but also working all the time, and that part of what's in MindMatters, all the time it's just accepting people's differences and how do you deal with people you don't like, and all these things that are about getting on with other people and about understanding other people and blah blah blah. Executive, 2005*

### **Help-seeking attitudes and behaviours**

One of the counsellors confirmed that students' willingness to seek help and use counselling seemed to have increased at this school, along with an increase in referring behaviour by certain teachers. These changes were possibly as a result of the school's use of MindMatters.

*I don't know. I see a lot of kids here, maybe that is the impact of MindMatters, that MindMatters trains kids to go and seek help. I know that the PE staff - they teach components of MindMatters - and I know that they will refer kids to me because kids will go to them so kids are seeking help and I would have a pretty large client list, so would (name); (name) turns kids out of there all the time, I don't know... but you don't know if that's the impact of MindMatters or whether it's the impact of the fact that this is my fifth year here and the same with (name), that the kids are confident about coming to see us; staff are confident about referring kids to us, you know, that we have credibility. It's really difficult to know. Counsellor, 2005*

### **Bullying and harassment**

Earlier findings in relation to increased capacity for staff and students to deal effectively with bullying and harassment were also confirmed at the fourth visit.

*Bullying, of course, is a huge thing in Year 7 because of the whole way they see the world and friendships and all that sort of stuff, but that's the major concern. And if the year advisor is dealing with that sort of actively and they're talking about it and all that sort of stuff, it just means that things don't turn into a blast before we sort of have to deal with it. We have seen that as a very positive role for the year advisor and for the kids because it just gives us... there's always this avenue to get to the kids without it being me out there on the assembly, you know, that sort of a personal big thing. Executive, 2005*

Students report that they believe it is acceptable to report bullying to the year advisor, and that it would be dealt with in ways that would avoid recrimination.

*You learned how to deal with bullying.*

*And the year advisor said we could go to her if we had any problems.*

*She put our trust in her because some teachers you don't want to go to because you don't know how they're going to react if you go up to them and say someone's been bullying, because if you go up to a teacher and tell them that a certain person's been bullying you but tell them not to get this person in trouble because you don't want ..... they'll go behind your back and do it anyway.*

*She would say something to them but not mention our names; she'd tell them that she's seen this person hassling a few people and just to back off a bit.  
Students, 2005*

Year 8 students identify that some level of bullying continues to exist but that they have learned some skills that enable them to tolerate it rather than react to it.

*The school is good because I've like learnt stuff and everything. I don't get bullied or anything. I get called names and stuff but I don't really care about that and I reckon that the school could have a better toilet system. Students, 2005*

### **Smoking**

Younger students believe that peer norms in the school have turned away from smoking tobacco.

*I remember when my brother started at the school, the popular group said you can't come in here because you don't smoke or anything but now when you're near the popular group they see smoking and alcohol, smoking's so dirty, smoking's gross. You don't have to be a smoker to be cool. Student, 2005*

## **10.2 Further views on impacts on staff at fourth visit**

### **Mental health awareness**

As mentioned above in 2005 the staff at Windermere were exposed to a great deal of training from a mental health worker and also were given the opportunity to participate in a voluntary program with one of the counsellors to learn about and implement cooperative teaching practices. Overall a number of informants indicated that the overall effect of these initiatives was to increase awareness of mental health problems and to modify teaching practices in ways that were more supportive for students and less stressful for teachers.

*We're finding more and more that the more we get the staff talking to each other out of their staffroom about their professional practice - talking about kids and how annoying or naughty or whatever they can be; they always use that; but we want them to take the next step and start reflecting and talking about*

*their professional practice in responding to that and, to do it outside a staffroom, is a more viable environment than just doing it in the staffroom. And actually, the counsellor, is working with some of our teachers to get some collegial sharing and buddying going and some team teaching happening, but the team teaching focus is not the actual pedagogy; or the content of the subject that they're teaching is more the psychology of the classroom and how to manage it. And children respond very well and you get the psychology of the classroom mapped out and sorted out and you've basically got most of the kids exactly where you want them.*

*It starts off with just your basic classroom management strategy, but then the really important things like not blaming the whole class, or not disciplining the whole class because two children in the class are misbehaving. The important aspect of developing good positive rapport with the students in your class, not allowing some difficult children - two or three in the class - to have a negative effect on the relationship between the teacher and the kids. Basically all the strategies you use to do that and very publicly valuing the positive things that the kids do in the classrooms, the value of positive reinforcement in making it public in the classroom and the value of very quietly but firmly dealing with individuals who need discipline, and that's really what we find, or what I've always found, was incredibly effective with managing and getting the psychology of the classroom right. And the children respond to it very positively; they're very clever; they know exactly what goes on and they appreciate it. Executive, 2005*

### **Use of support services**

As a result of the involvement of the mental health worker in the school over the previous twelve months, the school executive felt the school was now utilising support services more frequently and effectively.

