



Respect takes hold at schools

Two Nelson schools were among the first in the country to use a programme which reinforces positive behaviour in students.

James Greenland finds out whether it's been a success.

The two Nelson Tasman schools that initiated the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) programme say they would recommend the scheme, adding that while money helps it takes more than cash to change a school's culture.

In mid-2010, Lower Moutere School was one of the first schools to receive PB4L funding from the Ministry of Education, a total of \$30,000 over three years.

Principal Barbara Bowen said the programme inspired a culture change at her school, and in the wider Motueka school community, and had been a total success.

Other schools in the Motueka trial cluster included Parklands School, Motueka South School and Motueka High School, with Nayland College, Broadgreen Intermediate and Stoke School signing up the following year.

Introduced in 2009, PB4L focuses on reinforcing positive behaviour rather than punishing "naughty kids", and aims to increase achievement and cut the social costs of anti-social behaviour.

"Previously, the bad kids got more attention," Mrs Bowen said.

But, that was a negative focus. Teachers were most skilled at teaching, not telling off.

"You don't punish a kid who struggles to read or write, you teach them. It's the same with teaching positive behaviour," she said.

Since the inception of PB4L a variety of rewards schemes has been developed at the school and in the community, with organisations like the recreation centre and the library being encouraged to recognise and congratulate young people who they see displaying positive behaviour around town. Money had also been spent on upgrading the Lower Moutere logo and the school had hosted regular community meetings.

Eleven-year-old Isaac Bunn is the latest recipient of the Fickling Family Term Cup, for being an all-around good child and epitomising the positive behaviour Mrs Bowen hopes to see from all students.

Isaac had been a peer-mediator, a school counsellor, and a sports shed monitor, and went out of his way to do everything else his teachers asked of him, Mrs Bowen said.

"Mrs Bowen always says that the older kids are role models for the younger kids," Isaac said. "In class there are lots of people that are not sensible and I am one of the more sensible kids. People call me the teacher's pet."

It was little signs of recognition, like praise-postcards that were anonymously sent home to parents' letterboxes, that had really made a difference to students and parents, who were taking a greater responsibility for their, or their child's, behaviour at school.

The scheme also encouraged schools to keep data records about behavioural incidents, which allowed teachers and management to focus resources at specific times of day or on areas that were identified as likely trouble spots.

Mrs Bowen said implementing PB4L did require a big commitment and the programme needed to be a school's exclusive priority during the early stages.

"You do need to fully commit to it and see it through. It's really dependent on every staff member being on board.

"It was not a quick fix and took every





bit of the three years we were provided to develop the systems to sustain the programme,” she said.

But, having come to the end of their funding period, Mrs Bowen said she would encourage other schools to take up the PB4L challenge.

She said some of Lower Moutere’s success was because it was in a cluster of schools, “who provided support, ideas and a certain degree of accountability to each other”.

Nayland College’s assistant principal Trevor Olley agreed that the scheme worked best when there was collaboration and collegiality between schools.

Nayland is part of the Stoke cluster that picked up PB4L funding in 2011 and, like Lower Moutere, the college had experienced a significant culture change, Mr Olley said.

This year Nayland welcomed its first intake of year 9s who had experienced a PB4L system previously, at Broadgreen, and it was obvious they came to college already accustomed to a PB4L way of thinking.

“Manaaki Nayland” was adopted as the college’s mantra when PB4L was introduced.

That was all about respect; for yourself, others, your environment, and your learning, Mr Olley said.

The philosophy has since been splashed all over the school, with life-sized prints of student leaders plastered on buildings reminding students to show respect, teachers wearing PB4L T-shirts

to school on their own accord, respect posters hanging in classrooms, and PB4L badges awarded to each new entrant on their first day.

Mr Olley said schools would benefit greatly from the scheme so long as they worked together and established a co-operative approach to PB4L.

The Government is set to invest a further \$63.6m into PB4L, after a pre-Budget announcement made by Education Minister Hekia Parata last week.

Over four years, that would give an extra 200 primary and intermediate schools the opportunity to access PB4L, and by 2016 it would be available to all secondary schools.

Ultimately, Ms Bowen said PB4L was “money well spent” and she welcomed the extra investment.

Mr Olley said funding was only one of the reasons Manaaki Nayland had taken off, that enthusiasm from teachers and ministry advisers, such as Rosemary Brown in Nelson, was equally if not more important for schools.

“The money has been completely irrelevant, really. We could have implemented this without the money. It just helps.

“It’s about creating a culture of respect in the school. It becomes a part of you.”

He said that it was the hardest thing in the world, changing the culture of a secondary school, but said PB4L had the potential to achieve it.

“Manaaki Nayland is alive and well, and here to stay,” he said.



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Rewarded: Lower Moutere Primary School Term Cup winner Issac Bunn, 11. The cup is awarded for positive behaviour.

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