AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH SIGNIFICANT SEND IN A MAINSTREAM SETTING.

by

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades we have witnessed unprecedented growth in inclusive education policies and rhetoric. The inclusion of children with SEND has become an important aspect of the educational system in England, and there is a wealth of research which has sought to examine the perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education of those working on the 'frontline' of implementation. It is evident, however, that the findings of this research have been contradictory and inconclusive (Cassady, 2011). Educators have reported both positive views about inclusive policy and practices as well as negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEND, attributed to various barriers (for example, see Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Cassady, 2011; de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011). Despite the complexities involved in understanding educators' perceptions of inclusion, at present there is limited qualitative research which offers an in-depth account of practitioners' lived experiences of including children with SEND in mainstream settings. The current study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to address gaps in existing research by examining the experiences of eight teachers and teaching assistants within a single mainstream primary school in North-West England. The research seeks to explore how participants make sense of their experiences of including children with significant SEND and the facilitators and barriers encountered to the inclusion of these children. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to inform understanding of the unique and individual accounts of each participant. Comparisons were drawn across the cases to identify patterns of commonalities and divergences, from which four superordinate themes were abstracted: 'the personal and professional challenge'; 'perceptions of children with SEND'; 'the mainstream school context'; and 'being part of the human system of support'. These findings are discussed with reference to extant literature and the research questions. The investigation demonstrates that participants' interpretations of their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting are likely to be influenced by the interaction between multiple, interrelated systems which surround them, which can be considered educator-related and environment-related in nature. Implications of the research findings for educational professionals are considered.

DEDICATIONS

To my Mum, Dad and sister, Leah. Your support has been unwavering and complete. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ASC- Autistic Spectrum Condition

CPD- Continuous Professional Development

EBD- Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

EHCP - Education, Health and Care Plan

EP - Educational Psychologist

EYFS- Early Years Foundation Stage

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

ITT- Initial Teacher Training

SEMH- Social, Emotional and Mental Health

SEN- Special Educational Needs

SENCo- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

SEND- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

TA- teaching assistant

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Chapter Overview

The current research forms the basis of a thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at The University of Birmingham. This Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study explores the lived experiences of educators with regards to the inclusion of children with significant Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The research was conducted within one mainstream primary school in the North-West of England, in which I am currently employed as a full-time teacher. This chapter presents the origins, context and rationale for the research and the aims and purpose of the study. My position as the researcher is also detailed. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the thesis structure.

1.2: Origins of the Research

The topic of the current research is of particular interest and importance to me, both personally and professionally. It is necessary to declare experiences which have shaped the way in which I view the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings and which have undoubtedly influenced my choice of study topic.

The concept of inclusion within the British education system is often taken for granted; as a relatively recently qualified teacher, with a little over six years of professional experience, the rhetoric of inclusive education has certainly existed throughout my teaching career. During the first three years of my teaching practice, I feel that my knowledge of issues surrounding the inclusion of children with significant SEND was relatively limited. The pre-service training I received at university during Initial Teacher Training (ITT) was extremely brief and any training or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) I completed after qualifying was restricted, generally 'condition-specific' and provided reactively (for example, in 2014 I attended a course entitled 'Step Forward to Support Pupils with Down Syndrome in Mainstream Settings' after a child with Down Syndrome joined my class). In terms of direct experience, I only taught one child over the three year period who could be described as having significant SEND (in that they had a Statement of SEN). Although at this stage of my career I may have held a somewhat naïve position, I regarded inclusive education as an ideal model for education and a goal that we should strive to achieve.

After three years' teaching service I spent two years studying on the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme at The University of Birmingham. My time on the course amplified my commitment to the philosophy of inclusive education but also raised my awareness of issues and debates surrounding the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream schools. Upon returning to teaching in 2017, I continued to reflect upon the fact that, both conceptually and practically, inclusion is not unproblematic (Hegarty, 2001). By consulting relevant literature, I came to understand that a number of researchers have highlighted the gap between ideals and realities of inclusive education (Haug, 2017). Moreover, I discovered that findings of studies regarding educator attitudes towards inclusive education present a confusing picture; as noted by de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011, p. 333) "teachers seem to endorse inclusive education in general, but do not like to be involved when it concerns their own teaching practice". Despite believing myself to be an advocate for inclusive education, I found that I could empathise with this conflict in outlook. Teaching in a mainstream classroom, with a relatively high proportion of children with SEND over the past three years has highlighted to me that, in practice, there are numerous factors which can influence and shape educator experiences and perceptions of inclusion. Certainly, at times, I feel it can be a challenging task to meet the individual needs of pupils with significant SEND, whilst providing quality teaching for the whole class. These reflections upon the complexities of my own personal and professional views about inclusive education, and those of my colleagues voiced during professional discussions, provided the catalyst for the current research.

1.3: Research Context and Rationale

In recent years there has been a shift towards inclusion within education legislation, which has affirmed the rights of children with SEND to be provided for within the mainstream system (Varcoe and Boyle, 2014). On the assumption that the successful implementation of inclusive policy is influenced, to a certain extent, by educational professionals working on the 'front line' being positive about it, there is a wealth of research which has sought to explore and examine educators' perceptions of the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). However, it is evident that the findings of this research have been inconsistent (Cassady, 2011). Practitioners have reported mixed views about inclusive policy and practices, with negative attitude towards the inclusion of children with SEND attributed to various barriers (for example, see Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden,

2000; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Cassady, 2011; de Boer et al., 2011). Moreover, the majority of these studies and reviews have relied upon international research which, given the disparity in educational systems and policies, may limit the applicability of the findings to the UK and England.

Given the complexities involved in understanding educators' attitudes towards inclusion, it is somewhat surprising that there is, at present, limited qualitative research that provides an in-depth account of the lived experiences of including children with SEND in mainstream settings. Furthermore, existing research has primarily focused on educators' perspectives upon the general idea of inclusion, with fewer studies focusing specifically upon their experiences and perceptions of including pupils with significant SEND in their mainstream classrooms (Cassady, 2011). When reviewing the literature, it also very quickly becomes apparent that many studies which focus on educator perceptions of inclusion fail to capture the views of those who tend to work most directly with children with significant SEND (Webster et al 2011); whilst there is a relatively large body of literature that focuses on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, only a small minority of studies represent the views of teaching assistants (TAs; see, for example, Glazzard, 2011; Mackenzie, 2011; Sikes, Lawson and Parker, 2007). O'Brien and Garner (2001) highlight that teaching assistants are frequently marginalised in published literature and treated as passive subjects rather than active participants. They talk of a 'voice vacuum' for TAs and a need for conversations with them, rather than about them.

The belief that "if you want to know what is going on, it is always sensible to ask the people who are doing the work themselves" (Kelly, 1955, in Reid 2006, p.41) underpins the rationale for this research. It is vital that research in education takes account of the educators' perspective; taking a more in-depth look at the unique experiences of mainstream teachers and teaching assistants in relation to including children with significant SEND is clearly meaningful and may help to provide a more adequate and useful construction of the current situation.

1.4: Research Aims and Purpose

The current study aims to address gaps in the existing research by offering a detailed exploration of the lived experience of educators including children with significant SEND within a mainstream primary school, thus offering new insight into a previously studied area. Unlike many previous studies, which have tended to reduce individuals' experiences through

quantitative methods, the current study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to elucidate and unpick the unique experiences of participants. To my knowledge, this is the first study to use IPA to explore educators' experiences of teaching children with significant SEND. As only a limited number of recent qualitative studies have been undertaken in England, the current study offers a useful addition to the debate on inclusion and specifically to educator perceptions of inclusion. Also, by involving both teachers and teaching assistants as participants in the research, the study brings the relatively unacknowledged 'voices' of TAs into the debate. At a local level, it is anticipated that this study will have school-wide benefits, in that it will raise professional awareness of the lived experiences of educators within the setting in relation to including children with significant SEND, and the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of these children that are encountered. It is expected that, in stimulating discussion and encouraging reflection upon current practice, the findings of the current research will contribute towards positive systemic change within the setting. Moreover, whilst in IPA immediate claims of the research are bounded by the group studied, the findings of the current research may still inform and interest the wider teaching community.

The intention of the study is to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in their mainstream setting. Moreover, the study aims to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

My two research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?
2. What facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

1.5: Researcher Positionality

As a teacher, currently teaching full-time in the Reception class of the mainstream primary school in which data was collected, I can be considered an 'insider researcher' (Berger, 2015), which places me in a unique and privileged position to write this thesis. I understand and appreciate that my own interpretations and sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts and that I cannot assume a position of neutrality as a researcher. Whilst I accept that research of this kind always involves a degree of subjectivity, through the

practice of reflexivity I have actively explored and exposed my own consciousness to ensure that I have an understanding of my bias. I have endeavoured to include my readers in the reflexive process, so that they are aware of my position as researcher and are able to consider how this might have influenced the research findings (Langdridge, 2007). Reflexivity and researcher position are discussed further in Section 4.7.

1.6: Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises seven chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

The first introductory chapter presents the origins, context and rationale for the research and the aims and purpose of the study. My position as the researcher is also detailed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Part One

This chapter explores how Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and inclusion are currently conceptualised within the education system in England.

Chapter Three: Literature Review: Part Two

Chapter Three offers a systematic review of the literature regarding educator perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Chapter Four offers a rationale for the choice of methodology and research methods used in the study. An account of how the research was conducted is also provided.

Chapter Five: Findings: Part One

This chapter provides an account of the in-depth analysis of individual participant interviews.

Chapter Six: Findings: Part Two

Chapter Six then moves on to draw comparisons across the cases, highlighting patterns of convergences and divergences across participant accounts.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

Within the final chapter, the group-level themes which were abstracted from analysis are discussed in relation to my two research questions and existing theory and literature. Strengths and limitations of the study, areas for future research and implications for educational professionals are considered.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART ONE

2.1: Chapter Overview

This chapter explores how Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and inclusion are currently conceptualised within the educational system in England. Historical context is discussed, as is ongoing debate regarding SEND and inclusion in education. Current SEND and inclusion policies in England are also detailed.

2.2: Conceptualising Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

2.2.1: Defining SEND

Currently in England, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is the legal term adhered to within the education system. As defined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 15-16):

> A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:
>
> - has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
> - has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

For some, the ambiguous nature of this definition of SEND is problematic. Indeed, Baroness Warnock, who chaired the committee which first introduced the term Special Educational Needs to the English education system, noted that the definition of SEN is the "…purest vicious circle you will ever know. A special need is defined as 'any need that the school needs to take special measures to meet'. Well that is not much of a definition but it is the only definition there is." (Warnock, 2005).

According to a recent Special Educational Needs report from the Department for Education, currently 15.5% of pupils in England have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (DfE, 2020). SEND is an all-encompassing term which reflects huge diversity in children's learning and development profiles. Whilst clearly children with SEND do not form

homogenous groups, children's SEND are generally thought of in the following four broad areas of need: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs. However, in practice, it is evident that "individual children or young people often have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change over time" (DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 85).

2.2.2: Historical Context of SEND

The term 'Special Educational Needs' was first officially introduced in the 1981 Education Act (DES, 1981), following a recommendation in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), which remains the most comprehensive review of SEN to be commissioned by a UK government (Webster, 2018). The overarching label of SEN replaced the previous 11 categories of handicap encoded by the 1944 Education Act (MoE, 1944) which included for example, 'educationally subnormal', 'maladjusted' and 'delicate' as well as blind, deaf and epileptic. The conceptualisation of SEN marked a move away from a sharp dichotomy between the non-handicapped majority and handicapped minority. Instead, the Warnock Report highlighted the complexities of individual needs and proposed that children with SEN are part of a continuum of learners. Indeed, the authors of the report noted that, rather than the 2% of pupils previously identified as having a formal handicap, as many as one in five children at some time during their school career may require some form of special educational provision. The Act also introduced Statements of SEN, designed to encourage, where possible, the education of those with SEN in mainstream settings (Hughes and Lackenby, 2015). Local Authorities were now obliged to make statutory assessments of children with significant SEN in order to establish whether they required a Statement to document their educational needs and the specific support they would require.

As noted by Armstrong and Barton (2007), the history of the tenet of SEN is a fine example of the complexities and contradictions involved in imposing new discourses on deeply rooted traditions and practices. Paradoxically, although the term Special Educational Needs focused on educational needs rather than individual impairments, it also became a mega-category denoting difference and distinguishing between those with and those without SEN. If, as the Warnock Report suggested, 20% of children had SEN at some time during their school career, by implication 80% did not. Arguably then, the Warnock Report simply provided a new system of broader categories and the introduction of new, less pejorative labels (Barton, 2018).

2.2.3: SEND and the Labelling Debate

Forty years have passed since the concept of SEN was first officially introduced and the term has endured through the various acts and pieces of legislation that have followed (albeit redefined as SEND in recent years, relating to disabled children and young people who require special educational provision, as well as those with SEN). The term SEND is one that has been subject to considerable deliberation with no clear resolution, nested within the wider 'labelling debate' which has a long history in the field of special education (Bailey, 1998; Lloyd and Norris, 1999; Soder, 1989). The term was originally created to protect and support children, and many educators maintain that assigning SEND labels to children and young people can lead to opportunities (in particular, extra resources) not otherwise gained if the child did not have a label (Gillman, Heyman and Swain, 2000). Moreover, it has been suggested that labels increase awareness and understanding of needs, reduce ambiguities and provide clear communication devices for professional exchanges of information (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). Conversely, others have questioned whether it remains useful or indeed appropriate to label children and young people as having SEND. According to Dunne (2009, p. 52) "each time difference is named, made visible or created…the invisibility and the power of a fictionalised normativity, and of hegemony, is strengthened and secured".

Whilst the SEND term may serve some educational functions, the potential negative effects of labelling are significant. Arishi and Boyle (2017) note that labelling children and young people with SEND may be harmful, since it can have a major impact on their own lives, as well as that of their families, and can also negatively influence educational and employment futures. Labelling children as having SEND can lead to stigmatisation, discrimination and exclusion, in addition to lowered expectations about what a 'labelled' child can achieve and a focus on within-child deficits (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). Furthermore, the use of the SEND label may erode the self-competence of teaching professionals, encouraging a view that they are not qualified to educate these particular pupils (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). Ho (2004, p.91) noted that "it is ironic that a system that strives to provide equal educational opportunity would require children to be labelled in order to qualify for equality". However, just because the use of the SEND label is problematic does not mean that we should stop acknowledging and recognising difference; clearly we need to have a framework that accepts and accommodates diverse developmental patterns and learning styles. Rather, the problem is that we often make erroneous assumptions about the causes of differences and difficulties. As highlighted by Ho (2004), labelling children as having SEND may serve to reinforce the medical model of learning difficulties, leading educators to look for problems within the

child, rather than focusing on the educational and social systems which may affect their learning. For Lauchlan and Boyle (2007, p. 41) "those working in special education need to adopt an ethical framework to the application of labelling, one which can be considered valuable…in terms of whether it opens [and not closes] doors and creates opportunities for the person concerned".

2.2.4: SEND and Models of Disability

Whilst SEND has been viewed by society and individuals from a diverse range of perspectives (Slee, 1998), two prominent ideological frameworks exist, referred to as the social and medical models of disability (LoBianco and Sheppard-Jones, 2007). The medical model views SEND as a deficit located within the individual, which should be treated or cured. The model maintains that pathology or disorder is the basis for defining disability or learning difficulty (Conner, 2016). Moreover, the medical model implies that it is the responsibility of the individual to fit in with society. The social model argues that SEND only exist because those with impairments are oppressed by society; barriers and prejudices, not individual impairments, cause SEND, and these barriers should be removed by society (Shakespeare 2002). Proponents of this approach assume that the current attainments of children with SEND reflect the nature and quality of previous learning experiences and that those children will learn when taught appropriately (Elshabrawy and Hassanein, 2015). At one extreme then, the social model holds that "there are no children with learning difficulties, only adults with teaching difficulties" (Frederickson and Cline, 2002, p. 40).

Although the disability models are often presented as having succeeded each other, it would be more correct to consider that they co-exist or become dominant in particular places and times (Devlieger, 2005). As noted by Devlieger (2005, p. 10):

> …thinking that one mode of thought has totally replaced another mode of thought is illusory. It is always a matter of dominance, of situational context, and in particular of time, i.e. of not yet having achieved a particular mode of thinking and the fact that older dominant modes of thinking never leave us.

Analysis of the two models brings to light certain limitations inherent in each. A major criticism of the medical model is that it is insufficiently holistic, viewing pupils with SEN as somehow lacking, and marginalising (or even ignoring) the power of wider environmental factors. Conversely, a critique of the social model is that, in denying the role of within-child factors, the model fails to address impairment as an observable attribute of an individual that is an essential aspect of their lived experience (Palmer and Harley, 2012). It seems that

considering either of these two models on its own is an overly-simplistic viewpoint (Terzi, 2005).

While typically described as opposing, a number of scholars claim that the medical and social models each have something important to contribute (Blustein, 2012). An interactional approach to understanding SEND provides a synthesis of the medical and social models, emphasising that it is impossible to separate the learning competencies of individual children from the environment within which they live and function. SEND result from the "complex interaction between the child's strengths and weaknesses, the level of support available and the appropriateness of the education being provided" (Frederickson and Cline, 2009, p. 38). SEND are not just a reflection of pupils' inherent difficulties or disabilities, but rather are often related to factors within educational settings which can reduce or exacerbate problems. The interactional model has been widely endorsed in the educational community as a framework for conceptualising SEND and is espoused and advocated in current SEND policy and legislation (DfE and DoH, 2015).

2.2.5: Current SEND Policy in England

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms in 2014 have been reported as the most significant reforms of their kind for over 30 years (Curran, Mortimore and Riddell, 2017). Through the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) the Government sought to effect cultural and systemic change within the area of SEND and education, emphasising the development of an aspirational and outcome-based system which aimed to ensure that all children and young people with SEND and their families are able to access the right support and provision to meet their needs. The Act outlined a revised SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) which came into effect in September 2014 (replacing the previous SEN Code of Practice [DfES, 2001a]) and provided statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people.

The SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) highlights the duty of educational settings to ensure systems are in place to identify, assess and meet the Special Education Needs of children through appropriate special educational provision (that is, "educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of the same age" [DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 285]). The new Code redefines SEN to include children with disabilities (described as "physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" [DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 16]) who require special educational provision. As such,

the Code is also upheld by the Equality Act (HM Government, 2010), which identifies disability as a protected characteristic and outlines the statutory duty of educational settings to ensure that pupils with disabilities are protected from direct and indirect discrimination. The introduction of the new Code heralded a number of significant changes to SEND education and provision. Firstly, there is a clearer focus on engagement and participation of children and young people and their families. Indeed, measures to ensure that pupils and their parents are placed at the centre of service delivery are woven into the structure of the legislation at a number of levels (Lamb et al, 2016). There exists a plethora of research highlighting positive outcomes emerging from learner and family participation in decisions regarding education (Walsh, 2017). Not only is there a moral and legal obligation for children to have the right to participate but from a more pragmatic position, children and young people can contribute insights that can lead to better-informed educational decisions. Moreover, transparency and joint working can improve parental confidence and the working relationships between parents and schools, and parents and the Local Authority (Penfold et al., 2009; Lamb, 2009). Within the revised Code there is also an emphasis on fostering effective collaboration between external agencies. Through joint planning and commissioning of education, health and care services the reforms aim to make best use of all resources available in a given area in order to improve outcomes for children in an efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. Further, there is a stronger commitment to supporting long-term outcomes for learners with SEN, with the Code offering protection and support from birth to 25. There is a focus on supporting successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment.

The staged approach to meeting children's Special Educational Needs through the School Action and School Action Plus levels of support which existed under the previous Code is replaced in the revised Code with a single category of SEN Support and a cyclical process of 'assess, plan, do, review' that is known as the graduated approach to SEND. The graduated approach recognises that there is a continuum of Special Educational Needs and that, by frequently revisiting, refining and revising earlier decisions with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and increasing specialist expertise, interventions will be developed to match the individual and unique SEN of pupils. As with the previous Code, the revised Code acknowledges that the needs of some pupils cannot be met at the SEN Support level. If, despite an educational setting taking relevant action to identify and meet a pupil's SEND, they do not make expected progress, the pupil may meet the eligibility criteria for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

EHCPs, which replaced Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments in 2014, are legal documents which describe a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs and outline the support and provision that should be provided to meet them. They are issued by the Local Authority for children and young people aged between 0-25 after an EHC needs assessment has determined that an EHCP is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies. EHCPs are issued only to those with the most significant and complex needs who require high levels of support; currently in England 3.3% of pupils have an EHCP or Statement of SEN (DfE, 2020).

It is apparent that the majority of those involved in the SEND system do not dispute the core principles and aims of the recent reforms, in providing a stronger voice for pupils and developing closer co-operation between education, social care and health services to improve the long-term outcomes for children and young people (Lamb et al., 2016). Whilst the reforms may be considered 'the right thing to do' (Lamb et al, 2016), their implementation has proved a significant challenge, with uneven change across different Local Authorities. Local Area SEND inspections conducted jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (Ofsted and CQC, 2017) found that, in over a third of the local areas inspected, leaders across education, health and care did not involve children and young people or their parents adequately in planning and reviewing provision. Furthermore, the report noted that there has not been enough progress in implementing a coordinated 0–25 service for children and young people who have SEND, and highlighted that partnership working between education, health and care professionals was weaker in mainstream education than in special schools. Perhaps even more importantly, the inspections found that pupils with SEND have a much poorer experience of the education system than their peers, and are excluded or missing from schools much more frequently than other pupils. Moreover, many parents of learners with SEND reported concerns about the quality of staff training and teachers' ability to meet their child's specific needs in mainstream schools. It seems then that, whilst the 2014 reforms set in motion positive change within the area of SEND and education, there is still a long way to go before SEND systems are truly person-centred, responsive, easy to navigate and efficient.

2.2.6: Teacher/Teaching Assistant Education and SEND

According to the current SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 99), "teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff". Whilst there has been an obligation for all schools in England to employ a Special Educational

Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) since the role was established in the 1994 SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994), it is apparent that their role is strategic and advisory; SENCos are responsible for coordinating services for children with SEND and ensuring that "all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN" (DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 89).

Given that current policy highlights that teachers have overall responsibility for ensuring children with SEND make appropriate progress in their class, it is interesting to note that, in recent years, research has concluded that there has been a lack of emphasis on training teachers to support children with SEND in both Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) frameworks (Mintz et al., 2015). Indeed, a report by the Education and Skills Select Committee noted that "the Government needs to radically increase investment in training its workforce so that all staff, including teaching staff, are fully equipped and resourced to improve outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities." (Education and Skills Committee, 2006). No doubt partly in response to this and other key reports such as the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) which drew similar conclusions, the government has placed increasingly greater emphasis on building educators' capacity to meet the need of pupils with SEND. A range of initiatives have been implemented in England including: the introduction of mandatory national training for SENCos; a revision of the national Teacher' Standards to strengthen the focus on support for children with SEND; the development of SEND CPD materials to support the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs); and a commitment to ITT providers to secure a greater number of trainee teacher placements in special school settings (Cheminais, 2015). Despite this, SEND training continues to be acknowledged as a weakness in both ITT and CPD. The Carter review of Initial Teacher Training (Carter, 2015) noted that ITT inadequately prepares new teachers to address SEND and emphasised that training in how to support children with SEND "should not be treated as an optional extra but as a priority" (p.24). Moreover, a recent survey conducted by the NASUWT teachers' union found that a high proportion of respondents reported significant difficulties in accessing high-quality effective SEN-related training or CPD (NASUWT, 2018).

Although teachers may be ultimately accountable for the children with SEND within their class, it is clear that teaching assistants have become an essential component of practice (if not policy), with regard to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools and the delivery of curriculum interventions for low-attaining pupils (Webster, Blatchford and Russell, 2013). As noted by Webster et al. (2010, p.331) the TA role has evolved in such a

way that "TAs have become the de facto primary educators of pupils with SEN. TAs are placed in situations each day in which they have to make pedagogical decisions beyond their expertise". This is despite the fact that "no literature to date has offered a compelling rationale in support of assigning the least qualified school personnel, namely teaching assistants, to students with the most complex learning challenges" (Giangreco, 2010, p. 341). It has been consistently reported that TAs are often required to undertake roles for which they are under-qualified and inadequately prepared (Giangreco, 2010). Webster and Blatchford (2015) found that although teachers often mistakenly position TAs as the 'expert' because of the valuable knowledge they possess about the pupils they support, TAs have considerable gaps in their SEND knowledge and training. Moreover, Webster et al. (2010) highlighted that teachers are often inadequately prepared to work with and supervise TAs (only 25% of teachers reported having had access to pre-service or in-service training to work with teaching assistants), and that planning time between teachers and TAs was insufficient (75% of teacher reported having no allocated planning or feedback time with TAs). It is clear that inappropriately expecting TAs to take on teacher-type duties, without adequate training, preparation or supervision, is highly likely to have a detrimental bearing on the progress and development of pupils with SEND.

2.3: Conceptualising Inclusion

2.3.1: Evolution of Inclusive Education

In recent decades, there has been a substantial growth in inclusive education policies and rhetoric. With the advent of New Labour in 1997, inclusive education became part of the 'official script' for schools to translate into practice (Glazzard, 2013), nested within the government's wider social inclusion agenda. Whilst it may be observed that New Labour claimed ownership of inclusion, the ideology of inclusion should not be viewed as a wholly new phenomenon; as noted by Hodkinson (2011), its origins can be traced back to the early 1900s and the welfare pioneers who believed in a non-segregated schooling system (O'Brien, 2001). Indeed, the belief that children identified as having Special Educational Needs should attend their local schools was enshrined in the 1944 Education Act (MoE, 1944, p. 27):

> The arrangements made by a local education authority for the special educational treatment of pupils of any such category shall, so far as is practicable, provide for the education of pupils in whose case the disability is serious in special schools appropriate for that category, but where that is impracticable, or where the disability

is not serious, the arrangements may provide for the giving of such education in any school maintained or assisted by the local education authority.

In its current form, inclusion in England has been heavily influenced by the 1978 Warnock Report (DES, 1978), and subsequent Education Act in 1981 (DES, 1981). A key theme in the Warnock Report centred upon integrating pupils with Special Educational Needs into mainstream schools. As the Warnock Report explained it, integrated education reflected a "consensus of public feeling that handicapped people should, so far as possible, be enabled to take their place in the general community" (DES, 1978, p. 115). The recommendations of the Warnock report soon found a legislative home in the 1981 Education Act, which identified that children with SEN could be educated in mainstream schools, where it was felt to be appropriate.

Interestingly, integration policies advocated in the Warnock report (DES, 1978) and Education Act (DES, 1981) which followed have been contested in more recent years. Integration can be seen as an assimilationist process, in that children with SEN are required to adapt to the policies, rules and routines of a largely unchanged mainstream school environment (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). The onus for change is placed upon those seeking to enter mainstream schools, rather than on mainstream schools to adapt and change themselves in order to include a greater diversity of pupils. More recently, the term `inclusion' has come to supersede `integration' in the vocabulary of educators.

In 1994 representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations met in Salamanca, Spain, to affirm the rights of individuals with special needs and develop an international consensus on inclusion and diversity in education. Following the publication of the Salamanca Statement, which determined that countries should "concentrate their efforts on the development of inclusive schools" (UNESCO, 1994, p.13), the New Labour government radically advanced a policy of inclusive education through its Green Paper (DfEE, 1997) and Special Educational Needs Action Programme (DfEE, 1998). In doing so, the government "aligned the English education system for the first time with the international movement towards inclusive education" (Mitchell, 2005, p. 63). Inclusion remained firmly on the political agenda as a torrent of policies, initiatives and legislation for special education flooded from Westminster, which promoted the rights of children with SEN to a mainstream education. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (DfES, 2001b) strengthened the endorsement for inclusion by ensuring that, for the first time, institutions were not able to refuse access to placements on the basis that they could not meet the pupil's needs (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). In addition, the 2001 Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a)

confirmed the acceptance of inclusion by stating that the special educational needs of children would normally be met in mainstream settings (Hodkinson, 2010).

2.3.2: Concept of Inclusion

Whilst inclusive education has become an important aspect of our educational system in England, it is evident that tension exists with regards to how inclusion is best conceptualised (Hornby, 2001). Although there have been a plethora of attempts to describe inclusion, there is no generally accepted definition of the term (Lunt and Norwich, 1999). Campbell (2002) argues that there are different and incompatible ideas about inclusion, which make the concept multifaceted and complex, whilst Avramidis and Norwich (2002) note that "inclusion is a bewildering concept which can have a variety of interpretations and applications" (p. 158).

For some, the term 'inclusive education' is little more than a cliché; "a politically correct term that is used for speeches and policy-makers to silence all woes" (Azzopardi, 2009, p. 21). Certainly, it can be seen that some definitions of inclusive education are extremely narrow whilst others are all-encompassing (Westwood, 2013). A narrow conceptualisation of inclusive education is associated with the practice of teaching children with SEND alongside their non-SEND peers in a mainstream setting, rather than segregating them into specialist settings. It could be argued that definitions formulated in these terms do not promote inclusion but, conversely, encourage a return to integration and thereby tolerance, not inclusion, of children with additional needs. Moreover, it is evident that this definition refers only to children whom society deem to have SEND, rather than relating to a broach church of characteristics including gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, culture and social class.

At an ideological and rhetorical level, an inclusive education system is a subset of an inclusive society; a society in which difference among people is acknowledged, accepted and valued, and in which individuals and minority groups are not marginalised (Westwood, 2013). Indeed, the values associated with inclusion revolve around fellowship, participation, democracy, equality and justice (Haug, 2017). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization notes that "the ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion" (UNESCO, 2010). As highlighted by Barton (1997, p. 234), inclusive education "is not merely about placing disabled pupils in classrooms with their non-disabled peers; it is not about 'dumping' pupils into an unchanged system of provision and practice". Inclusion places an onus upon schools to examine the

curricular, pedagogical and environmental factors which limit achievement (Erten and Savage, 2012), rather than blaming impairments within the child for educational failure (Glazzard, 2014).

It is evident that the challenges associated with establishing a shared understanding of inclusive education are perhaps exacerbated by the uneasy fit between the concept of inclusion and that of labelling children as having SEND. As noted by Robinson (2017), the terms SEN and inclusion are not always compatible with one another and may attempt to pull educators in two directions; one which includes all and one which 'others' and pathologises some (Barton and Clough, 1995; Howes, Grimes and Shohel, 2009). In his paper, Hodkinson (2011) critically analysed the definition of inclusion and concluded that inclusive education is not a new or radical concept, but rather is nothing more than a "graft of integration" (p. 180). Pupils with SEND continue to be defined, not in terms of the barriers they face in the education system, but by their individual 'within-child' differences and/or deficits (Runswick-Cole, 2011); they continue to be singled out as different and subsequently offered an education that is different.

Dyson (1997) claimed that the quest for inclusion has resulted in special education reproducing itself in mainstream schools, setting up colonies of young people within schools as opposed to transforming mainstream education. Moreover, Michailakis and Reich (2009, p.24) argue that inclusive education for children with SEN in mainstream schools necessitates various kinds of "inclusion through selective exclusion" (for example, a differentiated curriculum and different classes, special treatment by teachers and additional adult support, partial exemption from assessment and testing etc.). It is evident then that children can be in mainstream school but not necessarily be included. As such, it could be argued that the shift from integration to inclusion has been a process in name only; an illusion of change (Allan, 2008a).

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) offers an operational definition of an 'inclusive setting', maintaining that "an inclusive setting refers to education where the pupil with SEN follows education in mainstream classes alongside their mainstream peers for the largest part - 80% or more - of the school week", acknowledging the "possibilities for small group or one-to-one withdrawal for limited periods of time (i.e. 20% or one day a week)" (EASNIE, 2018, p. 13). Conversely, other definitions place less emphasis on location (i.e. mainstream versus specialist settings) and are more concerned with participation and meeting the needs of pupils within a given setting. The Department for Education and Skills highlighted that "inclusion is about much more than the type of school

that children attend: it is about the quality of their experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school" (DfES, 2004, p. 25). Moreover, the National Association of Head Teachers defined inclusion as follows:

> Inclusion is a process that maximises the entitlement of all pupils to a broad, relevant and stimulating curriculum, which is delivered in the environment that will have the greatest impact on their learning. All schools, whether special or mainstream, should reflect a culture in which the institution adapts to meet the needs of its pupils and is provided with the resources to enable this to happen…Inclusive schooling is essential to the development of an inclusive society. It involves having an education service that ensures that provision and funding is there to enable pupils to be educated in the most appropriate setting. This will be the one in which they can be most fully included in the life of their school community and which gives them a sense both of belonging and achieving" (NAHT 2003, p. 1).

2.3.3: Current Inclusion Policy in England

In 2010 a new Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition Government took power in the UK. The coalition's "ambitious vision" (DfE, 2011, p. 13) for SEN was articulated in its 2011 Green paper which argued that "no one type of school placement (such as full inclusion in mainstream provision, special schools, or specialist units in a mainstream setting) is the most effective at meeting children's SEN" (DfE, 2011, p. 20) and proposed to "remove the bias towards inclusion and propose to strengthen parental choice by improving the range and diversity of schools from which parents can choose" (DfE, 2011, p. 17). As highlighted by Ekins (2012) the suggestion of the need to remove the bias towards inclusion represents a backwards step whereby inclusion is considered only in terms of the position and placement of pupils with SEN. Moreover, one could argue that the proposal to remove the bias towards inclusion portrays a negative image of the concept of inclusion and undermines recent moves within the education system to more fully understand the complex tenet of inclusion as an active process of removing barriers to learning and participation for all pupils. It is interesting to note that the political slogan of 'removing the bias towards inclusion' came to be dropped when subjected to political, professional and voluntary sector scrutiny (Norwich, 2014) and the phrase did not appear in the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) or the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) which followed. Instead, the Code of Practice presented a rather confused position by maintaining the presumption of mainstream education for pupils with SEND ("the UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled

children and young people….in mainstream education" [DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 25]) whilst also stressing that pupils and their parents should be able to exercise choice ("the benefits include: greater choice for parents and young people, enabling them to access a wider range of services or educational settings" [DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 55]).

The right of children with SEND to be educated at a mainstream school is set out with only two caveats; there is a general presumption of mainstream education unless this is "against the wishes of the parent or young person, or incompatible with the efficient education of others" (DfE and DoH, 2015, p. 174). Under these conditions, policy still asserts the need for specialist setting placements. Whilst this position is closely aligned with that of the 2001 Code of Practice ("unless a parent indicates that they do not want their child educated in a mainstream school…an LEA must ensure that a child is educated in a mainstream school unless that is incompatible with the efficient education of other children" [DfES, 2001a; p. 61]), it is interesting to note that in the past few years the number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) being educated in mainstream state-funded schools has decreased (from 54.6% in 2010 to 47.8% in 2019a) whilst the percentage of pupils with Statements of SEN or EHCPs attending maintained special schools has seen an increase since January 2010 (from 38.2% in 2010 to 43.8% in 2019) (DfE, 2019a). That is to say, less than half of children with significant needs are being educated in mainstream schools. It seems then that there is some discrepancy between the continued commitment to inclusive ideals stated in government policy and current trends in the types of provision children with significant SEND are accessing.

