Karama School in Darwin, NT provides an exemplary model of how to embed student wellbeing using a whole-school approach. The school started engaging with KidsMatter Primary in 2016 and has since implemented various programs that actively involve the whole-school community.

“We have a whole-school focus on increasing student wellbeing by improving literacy, numeracy, engagement, and achievement,” stated Louise Knights, Karama’s KidsMatter Action Team Leader and a Senior Teacher. The school initially investigated KidsMatter Primary in 2014 and decided in 2016 to implement the framework with the end goal of becoming a recognised Kidsmattter school.

In Term 1 2016, the Action Team introduced KidsMatter Primary to the whole school by including all staff members in the professional learning session.

“The entire staff - including support, admin and groundsmen - all attended. We ran an introductory session around what Kidsmatter is - a framework to guide continuous improvement, and demonstrated how it already linked in with our core business of student wellbeing.”

Louise Knights, Senior Teacher and KidsMatter Action Team Leader

Through the KidsMatter surveys and personal conversations, staff and student voices were heard. These gave the Action Team clear ideas on areas in which the school was doing well and those that needed improvement. “Our school was able to understand the positive impact that our community events were having and these encouraged teachers to reach out to parents and carers to engage in conversations before and after school.”

In addition, Karama School identified and established the three Rs as the its new values: Respect, Responsibility and Resilience. “We also introduced a wellbeing hour across the school and most recently we have adopted the Smiling Mind program. Each week we have a KidsMatter story in the newsletter and share with the community the positive actions that Karama students undertake during their entire school day,” Louise said.

Louise added that KidsMatter Primary also helps take care of staff wellbeing. “Whilst the
KidsMatter framework ensures we are driving change for student wellbeing, it also keeps teacher wellbeing at the forefront,” she stated. The support from Principals Australia Institute [PAI] has helped the school in its KidsMatter implementation process. “The professional learning available is at no cost to schools, always easy to take in, and provides useful connections to support extending to our local community. The PAI Coordinator assigned to help us has worked closely throughout our journey - coming out to meet with the Action Team at school, providing activities, ideas, advice and support around every next step,” Louise added.

Indeed, Karama School has truly embedded student wellbeing from the ground up. “There is a general feeling of being proud to be a Karama Kid and families being proud to be part of our school community,” Louise stated.