



# IMPACT IN SCHOOLS

Smiling Mind 2025 Annual Impact Report



# Evaluating our primary school program: student and educator outcomes

## 2025 evaluation findings show strong wellbeing benefits for students and educators

Smiling Mind's Primary School Program is designed to build children's mental fitness early, strengthening the skills that support calm, confidence, connection and learning readiness. Program evaluation continues to play a core role in ensuring the program remains evidence-informed and effective at scale, building on the independent ACER evaluation published in 2024.

In 2025, the Primary School Program supported 80,080 children and 5,720 educators. Our ongoing evaluation continued to show strong benefits for students and educators, with clear positive outcomes reported by both children and the adults supporting them in the classroom.

A subset of 37 schools participated in the evaluation. Insights were collected from 229 educators and 4,206 students. Educator respondents were primarily from NSW (31.9%), WA (28.8%) and VIC (23.9%), with smaller representation from QLD (15.0%) and SA (0.4%). Geographically, just over half of respondents were from Major Cities (54.0%), with the remainder from Inner Regional (23.5%), Outer Regional (16.4%), Remote (4.0%) and Very Remote areas (2.2%).

In 2025, student-reported wellbeing benefits increased to 75%, up from 67% in the previous ACER evaluation, signalling stronger perceived impact for children. Educator satisfaction and confidence remained high, while new findings also showed meaningful benefits for educators' own wellbeing, reinforcing the program's whole-school value.



“ **After you do it you feel calmer.** ”  
— Year 3 student

## 2025 Evaluation Highlights

### What students told us

**88%**  
enjoyed the program

**75%**  
reported benefits to their mental wellbeing

Students identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:

**91%**  
felt calmer

**85%**  
better able to manage “big emotions”

**92%**  
clearer on what matters to them

### What educators told us

**94%**  
saw benefits in students

Educators also identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:

**81%**  
said it improved student mental health and wellbeing

**70%**  
said it improved educators' own mental health and wellbeing

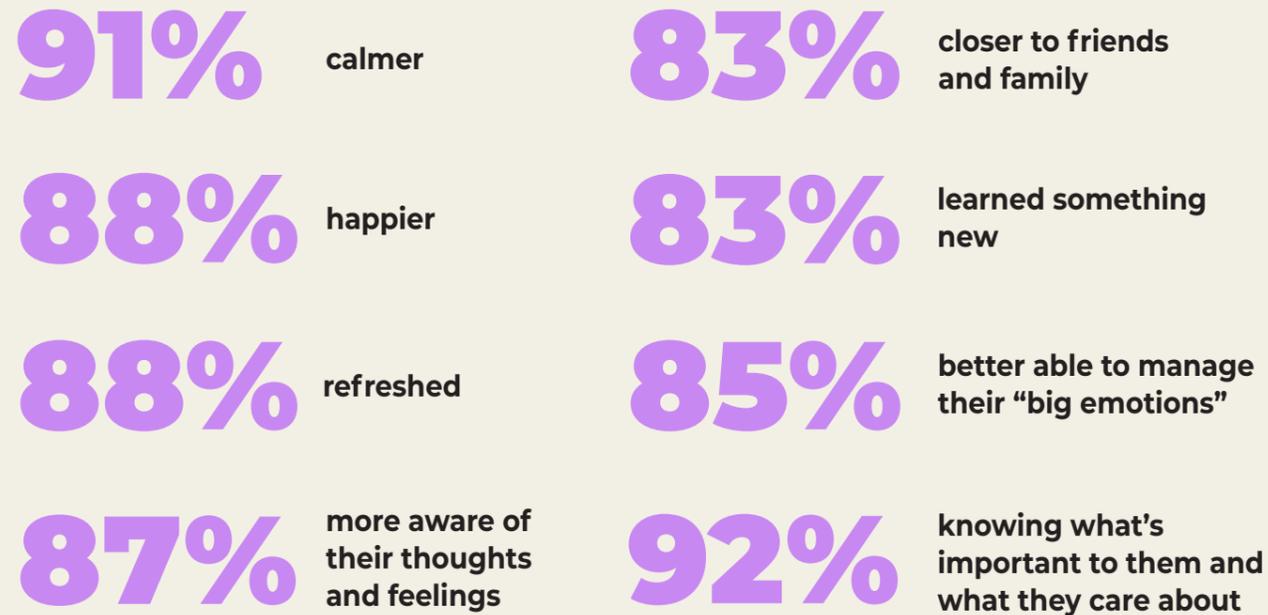
**92%**  
said lessons were easy to use

**81%**  
felt more confident teaching SEL

## Student outcomes (rated by students): calmer, more self-aware and regulated

In 2025, most students reported enjoying the program (88%).