2.3.4: Debates about Inclusion

As with many issues in education, inclusive education has been both criticised and advocated. For some commentators, the move to include all pupils into mainstream education and to provide individually planned provision for their needs in that context is seen as a step, if not a giant stride, in the right direction (Lovey, 2013). The concept of inclusive education can be seen as the logical development of a more tolerant and accepting society; an extension of the basic human right for all people to participate in that society, regardless of any difference or disability (Rouse and Florian, 1997). The major draw of inclusive education is the promise of equal access to social and academic opportunities. It is important that the evidence for the relative effectiveness of different types of educational placements is not overemphasised; Topping and Maloney (2005, p. 7) noted that "any differences in outcomes for children with special needs between special and mainstream schools are small" whilst Ofsted (2010, p. 30)

effectively attempted to lay rest to arguments of whether specialist or mainstream schools were the better provision for children with SEND by noting that "that no one model of educational support- such as special schools, full inclusion in mainstream provision or specialist units co-located with mainstream settings- systematically worked better than any other". Rather, the Ofsted review highlighted that the most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils was the quality of the provision.

It has been argued that the idealism that can be associated with inclusion is unhelpful in improving provision in schools (O'Brien, 2001). Whilst inclusion at the philosophical level may hold the moral high ground, at the pragmatic level its position is much less secure and must be examined critically (Croll and Moses 2000). Baroness Warnock (2005) in her publication, 'Special Educational Needs: A New Look', commented that "there is increasing evidence that the ideal of inclusion, if this means that all but those with the most severe disabilities will be in mainstream schools, is not working" (Warnock 2005, p 32). Warnock, hailed as the 'architect of inclusion' (Allan, 2008b) argues that the move towards inclusion was ill-advised and claims that there is a "body of evidence" (Warnock, 2005, p.35) which suggests that the experience of disabled children in mainstream schools is generally "traumatic" (Warnock, 2005, p.43). Although failing to specify what this evidence was, and without reference to the extensive publications by disabled people supporting inclusion (Barton, 2005), Warnock (2005, p. 35) contends that exclusion is inevitable, even if a child's experience begins well in primary school:

> Young children can be very accommodating to the idiosyncrasies of others, and teachers tend on the whole to stay with their class, and thus get to know their pupils and be known by them. The environment is simply less daunting than that of the secondary school. In secondary schools, however, the problems become acute. Adolescents form and need strong friendships, from which a Down's syndrome girl, for example, who may have been an amiable enough companion when she was younger, will now be excluded; her contemporaries having grown out of her reach. The obsessive eccentricities of the Asperger's boy will no longer be tolerated and he will be bullied and teased, or at best simply neglected.

Whilst this apparent 'U-turn' by Warnock gained significant media attention, it is evident that successive Ofsted reviews have raised concerns that an ongoing commitment to inclusive principles is not working at the level of more positive outcomes for certain individuals. Indeed, the Ofsted Special Educational Needs and Disability Review reported that pupils with SEND continue to be "much more likely to be absent or excluded from school, and achieve

less well than their peers, both in terms of their attainment at any given age and in terms of their progress over time" (Ofsted, 2010, p. 5), and noted that these outcomes have changed very little over time. Moreover, recent Local Area SEND inspections (Ofsted and CQC, 2017) found that staff at mainstream schools were less adept at assessing and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND than staff at special schools.

Questions raised by teachers' unions about whether inclusion can realistically be achieved have emanated from concerns about teachers being unprepared (Edmunds, 2003), and fears that inclusion is placing unnecessary pressures on educators and adding to their existing stress (Allan, 2008b). Stress in teaching is not a new phenomenon. Phillips and Sen (2011, p. 177-178) reported that "work-related stress was higher in education than across all other industries" and it is evident that the retention rates of early-career teachers have fallen considerably in recent years (Worth, 2018). Teaching is a demanding profession which involves high levels of face-to-face interactions with key stakeholders, which can prove "emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating" (Lambert et al., 2006, p. 105). Moreover, teaching requires intensive emotional labour, a process involving the induction or suppression of one's emotions to match the demands of their role (Hochschild, 1983), which has been shown to be related to educator stress and burnout (Chang, 2013). Whilst stress for educators can originate from a variety of sources (for example, Aydin and Kaya [2016] highlighted school facilities, colleagues, school administration and students as potential sources of stress for teachers), commonly cited stressors include work overload, poor working conditions and pupils' motivational and behavioural problems (Fernet et al., 2012). In the context of the high levels of role-related stress experienced by educators, it is evident that any additional stress and emotional labour brought about by the inclusion of children with SEND may be perceived as adding further weight to an already heavy burden.

Educators' apprehension about their capacity to include is understandable, given the constraints under which they are expected to function. Ever since New Labour placed inclusive education at the centre of its educational agenda in England, inclusion has been a political process pursued through a powerful top-down implementation (Hodkinson, 2011). Although inclusive practice may be driven by national policies, educators inevitably experience the effects of interpretations of these policies at the Local Authority and school level. The inclusive education movement made classrooms in England increasingly heterogeneous and this has posed considerable challenges for teaching professionals (see NASUWT, 2008). Too often, teachers have been castigated for the failings of inclusion. For Gibbs (2018), teachers cannot be blamed because of their lack of autonomy and agency; what

they do is very much determined by the environments in which they work. Inclusion has been superimposed onto an educational system that houses competing and opposing systems such as school performance tables, a prescribed curriculum and age-related assessments. As a consequence, within any one school or Local Authority one agenda may be prioritised over another. As noted by Ellis, Tod and Graham-Matheson (2008), whilst SENCos may be focused on delivering policies for SEND that seek to include pupils and recognise the broader achievements pupils with SEND make from their starting point, senior leaders may be more concerned with performance tables and externally assessed levels of attainment of groups of pupils. Class teachers then have the complex task of mediating the tensions between the day-to-day provision of quality teaching for the whole class, whilst maintaining a responsibility for the learning needs of individual pupils with SEND. Given that evidence from the academic literature suggests that attempts by schools to become more inclusive resulted in a decline in academic standards, schools which embrace inclusion may find it harder to maintain high positions in the league tables, whilst schools with less diverse populations are allowed to flourish (Glazzard, 2014). Clearly, in an educational climate where practitioners are under such immense pressure to meet prescribed government targets, it is all too easy to lose sight of the importance of inclusive education.

2.3.5: Optimal Conditions for Inclusion

The barriers to inclusive education are well-understood, and include inadequacies in policy, resources and facilities, specialised staff, teacher training, pedagogical techniques, flexible curricula, supportive leadership, and cultural attitudes (Schuelka, 2018). Undoubtedly, there is a tension between an educational ideal and the day-to-day living of inclusion (Sikes et al., 2007). If the main stakeholders (that is to say learners, teachers, parents/carers and so on) perceive inclusive education as being a combination of externally imposed ideals with inevitable impractical outcomes, the development of practice will be severely restricted (Ellis et al., 2008). The UNESCO (2017) Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education provides a clear account of the key dimensions of successful inclusive education implementation. Schuelka (2018) succinctly summarises these dimensions into five main components:

1. Inclusive policies which promote high outcomes for all students
2. Flexible and accommodative curriculum
3. Strong and supportive school leadership
4. Equitable distribution of resources

5. Teachers who are trained in inclusive pedagogy and view it as their role to teach all learners in a diverse classroom

It is evident that all of these five components can be conceptualised at a macro (or national), meso (or Local Authority) and micro (or school) level (Loreman, Forlin and Sharma, 2014). Moreover, it can be seen that the implementation of successful inclusion at the micro level is reliant upon national legislation which supports inclusive education, provides adequate resources and offers an accessible and flexible curriculum (Goepel, Childerhouse, Sharpe, 2015).

At the school and classroom level, strong leadership is clearly vital for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Blackmore, 2009; Salisbury 2006). School leaders must be supported to enact an inclusive vision for their schools and 'drive' the inclusion agenda (Hines, 2008). It is also crucial that teachers and support staff are prepared to respond to learner diversity during their initial training and have opportunities to take part in continuing professional development regarding inclusive and equitable practices (UNESCO, 2017). As noted by Schuelka (2018), this positively affects teachers' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, inclusion by emphasising that it is within their professional role to include all children in their classroom, and is not just the domain of specialists and special curriculum. Moreover, appropriate training has been shown to improved self-efficacy (Sharma and Sokal, 2015; that is, one's belief about one's own capabilities to successfully perform [Bandura, 1977]), the benefits of which are far-reaching. As noted by Gibbs (2018), research evidence shows that teachers with higher levels of relevant self-efficacy are less likely to suffer 'burnout', more likely to be effective classroom organisers and managers (thus providing a good environment for learning), have positive dispositions toward inclusive practices and socio-cultural diversity and show greater tolerance and effectiveness with 'problematic' young people (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000; Zee and Koomen, 2016). Clearly then, it is important that the values, beliefs and perceptions of teaching professionals are not underestimated; as noted by McLeskey and Waldron (2000, p.48) "what stakeholders believe often serves as a major impediment (or facilitator) to the development of successful inclusive schools".

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW: PART TWO

3.1: Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a systematic review of the literature regarding educator perceptions of, and attitudes, towards the inclusion of children with SEND. The search and selection strategies employed are detailed and information about the research included for review is provided (including participant characteristics, study measures, reported findings, and strengths and limitations in the literature).

3.2: Previous Systematic Reviews of the Literature

A number of systematic reviews have summarised and synthesised existing research which focuses on educators' attitudes towards including children with SEND in mainstream schools. Two literature reviews were of particular relevance to the current research (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011).

Avramidis and Norwich (2002), conducted a review of international studies of teacher attitudes towards integration and inclusion carried out between 1984 and 2000. Whilst some information about the databases searched and the review inclusion criteria was provided by the authors (for example, studies were only included for review if the main research focus was on teachers' attitudes), the total number of papers reviewed was not detailed. The authors noted that, although positive towards the general philosophy of inclusive education, teachers did not advocate a 'total inclusion' approach to special educational provision. Instead, they held differing attitudes about school placements, based largely upon the nature of the pupils' Special Educational Needs. Teachers were more willing to include students with mild disabilities or physical/sensory impairments than students with more complex needs. Indeed, the authors stated that they found enough evidence to suggest that, in the case of the more severe learning needs and behavioural difficulties, teachers held negative attitudes to the implementation of inclusion. The evidence regarding teacher-related variables (including gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level, and contact with disabled persons) was found to be inconsistent and none alone could be regarded as a strong predictor of educator attitudes. In terms of educational environment-related variables, the availability of support services (both physical [e.g. resources, teaching materials, IT equipment, a restructured physical environment, etc.] and human [e.g. learning support

assistants, special teachers, speech therapists, supportive leadership etc.]) at the classroom and the school levels were consistently found to be associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion. The authors noted that, in terms of research methods, the majority of studies employed Likert-type inventories which attempted to determine the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed with the general concept of integration or inclusion. Few attempts were made to include other sources of data or to explore the factors that may underlie particular attitudes.

In their paper, de Boer et al. (2011) provided an overview of 26 international studies into teacher attitudes towards inclusive education published between 1998 and 2008. Studies had to meet certain criteria to be included in the review. For example, papers needed to be published in an international scientific journal, contain empirical data and focus upon the attitudes of regular primary school teachers towards aspects of inclusive education. Moreover, papers were required to include a standardised measurement of teachers' attitudes (it is important to recognise that this criterion will have excluded certain qualitative studies from the review). The authors again noted that the majority of the studies used self-report questionnaires with Likert scales and reported findings either in terms of percentages or in terms of mean scores and standard deviations. The authors reported that overall findings suggested the majority of teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. Variables related to teachers' attitudes included: training (teachers who had experienced long-term training were more positive towards statements about the general philosophy of inclusion); class size (the smaller the class size, the more positive the attitudes teachers had); years teaching (teachers with more teaching experience held less positive attitudes regarding inclusion); experience with inclusive education (experience with inclusive education promoted positive attitudes towards inclusive education); and pupils' type of disability (children with emotional and behavioural difficulties caused teachers most concern in mainstream schools).

Both reviews relied upon international research which, given that educational policy, practice and legislation differ widely between countries, may limit the applicability of the findings to the UK and England. Moreover, both studies were also solely concerned with teachers' attitudes and relied mainly upon quantitative measures. It is evident that the current research is interested in exploring educators' lived experiences of inclusion, rather than solely examining their attitudes towards it (which is arguably a narrower and more summative focus). As such, the inclusion criterion employed in these previous two papers, which limited the reviews to research focused on educators' attitudes (or, in the case of Boer et al.'s [2011]

study, which limited the review to research which included a standardised measurement of teachers' attitudes) has been revised (see Section 3.3 for search terms used in database searches and Section 3.4 for inclusion criteria). Consequently, I anticipate that a greater proportion of the studies included in the current systematic literature review will present qualitative data and that some of the research may take a broader, narrative form. The purpose of the current systematic literature review is to describe and evaluate the most recent UK-based research into both teacher and teaching assistant experiences of, and attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings.

3.3: Search Strategy

Potentially relevant papers were identified through electronic database searching. Three databases were searched in March 2019 (EBSCO, PsychInfo and Medline) using the search terms presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Search Terms used in Database Searches

Search Terms	**Search Field**
(teacher* OR teaching assistant* OR learning support assistant* OR educational professional* OR educator*) AND	Title
(experience* OR perception* OR perspective* OR view* OR attitude* OR belief* OR voice* OR thought*) AND	Title
(inclusion OR inclusive education OR inclusive practice OR SEND OR SEN OR Special Educational Need*) AND	Title
UK OR United Kingdom OR Britain OR England OR Northern Ireland OR Scotland OR Wales	All Text

3.4: Criteria for Considering Studies (Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria)

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to ensure that papers were relevant to my literature review and to limit the extent to which my implicit biases influenced study selection.

The following criteria were used to identify papers for inclusion in this review:

1. Published between 2000 and 2019.

2. Published in peer-reviewed journals.
3. Published in the UK.
4. Presented empirical research centred upon qualified mainstream school teachers' and/or teaching assistants' experiences of, or attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND.

Studies solely concerned with examining the perceptions of particular sub-groups of teachers (e.g. music teachers, mathematics teachers) or the inclusion of children with SEND in specific subjects (e.g. physical education, music) were excluded from the review. Research which exclusively focused upon teacher perceptions of the inclusion of children with a specific type of SEND (e.g. children with hearing impairments, children with Autistic Spectrum Condition [ASC]) was also excluded.

3.5: Selection Strategy

A total of 363 articles were returned from the databases searches. Of these, eight were excluded because they were not published in peer-reviewed journals. A further 21 studies were excluded because they were published before 2000. The remaining 334 papers were reviewed using a three-stage screening process (Meade and Richardson, 1997). Papers were considered firstly by reviewing the title, then the abstract and finally the full paper, with articles being excluded at each stage if they failed to meet one or more of the inclusion criteria. During the initial phase of the screening process, 126 articles were excluded because they were duplicates and a further 161 papers were excluded after reviewing the titles. Following an abstract review of the remaining 47 papers, a further 27 were excluded. The remaining 20 papers were examined in full. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, six papers remained. Combined with articles found using reference and hand searches, a total of seven papers were included for review. See Table 2 for a more detailed account of the paper screening process.

3.6: Overview of Studies

Table 3 provides an overview of the seven papers selected for review, detailing the research designs, data collection methods, and participant characteristics.

Table 2: Systematic Literature Review Paper Screening Process

Screening process stage	**Number of papers reviewed at screening process stage**	**Number of papers excluded**	**Rationale for paper exclusion**	**Number of papers remaining**
Database search	363	29	• 8 papers were not published in peer-reviewed journals • 21 papers were published before 2000	334
Title stage	334	287	• 126 papers were duplicates • 77 papers were not published in the UK • 38 papers did not involve qualified teachers/TAs • 18 papers concerned specific sub-groups of teachers/specific subjects • 12 papers centred upon the inclusion of children with specific types of SEND • 16 papers did not focus upon teacher/TA experiences of, or attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND	47
Abstract stage	47	27	• 23 papers were not published in the UK • 3 papers did not focus upon teacher/TA experiences of, or attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND • 1 paper concerned specific sub-groups of teachers/specific subjects	20
Full paper stage	20	14	• 4 papers centred upon the inclusion of children with specific types of SEND • 2 papers were not published in the UK	6

			• 2 papers did not present empirical research • 2 papers did not focus upon teacher/TA experiences of, or attitudes towards, the inclusion of children with SEND • 2 papers did not involve mainstream school teacher/TA participants • 1 paper did not involve qualified teachers/TAs • 1 paper was a literature review cited above (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002)	

Table 3: Overview of Papers Reviewed

Paper Title and Author(s)	**Research Design**	**Data Collection Method**	**Participants**
A survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000)	Survey	Self-report questionnaires	81 primary and secondary school teachers (18 male; 61female; 2 undisclosed) drawn from 16 mainstream primary and secondary schools within one Local Education Authority in England.
Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in high schools (Boyle, Topping and Jindal-Snape; 2013)	Survey	Self-report questionnaires	391 secondary school teaching and management-level staff (136 male; 229 female; 26 undisclosed) from 19 mainstream and six special schools in one Local Education Authority in Scotland.
Perceptions of the Barriers to Effective Inclusion in One Primary School: Voices of Teachers and Teaching Assistants (Glazzard, 2011)	Case Study	Focus group	The participants were either teachers or teaching assistants from one primary school in the north of England. The total number of participants involved in the focus group is not detailed in the paper.
Seeking stories: reflections on a narrative approach to researching understandings of inclusion (Lawson, Parker and Sikes, 2006)	Narrative	Unstructured interviews	The researchers interviewed individuals and groups of participants across one mainstream primary school and one mainstream secondary school. Participants included both teachers and teaching assistants. The researchers noted that 60 stories were obtained. It is not clear from reading the paper whether these stories were obtained from 60 different

			participants or whether a smaller number of participants contributed multiple stories.
'Yes, but . . .': rhetoric, reality and resistance in teaching assistants' experiences of inclusive education (Mackenzie, 2011)	Case study	Focus groups Semi-structured life history interviews	The sample comprised 13 teaching assistants working in schools in East London. 10 participants took part in four focus group discussions. Three participants took part in the semi-structured life history interviews.
Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, perceived adequacy of support and classroom learning environment (Monsen , Ewing and Kwoka, 2014)	Survey	Self-report questionnaires	A sample of 95 teachers (21 males; 73 females; one undisclosed) was obtained from 120 schools randomly selected from South East England.
Primary School Teacher Perceptions of the Conditions Required to Include Pupils with Special Educational Need (Rose, 2001)	Survey	Semi-structured interviews	20 primary school teachers and seven head teachers drawn from seven primary schools.