### **Changes in teaching approaches**

One teacher who had used MindMatters activities in her work as a year advisor reported that she had learned to integrate aspects of MindMatters into their normal teaching practice.

*Part of it is, too, that we have a structure where there's a welfare lesson; that's a significant factor, and then MindMatters can be utilised in those sort of welfare lessons, and from my point of view, as a year advisor, I take what I've learnt from it into my classes. I can use it with my normal classes, so that then is sort of passing it on as well.*

*Do you mean in the way you communicate or activities that you do?*

*Oh a bit of both. I'm in an area where I can have lessons that are based on issues and things like that and get the kids to express what they want to. Like in drama, we do play building, a play building task that's based on a particular issue that's within the community, so things that they're aware of that are going on, that they don't agree with, and it usually comes down to the parties, the*

*partying and who knows, you know those sorts of things, smoking and sometimes violence and sexual abuse, those sorts of things. Staff, 2005*

### 10.3 Further views on impacts on whole school at fourth visit

#### School's capacity to support students

The principal at Windermere High remains highly committed to increasing the school's capacity to support the social and emotional development of the students and believes that MindMatters has made a contribution to increasing this capacity. While she identifies benefits for the students as individuals, she also believes that the school as a whole has seen a benefit from using MindMatters.

*We've seen a great deal of benefit for the school as well as for the children individually, so it's in a structural level as well as on a personal level. Executive, 2005*

Principally, this benefit is seen to have come about by MindMatters having played a facilitating role through the provision of a set of concepts and a common language which the school can use to express its changed direction.

*It gives the school a language; you know, we all talk the same language about getting on with people and not condoning violence or whatever is all those things that are all, as you'd say, they're all interlinked. I think this school is an entirely different place to what it was when I arrived here nine years ago, entirely and there are a lot of factors in that, including the fact that we've gone down a few hundred kids - thank goodness - and we've got more usable space and we're not sitting on top of each other and all sorts of other things, but it's factors like these programs that actively go out there and say to the kids, talk to the kids and let them talk about relationships and getting on with people and not just focusing on welfare.*

*So to answer your question, MindMatters was part of a whole range of things that we've done to emphasise the benefits of a welfare driven approach in the school; I mean it's not everything but it's just that thing so that people can come to school in the first place and feel connected and feel that if something goes wrong someone's going to do something about it and they know who to go to and all of those issues. Executive staff, 2005*

#### Changes in school climate

Students agree that the school climate has changed positively however they do not attribute this to MindMatters but to other broader changes.

*When my brother first came to the school there used to be a different principal and it used to be really bad. And when they got the new principal the school got cleaned up and they've done the upgrade and stuff. Student, 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 Windermere, the scores for each sex in each year in 2005 are compared to the scores of students of the same sex and grade in 2002.

### Note

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

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

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

### Changes in protective and resilience factors

The Healthy Kids Survey has 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 years 7 ( $p < .01$ ) and 8 ( $p < .05$ ) in 2005, both showed a moderate, statistically significant increase in mean 'school connection' scores compared to students in their years in 2002;
- female students in year 7 showed a small, statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) increase in mean 'school connection' scores compared to students in their year in 2002;
- males in year 7 and females in year 10 in 2005 both showed a small, statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) increase in mean 'autonomy experience' scores compared to students in their year in 2002;
- male students in year 7 in 2005 showed a higher, statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) increase in mean 'self esteem' scores compared to students in their year in 2002;
- male students in year 7 in 2005 showed a moderately higher, statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) increase in mean 'effective help-seeking' scores compared to students in their year in 2002.