**Three quarters (75%) said it benefited their mental wellbeing. Students identified a wide range of positive impacts, including:**



Student reflections show how practical and transferable these skills feel, not only at school, but beyond the classroom:

“  
**I learnt to take a break, take some breaths and calm down then focus on the task ahead.**

— Year 5 student

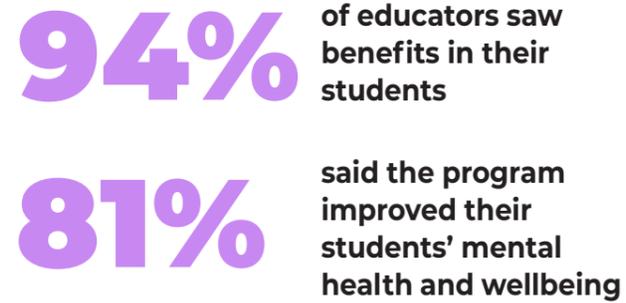
Some students also described deeper emotional learning and stronger self-awareness:

“  
**Smiling Mind helped me notice my feelings instead of ignoring them... and taught me ways to breathe, pause, and feel more in control.**

— Year 6 student

## Student outcomes (rated by educators): benefits visible in behaviour and learning readiness

Educators consistently reported that program benefits were visible in students' day-to-day behaviour and classroom readiness. In 2025:



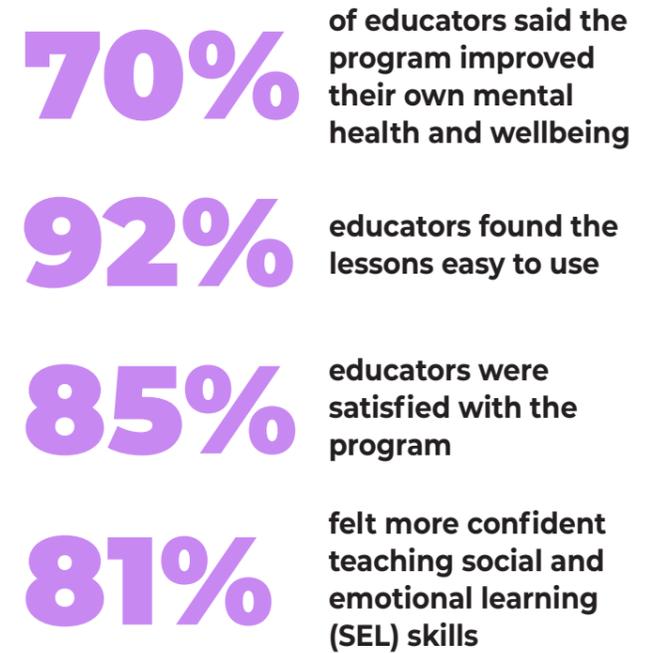
Teachers described Smiling Mind as an effective "reset" after breaks and a consistent tool to support self-regulation and transitions:

“  
**Students are more settled...Some of them ask to do the Smiling Mind meditations when they come in after lunch... demonstrating that self-regulation and self-awareness has grown amongst students.**

— Year 6 classroom teacher

## Educator outcomes (rated by educators): improved wellbeing and confidence to teach SEL

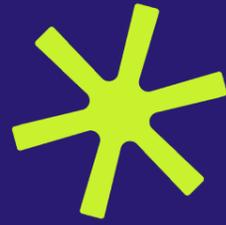
In 2025, the program continued to support educators themselves, reinforcing that successful implementation starts with staff wellbeing and confidence.



Educators also described the value of a shared language that supports emotional literacy and everyday problem-solving:

“  
**The students have been given the language needed to express their needs and thoughts about social and emotional learning experiences.**

— Foundation/prep classroom teacher



## Why it matters

These findings reinforce that mental fitness can, and should be developed early, through consistent practice in the place where children spend most of their time: school. In 2025, students reported feeling calmer, more connected and better able to manage big emotions, while educators reported stronger wellbeing outcomes and growing confidence to teach these skills.

Smiling Mind's ambition is bold: to see our Primary School Program embedded in every primary school across Australia, ensuring every child has access to evidence-informed mental fitness skills as part of everyday learning.