3.7: Participant Characteristics

In five of the seven papers the number of participants included in the study was detailed. Across these studies the total number of participants was 607. Sample sizes ranged from 13 (Mackenzie, 2011) to 391 (Boyle et al., 2013). In one paper (Glazzard, 2011), the total number of participants was not included in the research write-up (the author simply notes that participants were recruited from one school in the north of England), whilst in another paper (Lawson et al., 2006), the researchers noted that 60 stories were obtained from participants. It was not possible to establish from reading the paper whether these stories were obtained from 60 different participants or whether a smaller number of participants contributed multiple stories. Only a minority of the papers reviewed reported on the sample's gender composition or provided other demographic information, such as length of teaching service (Avramidis, et al., 2000; Boyle et al., 2013; Monsen et al., 2014). In all of the studies which provided a breakdown of gender, the majority of participants were female (64% of participants were female across the three studies which reported gender composition). Sampling techniques were described in some papers and it is evident that the strategies used to select participants varied considerably. Mackenzie (2011) and Boyle et al. (2013) used convenience samples while Monsen et al. (2014) randomly selected participants from one region in England. One study drew their sample from a single school (Glazzard, 2011), whilst the other study samples were drawn from multiple schools.

As a result of the inclusion criteria, all studies involved participants who were qualified mainstream school teachers and/or teaching assistants. The majority of studies involved solely teacher participants (including head teachers and management-level teachers). Two studies (Glazzard, 2011; Lawson et al., 2006) involved both teacher and teaching assistant participants (the respective numbers of teachers and teaching assistants were not detailed in either study), whilst only one study involved only teaching assistant participants (Mackenzie, 2011). The studies recruited participants across both primary and secondary school settings (three studies involved primary school educators, two studies involved both primary and secondary school educators, one studies involved secondary school educators and one paper failed to document whether participants were recruited from primary or secondary school settings [Mackenzie, 2011]).

3.8: Study Measures

Three of the studies reviewed collected quantitative data (Avramidis et al., 2000; Boyle, et al., 2013; Monsen et al., 2014). All three of these papers employed self-report questionnaires which involved Likert-type scales in which participants were required to select a level of agreement with a number of statements relating to inclusion. One study supplemented quantitative data gathered with qualitative information (Avramidis et al., 2000). The remaining four papers reported only qualitative data. Glazzard (2011) and Mackenzie (2011) used focus groups as their method of data collection (Mackenzie [2011] supplemented focus group data with semi-structured interview data), Rose (2001) employed semi-structured interviews and Lawson et al. (2006) used unstructured interviews. The study measures and main reported findings of the papers included for review are described separately in Table 4.

Table 4: Study Measures and Main Reported Findings

Paper Title and Author(s)	**Study Measure(s)**	**Key Findings**
A survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority (Avramidis et al., 2000)	<u>Quantitative Measures:</u> 5-point (12-item) Likert scale measuring beliefs relative to inclusion (cognitive component). 7-point (seven-item) semantic differential scale consisting of bipolar adjectives measuring the respondents' emotional reactions when they had to deal with newly included SEN children (affective component). 5-point (eight-item) Likert scale measuring intentions (conative component). 5-point (18-item) Likert scale measuring teachers' perceptions of the skills they possessed.	Generally, the participants appeared to be positive with the overall concept of inclusion. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) were seen as causing significantly greater concern and stress than pupils with other difficulties. The authors found that teachers who had been implementing inclusive programmes, and therefore had active experience of inclusion, possess more positive attitudes. Participants demonstrated a lack of confidence in meeting the requirements of students with SEN. The data showed the importance of professional development in the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusion (teachers with university-based professional development held more positive

	Qualitative Measures: 3 open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire in order to give the respondents the opportunity to raise issues not covered by the attitude scales.	attitudes towards inclusion and were more confident in meeting the needs of children with SEN). When participants were asked about what extra things they would need in order to make their responses more positive, the issues of extra support, training and material resources emerged. When participants were asked what needed to change at a classroom and whole-school level, the following themes were identified: classroom layout and restructuring of the building, class size, time.
Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in high schools (Boyle, et al., 2013)	Quantitative Measures: A questionnaire, including demographic questions (e.g. length of teaching service), and an attitude scale in which respondents were invited to select a level of agreement on a six-point Likert scale with a number of statements relating to inclusion. The statements were categorised into the following areas: behaviour, cognition, teacher competency and training, curriculum, learning culture, differentiated learning, mainstream schooling and support.	Overall, teaching staff were pro-inclusion, conditional on adequate support and resources. The findings from this study have indicated some significant difference in attitudes towards inclusion in various teaching groups/departments in secondary schools. There was a significant gender difference in terms of attitudes towards inclusion (with female teachers being more inclusive than their male colleagues). Head teachers and deputy-head teachers were significantly more

		inclusive than teachers. After the first year of teaching, there was a significant negative change in attitudes towards inclusion. The authors found that studying for a module in special education after qualifying had a significantly positive influence on attitudes to inclusion.
Perceptions of the Barriers to Effective Inclusion in One Primary School: Voices of Teachers and Teaching Assistants (Glazzard, 2011)	<u>Qualitative Measures:</u> The interview [focus group] schedule is presented in the paper. It involves a number of open-ended questions centred upon including children with SEN in mainstream settings.	The evidence suggested that practices within the school were varied and ranged from highly inclusive to highly exclusive. Some teachers worked in good faith to develop effective inclusion for learners with special educational needs. Conversely, other teachers displayed negative attitudes towards these pupils and this impacted negatively on the school's commitment to inclusion. Lack of funding, resources and training were identified as key barriers to inclusion. Parental resistance to inclusion was also evident within the context of this school and there was a strong feeling that the inclusion

		agenda was problematic in the context of the standards agenda. There was a strong sense that practitioners should be willing to commit to the principles of inclusive education.
Seeking stories: reflections on a narrative approach to researching understandings of inclusion (Lawson et al., 2006)	<u>Qualitative Measures:</u> The researchers each visited one mainstream primary and one mainstream secondary school three times each over the course of one academic year. The stories they obtained (60 in total), together with their reflective and reflexive research stories, constitute their data.	The research highlighted the need to engage with the perspectives of all involved in inclusion, included teaching assistants. The concept of inclusion, while variously defined by the participants, often seemed to accord with at least some aspects of government rhetoric. The teachers' and teaching assistants' stories about inclusive practice frequently focused on the human aspect of day-to-day involvement with individual pupils, indicating a tension between systemic and personal elements in interpretations of inclusion, and highlighting the importance of capturing the individual subjective stories and understandings.
'Yes, but . . .': rhetoric, reality and resistance in teaching	<u>Qualitative Measures:</u> The transcripts of the focus groups and semi-structured life history interviews produced the	On the whole, TAs felt ambivalent about inclusion. Most respondents were supportive of inclusion in principle, but were less certain about how it worked in practice.

assistants' experiences of inclusive education (Mackenzie, 2011)	data for analysis.	Respondents' understandings of inclusion were full of tensions. Many respondents felt that mainstream schools could not cope with children with challenging behaviour and had negative perceptions about mainstream teachers' abilities to meet the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. TAs tended to discuss children with special educational needs in terms of a 'caring' discourse and often talked about 'looking after' and 'caring' for the children they supported. TAs almost uniformly used a medicalised, 'category' approach when discussing children.
Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, perceived adequacy of support and classroom learning	<u>Quantitative Measures:</u> *Completed by teachers*- 8-point (30-item) Likert scale measuring teacher attitudes to inclusion (Teacher Attitude to Inclusion Scale [TAIS]).	The study revealed that years of teaching experience, age-level and size of class taught, teacher gender, and teacher attendance at special education courses had no significant effect on teachers' attitudes towards the concept of inclusion. However, the findings demonstrated that younger teachers had significantly more positive attitudes than older teachers. Teacher attitudes towards including SEN pupils in mainstream

environment (Monsen et al., 2014)	The Willingness to Include questionnaire comprising nine SEN difficulties divided into mild, moderate and severe needs. 8-point (13-item) Likert scale measuring adequacy of support (Adequacy of Support questionnaire). 4-point (12-item) Likert scale regarding stress symptoms (The Health/Stress questionnaire). 2-point Yes/No inventory which comprised 25 statements about the classroom learning environment across five scales (cohesiveness, friction, satisfaction, difficulty, competitiveness; My Class Inventory [MCI]: short form). *Completed by pupils*- My Class Inventory (MCI): short form.	settings were found to have a significant impact on how they managed their classroom learning environments and how adequate they perceived available support to be. Teachers with more positive attitudes towards inclusion were reported by their pupils to have classroom environments with greater levels of satisfaction and cohesiveness and lower levels of friction, competitiveness and difficulty than for those with teachers who held less positive attitudes. More positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion were associated with greater perceived adequacy of both internal and external support. Teachers were less willing to include pupils with behavioural difficulties than pupils who were able/gifted or had physical difficulties, irrespective of attitudes to inclusion.
Primary School Teacher	<u>Qualitative Measures:</u>	The study identified a perception amongst primary school teachers and head teachers that a number of conditions have to be met to

Perceptions of the Conditions Required to Include Pupils with Special Educational Need (Rose, 2001)	The interview schedule was divided into three sections 1. Personal information (years of teaching service, experiences of working with pupils with SEN, and position in school). 2. Teacher opinions on the conditions which would be necessary for pupils currently educated in special schools to be successfully included in mainstream classes. 3. Questions relating to two specific pupils with SEN. The purpose was to enable the interviewees to identify specific challenges which may be presented by individual pupils with clearly defined needs.	facilitate a more inclusive education system. Recurring themes emerged which were categorised under five headings: classroom support, training, time, physical access, parental concerns.

3.9: Reported Findings

3.9.1: Educator Perceptions of Inclusion

This review shows that educators hold predominantly positive or ambivalent beliefs and feelings towards the general idea of inclusive education. Two of the studies reviewed highlighted that participants' understandings of inclusion were full of tensions and uncertainty. Lawson et al. (2006) noted that the concept of inclusion was variously defined by participants, whilst Mackenzie (2011) found that TAs felt unsure about inclusion; participants were supportive of inclusion in principle, but were less certain about how it worked in practice. Other studies demonstrated more positive perceptions of inclusion. In their paper, Avramidis et al. (2000) noted that the mean scores of participants in the scales measuring the components of attitude demonstrated positive attitudes towards the general concept of inclusion, whilst Boyle et al. (2013, p. 527) concluded that "overall, teaching staff were pro-inclusion, conditional on adequate support and resources". This tenet was echoed by Rose (2001), who identified that there is a perception amongst educators that a number of conditions have to be met to facilitate a more inclusive education system. Glazzard (2011, p. 56) noted that "there was a strong sense that practitioners should be willing to commit to the principles of inclusive education". These findings seem to deviate from the more negative conclusions of the systematic literature review conducted by de Boer et al. (2011) regarding attitudes towards inclusive education. Instead, the findings of the current review are aligned with the findings of Avramidis and Norwich (2002) which indicated that "participants were generally positive towards the general philosophy of inclusive education" (p.142).

3.9.2: Factors Influencing Educator Perceptions of Inclusion

Child-related Variables

Three of the papers considered in the current review examined how the nature of children's SEND influenced educator perceptions of inclusion. Avramidis et al. (2000) showed that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were seen to cause significantly more concern to teachers than pupils with other types of SEND. Similarly, Monsen et al. (2014) found that teachers were less willing to include pupils with behavioural difficulties compared with pupils who were gifted or had physical difficulties, irrespective of attitudes to inclusion. In her paper, Mackenzie (2011) also highlighted that many (teaching assistant) participants felt that mainstream schools could not cope with children with challenging behaviour and had negative perceptions about mainstream teachers' abilities to meet the needs of children with

emotional and behavioural difficulties. Such findings, which are consistent with those of the previous two systematic reviews (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011), are perhaps unsurprising given that research has repeated demonstrated that teachers are averse to having 'difficult' pupils in their classes (Scanlon and Barnes-Holmes, 2013).

Educator-related Variables

Five of the reviewed papers reported on participant demographic, and other educator-related factors, and their influence on perceptions of inclusion. Avramidis et al. (2000) found that teachers who had been implementing inclusive programmes, and therefore had active experience of inclusion, held significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion. The level of the professional development of the participants was also found to be significantly related to their attitude towards inclusion. Like Avramidis et al. (2000), Boyle et al. (2013) also found that professional development (in the case of their research, studying for a module in special education after qualifying) had a significantly positive influence on attitudes towards inclusion. The themes of professional development and training were also evident in the qualitative data presented by Glazzard (2011) and Rose (2001). Both authors highlighted that participants in their studies felt strongly that they were inadequately trained to educate children with SEND, with Rose (2001, p. 153) concluding that "this is an issue which concerns many teachers and which needs to be addressed if significant progress towards greater inclusion is to be made". Such findings are consistent with those of de Boer et al. (2011), who found that teachers who had experienced long-term training were more positive towards statements about the general philosophy of inclusion. Only one of the studies reviewed (Monsen et al., 2014) found that training and attendance at special education courses had no significant effect on teacher attitudes.

Findings relating to other educator-related variables were somewhat inconsistent across the studies. Avramidis et al. (2000) reported that variables including gender, age, teaching experience, phase taught, area of school, size of school and size of classroom were not significantly related to participant attitudes towards inclusion. Similarly, Monsen et al. (2014) found that years of teaching experience, age-level, size of class taught and gender of the teacher had no significant effect on teachers' attitudes towards the concept of inclusion, although their findings demonstrated that younger teachers had significantly more positive attitudes than older teachers. The authors noted that, although one might assume that this finding may indicate younger teachers have been trained more recently and therefore more readily accept and adopt inclusive education policies, this explanation is flawed due to the

fact that years of teaching experience did not have a significant influence on teacher attitudes. Rather, Monsen et al. (2014) point to previous research which indicates that teachers' concerns over threats to their professional competency and integrity increased with age (Forlin, Keen and Barrett, 2008) to explain why older teachers were more reluctant to face the additional challenges associated with including children with SEND. Unlike these two studies, Boyle et al. (2013) found that there was a significant gender difference (with female teachers being more inclusive than their male colleagues) and that educators' positions of authority within schools significantly influenced attitudes towards inclusion (head teachers and deputy-head teachers were significantly more inclusive than teachers). They also found that after the first year of teaching, there was a significant negative change in the attitude towards inclusion. It is evident that such discrepancies mirror the inconsistent findings of the two previous literature reviews (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; de Boer et al., 2011).

Educational Environment-related Variables

Four of the papers reviewed examined environmental factors and their influence on educator perceptions of inclusion. One factor that was consistently found to be associated with more positive attitudes was the availability of (human) support at the classroom and the school levels. Monsen et al. (2014) found that teacher attitudes towards inclusion were more positive with greater perceived adequacy of internal support (for example, support from other teachers, classroom assistants and parent/carer helpers) and external support (for example, support from educational psychologists and speech and language therapists). In Avramidis et al.'s (2000) study, participants' responses to open-ended questions regarding extra provision that would be required in order to make their attitudes towards inclusion more positive also included extra adult support in class. Rose (2001) identified classroom support as one of a number of conditions participants felt were required to facilitate a more inclusive education system and Glazzard (2011) highlighted that a lack of human resources was identified by participants as a key barrier to inclusion. The need for additional training and concern about a lack of personal professional experience was also a recurring theme in the literature (Avramidis et al., 2000; Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001), as was the need for additional material support (including resources, teaching materials and restructuring of the school and classroom layout; Avramidis et al., 2000; Glazzard, 2011). Issues of time also emerged as a theme in the literature (both in terms of participants reporting the need for additional time to plan for children with SEND and in terms the difficulties associated with providing adequate time to both the children with SEND and the other pupils in class; Avramidis et al., 2000;

Rose, 2001). Finally, in two of the studies, parental resistance was voiced by participants as a barrier to inclusive practice (Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001). Both studies noted that participants felt that parents were most concerned about the inclusion of children with social, emotional and mental health needs in mainstream schools, who may potentially have a detrimental influence on their own child's education and behaviour. With the exception of this final theme, it is evident that the educational environment-related variables described in the current literature review are consistent with those reported in the paper by Avramidis and Norwich (2002).

3.10: Strengths and Limitations in the Literature

3.10.1: Sample Characteristics

Although a relatively large number of participants were involved across the five studies which reported on sample size, it is apparent that participant numbers varied considerable (with some relatively small samples evident) and that there was an overall gender bias towards female participants. Moreover, a number of studies used convenience samples which may have potentially diminished the external validity and generalisability of the findings (Reis and Judd, 2000). Only two of the studies included for review recruited both teacher and teaching assistant participants and in neither study was there sufficient information provided regarding participant numbers and composition to allow between-group analytical comparisons to be drawn. In terms of research methods utilised, it is clear that all three methods employed across the seven studies reviewed have their respective limitations which must be carefully considered. Some of the major disadvantages of the questionnaire method include the potential for: low response rates; sample biases; misinterpretation of questions by participants; the meaning of responses being lost; a lack of opportunity for researchers to follow up ideas and clarify comments. Some of the major disadvantages of the interview method and focus group method include the potential for: a power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee [or indeed, between participants in focus groups]; verbal and non-verbal cues biasing responses; difficulties in analysing data produced [Cargan, 2007]). It is apparent that triangulating the information obtained from more than one data collection method allows "the weaknesses in each single method...[to] be compensated for by the counter-balancing strengths of another" (Jick, 1979, p. 604). A triangulated approach affords the fidelity and rigor often lacking in single method studies and enhances the reliability and validity of the findings (Yin, 2009). Interestingly, only one study employed a multi-method

approach (Mackenzie, 2011) whilst another study used the questionnaire method to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data (Avramidis et al., 2000).

