

KidsMatter is the Australian primary schools mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative. The initiative was trialled in over 100 schools nationally during 2006-2008. In 2009, your school community is invited to participate in KidsMatter.

The KidsMatter Primary initiative aims to:

- improve the mental health and well-being of primary school students,
- reduce mental health problems amongst students, and
- achieve greater support for students experiencing mental health problems.

KidsMatter Primary offers schools:

- a comprehensive framework for building school capacity in mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention
- a structured process for whole-school implementation
- professional learning and ongoing support for staff.

KidsMatter focuses on increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors for children's mental health through the following four components:

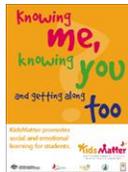


A positive school community

- Sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community
- Welcoming and friendly school environment
- Collaborative involvement of students, staff, families and the community

Sample objectives

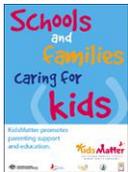
- School addresses inclusion and belonging at a whole school level through specific policies and practices.
- Students, staff, families and the community are encouraged to share their views and contribute to school decisions.



Social and emotional learning (SEL) for students

- Effective social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum taught to all students
- Opportunities for students to practice and generalise SEL skills

- SEL curriculum covers the five core social and emotional competencies (self-awareness; social awareness; self-management; relationship skills and responsible decision making).
- Opportunities are regularly provided for students to generalise their SEL skills in the classroom, school and wider community.



Parenting support and education

- Effective parent/carer-teacher relationships
- Provision of parenting information and education
- Opportunities for families to develop support networks

- Teachers have the skills, confidence and commitment to form collaborative working relationships with parents.
- Effective information is provided to parents on parenting practices, child development and children's mental health.
- Community resources to support parents and carers are identified and promoted.



Early intervention for students experiencing mental health difficulties

- Promotion of early intervention for mental health difficulties
- Addressing attitudes towards mental health difficulties
- Processes for addressing the needs of students experiencing mental health difficulties

- All school staff are informed about how to identify students experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Appropriate interventions, including referral pathways, are identified and planned for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

KidsMatter Primary - Implementation 2009

Participating sectors are asked to partner with KidsMatter to:

- **identify** regions/clusters of schools in which to formally implement KidsMatter;
- work with the KidsMatter Project Officer in your State or Territory to **implement KidsMatter** in schools within your area;
- establish a **KidsMatter leadership group** in local areas with representatives from key education, health and community organisations to lead KidsMatter implementation;
- **identify qualified personnel** who can work with schools in the area to provide KidsMatter implementation support and professional learning;
- **engage schools in the area** who are ready for formal participation;
- **schedule KidsMatter briefings** for local personnel and school action teams;
- **link schools** with appropriate community-based services for child mental health and parenting support and education and provide system level support as required;
- **advise on** links between KidsMatter and existing sector-based and local policies, processes and initiatives.

KidsMatter Primary provides :

- a comprehensive, systemic framework for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention by focusing on **four key components**;
- a **Project Officer** in each State and Territory to provide professional learning and support to local personnel involved in facilitating KidsMatter implementation in schools;
- an **Implementation Manual** that details the initiative and provides a structured process for school-based implementation;
- a **Programs Guide** which provides evaluative information for over 70 school-based mental health programs that schools can compare and use to address each KidsMatter component;
- a range of **supporting resources** for schools to use in addressing student mental health issues including posters, information sheets for parents and carers, mental health resource packs, eNewsletter and KidsMatter website;
- **professional learning** packages to enable qualified local personnel to provide professional learning for each KidsMatter component to all staff in participating schools.

Participating schools are asked to:

- **commit to KidsMatter** implementation as a priority;
- form an **Action Team** to undertake the responsibility for coordinating and “driving” the initiative within the school;
- enable Action Teams to attend **KidsMatter briefing**, engage staff and parent support and conduct school-wide mental health survey;
- **conduct an audit** of current practices that promote students’ mental health and identify priorities for action;
- develop **action plans** for each component to address the target areas of KidsMatter;
- follow the structured **KidsMatter implementation process** to systematically guide planning and implementation to meet the needs and identified priorities of the particular school;
- enable all staff to undertake **KidsMatter professional learning** covering each of the four key components;
- **provide feedback** to guide and inform the future development of KidsMatter.