**We are deeply grateful to the funders and partners already committed to this vision, whose support enables schools to implement the program, and helps build the foundations for generational change in mental health.**

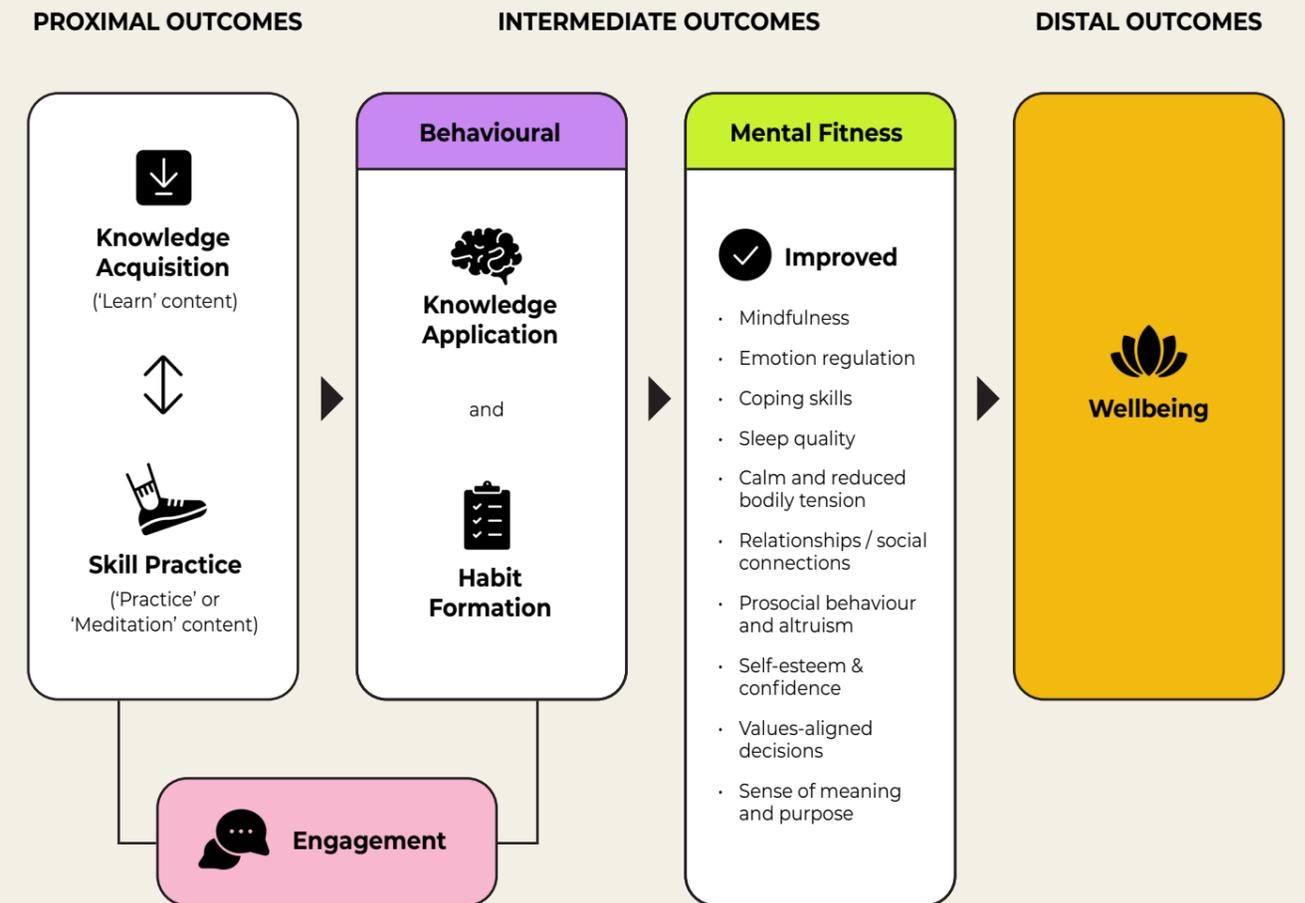
## Our Theory of Change

### Designing (and measuring) for Impact

School program evaluation data collected across 2024 and 2025 confirms elements of our Theory of Change:

- ✓ Program use is associated with more mental fitness skill development
- ✓ Engagement (enjoyment and interest) with the program is associated with mental fitness skill development
- ✓ Mental fitness skills practice associated with wellbeing

As we continue to evaluate our programs we aim to further evaluate the pathways to change and the broader impacts of the program including school engagement, school climate and long-term mental health outcomes.





# Borden Primary School, WA



## Building calm, focus and self-regulation through everyday practice

Borden Primary School is a small, multi-age K–6 school in regional Western Australia. Like many rural and remote schools, staff support students with diverse learning needs while having limited access to specialist wellbeing services.

The school was seeking a simple, evidence-informed approach to strengthen students' self-regulation, reduce low-level classroom dysregulation after transitions, and build a shared language for wellbeing across the whole school.

## The approach

Borden Primary School implemented Smiling Mind's Primary School Program as a whole-school routine embedded into the existing school day.

- All classes from Kindergarten to Year 6 participate, creating consistency and shared expectations.
- A short 5–7 minute guided practice is used daily as a post-lunch reset.
- A longer weekly lesson draws on Smiling Mind's digital classroom resources.
- Practices are adapted by age: movement-based activities in Early Years, and student-led choice in upper primary.

