St Mark’s Catholic Primary School, Fawkner: on message …

Why KidsMatter?
The school became interested in implementing KidsMatter Primary in 2010. It was identified as a valuable way to engage students and their families and a way to create opportunities to develop a community where wellbeing was a highly prized goal. By the end of 2011 all staff had been trained in the four Components. The school employed a Wellbeing Leader who works two days a week and promotes activities and approaches that give attention to emotional health.

We enrol the whole family
Principal, Michael Bourne, has a belief that when he enrols a new student, he is actually welcoming and engaging all members of the family. The leadership team has explored a range of opportunities to involve parents in a wider perspective of what the school can offer them. Parent Conversation hours are run twice a term. The topics, determined by parents, have included: cyber bullying, Restorative Practices, and presentations from local health services.

Staying on message
The school’s unofficial motto is ‘happy children, friendly families’. This phrase is an important focus for the school community. Messages about valuing children and respect for all individuals are observed in the weekly newsletter in the section about ‘Value of the Week’ and the KidsMatter Primary term focus. In Term 2, 2012, the focus was empathy.

Initiatives
Other initiatives to bring parents into the school include services such as play group; on-site counselling and computer and art classes. The school has introduced Italian conversation classes and Maths and Literacy classes for parents. Class sizes vary but on most occasions between 10% - 15% of the families attend any one of these sessions.

… We want to bring services into the school and to involve parents and carers in the learning environment. We run a playgroup; art lessons; Italian conversation classes; Maths and literacy classes for parents and on-site counselling. I want staff to know the context in which families are living and so I take staff around the local community to understand our school’s neighbourhood.

Michael Bourne, Principal
about and practice ways of sharing and negotiating, and playing fairly. The week’s value is also published the weekly newsletter so it can be highlighted at home. This encourages all members of the school community to stay on message. As Michael says: if you want to increase student results: KidsMatter. If you want to improve staff morale: KidsMatter. If you want to engage with the community: KidsMatter.

Making leadership visible
At St Mark’s the vision of leadership is consistently made visible. Year 6 students take responsibility for working with younger students. Examples of cross-age interactions include lunchtime clinics for students who have the opportunity to develop skills such as football for prep students or netball for Year 3 students. Other clinics have focused on art and craft activities such as: drawing, play doh and origami.

We love parent excursions
The school has a commitment to working with parents in a range of ways and excursions for whose first language is not English have been a successful venture.

We want to build the capacity of families to partner with the school. An example of a successful excursion was a visit to the Melbourne Aquarium with 78 non-English-speaking parents and grandparents who mainly spoke Arabic, three teachers and two bilingual aides.

Michael Bourne, Principal

The KidsMatter Primary vision
The Leadership Team has built the four Components of KidsMatter Primary into the identity and vision of the school.

The commitment to integrating KidsMatter Primary is a strategy to ensure that it will survive when the Principal moves on.

New staff members are inducted into KidsMatter and the quickly acknowledge the priority to support mental health and wellbeing for students.

We want our school to ‘live’ the KidsMatter vision and we want all staff and students and their families to know and own it. KidsMatter is not just another program that will lose energy and focus in a few years time. It is a framework bigger than any one person, and has become a cornerstone for the St Mark’s Primary school vision.

Michael Bourne, Principal

St Mark’s Catholic Primary School, Fawkner
Victoria

- Is about 12 kms north of the City of Melbourne
- Has an enrolment 178 students
- Works with 121 families and 26 different languages
- Is a low socio-economic National Partnerships School

www.smfawkner.catholic.edu.au