Marymount College
- Wellbeing is always on the agenda

When Marymount College introduced KidsMatter Primary in 2009, it built on two year’s work with MindMatters which had begun when the school was undergoing some changes.

For example, the timetable was restructured to allow teachers to increase interactions with classes, and have greater understanding of the context of each student. The new directions reflected an intentional focus on wellbeing.

As Deputy Principal, Leone Coorey, says: [it’s about] the recognition of the interrelated role between learning and wellbeing – you cannot have one without the other!

**Spotlight on the community through KidsMatter**

Membership of the KidsMatter Action Team included leadership representatives, teaching staff, and a parent. The first goal was to develop ‘an inclusive, welcoming and creative school community’.

The Action Team initiated several steps: a professional learning day based on staff wellbeing, activities to improve the school’s physical environment, and a survey of the experience of the school community. Data collected by the Action Team informed some new steps which included a strong emphasis on social and emotional learning. At this time, through a parent who was an academic there, the school developed a partnership with the University of South Australia.

**Marymount Matters: incorporating MindMatters and KidsMatter**

In 2011 Marymount Matters came into existence. The Action Team agreed there were advantages in combining MindMatters and KidsMatter Primary to increase the focus on the mental health and wellbeing of students across the four year levels. The goal was to make explicit links between student wellbeing and learning and educational outcomes in a cohesive way. Creating the logo for Marymount Matters was one of the first outcomes.

The Marymount Matters Team, which now also included students, identified three focus areas for its work:
1. Social and emotional learning for all students
2. Student leadership in the area of mental health and wellbeing
3. Parent engagement and participation.

**New directions in the curriculum**

During 2011-12 all staff attended professional learning about social and emotional competencies which were mapped at each year level. The curriculum work meant new directions in teaching these skills in the classroom, and where appropriate, school counsellors provided complementary skills training for some students.

**Focus on student leadership**

As Leone says: we have involved student leadership … we know that girls of this age are often more likely to listen to their [peers] than to parents or teachers.
Year 8 and 9 students have developed leadership skills through MindMatters Youth Empowerment Process (YEP). They took on leadership roles, supported younger students and raised awareness about good mental health. These actions have led to creation of posters about student issues and some video clips about bullying.

"... Being part of the YEP group has been a very positive way to learn about mental health and wellbeing. You are learning about it while you are teaching it to your peers. This understanding of wellbeing has helped me with everything I do at Marymount."

Year 9 student

This year YEP students are involved in consultations about the Relationship Policy. The school community is learning about restorative practices which will be a feature of the new policy.

Reconsidering parent engagement and participation
The KidsMatter Primary survey supported the direction that the school was keen to undertake to increase parent engagement and participation and results led to the goal of increasing parent involvement. When parents highlighted the need for families to meet each other, some members of the Action Team met with the Catholic schools parent stakeholder group (Federation of Catholic Schools Parent Communities) and decided to establish a new structure.

The Parent Rep group with 29 parent representatives meets monthly with school leadership and a teacher to brainstorm and plan parent events. A funded project enabled a group of parents who were not usually involved with school activities to work with an artist to create two significant art works which reflect the Catholic identity of the College.

New approaches: supporting the mental health of students
The integration of MindMatters and KidsMatter Primary has also been beneficial for developing structures to assist staff to support students who experience mental health difficulties. This has involved initiating a case management process with an integrated action plan for students, and a number of partnerships have been formed with local allied health agencies.

National recognition
The theme of improving mental health and wellbeing permeates through the school from supporting lunchtime activities to the strategic plan. The College has dedicated extensive energy and resources and implemented a range of strategies to improve the wellbeing of the school community over nine years. The school completed all four components of KidsMatter. To acknowledge this commitment, the school received national recognition from both MindMatters (2012) and KidsMatter Primary (2013).

"... We ensure that wellbeing is always on the agenda – in the school’s strategic plan, staff meetings, professional learning, school assemblies, parent gatherings and in our daily interactions with students."

Leone Coorey, Deputy Principal

Marymount College
South Australia
- A Catholic girls’ middle school
- Located near the coast 12 kms south-west of Adelaide
- Enrols about 490 girls
- Combines KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters as Marymount Matters

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