After a short staff onboarding and modelling session, teachers embedded the practices into existing classroom routines, supporting strong uptake and long-term sustainability.

## The impact

Since introducing Smiling Mind, the school has observed:

- Calmer starts to afternoon learning sessions
- Faster de-escalation following transitions
- Improved student focus and readiness to learn
- Students independently requesting mindfulness strategies before challenging tasks

The consistency and simplicity of the routine has supported both teacher confidence and student agency, helping wellbeing skills become part of everyday learning.



**Smiling Mind has given our students practical tools to settle, focus and learn and it's easy for teachers to sustain. It's a small routine with a big impact.**

— Viktoria Lance, Principal



## \* Why it matters

Borden Primary School believes access to a consistent, low-cost and evidence-informed program like Smiling Mind could lift baseline wellbeing across Western Australia, particularly in regional and remote communities where specialist support is limited.

This case study reflects how Smiling Mind's Primary School Program supports schools to embed mental fitness skills into everyday practice, strengthening learning readiness, wellbeing and classroom climate at scale.

# Agnes Water State School, QLD

## Building a culture of kindness, calm and lifelong mental fitness through everyday practice

Agnes Water State School is a regional primary school in Queensland, supporting 218 students in an Outer Regional community. Like many schools, they recognised that learning and wellbeing are inseparable, and wanted a practical, preventative approach to help children build the skills to thrive.

Over time, Smiling Mind has become embedded not just as a program, but as a shared language and way of being across classrooms, staff culture and family life.

“  
**The most beneficial change that has occurred in our school is that culture of kindness, the language of compassion that comes through in everything that the students are doing.**

— Leigh Tankey, Head of Curriculum

### The approach

Agnes Water implemented Smiling Mind as a whole school wellbeing approach, aligned to Positive Behaviour for Learning and embedded into classroom routines for long term sustainability.

Key elements included classroom delivery across every year level with new concepts explored fortnightly, daily guided meditations paired with reflective discussion to build emotional literacy and help-seeking, student journals and wellbeing spaces including Meditation Corners to support independent regulation, and a range of whole school rituals designed to embed kindness, gratitude and shared language.

These included a weekly Kindness Jar initiative where students acknowledge acts of kindness they have seen or experienced, whole school meditations to open parade, themed initiatives linked to specific lessons such as Acts of Kindness week, and gratitude letter writing in the lead up to World Teachers Day.

Staff wellbeing was intentionally prioritised, with Smiling Mind practices embedded into staff meetings to build consistency, confidence and modelling. Parent sessions and home practice further reinforced skills beyond the classroom, supported by a clear referral pathway through the school's Student Wellbeing Action Team for children needing additional support.

### The challenge

The school was seeking a consistent, whole-school approach to strengthen students' self regulation and emotional literacy, improve calm, focus and readiness to learn particularly after transitions, reduce low level classroom dysregulation, and build staff confidence through shared, strengths-based language.

### The impact

Over multiple years of sustained implementation, the school has observed meaningful shifts across student wellbeing, relationships and learning readiness.

Teachers reported calmer classrooms, improved focus and smoother transitions back into learning, supported by a shared mindful language that makes redirection easier and more consistent.

Students have developed stronger emotional literacy and self regulation, becoming more able to identify emotions, recognise anxiety and seek help earlier, while reinforcing skills with each other.

“  
**Smiling Mind has made me feel more confident talking about my feelings. It's stopped a lot of bullying.**

— Student

Families also reported benefits beyond the school gates, with children using strategies at home to support calm and connection.

“  
**By spending only a few minutes on the program each day the kids are preparing their brains for their learning. These are skills I'm sure our kids will use well into the future.**

— Year 5 parent

Staff described personal benefits as well, including improved stress management and greater confidence in teaching wellbeing consistently.

### \* Why it matters

Agnes Water State School's story shows what's possible when mental fitness becomes part of everyday school life for every member of the school community. By investing in staff wellbeing alongside student learning, the school has built a sustainable culture where emotional regulation, compassion and gratitude are modelled daily.

When staff are supported to build their own emotional resilience, they are better equipped to teach these skills with authenticity and confidence. Strong leadership belief and commitment has been critical in embedding this approach and strengthening wellbeing and learning outcomes across the school.

“ **Smiling Mind should be in every classroom, it should be in every school, it should be in every staff room.** ”

— Leigh Tankey



**More information can be found  
on the Smiling Mind website  
[www.smilingmind.com.au](http://www.smilingmind.com.au)**



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**Smiling Mind is a 100% not-for-profit  
organisation that aims to create  
generational change in mental health.**