3.10.2: Study Measures

Although some papers included in the review provided detailed information about the measures employed in the research (for example, Glazzard's [2011] paper presented the focus group interview schedule whilst Avramidis et al. [2000] and Monsen et al. [2014] offered in-depth accounts of their questionnaire designs), other studies provided far less information about their study measures (for example, Mackenzie [2011, p. 65] simply noted that "data were collected through interviews [three respondents] and four focus group discussions [ten respondents]"). Of those studies which did provide detailed information about research measures, it is evident that some examined educator perceptions of the inclusion of pupils with SEND in general (for example, both Avramidis et al. (2000) and Boyle et al. (2013) asked participants questions regarding 'students with special educational needs'), whilst others specifically focused upon educator perceptions of the inclusion of children with significant SEND (for example, Glazzard [2011] examined educator views on including children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties). However, it is apparent that these studies did not attempt to explore how such needs were conceptualised by respondents. Clearly, different participants in a population may have multiple interpretations for the same label.

Due to the nature of the research, all of the studies reviewed utilised self-report techniques to gather data. Given that the concept of inclusion is particularly value-laden and reflects a certain ideological stance, there is a danger that participants may have attempted to communicate socially desirable answers rather than relaying true beliefs. Clearly, the responses provided in this research may have little or no correspondence with teachers' actual beliefs and understandings of, or behaviours towards, pupils with SEND. Only one study attempted to validate the self-report measures and examine whether teachers' perceptions of inclusion influenced how they managed their classroom learning environments (Monsen et al., 2014). Moreover, as all but one of the studies (Lawson et al., 2006) were cross-sectional in design and collected data from participants only once, it was not possible to examine changes or developments in participants' perceptions. Finally, only some of the studies included for review attempted to determine the factors that may underlie educator's attitudes and perceptions of inclusion. Three papers reported on child-related variables (Avramidis et al., 2000; Mackenzie; 2011; Monsen et al., 2014), four papers reported on educational

environment-related variables (Avramidis et al., 2000; Glazzard, 2011; Monsen et al., 2014; Rose, 2001) and five papers reported on educator-related variables (Avramidis et al., 2000; Boyle et al., 2013; Glazzard, 2011; Monsen et al., 2014; Rose, 2001). These limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings of this review.

3.11: Limitations of the Current Literature Review

In undertaking a systematic literature review, researchers aim to minimise the potential for hidden biases by documenting their methodology in an explicit and accountable way so that the process is transparent and replicable (Bronson and Davis, 2012). Clearly however, there are some who are dissatisfied with the tenet that evidence can be 'extracted' from texts and subsequently 'synthesised' in a form that is "impervious to ambiguities of context, readers' interpretations or writers' arguments" (MacLure, 2004). Furthermore, in terms of more practical limitations, the systematic approach is widely acknowledged to be time-consuming and resource intensive and it is evident that reviewers often allude to difficulties of time constraints or manageability (MacLure, 2004). With regard to the current chapter, these factors undoubtedly had implications for the search and review strategies implemented which may be considered limiting. In addition to the fact that only three databases were searched, in order to avoid extremely large numbers of articles being returned from the databases searches, quite specific search terms and fields were utilised. Had these searches been expanded, additional relevant studies may have been identified. It is also apparent that some potentially relevant papers may have been excluded simply because they were not available electronically and could not be obtained for review. Moreover, because it was not possible to review the large number of papers identified through the searches in detail, it was necessary to apply a strict set of inclusion and exclusion criteria which narrowed the scope of the review. As a result of the inclusion criteria, unpublished papers which may have provided relevant evidence were excluded from the review, as were all papers published outside of the UK and those which concerned specific sub-groups of teachers, specific subjects or focused upon the inclusion of children with specific types of SEND.

3.12: Conclusions and Implications for Current Research

The aim of this chapter was to augment the findings of previous systematic reviews conducted by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and de Boer et al. (2011) by identifying and

evaluating the most current relevant literature. Whilst the previous reviews considered papers published between 1984 and 2008, the current review included contributions from 2000 until 2019 and specifically focused upon UK-based research. Although the scope of the current review was more limited than that of the previous reviews (this chapter reviewed seven studies whilst de Boer et al.'s [2011] papers reviewed 26 studies and Avramidis and Norwich (2002, p. 129) noted that that they had reviewed a "large body of research" [the specific number of papers was not documented]), it is evident that the research extends and updates previous findings. When considering the research findings, there were some parallels between the current review and previous reviews in terms of the core themes which emerged from the studies (e.g. educator perceptions of inclusion, factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards, and experiences, of inclusion). As in Avramidis and Norwich's (2002) review, the majority of the studies examined in the current systematic literature review found that educators have predominantly positive or ambivalent beliefs and feelings towards the general idea of inclusive education. Moreover, a number of child-, educator- and educational environment-related variables were found to be associated with educator perceptions of inclusion, with varying consistency across the studies.

In comparison to the two previous reviews, a far greater proportion of the studies included in the current systematic literature review collected qualitative data (as a consequence of revisions to the inclusion criteria which permitted research which did not include measurements of educator attitudes). However, it remains that a significant number of the studies employed quantitative research designs. There is still, at present, limited qualitative research which provides detailed analysis of educator experiences and perspectives associated with the inclusion of children with SEND. Although the parameters of the current literature review allowed research which involved both teacher and teaching assistant participants to be included, it is evident that only a minority of studies represented the views of TAs. Furthermore, those studies which did include both teacher and teaching assistant participants failed to provide sufficient information regarding participant numbers and composition to allow between-group analytical comparisons to be drawn. The current study builds on the research reviewed in this chapter and addresses gaps in the existing literature by offering an in-depth account of teachers' and teaching assistants' lived experiences of including children with SEND needs within a mainstream classroom. Given that existing research has tended to focus upon educators' experiences of, and attitudes towards, the inclusion of pupils with SEND in general, the current research focuses specifically upon experiences of including pupils with significant SEND (how significant SEND is conceptualised by participants is also

explored in the research). The facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND experienced by teachers and teaching assistants are also examined.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1: Chapter Overview

This chapter offers a rationale for the choice of methodology and research methods used in the study and provides an account of how the research was conducted. The chapter begins by exploring the ontological and epistemological stance underpinning the study and how this informed my choice of research questions and led to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) being selected as an appropriate approach. Following this, the chapter outlines how the research was conducted, including an account of the research context and ethical considerations. Reflexivity in relation to my researcher position is discussed, and the validity and reliability of the research is also considered.

4.2: Ontology and Epistemology

According to Marsh and Furlong (2002), each social scientist should have a critical understanding of their own ontological and epistemological positions. These positions are often implicit rather than explicit and shape the approach to theory and the methods which researcher utilises: "they are like a skin not a sweater: they cannot be put on and taken off whenever the researcher sees fit" (Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p.17).

Ontology refers to assumptions about existence or being, whilst epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and considers the relationship between the researcher and reality, and how we achieve our understanding of reality (Cohen et al., 2000). Hughes and Sharrock (2007) highlight that ontology and epistemology are closely related; what we take for the ultimate reality is inextricably linked to what we accept as knowledge or evidence.

Ontological and epistemological positions tend to be associated with wider theoretical paradigms (Crotty, 1998). Based upon the work of Guba and Lincoln, (1994), Table 5 outlines the basic assumptions of three prominent theoretical paradigms: positivism, post-positivism and constructivism.

Table 5: Basic Assumptions of Positivism, Post-positivism and Constructivism

	Positivism	**Post-positivism**	**Constructivism**
Ontology	Realism: Reality exists and is apprehendable.	Critical Realism: Reality exists but this is only imperfectly apprehendable.	Relativism/Interpretivism: Multiple versions of reality are constructed.
Epistemology	Objectivist: Findings are considered 'truths'.	Modified Objectivist: An objective, critical approach. Recognition that knowledge is imperfect and that findings are approximations of reality.	Subjectivist: Knowledge is a human construction. Researcher and participant co-construct findings.
Methodology	Use of quantitative methods. Experimental/ manipulative. Verification of hypotheses.	Use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Modified experimental/ manipulative. Use of triangulation.	Use of qualitative methods. Hermeneutical/dialectical.

As a researcher, I have developed reflexive awareness of my assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) and hold to a relativist, subjectivist position, aligned with the constructivist paradigm. Unlike positivism (based upon a realist ontology whereby "social phenomena exist independently of both the observer and social actors" [Blaikie, 2000, p. 119]), which maintains that it is possible to discover knowledge which reveals universal truths about human behaviour (Coolican, 2014), constructivism maintains that there is no one external reality that can be measured objectively. Rather, "meaningful reality …is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Realities are apprehensible in the form of "multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature… dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

Within this philosophical framework, social phenomena and their meanings can only ever be viewed from an individual's perspective and can never be seen as definitive (Bryman, 2001). Moreover, the historical and cultural specificity of our understanding of the world means that research findings should not become universal laws about human nature (Burr, 2003). Thus, constructivist approaches accept the dynamic, subjective and evolving nature of social reality and seek to develop ways of understanding each participant's individual constructions.
I understand that my approach could be considered 'light' constructivism. Light constructivism is often associated with Wendt (1999, p.136) who notes that:

> The point is that the real world consists of a lot more than material forces as such. Unlike a potentially more radical constructivist position I do not deny the existence and independent causal powers of those forces, but I do think they are less important and interesting than the contexts of meaning that human beings construct around them.

IPA endorses constructivism's claims that sociocultural and historical processes are central to how we experience and understand our lives and agrees language is important to this. However, it sits at what might be considered the lighter end of the constructivist continuum, maintaining that seeing the individual's lifework merely as a linguistic and discursive construction does not speak to the empirical realities of people's lived experiences (Eatough and Smith, 2008). Whilst I am primarily concerned with individual lived experience, I also seek to identify and understand any shared experiences in participants' accounts. Though, as a constructivist, I do not believe that the experience of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting has a single objective reality which can be measured, I do intend to discover whether there are any commonalities between the subjective and unique experiences discussed by research participants.

4.3: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

My ontological and epistemological stance influenced me in selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as my methodological approach. IPA is an approach to qualitative, experiential research specifically designed to "gain insight into individual participants' psychological worlds" (Willig, 2008, p.73). The methodological approach has two primary aims: first, to examine in detail how individuals make sense of a given experience and second, to give detailed interpretation of the account in order to understand the experience. As noted by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 5) "IPA enables the

research study to move away from the descriptive commitments and transcendental interests towards a more interpretive, and worldly position, with a specific focus on understanding the perspective of the individual's involvement in the lived world". IPA has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology focuses on studying individuals' lived experiences as they perceive them. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and focuses on how individuals interpret those experiences. IPA acknowledges that, as a researcher, my own subjective interpretations and sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts. The essence of IPA is for the researcher to attempt to make sense of the participants' attempts of making sense of their own experiences, thereby capturing the double hermeneutic process (Smith et al., 2009). Idiography is concerned with the particular, in the sense of both detail and context. A more detailed account of the philosophical underpinnings of IPA is provided in Table 6.

Table 6: An Overview of the Philosophical Underpinning of IPA

Phenomenology	Phenomenology is the "study of human experience and the way in which things are perceived as they appear to the consciousness" (Langdridge, 2007, p. 10). Initially articulated by Husserl, phenomenology aims to produce an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions (Smith and Osborn, 2015). This involves attempting to 'bracket' (or put aside) one's preconceptions and allowing phenomena to speak for themselves (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). The phenomenological researcher should aim to follow the participant in novel and unanticipated directions as the story of their experience unfolds (Smith and Osborn, 2008).
Hermeneutics	Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Hermeneutics was originally applied to the interpretation of biblical texts and has since developed into a more general concern with the process of understanding (Palmer, 1969; Packer and Addison, 1989). IPA acknowledges that human beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts which participants provide reflect their attempts to make sense of their experiences. IPA also recognises that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then

	needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience (Smith et al., 2009). In other words, the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant's attempts to make sense of their own experiences. This dual interpretive process is referred to as a double hermeneutic. In IPA research, the researcher endeavours to get as close to the participants' personal worlds as possible, whilst understanding that they cannot do this directly or completely as access depends upon, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions (Smith, 2008).
Idiography	Idiography is concerned with the particular and operates at two levels; the commitment in the sense of detail and analysis, and the commitment to understanding how a particular experiential phenomenon has been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context (Smith et al., 2009). This is in contrast to most psychology which is 'nomothetic' and concerned with making claims at the group or population level and establishing general laws of human behaviour. Each individual's case is analysed in detail before similarities and differences between cases are explored. As a consequence of IPA's commitment to idiography, IPA researchers generally seek to generate small, purposive and relatively homogeneous samples.

IPA provides the opportunity to analyse a small number of cases in-depth, to understand the unique experiences and perceptions of each participant in detail, whilst also allowing for data to be examined for wider interpretive meaning (Smith et al., 2009). The aim of IPA is not to generalise about larger populations, but rather to arrive at more general claims cautiously, and only after the analysis of individual cases based on a relatively small sample size (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen over other methodology approaches (such as Grounded Theory or thematic analysis) due to its emphasis on capturing detailed and nuanced accounts of each case *before* moving to look for patterns of convergence and divergence across cases. I prioritised an in-depth exploration of the individual experiences of participants as I believe this provides the most valuable insight into the phenomenon. This reflects the value I place on the participants as the experts on the lived experience of including children with

significant SEND and the desire to understand how meaning is constructed from their perspectives (Reid et al., 2005).

4.4: Research Aims and Questions

The overarching aim of this study and the choice of research questions reflect my epistemological and ontological position as a researcher (Smith et al. 2009). The intention of the study is to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in their mainstream classrooms. Moreover, the study aims to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

My research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?
2. What facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

4.5: Research Context

The research was conducted in a single mainstream primary school within a Local Authority in the North-West of England in which I am currently employed as a full-time teacher. I began working at the school in September 2017. As of January 2019, there were 139 state-funded mainstream primary schools, 32 state-funded mainstream secondary schools and 11 state-funded special schools within this Local Authority (DfE, 2019b). Of the compulsory school-age pupils attending primary schools in the Local Authority, the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium is well above average, the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is above average and the number of pupils with SEN support and Statements of SEN or EHCPs is above average (DfE, 2019c, DfE, 2019a).

The school in which this research took place is a state-funded community primary school for boys and girls aged 3-11 years. The school is larger than average, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils (using pupil premium as a measure) is well above the national average in England and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and increasing (precise numbers are not reported to minimise the risk of the research setting being identifiable). The school was rated as "Good" in its most recent Ofsted inspection in 2015,

with the areas of 'Leadership and Management' and 'Behaviour and Safety of Pupils' judged as "Outstanding". The Ofsted report states that the proportion of pupils with SEND is below national average and notes that "the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good overall. They make similar progress to their peers because their needs are met through well-planned and effective support which ensures that they achieve well". As of January 2021, there were five children in school with an EHCP, and EHC needs assessments were in process for a further five children. Since September 2017, four children with EHCPs have left the school to attend specialist settings.

4.6: Ethics

All social researchers must operate according to high ethical standards; respecting those who are involved in the research project and, as far as is possible, avoiding causing any harm or damaging repercussions (Denscombe, 2010). The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018), the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018) were consulted when considering the ethical challenges associated with the current project. The study obtained approval from the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Committee before research commenced (see Appendix 1 for Application for Ethical Review and Appendix 2 for Ethical Approval Confirmation). Table 7 summarises the key ethical considerations involved in the current research and the steps that were taken to address these issues and minimise potential risks. Clearly, my position as an 'insider' researcher had a complex and multifaceted influence upon the ethics of this study. The ethical implications of my positionality are presented in Table 7, and in Section 4.7 I go on to discuss reflexivity in relation to my researcher position.

Table 7: Key Ethical Considerations

Ethical Consideration	Steps Taken to Address Ethical Issue/Challenge
Informed Consent	Freely-given, informed consent was obtained from all participants. The staff team was informed about the nature of the research during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets were provided (see Appendix 3). The participant information sheet contained details about the project and what would be expected of participants should they agree to take part in the research. Prospective participants were invited to contact me to express their interest in participating in the project, providing that they met the study's participant inclusion criteria (see Section 4.8). Directly prior to each research interview, the aims of the research and implications for participants were reiterated and there was opportunity for participants to ask questions. Consent forms (see Appendix 4) were signed by the participants on the day of their interview. It should be noted that, given my position as an 'insider' researcher, participants may have volunteered to take part in the research out of a sense of duty or obligation.
Confidentiality and Anonymity	Anonymity could not be offered as the study involved face-to-face interviews. Participants were informed of the method of data collection in the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendices 3 and 4). To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were utilised in interview transcripts and a code was used which linked the pseudonyms to personal data. This information was stored separately. Participants were informed of the limits of confidentiality when they gave consent and were made aware of the circumstances in which confidentiality may need to be breeched (for example, if a disclosure was made which suggested that the participant or others were in danger of harm or which indicated illegal activity). There was a risk that individual participants may be identified through the research, particularly in light of the small sample size. Moreover, other individuals not involved in the research (e.g. pupils, members of staff) could also potentially be identified. This risk was minimised by ensuring that the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations were not reported in the written presentation of findings. Participants were informed that the final write-up of the research project would form the basis of my thesis for a Doctorate in

	Education, which would be available online and that my research could potentially be published in an academic journal. Participants were told that excerpts from interview transcripts would be included in the final write-up of the research project. It is clear that, however anonymous data appears to outsiders, given my dual position as both teacher and researcher, insiders (e.g. members of staff or parents of children in my school) would be able to identify the research setting and may also be able to identity particular participants from discussions recorded in interview transcripts. To minimise this risk, in addition to ensuring that the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations have not been presented in the written presentation of the findings, I have requested to restrict public access to my thesis until January 2026. Finally, I informed participants that the research findings would be shared with the wider school team in a research summary report (see Appendix 5), but that participants' interview responses would be presented collectively, so that it would not be possible to attribute an interview response to any individual participant. Direct quotes from participants were not included in this summary report, nor was any other information which could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them.
Risk of Harm to the Participant	A potential risk in conducting this study was that participants may have found the research process stressful or upsetting (in that participants could have identified or realised personal concerns regarding their teaching practice that may have caused them to become upset). Participants were debriefed after interviews in order to afford them the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research and to help identify any concerns. If I had sensed that a participant was becoming uncomfortable or distressed, the interview would have been adjourned sensitively. If the participant had wished to access further support, I would have signposted the participant to professional support from a colleague or senior member of staff in school, or to relevant external services and agencies. All participants were provided with my contact details and those of my university research supervisors should they wish to ask questions or make any complaint.

