From pilot to second time around
Quite a lot has changed since Trinity Christian School first became involved as a KidsMatter Primary pilot school in 2006.

For example, a number of teachers have moved to other schools; a range of new families, including many from non-English speaking backgrounds, have enrolled; and the Australian Curriculum has been introduced.

School Counsellor and Action Team Coordinator, Jenny Ward, says, KidsMatter Primary has become part of how we operate at Trinity. Our school philosophy dovetails with KidsMatter and it’s hard to tell where one starts and the other ends.

Bringing KidsMatter to life
The staff have now completed Component 1 for the second time, and have appreciated the new resources. One observation made by staff who had experienced previous training was about the quality of the new KidsMatter resources. Previously staff thought the resources were a bit interesting, but... They have really enjoyed the new videos because they present examples of the ways that a variety of schools are working with KidsMatter. Staff have also valued the engaging ‘bites’ from professional people which have made them reflect more widely about mental health. Our staff think the new resources have brought KidsMatter to life, Jenny says.

Integrating with Christian Life studies
KidsMatter has offered the school the opportunity to integrate aspects with the Christian Life Studies curriculum. The social and emotional learning program used across the primary school is Bounce Back, and its focus on resilience, combined with the value of the week is taken up in practical ways in classes and through assemblies. Each week a different class takes responsibility to plan an assembly and teach the value to the rest of the school.

Parent engagement at Multicultural Day
At the end of Term 1, the school Multicultural Day was combined with the annual walkathon. It was an opportunity to engage parents in a different kind of activity.

"... We invited parents to put together a presentation to communicate something about their culture. We allocated a table to each group and in the end we had 13 different cultures represented. It was great to see students getting a stamp from different countries’ on their passports. Other parents were on checkpoints along the course - it was a positive way to involve the parent community in the school environment."

Jenny Ward, Counsellor and Action Team Coordinator
Smoothing the business of starting school
At Trinity there is a strong emphasis on assisting students (and parents) to make the transition from preschool to the first year of school.

Staff made the decision through experience of knowing the challenges of starting school, and KidsMatter Transitions facilitates the processes of transition.

Students who are very anxious receive a transition booklet during the Christmas holidays and this includes photos of the school and the class teacher.

... Students have learned skills to deal with feelings and ways to interact with their peers. Parents know about mental health and how to ask questions when things are not going so well because we have produced a little fridge sheet with prompts, and we know that some parents use this successfully.

We have quite a few parents who work in classrooms and we know that they witness social and emotional learning strategies we use with students.

Jenny Ward, Counsellor and Action Team Coordinator

Building resilience
Through initiatives such as the transition to school process and the social and emotional learning, staff are aware of the impact of building a positive school community.

There is a strong sense that students in the junior school are benefitting from the KidsMatter culture that speaks about mental health and what it means to be resilient.

KidsMatter – pulling everything together
The focus on mental health and wellbeing throughout the school has been extended with teachers in the Middle School and Secondary School who have completed MindMatters training. The system of Year 9 and 10 peer leaders who work with Years 6 and 7 students has created a strong link between the two age groups. There is also a growing awareness about mental health at whole-school assemblies.

The school newsletter includes a KidsMatter Primary article twice a term and highlights strategies for wellbeing and tips for parents. As Jenny says, KidsMatter Primary pulls together everything about supporting mental health and wellbeing at Trinity Christian School

“... Before day one of Term 1, parents, carers and children will have met at the school three times. The play date for children held at the end of the previous year is a really successful activity. We address concerns and iron out the tricky bits before Kindergarten starts.

Jenny Ward, Counsellor and Action Team Coordinator

Trinity Christian School
Australian Capital Territory

- Is located in Tuggeranong Valley in the southern suburbs of Canberra
- Is a Kindergarten-to-Year 12, day school for boys and girls
- Has a total enrolment of 1,144 students
- Promotes the motto ‘Love, Nurture, Service’
- Was a pilot school for KidsMatter Primary in 2006

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