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

		School connection	Autonomy experience	Self esteem	Effective help-seeking
Grade 7 (2005)	Males	Moderately higher	Slightly higher	Higher	Moderately higher
	Females	Slightly higher	No difference	No difference	No difference
Grade 8 (2005)	Males	Moderately higher	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
Grade 9 (2005)	Males	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	Slightly higher	No difference	No difference	Slightly lower
Grade 10 (2005)	Males	No difference	No difference	No difference	Slightly higher
	Females	No difference	Slightly higher	No difference	No difference

Other comparisons which were not statistically significant were:

- females in year 9 in 2005 had a slightly higher mean score for 'school connection' compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- males in year 10 in 2005 had a slightly higher mean score for 'effective help-seeking' compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- females in Year 9 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean score for 'effective help-seeking' compared to students in the same year 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: Help-seeking indicators in students in 2005 compared to the control group.**

		<b>% who indicate they would talk to someone at school</b>	<b>% who indicate that student welfare would be helpful</b>
<b>Grade 7 (2005)</b>	Males	<b>Slightly higher</b>	Slightly higher
	Females	No difference	<b>Slightly higher</b>
<b>Grade 8 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	<b>Slightly higher</b>
	Females	No difference	Slightly higher
<b>Grade 9 (2005)</b>	Males	<b>Slightly higher</b>	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference
<b>Grade 10 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	No difference
	Females	No difference	No difference

Table 2 shows the differences for males and females in these help-seeking indicators for each year in 2005 compared to students of the same sex and year in 2002 (statistically significant differences are shown in bold). A number of comparisons were statistically significant:

- A slightly higher proportion of males in year 7 and year 9, in 2005, indicated that they would talk to a teacher or some other adult at school about problems ( $p < .05$ );
- A slightly higher proportion of females in year 7 ( $p < .01$ ) and males in year 8 ( $p < .05$ ), in 2005, indicated that they thought a counsellor or student welfare officer would be useful.

Although not statistically significant, a slightly higher proportion of males in Year 7 and females in year 8 in 2005 indicated that they thought a counsellor or student welfare officer would be useful, compared to students in the same year in 2002.

### **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. Overall, these data show some positive changes in frequency of use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and one negative change. (Statistically significant differences are shown in bold). These are:

- males in year 8 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean score ( $p < .05$ ) for days of using alcohol compared to students in the same year;

- female students in year 9 in 2005 had a lower mean score ( $p < .01$ ) for days of using tobacco compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- both males and females in year 7, and males in year 9 in 2005 had slightly lower mean scores ( $p < .05$ ) for days of using tobacco compared to the students in the same years in 2002; and
- males in year 7 in 2005 had a slightly higher mean score ( $p < .05$ ) for using marijuana compared to students in the same year in 2002.

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

		Mean days of alcohol use	Mean days of tobacco use	Mean days of marijuana use
<b>Grade 7 (2005)</b>	Males	Slightly lower	<b>Slightly lower</b>	<b>Slightly higher</b>
	Females	No difference	<b>Slightly lower</b>	No difference
<b>Grade 8 (2005)</b>	Males	<b>Slightly lower</b>	Slightly lower	Slightly lower
	Females	No difference	Slightly lower	No difference
<b>Grade 9 (2005)</b>	Males	Slightly lower	<b>Slightly lower</b>	Slightly lower
	Females	No difference	<b>Lower</b>	Slightly lower
<b>Grade 10 (2005)</b>	Males	No difference	No difference	No difference
	Females	Slightly higher	No difference	No difference

Comparisons which did not reach statistical significance were:

- males in years 7 and 9 in 2005 both had a slightly lower mean score for days of drinking alcohol compared to students in the same years in 2002;
- female students in year 10 in 2005 had a slightly higher mean score for days of drinking alcohol compared to students in the same year in 2002;
- males and females in year 8 in 2005 had a slightly lower mean score for days of using tobacco compared to students in the same year in 2002; and
- males in year 8, and both males and females in year 9 in 2005, had slightly lower mean scores for days of using marijuana compared to students in the same years in 2002.

**Comment**

Windermere High has a high proportion of students with a high level of need. The school has made many efforts to provide a high level of supports for these students over recent years. MindMatters was one of a number of programs that the school has adopted.

The tables above reveal a number of statistically significant changes in positive directions in indicators of resilience, help-seeking and drug and alcohol use.

The use of MindMatters and the associated increase in level of awareness of and support for students with mental health problems, as well as an increased pastoral care focus through year coordinators has contributed to these outcomes.

## 12 Teacher's experiences of using MindMatters

When the evaluation was extended from two years to three, the evaluator was asked to attempt to engage teachers in a discussion about their classroom experiences of teaching any of the MindMatters lessons. This was done opportunistically by asking all interviewees whether they had taught any of the MindMatters lessons in recent weeks. If they had they were asked to briefly describe what they had taught and their opinion of the process and outcome of the lesson in question.

