...I think the most significant change that I’ve become aware of, through being involved in the values project, as reported to me by my staff, was that the students seem a lot calmer, they seem a lot happier to be in class. But most significantly was that it, being involved in the project has significantly improved relationships between the staff and the students. And part of that has been observed, sort of across all curriculum areas, in the sense that the kids are much less self-centred than when they first started in the project.

Initially when we started talking about the values in an explicit sense, and getting an understanding of what the values meant, I noticed that there was even a bit of self-centredness in their understanding of the values. Like the value of ‘respect’ for example, it was about people having respect for me. ‘Freedom’ was about my freedom, and ‘fair go’ was about other people giving me a fair go. But because we had the focus on giving, it gave the kids the opportunity to make that shift. And just to give you an example of, in a woodwork class for example, when kids were halfway through doing a job and got released, if the teacher would say ‘Well come on guys, how about we finish this guy’s job so it can be sent up to Property and sent on to him’, and the kids would go, ‘No, stuff him. We’re not going to finish his job. We’re doing our own job’. But through the weeks of the project he noticed that the kids were very willing to finish off another kid’s job so that it could be sent on to him and there was a very much a shift away from ‘what’s in it for me’, to them having a healthy respect for other individuals and a definite understanding of how giving can be quite altruistic and there doesn’t have to be something in it for me.

And one student in particular, who I’ve tracked personally through the course of the project, I’ve seen enormous changes in him and he’s been involved in a whole lot of different activities to do with giving on the sporting field, in hospitality, in woodwork, and just in his core curriculum. And probably the culminating event for him in my observation was an essay that he wrote for an essay competition that wasn’t actually anything to do with values. He was writing an essay on my local hero, and, sorry, and he wrote it about his mum as his local hero, and even though this lesson had absolutely nothing to do with values, when you read his essay, as rough and ready as it is, it’s just dripping with all the values of respect and caring, compassion and all of that sort of stuff. So I think that that was probably the most significant change that I noticed out of the project.