Right to Withdraw	Participants' right to withdraw from both the pilot interviews and the full project was stated explicitly in the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendices 3 and 4). In addition, I orally reiterated participants' right to withdraw prior to the interviews commencing. Participants were free to withdraw from the project before, during or after their interview took place. Participants were provided with a date (four weeks after their interview took place) by which to contact me if they wished to withdraw the data they provided. Withdrawal time was limited to a maximum of four weeks from data collection (as after this time data analysis would be in progress). It could be argued that participants may have been less inclined to withdraw their data as result of my dual position as both a researcher and a colleague. Participants may have felt that to do so would negatively impact upon our professional relationship outside of the research study.
Feedback for Participants	After completing the interviews, participants were debriefed. During the debrief, the purpose of the interview session and how the data would be stored, analysed and reported was reiterated. Following data analysis, a research summary report (see Appendix 5) was sent to all participants, outlining the main findings of the research. Participants were offered the opportunity to meet with me individually, to discuss the research findings.
Privacy and Data Storage	I requested the sole use of a quiet room for the duration of the interviews to minimise environmental distractors for myself and the research participants and to ensure that the interviews were not overheard. Immediately after each participant interview, the electronically audio-recorded data was transferred from the audio-recording device to a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare. The audio files were then erased from the audio-recorder. Electronic transcripts and notes have also been stored in a password-protected folder on BEAR DataShare. Printed transcripts, written notes and consent forms have been stored in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. In accordance with university research policy, data will be stored on BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10 year expiry date is set for the electronic data stored on BEAR DataShare. Any paper records will also be destroyed after 10 years.

4.7: Reflexivity in Relation to my Researcher Position

I am a female teacher of White British heritage with over six years' teaching experience. I have spent these years within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and am currently working in a Reception class. As an IPA researcher, I am aware that my own subjective sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts. In Section 1.2 I consider my positionality and highlight experiences which have shaped the way in which I view the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings. Given the double hermeneutic nature of analysis in IPA research, it is important that I acknowledge my researcher position, as this will undoubtedly influence my interpretive lens.

The current research was conducted in a single mainstream primary school in which I am currently employed as a full-time teacher. It is evident that undertaking 'insider' research within my own institution placed me in a unique and privileged position to implement the research reported in this thesis. For Greene (2014) insider research, with its roots in ethnographic field research, is that which is conducted within a social group, organisation or culture of which the researcher is also a member. As noted by Floyd and Linet (2010, p. 5) "although a potential minefield, insider research can also be a rich pasture, from which important data can be harvested". There are certainly a number of benefits of insider research in terms of access, rapport and shared frames of reference with participants, and an in-depth understanding of the organisation (Floyd and Linet, 2010). It is evident however that, as an insider researcher, there is clearly a lack of detachment from my field of study, in that I must face the task of managing the influence of being both the researcher and the researched. Greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity and an increased risk of making assumptions based on my own values, experiences and preconceptions. Whilst I clearly share a number of attributes with my research participants (indeed it is evident that I meet the participant inclusion criteria for the current study [see Section 4.8], in that I have over six years of teaching experience and have taught a number of children with significant SEND over the course of my career), throughout the study I endeavoured to avoid assuming to know what it was like to be the participant.

I have attempted to 'bracket' (or put aside) my presuppositions during the research process, in order to produce an account of the experiential world of my participants. However, because IPA acknowledges a role for interpretation, the concept of bracketing is somewhat controversial and, in any event, gives way to a more interpretive process as analysis proceeds (Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008). In IPA research it is acknowledged that there is no such

thing as a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1986) and that the researcher plays an inescapably significant part in the process (Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008). Rather than attempt the impossible task of remaining impartial and unbiased, IPA emphasises the need for an ongoing process of reflexivity by the researcher throughout the research process (Coolican, 2004). Reflexivity is integral to experiential qualitative research (Shaw, 2010). It can be defined as "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p.532); the acknowledgement by the researcher that they are part of the social world they are studying and therefore contribute to the construction of meaning throughout the research process (Willig, 2008). Reflexivity involves a continuous process of reflecting on the role of subjectivity and of researchers recognising and examining how their "social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p.17).

Although I cannot assume a position of neutrality as a researcher, I have taken steps to develop my reflexivity and actively explore and expose my own consciousness to ensure that I have an understanding of my own bias since clearly, if "researchers are unaware of their own preconceptions and beliefs, it is impossible for them to put these issues aside" (Chan, Fung and Chien, 2013, p. 3). To enhance reflexivity Van Heugten (2004) recommends that researchers engage in 'stream of consciousness' writing, interviewing oneself and talking with others about their experiences. As such, I kept detailed records of my decisions, thoughts and reflections in a research diary at key stages of the research (for example, after completing the pilot interviews, after each interview had taken place, during the 'reading and re-reading' stage of analysis) to raise my awareness of my own interaction with the data (see Appendix 6 for extracts from my research diary). I also reflected on the research process in regular supervision sessions with my research supervisors. Moreover, prior to main data collection, I self-piloted my interview schedule to enhance my reflexivity and encourage critical self-evaluation of my positionality as a researcher. I attempt to include readers in my reflexive process in my writing so that they are aware of my position as the researcher and are able to consider how this might have influenced the research findings (Langdridge, 2007).

4.8: Participants

In accordance with IPA, the study adopted a purposive sampling approach to obtain a relatively homogeneous sample (Smith et al., 2009). All participants were teachers or teaching assistants, recruited from a single mainstream setting in the North-West of England, in which I am currently employed as a full-time teacher. For Smith et al. (2009, p. 49),

participants should “represent a perspective rather than a population”. In the present study homogeneity is not claimed in terms of sample characteristics, but rather in terms of participants’ shared experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Of course, it could be argued that a TA’s perspective will necessarily be different to that of a teacher because of role difference. In Chapter Six, analytical comparisons of the contributions of teacher participants and TA participants are made to facilitate the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between the two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples.

Before recruiting participants, I met with my head teacher to discuss the scope and implications of the project and to request her permission for the research to be conducted in school. A head teacher information sheet (Appendix 7) was shared during this meeting to support my explanation of the study.

Once my head teacher had approved the research, the staff team were informed about the nature of the project during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets (see Appendix 3) were provided. The participant information sheet contained details about the project and outlined what would be expected of participants should they agree to take part in the research. A follow-up e-mail was also sent out to the staff team approximately one week after the whole staff meeting, reminding them about the research participation request. Members of staff were invited to contact me to express their interest in participating in the project, providing that they met the study’s participant inclusion criteria. To be eligible to participate in the study, participants were required to have a minimum of two years’ experience in their teacher or TA positions. Moreover, participants must have had direct experience of supporting at least one child with an EHCP (used as an indication that the participant had experience of supporting a child with what I would consider to be significant SEND) in a ‘typical’ mainstream class (as opposed to an intervention group or provision). Whilst I was mindful to focus the interviewees’ attention towards children with significant SEND within the interviews, the ambiguity of this term means that participants may not have been referring to children that I would consider to have significant SEND at all times in the interview (this is highlighted in Section 7.5.3 as a potential limitation of the research). How significant SEND is conceptualised by participants was explored during the interviews.

In total, four teacher (three female, one male) and four teaching assistant (four female) participants were interviewed. Whilst this is a relatively large sample for an IPA study (Smith et al., 2009), it is evident that "the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 40). Having a slightly larger sample allows for a wider range of

perspectives to be drawn and facilitates the identification of convergence and divergence between participants (Smith et al., 2009). At the same time, the amount of qualitative data gathered will not be overwhelming and still allows sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case. Including both teacher and teaching assistant participants in the sample allows for two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples, so allowing for within- and between-group analytical comparisons to be drawn. All participants involved in the present research were experienced educators with upwards of three years' service. Two participants were members of the Senior Leadership Team who still maintained direct class teaching time within their weekly timetables. All eight participants could be broadly classified as White British. Each participant is described in Chapter Five in brief 'pen portraits' to support the idiographic quality of the analysis and to further illuminate how my interpretations of their experiences evolved. Pseudonyms have been used for confidentiality purposes.

4.9: Piloting

Piloting was important in the development of my chosen method of data collection and afforded me the opportunity to trial the interview schedule and review the questions for clarity, flow and access to appropriate information for analysis. Three pilot interviews were conducted prior to the main data collection; the first of these comprising a self-pilot and the second and third with volunteer teacher and teaching assistant colleagues respectively (see Appendix 8 for pilot interview schedule). These pilot participants were not employed within the research school, but otherwise met the participant inclusion criteria (see Section 4.8; in that they had more than two years' experience in their teacher or TA positions and had direct experience of supporting at least one child with an EHCP in a 'typical' mainstream class). The volunteer participants were informed that the data from the pilot interviews would not be included in the final research report. The purpose of the self-pilot was to enhance my reflexivity as a researcher and also address power within the research process by developing my understanding of the interview experience from a participant perspective (see Appendix 6 for my reflections on the self-pilot process). The volunteer participant pilots provided a chance for me to practice my interview technique within an IPA framework, and also to reflect with the volunteer participants on the interview content and process in order to identify any changes or refinements needed.

The pilot interviews confirmed that the identified questions were suitable as a basis for discussion within the interviews to follow, in that they would obtain data sufficient to answer

the research questions. One key reflection following the pilot interviews was that the depth and quality of the data gathered would potentially be strengthened by providing an opportunity for participants to review the interview schedule prior to the interviews taking place. Whilst prior knowledge of the questions may blunt the spontaneity and authenticity of communication, an awareness of the topics to be discussed and the key interview questions would be likely to elicit more considered responses.

The pilot interviews (and subsequent supervision) also highlighted the need for me to develop additional prompts and follow-up questions in order to encourage elaboration. Moreover, the pilot interviews encouraged me to consider the use of certain terminology and jargon in my questions and whether this was helpful. For example, in the pilot interview schedule, questions centred upon participants' experiences of including children with EHCPs. I noted that the use of this terminology was restrictive (and in some cases confusing and inaccessible) for participants and consequently decided to rephrase the questions so that they focused upon participants' experiences of children with significant SEND. Whilst it is evident that this phrasing is more ambiguous and subjective in nature, it was decided that this amendment was necessary in order to enhanced accessibility for participants. The pilot interviews also afforded me the opportunity to reflect upon my interview style. I acknowledged that questions were delivered in a somewhat rigid way (one after another), rather than being used flexibly as a guide (as recommended by Smith et al., 2009) and reflected that this was an area for development as I moved forward to the main data collection phase of the research. Finally, I noted that, whilst I successfully assumed a non-judgmental approach as a curious and active listener, it would be necessary for me to adopt a more neutral demeanour in the main interviews to ensure that participants did not misinterpret prompts and encouragement as agreement.

4.10: Data Collection

As noted by Smith et al. (2009, p.56), IPA is best suited to a data collection approach which will "invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences". Accordingly, a qualitative approach was adopted in the current research and in-depth individual interviews were conducted with all of the eight participants. The research interview is defined by Cannel and Kahn (1968) as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives" (cited in Cohen, Manion and

Morrison, 2007, p. 351). In IPA research, interviews are a dynamic two-way process, with both interviewer and interviewee taking an active role. Semi-structured interviews, which involve a small core of pre-determined questions posed within a flexible framework, were deemed most appropriate for the current research as they provide a degree of structure whilst offering the freedom to probe responses to explore areas of interest and facilitate discussion of relevant topics (Robson, 2011; Thomas, 2009). This allows the interview to evolve and develop in interesting and perhaps previously unconsidered ways (Coolican, 2004).

In line with the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009,) seven open-ended questions relating to the research questions under exploration were developed, with additional prompts and probes to further stimulate discussion. The open-ended questions were designed to prompt detailed accounts of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009), allowing participants to take ownership of the data and inviting the authentic, individual and rich responses said to be the hallmarks of qualitative research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). I was careful to avoid questions which restricted or led participants' responses. Table 8 presents the open-ended interview questions and follow-up prompts and probes used in the interviews.

The interview schedule was constructed with reference to literature focused upon designing and conducting IPA research (for example, Smith et al., 2009) and the study's research questions, thorough a process of self-reflection and supervision. The schedule design was further developed following pilot interviews which are further described in Section 4.9. Table 9 provides the rationale for each of the seven open-ended questions included in the interview schedule.

Table 8: Open-ended Interview Questions and Follow-up Prompts and Probes

Open-Ended Interview Questions	**Potential Follow-Up Questions (Prompts)**	**Potential Probes**
Can you tell me a little bit about your current role in school?	• How long have you been in your current role? • Can you tell me a little bit about your professional experience/training prior to your current role? Have you worked in other settings/worked in any different roles? What training did you undertake to become a teacher/teaching assistant? • Why did you want to become a teacher/teaching assistant? • What did you think being a teacher/teaching assistant would be like? • What are the most/least enjoyable/rewarding aspects of your role?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
What experience (if any) have you had with children with significant SEND in your life outside of work e.g. in your childhood, your home life/before training for your current role?	• How do you feel these experiences outside of work/before training for your current role have influenced your views about inclusion/teaching children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?

Thinking now about your current role- how do you experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting?	• Think of children you have worked with in your current role who have significant SEND, as opposed to 'typical' children in class. What/How questions…..e.g. What are they like in class? How would they behave in class? What do their needs look like? What would you see them doing? As opposed to….. • Can you describe your initial thoughts and feelings when you hear that you will have a child or children with a significant SEND in your class/you will be supporting a child or children with significant SEND? • How do you feel your lived experiences in your current role have affected your perceptions of the inclusion of children with significant needs in a mainstream setting? • What does inclusion mean to you? Do you think inclusion is a good thing? Why? When? For whom? • What do you think are the 'pros' and 'cons' of inclusion? What about from the children's perspectives/parents' perspectives/wider school team's perspective? • Is there anything you would share with other teachers/TAs about your experiences of including a child with a significant SEND in a mainstream setting? • Have you received training or support (either before undertaking your	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?

	current role or in your current role) about inclusion/teaching children with significant SEND? • Did this training or support influence your views about inclusion/teaching children with significant SEND?	
Can you describe any positive experiences you have had in relation to including a child with significant SEND?	• What went well (examples)? • Why did this go well? • What contributed to the experiences/outcomes? • How did it feel when something went well?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
Can you describe any issues or challenges that you have encountered in relation to including a child with significant SEND?	• How did you respond to these issues/challenges? • Could these difficulties have been alleviated/avoided? • How much did these problems matter? To whom? Why? • How did it feel when you encountered these issues/challenges?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
What exists to facilitate/support you in including children with significant SEND?	• How did this support affect the experience of including a child with a significant SEND?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?

What do you feel are the barriers to you in including children with significant SEND?	• How did these barriers affect the experience of including a child with significant SEND? • What more do you feel would be helpful in including children with significant SEND?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?

Table 9: Rationale for Interview Questions

Open-Ended Interview Questions	Rationale for Inclusion
1. Can you tell me a little bit about your current role in school?	• This question was used to gather contextual information about the participants' backgrounds and identities. The information shared helped me to develop pen portraits for each participant (see Chapter Five). • The question was useful for rapport building and helped participants become comfortable talking.
2. What experience (if any) have you had with children with significant SEND in your life outside of work e.g. in your childhood, your home life/before training for your current role?	• This question was designed to elicit information which would help me to develop an understanding of past experiences in participants' lives which may have helped shape their perceptions of inclusion and including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting. • This question is descriptive in nature. When designing the interview schedule, I was conscious of the importance of beginning with descriptive or narrative questions before moving on to questions which were more analytical or evaluative (Smith et al., 2009). It is evident that complex questions early in the interview may unsettled participants and have a negative influence on the remainder of the session.

3. Thinking now about your current role- how do you experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting?	• This question was included to address Research Question 1). • The question is very abstract. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), I prepared for this by constructing prompts. A number of prompts were developed for this question. These were not all intended to be used within a single interview. Instead, they were prepared to offer a range of possible routes in case a participant found it difficult to respond (Smith et al., 2009). • This question, and the associated prompts, helped me to better understand participants' experiences of including of children with significant SEND and also their conceptualisation of SEND and inclusion.
4. Can you describe any positive experiences you have had in relation to including a child with significant SEND?	• This question was included to address Research Question 1. • I wanted to avoid asking leading questions. As such, I ensured my questions focused upon both positive and negative experiences in relation to including children with significant SEND.
5. Can you describe any issues or challenges that you have encountered in relation to including a child with significant SEND?	• Again, this question was included to address Research Question 1. • The words 'issues' and 'challenges' do not appear until late in the schedule in order to present as neutral a tone as possible early on. • I thought that this was potentially a more sensitive question than interview question 4. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that more sensitive issues should be worked towards gradually.

6. What exists to facilitate/support you in including children with significant SEND?	• This question was included to address Research Question 2 (what facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?). • This question is evaluative in nature. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), it appears later in the interview schedule.
7. What do you feel are the barriers to you in including children with significant SEND?	• This question was included to address Research Question 2. • This question is evaluative in nature. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), it appears later in the interview schedule.