The fourth visit to Windermere provided only a limited opportunity to discuss the classroom experience of using the MindMatters materials. The following account is from the Year 7 health teacher who had used MindMatters in their health periods earlier in the year. It reveals the teacher's perception that students responded well to the material and his own flexibility and skill in incorporating the resources into his teaching.

*It went really, really well. I don't know whether it's because the games are good or whether it's an alternative to sitting there doing mind-numbing work, but yeah they like the games; any of those games. We do lots of that sort of stuff, like getting teams onto logs and teamwork games, they just love that sort of stuff.*

*So do you actually use the lessons as they're actually written or do you weave them in? How do you go about it?*

*We pick and choose; we sort of just pick out the bits that we want that will fit in with what we're teaching at the moment.*

*You sound fairly comfortable with doing that kind of activity with kids?*

*Yeah. In PE it's a lot easier. I think a lot of the other teachers around the school, they like having the kids in a class; and they get a bit more uncomfortable if they've got them outside or somewhere where there's not four walls. But that's our job; that's what we're sort of used to; managing kids in open spaces so it sort of comes natural to us I think.*

The same teacher was using MindMatters in his teaching in the Year 11 Crossroads program and talked about the use of the 'Understanding Mental Illness' module, revealing how well students at this level respond to a unit on mental illnesses.

*I find anecdotal evidence is usually the best; often times I just run off at the mouth and say I've got a mate who's like this or I've got a cousin who's like this, and they find that a lot easier to relate to, rather than me just spewing the information at them. But once you start giving them some figures and stuff on how prevalent mental illness is in the community and then they start to come out and say, yeah I've got a mate who's smoking dope, so he nearly went crazy; and then they introduce schizophrenia and stuff like that. They're really big - the senior kids talking about mental illness; it's becoming a lot more mainstream I think*

*They do accept it, and, as I said, as soon as you start talking about it, like it's okay, like my brother did this or my uncle did that, that makes it a lot more accessible to the kids; if you just start talking about schizophrenia and bipolar*

*disorder and stuff, they're not that interested but as soon as you start making it something they can relate to, they don't mind talking about it at all..*

*What about in your own training as a health teacher - at uni - you probably wouldn't have covered mental illness?*

*No, not at all.*

*You seem to be fairly comfortable about the idea of teaching it?*

*Yeah. Well we sort of have to teach everything that's thrown at us; there's no point us getting embarrassed (about) it because we have to talk about it. Staff, 2005*

### 13 Key Learnings from this school

The following points summarise a number of significant areas that emerged from the way in which the MindMatters resources were used at Windermere High.

*When a critical mass of a staff are engaged in MindMatters training, the support for the program in the school is significant and long lasting, and has the effect of supporting other, welfare-related initiatives in the school.*

*The curriculum resources contained in the MindMatters kit are found to be very useful in a high school that has a large proportion of students with high support needs and which is striving to increase the support it provides.*

*Modification of the school's timetable can have beneficial effects for student wellbeing. Nevertheless, there are significant barriers to increasing the amount of time that can be dedicated to direct delivery of MindMatters materials in a designated 'welfare period'.*

*Incorporation of MindMatters materials into the formal curriculum is possible in health or personal development subjects but occurs less spontaneously in other subject areas in the absence of formal planning and structural support. When staff from other faculties teach the health curriculum, they become more familiar with and accepting of MindMatters.*

*When significant resources are made available, modifications to the physical school environment can contribute positively to student and staff wellbeing.*

*Purchase of sufficient kits is necessary to support teachers' interest in and willingness to use MindMatters curriculum resources. Inability to access a kit is, conversely, a significant barrier to uptake.*

*The positive attitudes of staff towards providing welfare support, in the presence of awareness of the high level of student need, are important factors in the successful adoption of a program like MindMatters.*

*Support from the school executive is critical for classroom teachers who wish to adopt and implement a program such as MindMatters.*

*Some teachers are not comfortable raising certain topics with students or are unwilling to open up discussions that may evoke expressions of feelings. Access to in-house professional development is not sufficient to increase their comfort.*

*A focus on supporting student wellbeing is seen by some teachers as detracting from the attention they need to give to achieving set curriculum outcomes. Other teachers, however, gain a new insight into their role as teacher and the inherent value of developing the teacher-student relationship.*

*Crowded curriculum is also frequently mentioned as a barrier to adoption of programs that support student wellbeing.*

*When MindMatters is adopted as an explicit program of a school that has a large proportion of students with high support needs, together with other initiatives, the staff and students of the school become more accepting of mental health problems and of the need to effectively seek help for such problems.*