

ST PIUS X COLLEGE CHATSWOOD



MINDMATTERS

PARENT INFORMATION BOOKLET 2010

In developing the College as a **MindMatters** school and in response to the sudden and totally unexpected tragic suicide of a year 12 student (a few years ago), a firm commitment was made to promote the importance of Mental Health and Wellbeing of all members of our school community.

Background: St Pius X Chatswood staff were first in-serviced in 2005 on the underlying concepts behind the Commonwealth Government funded program, "**MindMatters**". This booklet aims to assist parents new to the College since then, with some of the relevant information contained in the program, as well as serving as a refresher for all parents on its relevance in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing in our school community.

WHAT IS MINDMATTERS?

MindMatters is a resource/framework that supports Australian secondary schools in promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of all members of the school community.

The **MindMatters** framework recognizes the connections between curriculum, policies, practices and partnerships and encourages a co-ordinated approach to the promotion of mental health and resilience within the school context.

The whole school framework adopted by **Mindmatters** is highly compatible with other education initiatives such as Quality Teaching, National Safe Schools Framework and Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support (PBIS).

DOES MINDMATTERS WORK?

A National evaluation of **MindMatters** has recently been completed. Some findings are that schools implementing **MindMatters** show:

- Improvements in student attendance and behaviour
- Increased student help seeking behaviour
- Improved job satisfaction for staff
- Improvements in the school ethos

Schools already implementing a whole-school approach to the program were asked what difference implementing **MindMatters** made. Common responses were that it:

- Increased awareness of mental health – particularly in relation to bullying – which led to decreased suspensions
- Highlighted the importance of positive relationships and connectedness for students
- Created confidence in staff seeking help from outside and inside the school, including better relationships with a range of health and welfare services
- Provided a focus to improve staff wellbeing.

The curriculum framework of MindMatters focuses on teaching practices that promote and enhance engagement so that the focus is on teaching for mental health rather than about mental health.

For more information on the MindMatters program visit the website: <http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/>

THE KEY MESSAGES

MINDMATTERS

- **Commitment** to wellbeing
- **Whole school** approach
- **Resilience** research base
- Importance of **connectedness**
- Focus on **safety, trust, help-seeking**
- Working in community **partnerships**
- **Every teacher** affects wellbeing for the entire **school community**
- Social and emotional **wellbeing** for **all** students
- **Links** to curriculum frameworks
- MindMatters themes apply to **every subject**

RESILIENCE

- Ability to **bounce back** in adversity
- Essential for **wellbeing**
- Underpinned by **connectedness**
- Enhanced by **protective factors**
- About **staff** and **students**

BULLYING & HARASSMENT

- Profound **long term impacts** on students' lives
- Whole school approach is vital
- **Never OK**
- **Everyone** must challenge

MENTAL ILLNESS

- Mental illness is **common**
- Most illnesses can be **effectively treated**
- Promote **help seeking**
- Remove **stigma** and model **openness**
- Provide **information** and **support**
- **Young people** can be **carers**

LOSS AND GRIEF

- Loss is a constant **part of life**
- **More than bereavement**
- Grief responses are **individual**
- Grief can be **communal**
- Schools can provide **safety and control**

EDUCATING FOR LIFE

- Suicide is **unpredictable**
- Teacher's role is **wellbeing promotion**
- Take comments seriously and **refer**
- **Don't 'teach'** suicide
- Have critical incident management plans

WHOLE SCHOOL CHANGE

- Takes **time**
- **Collaborative** leadership
- **Research** underpins action
- See the **big picture**
- Go **step by step**

MINDMATTERS – A Whole School Approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing

2009 has been a significant step forward for our school community, in our desire to become a 'MindMatters' accredited school. This year has seen substantial progress in the implementation of a variety of activities and programs which enhance the mental health and well-being of all within our community. A key component of this growth has been the development of a MM Core Team which has received additional training and support to oversee the implementation of our goal for St Pius to strive to be at the forefront of positive mental health and well-being for all.

For those unfamiliar with the concepts of the MM project, it is a resource and framework that supports all Australian secondary schools in promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of all members of the school community. The MM framework recognises the connections between curriculum policies, practices and partnerships and encourages a co-ordinated approach to the promotion of mental health and resilience within the school context. The key messages of MindMatters include:

- a firm commitment to wellbeing,
- a focus on safety, trust and help-seeking,
- the importance of connectedness, and
- that every teacher affects the wellbeing of the entire school community.

