

tificate year have been going to the centre to take a look and help out.

A couple from Hamilton's Fairfield College visited the centre, and the Huntly pupils encouraged them to go back and set up one of their own.

Shelley Saneriva said they would like to see more such centres set up in other areas, and she hoped the Huntly pupils would spread the word about the benefits to be gained.

The pupils admit there was a potential for them to "play up" when they should be studying, especially in the times when there were no teachers or parents there to keep an eye on them.

But, said Joyce, they learnt not to be afraid to tell each other to shut up if anyone became distracting.

"We are moving away from the parent-teacher control thing," she added.

An aspect of the centre which keeps coming through is the sense of family and unity among the group which had developed. Many of the regulars also belong to the school's Maori culture group, Arahū Pōkeka, and their shared lives had established "a unity here, it's really big".

If a pupil doesn't turn up without explanation, the others will go and find out why. When one becomes discouraged, upset, depressed or dissatisfied for any reason, the rest rally around him or her and help them recover their enthusiasm.

And every night before they go to bed they hold "bitch" sessions, when they air complaints about one another's behaviours. This helps get rid of tensions, they say.

Without those sessions, "I think we would all be in little groups whispering about each other," Shelley said.

And the fact that the centre is on their marae has helped in a number of ways.

Pupils studying Maori language at school get a boost from being in an environment where the language is most

frequently used. Some of the project employment programme workers based there wander in sometimes and help them with their Maori language, as do some of the Maori elders living around the marae.

Hearing the language spoken naturally around them has helped their studies, they said.

And both the pupils and Mr Hughes are full of praise for the marae leaders, who were among the first to get behind the centre with support and help.

"They have given us, like, control of the marae," Joyce said. "They have not put any pressure on us to pay for power or anything like that." (The pupils bring their own food and "muck in together" to prepare meals).

By the time this edition of *Tu Tangata* is published, the 32 Huntly College pupils who were attending the marae homework centre last year should have found out in the mail just how useful their time there was.



Joyce Maipi... "little brothers and sisters running around."

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