The individual interviews each lasted approximately 45-60 minutes, which is deemed to be an appropriate length of time for an in-depth interview (Smith et al. 2009). Participants and other relevant members of staff (for example, the individuals providing cover in class for participants) were made aware of the time commitments involved to ensure that the time required could be accommodated within the school timetable. Informed by my pilot studies (see Section 4.9), I provided all participants with a copy of the interview schedule approximately 48 hours before their interview was scheduled. Before each interview commenced the information sharing and consent seeking procedure was used as an opportunity to establish rapport with the participants. I also anticipated that my prior professional relationships with the research participants would promote a sense of trust and minimise the potential of the power imbalance which is often evident between interviewer and interviewee (Cocks, 2006). I ensured that participants were aware that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was simply interested in their lived experiences. Although IPA acknowledges that researchers enter their field of study with some prior insight, they should remain aware of their limited knowledge of participants' experiences and attempt to "bracket" any such preconceptions. During the interview process I adopted the position of a curious and deliberately naïve listener (Smith et al., 2009); open to potentially unexpected findings generated by participants. Participants were questioned in a friendly and informal manner and were given time to develop their answers within the interviews. With the consent of the interviewees, interviews were audio-recorded to allow for them to be transcribed verbatim into written form. Additionally, an interview recording sheet was used to note particular non-verbal behaviours or topics to return to later in the interview (see Appendix 9). Following each interview, I was mindful to record my reflections on the interview experience in my research diary. This allowed me to build on successive interviews and develop my interview skills throughout the research process.

4.11: Data Analysis

IPA provides a "systematic and practical approach to analysing phenomenological data" (Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 2002, p.81). Although IPA has been criticised for its lack of flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2013), IPA's structured approach and accessible procedures (Barker et al., 2002) were considered valuable, given my relative inexperience with qualitative research. Whilst there is no single prescribed 'method' for working with the data, the primary analytic focus of IPA is on participants' attempts to make sense of their

experiences. Typically, IPA moves from the particular to the shared, from the descriptive to the interpretive, maintaining a commitment to understanding the participant's point of view, with a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in particular contexts (Smith et al., 2009). Given the double hermeneutic nature of the analysis with IPA, the end result is always an account of how the researcher thinks the participant is thinking. As such, the truth claims of an IPA are subjective and tentative (Smith et al., 2009). However, despite this subjectivity, Smith et al. (2009) argue that the analysis in IPA is dialogical, systematic and rigorous and the results are available to be checked by the reader.

The current research adopted a step-by-step analytical process described by Smith et al. (2009) which is summarised in Table 10. It is evident that IPA is by no means a linear process but instead a complex procedure which involves an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). Excerpts demonstrating this process are presented in Appendices 10, 11 and 12.

Table 10: Stages of IPA (based upon the framework developed by Smith et al., 2009)

Step 1	Transcription	Verbatim transcription of audio-recorded interview data (see Appendix 10). As noted by Smith et al. (2009), because analysis in IPA aims primarily to interpret the meaning of the *content* of the participant's accounts, it does not require a particularly detailed transcription of the prosodic aspects of the recordings. It does not require a record of the exact length of pauses, or of all non-verbal utterances, as favoured by conversation analysis.
Step 2	Reading and re-reading	The second step involved immersing myself in the original data. This required a close reading and re-reading of the transcripts. I also listened to the audio-recordings when first reading the transcripts so as to imagine the voice of the participant during subsequent readings. During this stage of analysis I kept reflective notes of my own responses in my research diary (see Appendix 6). This is recommended by Smith et al., (2009) to help to reduce the urge to begin reduction and synopsis immediately.

Step 3	Initial noting	This exploratory step is the most detailed and time-consuming level of analysis as it involves examining the interview transcripts line by line, maintaining an open-mind and noting anything of interest. Of course, as a researcher I cannot claim neutrality and one could argue that this process is implicitly theory-laden. Notes were made in the right-hand margin of the transcripts to annotate features that were interesting or significant. This process increased my familiarity with the transcript and aimed to produce a detailed set of notes and comments on the data. Descriptive comments (describing the content of what participants said), linguistic comments (focusing on the specific use of language by participants such as hesitation, repetition and use of metaphor) and conceptual comments (analysing at a more interrogative and conceptual level) were recorded (see Appendix 10).
Step 4	Developing emergent themes	This stage of analysis involved noting emerging themes in the left-hand margin based on the comprehensive initial exploratory comments developed in Step 3. The data is reduced but maintains its complexity; initial notes are transformed into concise phrases which capture and reflect what is important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript. These themes should reflect the original words of the participants, but also the interpretations of the researcher (see Appendix 10).
Step 5	Searching for connections across emergent themes	Step 5 involved mapping how the emergent themes might group together to form broader or superordinate themes. Smith et al. (2009) emphasise that this stage of analysis is not prescriptive and propose a number of different ways to look for patterns and connections. In the current study, emergent themes were removed from the chronological order they appeared in the text, written on individual pieces of paper and placed on a large board. I was then able to move these individual pieces of paper around the board to explore potential connections between the emergent themes. A range of techniques to search for connections were used including abstraction ("putting like with like and developing a new name for

		the cluster" [Smith et al., 2009, p. 96]), subsumption (occurs "where an initial theme itself acquires a superordinate status as it helps bring together a series of related themes" [Smith et al., 2009, p. 97]), polarisation (identifying oppositional themes) and contextualisation (placing themes within their temporal or cultural context as an anchor for clustering). Frequency was also considered, but themes were not discarded purely for their infrequency because frequency is not the sole indicator of significance (Smith et al., 2009). In searching for connections across themes I followed the guidance given by Smith et al. (2009, p. 96), who recommend that "not all emergent themes must be incorporated into this stage of analysis, [which] in part depends upon the overall research question and its scope". The clustered themes were checked against the transcript to ensure that the broader themes linked back to the original data. I then produced a graphic representation of the themes. For each superordinate theme, subordinate themes were listed and annotated with participant quotes (see Appendix 11).
Step 6	Moving to the next case	The above process was then repeated for each individual participant. It was important to attempt to bracket ideas and themes from previous cases in order to respect the individuality of each case and maintain IPA's commitment to idiography.
Step 7	Looking for patterns across cases	Step 7 involved looking for patterns of convergences and commonalities, and those of divergences and nuances, across cases. This often involves reconfiguring and relabelling of themes, as something from one case is illuminated by something from another (see Appendix 12). This stage required a great deal of thought and reflection as detailed in my research diary (see Appendix 6). After much consideration, Step 7 was completed in two stages. First, I compared the individual participant emergent themes across all 8 cases. I searched for connections between these emergent themes and grouped them into overarching (across case) subordinate themes. Not all individual emergent themes were carried forward

		(these are detailed in Appendix 12). Analytical comparisons of the contributions of teacher and TA participants to each overarching subordinate theme were made to facilitate the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between the two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples. These comparisons are presented in Chapter Six. I then looked at how these overarching subordinate themes grouped together to form overarching (across case) superordinate themes and a final list of themes was devised (see Appendix 13).

4.12: Validity and Reliability

The traditional criteria for validity and reliability are rooted in the positivist paradigm. In quantitative research, "validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are" (Joppe, 2000 cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 598-599), whilst "the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable" (Joppe, 2000 cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 598-599). Although qualitative research is still subject to thorough consideration of quality, it requires different forms of measurement, given that such research rejects the tenet of a universal truth. As noted by Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 250), the "usual canons of 'good science'…require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research". Thus, terminology within this paradigm moves away from traditional use of positivist criteria such as reliability and validity (Finlay, 2006). According to Yardley (2000), these may be inappropriate criteria if the purpose of the research is to offer just one of many possible interpretations of a phenomenon. In terms of assessing validity in qualitative studies, Smith et al. (2009) suggest using the open-ended, flexible principles offered by Yardley (2000) to judge the quality of qualitative research: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. In Table 11, Yardley's (2000) principles are outlined, alongside examples of how they were enacted in the current research.

Table 11: Yardley's (2000) Criteria for Determining the Quality of Qualitative Research and Examples of how the Criteria were Addressed in the Current Study

Criterion	Description of criterion	How criterion was addressed in current study
Sensitivity to context	Involves awareness of relevant literature and previous related empirical work, understanding of the socio-cultural setting of the study, appreciation the power imbalance between researcher and participants and the researcher's commitment to understanding the participants' lived experiences.	• Chapters Two and Three demonstrate that relevant extant literature relating to SEND, inclusion and educator attitudes towards, and experiences of, inclusion was examined and used to inform the current study. Moreover, methodological texts pertinent to the current study were consulted. • As an insider researcher and current colleague of the research participants I feel I have some awareness of the socio-cultural environment of participants. The research context is detailed in Section 4.5. Key characteristics of participants are described in pen portraits (see Chapter Five), providing contextual information about the participants' backgrounds and identities. • A number of steps were taken to attempt to address the potential of a power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewees (Cocks, 2006). Before the main data collection I self-piloted my interview schedule to develop my understanding of the interview process from a participant perspective (see Appendix 6 for my reflections on the self-pilot process). In participant interviews, I ensured that the interviewees were in a position to provide informed consent and were aware that data would remain confidential and that they had the right to withdraw their data. Efforts were made to establish rapport with the participants at the beginning of the interviews, and participants were questioned in a friendly and informal manner. It was anticipated that my prior professional relationships with the research participants would promote a sense of trust and minimise power imbalance. • As an IPA researcher I was committed to understanding the participants' lived experiences. IPA is an

		approach to qualitative, experiential research specifically designed to "gain insight into individual participants' psychological worlds" (Willig, 2008, p.73).
Commitment and rigour	Involves a thorough approach to data collection, analysis and reporting. This is achieved through prolonged engagement in the topic, the development of competence and skill in the methods used, immersion in the relevant data and completeness of the data collection and analysis (dependent upon the adequacy of the sample to supply all the information needed	• Three pilot interviews were conducted prior to the main data collection to develop my interview technique and schedule. During the main data collection stage of the research, I recorded reflections on the interview experience in my research diary (see Appendix 6), allowing me to build on successive interviews and develop my interview skills throughout the research process. • Methodological guidance on conducting IPA research was consulted. I adopted a step-by-step analytical process described by Smith et al. (2009). Analysis is dialogical, systematic and rigorous and the results are available to be checked by the reader. • Interviews were audio-recorded to allow them to be transcribed verbatim into written form. Care was taken to ensure accuracy. A close reading and re-reading of the transcripts was undertaken to immerse myself in the original data. • In total eight interviews were conducted. Whilst this is a relatively large sample for an IPA study (Smith et al., 2009), the sample facilitated the identification of convergence and divergence between participants (Smith et al., 2009) whilst still allowing for sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case. The sample was appropriate to answer my research questions and all participants met the study's participant inclusion criteria (see Section 4.8). • Participant validation post-analysis was purposely not obtained. That is to say, I chose not to share my findings with participants to check my themes and seek their feedback. This is because IPA recognises that the IPA researcher is engaging in a double hermeneutic, whereby the findings are the researcher's

	for a comprehensive analysis).	subjective interpretations and sense-making of the participant trying to make sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Of course, this interpretation should be the most probable and persuasive (Langdridge, 2007).
Transparency and coherence	Relates to the transparency and clarity of the researcher's presentation of the research process. This ensures that research is accessible for critical interrogation by peers.	• The ontological and epistemological views underpinning the current research have been explored in Section 4.2. • An auditable record of my decisions, thoughts and reflections throughout the research process were recorded in my research diary (see Appendix 6 for extracts from my research diary). • Excerpts demonstrating the analysis process are presented in Appendices 10, 11 and 12 so that the reader can examine how data were analysed using IPA. • In Chapters Five and Six, the themes identified through IPA are presented with supporting quotes from the interview transcripts to provide evidence that analysis remained faithful to the data.
Impact and importance	Relates to the theoretical, practical and socio-cultural impact of the study; the degree to which the research translates into something that is interesting, important or useful for others.	• The current study was designed to address gaps in the existing research by providing a detailed exploration of the lived experience of educators including children with significant SEND within a mainstream primary school, thus offering new insight into a previously studied area. • Also, by involving both teachers and teaching assistants as participants in the research, the study brings the relatively unacknowledged voices of TAs into the debate. • Research findings and implications were shared with members of the senior leadership team (in addition to the wider staff team) in my school in a research summary report (see Appendix 5). At a local level, it is expected that the research will have school-wide benefits and will contribute to positive systemic change within the setting. • The implications of the current research are further explored in in Section 7.4.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS: PART ONE

5.1: Chapter Overview

This chapter offers an account of the in-depth analysis of participant interviews. An idiographic portrayal of each participant is provided, allowing the uniqueness of their individual lived experiences to be depicted. Contextual information about the participants and reflexive descriptions of my interactions with them (based upon data from the interview transcripts and notes from my research diary [see Appendix 6]) are provided in brief 'pen portraits'. These pen portraits support the idiographic quality of the analysis and further illuminate how my perceptions and understanding of their experiences evolved. The superordinate and subordinate themes that were abstracted from the analysis of their interview transcripts are then presented for each participant, followed by a narrative account of themes which I thought held particular significance. Verbatim extracts from the participant interviews are included to illustrate the phenomenological basis for my interpretations and to ensure that the evidence base is transparent and accessible to the reader (Smith, et al., 2009).

5.2: Participant 1: Chloe

5.2.1: Pen Portrait

Chloe is a teaching assistant in Nursery. She has been in her current position for over three years and before this worked in private day nurseries for approximately eight years. She has a university degree in primary education. Within the interview, Chloe spoke of the demanding and stressful nature of her role and emphasised the responsibility of her position, noting "…*I do feel like I'm one of the teachers sometimes…".* Whilst identifying the considerable practical challenges associated with her profession, Chloe told me that she loves her job and finds it extremely rewarding. Her passion for her role was evident throughout the interview and she conveyed a strong desire to feel needed by the children she works with and to have a positive influence on their lives.

Chloe was the first person to volunteer to take part in the research. She seemed extremely enthusiastic about the project and I got the impression that she was very eager to participate and

have her voice heard. I acknowledged that I was somewhat surprised by this. I work relatively closely with Chloe in my role as a teacher in EYFS and perceive her to be a quiet, conscientious member of the team who is nurturing and compassionate in her approach to working with young children. I had not been aware however, of Chloe's considerable interest in SEND or inclusion issues. This made me reflect upon the boundaries that exist in collegial relationships, which can serve to limit what one discloses personally and professionally. I also considered whether there was something about working within a fast-paced school environment, with its multiple and ever-changing practical challenges and frustrations, which stunts conversations of deeper meaning.

5.2.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Chloe's interview transcript are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Chloe: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate themes	**Subordinate themes**
Personal commitment to inclusion	Personal values and beliefs about inclusion
	Reflecting upon own development
	Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND
Connecting with the child	Empathy and understanding
	Celebrating children with SEND
	Relationship with the child
	Heterogeneity of children with SEND
Working within the school system	Inclusion and school priorities
	Lack of flexibility in the mainstream classroom
	Colleague support
	Attitudes of other educators

Personal commitment to inclusion

Throughout the interview, Chloe expressed a commitment to inclusion and emphasised the value she places on diversity. This seems to be a core component of Chloe's identity as a practitioner and she was open about how her family had influenced her views, instilling within her an inclusive sense of understanding and appreciation of difference from an early age; "*It's always, you know, include everyone, everyone, even though they, you know, they might look a bit different or they might do something that's a bit different. Everybody's different. Everybody is special in their own way…*". I wondered too, if her higher level educational study may have further shaped her inclusive ethos. I recognised that the views shared by Chloe about inclusive education somewhat echo my own personal values and beliefs. When analysing her interview transcript I reflected that, given Chloe's prior knowledge of my position on inclusion from professional discussions outside of the current research, she may have been communicating what she perceived to be socially desirable answers within the interview, rather than relaying her true beliefs. However, given the depth and richness of her considered responses, I concluded that that her account presented as honest and authentic.

Chloe seemed to be enthusiastic about personal development and self-growth and articulated a desire to further her understanding of SEND issues. She spoke about a lack of access to training and I sensed that this resulted in feelings of inadequacy for Chloe and a perceived lack of expertise. This was supported by the fact that she seemed to crave expert advice; *"Or even if someone came in and just said 'look, this is what it is, you know, this is, this is how we work with people like that'."*. Chloe repeatedly shared concerns about her ability to fulfil the needs of children with significant SEND. For example, she told me *"…you initially think 'oh God, like how, how can I help them?* "' She also shared her experiences of frustration when children with SEND do not receive the support she believes they need early enough in their school career. She told me *"Um it's one of the things that I go home saying like 'that's really annoyed me, that's made me like really cross'"* and I thought this reflected the indistinct boundary between her professional and personal life. For me, this comment reiterated Chloe's dedication and commitment to her profession and also to inclusive education. Her role as an inclusive practitioner is not something she leaves behind at the school gates each afternoon but instead is an integral part of her individual identity. It was necessary to critically reflect upon my own thinking when interpreting this theme. I recognised that I held an implicit assumption that the

hierarchal structure within schools (in which teaching assistants are often in a lower position in terms of power, responsibility, training, and indeed salary, than their teacher colleagues) may serve to constrain the development of a strong professional identity in TAs. This certainly did not appear to be the case for Chloe.

Connecting with the child

I was struck by Chloe's empathy for children with SEND and that she really seemed to celebrate and champion the pupils she worked with. She appeared to appreciate the individuality of children and consider them holistically, referencing influencing factors such as family background and home life when discussing their needs. She positioned children with SEND as in need of care and understanding and spoke about providing comfort and looking after children with SEND, indicating a level of emotional investment. Chloe seemed to relate to children with SEND on a very personal level, sharing with me that she has "…*known what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else.*". She was very open about her own personal experiences of anxiety. I wondered if this had influenced her tendency to feel defensive of children with SEND, particularly *"…the quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety that always miss out…".* Chloe expressed a lot of admiration and pride when speaking about children with SEND and placed emphasis on children's strengths rather than deficits. During the interview, Chloe stressed the importance of her relationships with children, using a simile to make her description more emphatic; "…*sometimes you're like a second parent…".* Chloe also highlighted that she felt good relationships with children with SEND are crucial in understanding children's needs and providing support *("…it's just, it's based on how well we know him."*). She indicated that, as a TA, she was potentially better placed than a teacher to develop these strong bonds and implied that this was a position of privilege. Indeed, she noted that this was one of the key reasons she enjoyed her role, indicating these relationships were mutually beneficial.