In reflecting upon the impact of the MM program during 2009 the following list of accomplishments best summarises our progress:

STUDENTS

- Boxercise
- Beauchamp Park lunch activities (Years 7, 8, 11)
- Homework Help
- Lunchtime Getaway Program (Years 5 & 6)
- Anti-bullying cards
- Mentoring program
- Year 8/9 forums
- Pastoral Care days with mm input (Years 7-12)
- Transition group 6-7
- Kids Helpline – Screensaver
- 'Student at Risk' Suicide Awareness (Year 11)
- Merit Card System
- Peer Support (Yrs 11 - 7 and 5)
- Awards at assembly- student congratulated by others.
- Restorative justice - effective questioning to enhance skills to deal with conflict.

STAFF

- Mindmatters Action Group
- Social committee
- Staff Sports Uniform
- 12 staff inserviced in MindMatters – Level 1
- Massages
- Massage chair in staffroom
- Free counselling service available for staff.
- Welcome drinks
- Morning teas/drinks for various events, e.g. Melbourne Cup
- Staff MindMatters noticeboard
- Newsletter – 'Vital Health Staff'
- Presentations re adolescent mental health
- Survey & follow-up re 'being valued'
- Coffee machine launch/Personalised coffee mugs
- Formation of MindMatters Core Team
- REACHOUT – Screensaver
- Psychological Well-being Seminar

PARENTS/COMMUNITY

- Presentations re mental health – 'Students at Risk', 'Cyberbullying'
- MindMatters for Families – 'Boys Education'
- Parent member of Core Team – Mrs L Bousfield
- Acknowledgement of loss - whole school involvement: Time spent at assembly to acknowledge cancer awareness and Daffodil Day which is important for students who have lost parents and other close ones. Also whole school prayers said for members of school community.
- Harmony Day assembly

NEW INITIATIVES (FROM MM INSERVICE)

- **Year 5 'inclusion program'**
 - Survey
 - Recognition box
 - Reward system (yellow balls/ merit award)

- **Staff recognition scheme**

- **Homeroom Teachers Resource Kit- start of year**
 - Includes activities/ games from MindMatters and ideas on when to use throughout the year.

- **Junior school 'connection time'**
 - Incorporate 1 per term (as per reflection days) before sport on Thursdays

- **Bullying**
 - Activity for staff meeting to clarify 'what is bullying' (MindMatters activity) so we have school consensus & also raises awareness about issue
 - Acceptable behaviour/ bullying & harassment/ criminal behaviour

- **Physical environment beautification**
 - Environment Committee?
 - Rock Garden/Veggie Garden for science/health?
 - Mural: art (usually funding available through 'Art Start')

However it needs to be recognised that whole school change in this area is a step-by-step process that takes time, requires collaborative leadership and is underpinned by solid foundations provided through a dedicated core group of staff willing to give generously of their time and expertise.

I wish to acknowledge these people in particular for their participation in this process and to thank them sincerely for their involvement in this important aspect of the life of the College.

MM CORE TEAM

Mrs Lisa Bousfield (Parent of Reece – Year 8, and Dane – Year 5)

Mr Anthony Mahoney (Curriculum Co-ordinator)

Mrs Souad Camilleri (Science Lab Assistant and parent of James - Year 10, and Richard – Year 8)

Mrs Joanne McCarthy (School Counsellor)

Mr Matt Stearn (Senior School Sportsmaster)

Ms Tracey Bates (Music Teacher)

Mr Sean Brannan (PD/H/PE Co-ordinator)

Some final relevant facts about the MindMatters program:

- The most used mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention resource in Australia for schools with secondary enrolments.
- The most attended national professional development for Australian schools
- Recognised internationally
- Has successfully placed mental health and wellbeing on the education agenda and is providing sound educationally-based ways of undertaking this within their structures and curriculum.
- Over 100,000 school-based or school-related participants have attended **MindMatters** professional development since 2000
- Over 2500 schools with secondary enrolments have sent their staff to **MindMatters** professional development

Finally, into the future, it is our intention that St Pius X will be seeking accreditation as a '**MindMatters** School', therefore highlighting its commitment to the goal of seeking a whole-school approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Rick Russo



LIST OF KEY CONTACTS AT ST PIUS X IN 2010			
	Contact	Phone	Email Address
Junior School Co-ordinator	Mr Tim Long	9414 4363	tlong@stpiusx.nsw.edu.au
Guidance Co-ordinators:			
Year 7	Mr Simon Yue	9414 4341	syue@stpiusx.nsw.edu.au
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College Counsellors:	Mr Rick Russo Ms Jo McCarthy	9414 4359 9414 4322	russo@stpiusx.nsw.edu.au jmccarthy@stpiusx.nsw.edu.au
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