Working within the school system

Chloe emphasised that mainstream schools can be unaccommodating and inflexible environments in which children are expected to conform and 'fit in'. I got the impression that Chloe was disappointed with the rigidity of the school system; *"I feel like we should adapt more to their needs instead of the other way around.".* I thought her comments reflected

dissatisfaction with a 'within-child' approach and instead focused on systemic change. Chloe spoke about the relative position of inclusion, and its standing, when considered alongside other school priorities, stating *"...I feel like sometimes we do forget about that inclusion."*. She discussed concerns about dividing her time equitably to the varied responsibilities of her role and reflected upon the psychological balancing act involved in attempting to provide adequate support for children with significant SEND whilst ensuring that the needs of the other children in class are met.

Chloe spoke about conflicting perspectives amongst members of staff in school regarding how best to support children with SEND. She reported that she felt some older members of staff had more traditional views and advocated a firm approach, with an emphasis on discipline and punishment. It was clear that Chloe did not align herself with such individuals and I thought she appeared quite frustrated by their position. I wondered if Chloe considered such views ill-informed as she recommended that training would encourage people to critically consider their perspectives and may facilitate a change in mind-set. When discussing inclusive practice and adapting to meet the needs of individual children, Chloe told me *"...sometimes people are very negative about it and that affects people who try to be more positive."*. She also noted:

> Chloe: … I think how, how judgmental people are sometimes is a barrier. Um I don't think that happens in Early Years a lot but I do feel like even walking through the school with [name of child] even that's difficult sometimes.

I found it interesting here that Chloe was very clear that she was not referring to her immediate team. I questioned whether this was indicative of an 'us-versus-them' mentality and potential hostilities in relations between Early Years staff and the wider school team. I was cautious in my analysis here and careful to acknowledge my own personal experiences of feeling somewhat separate from, and different to, colleagues higher up in the school; this is likely to have influenced my reading of Chloe's account and the meaning I attached to it.

Chloe portrayed a sense of strength in the Early Years staff team. She often used the collective term 'we' and expressed group-based togetherness. It is clear, however, that my dual role as an insider researcher is likely to have influenced this account, given that I am also a member of this team and in a position of relative power to Chloe. Chloe spoke about the value of additional adults in class to support children with SEND. She noted that this can serve to alleviate practical demands, promote inclusion and allow for more individualised care and learning. She also

communicated the importance of being able to discuss children with SEND with colleagues within her team to obtain advice from members of staff with more experience. I sensed however, that Chloe placed even more value on just being able to talk to others who could understand and empathise with her experience; *"…we understand each other so well and we understand how difficult it is..."*.

5.3: Participant 2: Lorna

5.3.1: Pen Portrait

Lorna is a teaching assistant in Reception and has been in her current role for approximately six years. She has a diploma in childcare and education and previous experience of working in a day nursery. Lorna reported that she has wanted to work with children from an early age, since the birth of her younger sister. She views her role in school as that of an *"…unqualified teacher…"* and told me that she feels the expectations for teaching assistants in school are higher than she had initially expected. She places value on working directly with children and finds this rewarding and worthwhile, particularly when she is involved in children's 'lightbulb moments', when *"…they just get something and you think oh 'hallelujah' what I've been doing it works. Or like when the child suddenly becomes confident at something."*. Lorna spoke about the culture of pressure that exists in the school environment and reflected that this pressure can be "…*filtered down…"* the school hierarchy.

Lorna's was the shortest of the eight interviews conducted in this study. I thought there was some awkwardness in our dynamic which I had perhaps not expected because of our close professional and personal relationship in school. I reflected that this perceived discomfort may have been the consequence of a shift in power and reciprocity within the interview process. I certainly recognised that I felt slightly uncomfortable about interviewing someone I knew so well and I acknowledge that this may have influenced both the interview process and my interpretation of it. Prior to the interview, I sensed that Lorna was somewhat nervous and uneasy and she made reference to the strangeness and formality of the situation. I reiterated that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in her personal experiences. I also noted that I had self-piloted the interview to develop my understanding of the interview process from a participant perspective, in the hope that being open and honest about my 'insider' status

would enhance reciprocity and level the power balance. Within the interview, I found our conversation to be stilted at times and felt that Lorna was cautious in some of her responses. I questioned whether Lorna was concerned about giving 'correct', socially-desirable responses. I also wondered whether Lorna found it difficult to self-reflect and considered that opportunities for introspection and self-reflection may be limited in her role as a TA.

5.3.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Lorna's interview transcript are summarised in Table 13.

Table 13: Lorna: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate themes	**Subordinate themes**
A lack of control and order	Children with SEND as disruptive
	Fear of failure
Acceptance of SEND	An entitlement to equality
	A focus on within-child deficits
	Parental acceptance of SEND
	Peer relations
Constraints of the mainstream school structure and environment	Practical constraints in a mainstream classroom
	Colleague support
	Limited training and experience

A lack of control and order

Lorna placed emphasis on the importance of discipline, routine and consistency in school. She recognised however, that it is often necessary to make certain individual allowances for children with SEND (*"…there's a bit more leeway with this specific child than there is for your normal [made quote marks with fingers] child…").* I wondered if this raised tensions around equity for Lorna and whether she found it difficult to make exceptions for children with SEND, whilst ensuring other children understood the boundaries in class which she clearly values. Lorna appeared to perceive some children with SEND as disruptive. She told me "…*you'd have to stop what you're doing to sort them out. Maybe even it could continue so you have to discipline so*

it's just a lot of disruption.". She seemed to position these children as volatile and unpredictable (*"…they bounce off other children. So if one sets off the other will set off"; "…it's still day-to-day with this child and they can't sometimes they can't control how they're feeling…").* Lorna indicated that she felt some children with SEND may disrupt the control and order of the classroom more than others; *"…I wouldn't say if there was a child with physical needs wouldn't be as worried it would be a child possibly on the autistic spectrum that you think how are they going to disturb a class…".* Within the interview, Lorna often focused in on behavioural needs and children with SEND who physically hurt other children in class, which could result in *"…backlash from parents...".* I wondered if this was because behavioural needs presented the greatest challenge for Lorna and threatened her perceived professional competency and confidence in her skills as a practitioner.

Within the interview Lorna, spoke about the personal reward she takes from achieving successes with children with SEND but also the feelings of failure and hopelessness she experiences when she feels she is unable to help a child; *"It just feels like a bit of a [pause] just disappointing. Like you're failing them a little bit but there's nothing you can do. You try your best but there's nothing you can do."*. I thought that Lorna really seemed to internalise these experiences and feared failing children. For Lorna, this fear of failure also seemed to be linked to a lack of control, order and discipline:

Lorna: Well the initial is a, a bit of fear but not [pause] not in an awful sense but a fear as in you think "oh goodness how are they going to...is it going be a child who's just going to run wild in the classroom, are they not going to be able to control themselves?".

Acceptance of SEND

When analysing Lorna's interview transcript, I reflected that there were some inconsistencies and tensions in her perceptions of inclusion in mainstream settings and acceptance of SEND. Lorna spoke about the entitlement of equality and seemed to advocate the celebration of diversity and difference within the mainstream classroom. Moreover, she drew attention to certain positive aspects of inclusion, including the strong peer relationships which can develop between children with SEND and their non-SEND peers *"…even though [pause] they might know this child got extra, additional needs…*". However, I also noticed that Lorna seemed to focus upon within-child deficits when discussing children with SEND (*"…so these children of, of Reception*

age and these children, this child come in at maybe the attention span of a two year old and couldn't sit, couldn't listen, couldn't sit for songs at all…"). Although she felt that it was important to give children with SEND the opportunity to 'have a go' she seemed to believe that they inevitably would be unable to achieve in mainstream provision (*"Say it was climbing up a wall, I wouldn't be able to climb up a wall but I'd like to give it a good try.")* and appeared to concede that inclusion is not always viable *("To try and include everyone. Yeah, it's a good thing but obviously in time if things aren't working then other, other options need to be looked at.").* Indeed, I thought that Lorna seemed to position special school placement as more suitable for the education of some children with SEND;*"…if they go to somewhere where maybe they're not going to fail and they're going to just fit in I don't know how else to say it but [pause] create better opportunities in their life.".* Lorna spoke about parental acceptance of SEND and noted that some parents may be initially averse to specialist provision, despite this being the best place for their child:

> Lorna: …there's always a lot stigma and like we've had parents in the past saying that they don't want the children to go to er an SEND school because they said that they don't think it's best for them but they've come back they've got other children in this school and they said that actually it's the best place for them and they're doing, they're doing really well but it's all...there is the stigma and a lot of parents are saying a lot of them don't believe that there's anything wrong with their child sometimes it takes a lot for them to realise…

Constraints of the mainstream school structure and environment

Lorna indicated that the mainstream school structure and environment can make inclusive practice difficult. She told me:

> Lorna: …our Reception it's quite regimented…and I don't know what other Receptions are like but a lot of them are [pause] work-heavy and the expectations of children are quite high so it might stop them from being included because they feel like they can't do something.

She discussed concerns about a lack of time to support the needs of children with SEND in the mainstream classroom (*"It's always borrowed time from somewhere else because a day is just full of everything else we need to do.")* and noted that *"…sometimes other children's needs might not be being met…"* because children with SEND require a disproportionate amount of adult time. I wondered if Lorna felt a sense of injustice in response to this inequitable division of

adult attention, or that other children in class were at a disadvantaged because of the inclusion of children with SEND; *"...children are like put on not on the backburner but they might not gain that confidence to come to you because they know you might always be busy elsewhere."*. Lorna associated such issues around prioritising time with a lack of additional adult support in class. She shared *"...there's not much er help. There's only usually me and the class teacher with this child so there's not much other help for them."*. Lorna seemed to think that support in school to facilitate her in teaching children with SEND was limited ("*What exist to help support me in teaching...er not not much in school.")* and discussed a lack of training about SEND to support her professional development ("…*I've never really had any sort of training.")*. Although Lorna made some reference to external professionals, her main source of support seemed to be colleagues within school. She told me that she sought support from *"...people who know what they're talking about..."* such as the school SENCo, her phase leader or the class teacher. Lorna's phrasing here made me question whether she has a negative perception of her own knowledge and expertise. I thought this was substantiated by the fact that Lorna expressed a desire for more training around SEND and inclusion.

5.4: Participant 3: Jim

5.4.1: Pen Portrait

Jim is a teacher, currently working in Year 1. He has two years' experiences in Year 1 and prior to this worked in the Reception class in school for three years. Jim has an undergraduate degree in psychology and completed a PGCE to become a teacher. Both of Jim's parents are also primary school teachers. Jim noted that, although he did not want to become a teacher initially, he was led into the profession after finishing his university degree and that *"...for now teaching's fine..."*. Jim spent some time in a specialist setting during his PGCE year but left the placement after a week. He explained to me:

> Jim: …I just couldn't do it. I was there for a week and I was just like this isn't for me I can't work like this… they were all just everywhere…And it was too much. And I was like I can't, I can't be here for another eight weeks…

Given that Jim had such negative memories of working in a specialist setting, I was interested to discover that he has ambitions to become an Educational Psychologist in the future; a role that

would tend to involve working regularly in such settings with children with significant SEND (albeit with markedly different roles and responsibilities). For Jim, seeing the children he works with make progress "…*makes the teaching worth it…"* and he likes to feel as though he has had a unique impact on a child. Jim resents reducing individual children to "…*a piece of data…"* but feels this is inevitable because of *"…pressure from above…"* that feeds down from a government level.

Jim was enthusiastic about the area of study and seemed eager to be part of a doctoral research project. He articulated confidently and presented as self-assured in his perspectives, reflecting my prior perceptions of Jim as a colleague in school. I thought that he was very candid and open within the interview. At times I found the frankness of his comments to be slightly jarring (for example, his phrasing when he shared *"I went to a very small secondary school then I went to a grammar school for sixth-form. So, again, it sort of got rid of any special needs children.").* Jim was critical of the school he works in at times, noting that SEND support was inadequate and that inclusion *"…success stories…"* were limited.

5.4.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Jim's interview transcript are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14: Jim: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate theme	**Subordinate theme**
The problem with inclusion in mainstream settings	The importance of the learning environment
	The problem with inclusion in mainstream settings
	Mainstream 'v' specialist provision
	A differentiated curriculum
	SEND and school priorities
	Peer relations
	Parents

A deficit approach to SEND	Negative perception of children with SEND
	Progress
The emotional and psychological battle	
Colleague support	TA support
	Support from colleagues
	Support from external professionals

The problem with inclusion in mainstream settings

Jim perceives the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings to be positive in principle but stressed the plethora of issues and challenges inclusion entails when put into practice. He reported that children with SEND require *"…almost an entirely separate curriculum…"* and noted that these children are effectively excluded by inclusion, in that *"…they are still there…but they go off and do their own separate thing…",* often completing a discrete task away from the classroom. This led me to contemplate Jim's conceptualisation of inclusion and whether he distinguished between inclusion and integration in his interpretations. Jim told me that children with SEND get *"...a bad deal because you've not got enough provision or staff for them. Or time because you've only got so many hours in the day…"* and he emphasised the difficulties he faces attempting to balance the needs of children and prioritise how to spend his time in class and who to support. He also highlighted that the inclusion of children with SEND can detrimentally affect their non-SEND peers:

> Jim: …it's been very obvious that there have been children who have been included to the exclusion of others. Like when, like when I had the child who was being quite aggressive it meant that there were a lot of children who couldn't access the learning…

Jim noted that inclusion becomes more and more difficult as children grow older, attributing this to school becoming increasing structured and formal as children move up the years. Moreover, he highlighted that older children can be less understanding and forgiving of differences *("…the children give it back…Because they've got, they've got to the point where they've had them for seven years now and it's too much.*"). Jim told me that he feels the support in place in school to facilitate him in teaching children with SEND is inadequate and he referred to measures in place to promote inclusion (such as SEND learning walks and staff meetings) as box ticking exercises.

Jim feels that SEND provision in his school is lacking in comparison to other mainstream settings and he told me that consequently there are a lack of inclusion 'success stories'. Indeed, Jim informed me that many children with significant SEND have had a limited journey in the school; *"…those that we have had have either been moved out into a urm special needs setting or haven't been markedly low enough to warrant them needing to leave and we've been able to find something for them within school."*. I interpreted this comment to indicate that Jim is aligned with what he perceives to be the school position: some children do not belong in mainstream education. This was supported by the fact that Jim also implied that mainstream teachers lack the skills and expertise to support children with significant SEND ("*And again, it was another matter of it had sort of got past anyone's ability to look after him".)*

A deficit approach to SEND

I thought Jim was deficit-focused when discussing pupils with SEND. He told me that these children are *"…markedly different…"* and stressed the limited progress that they make in school:

> Jim: And still, one out of these two boys could not, for the life of him, work out the difference between forwards and backwards…Come on, let's go walking forwards. Grabbing him by the hand and walking backwards. B-B-Backwards. Right let's go. Still nothing…And you're there going what, what can I do to make this clearer for you? And you're sort of stuck at that level.

From analysis of the interview data, I got the impression that pupil progress is very important for Jim and that he perceives progress to be an external measure of his success and efficacy as a teacher. As such, I considered that the lack of progress made by children with SEND may feel frustrating or even threatening to Jim. Indeed, Jim associated limited progress with additional pressure and burden in his teaching role:

> Jim: So I think almost you get it in your head straightaway, someone who comes in and you've got someone with special needs you're like oh no I'm going to have a really tough year because I'm going to spend the year creating loads of extra documents that you have no idea whether or not it's going to be successful, you're going to be having to explain why this child isn't making the adequate progress alongside your other children.

I was interested to note here that Jim seemed to perceive this lack of progress to be inevitable, intimating the low expectations he may hold for children with SEND.

Jim reported that children with SEND can distract other children or can have a detrimental impact on their engagement. He positioned children with emotional needs as controlling and oppressing ("*Urm and we've had a few, not special needs, but more so emotional children who have been at this school which have completely lorded over the classroom and taken control.")* and shared than he felt it was difficult to include children with physical behaviours in the mainstream classroom ("*And he was just getting violent and aggressive so he eventually went to a special needs school…But it was obviously difficult to try and include him based on the fact that he was very aggressive towards the other children.").*

The emotional and psychological battle

Jim highlighted that, on entering the teaching profession, he was unprepared for the experience of having *"…a child with special needs in ch...in class all the time…".* From his phrasing here, and the emphasis he placed on his words, I wondered if this comment hinted at the perceived relentlessness of the task of supporting children with SEND. I thought this interpretation was strengthened when Jim shared *"We'd hammered and hammered and hammered for five days for him to work up to that one independent lesson…"* and went on to express his frustration that, despite his best efforts, progress with these children was very limited. Jim frequently made reference to 'chasing his tail' when discussing the inclusion of children with SEND. I wondered whether this indicated feelings of exhaustion and a perception that his actions were ineffectual and did not lead to progress.

I was interested to find that 'a perceived need to explain oneself' emerged as a theme when analysing Jim's interview transcript. He told me*:*

> Jim: You've also then got 26, 28 other children that you're sat worrying about and you can't lose those children as well so you almost have to have them doing something related so that you can sort of go in and check on them. You've got all the same resources out. And the worst thing you can do, obviously, is leave them to sit and do nothing because they'll sit and stare at the wall. And then I've got to explain that to a teacher or another person who walks into the class and they go 'oh why, why are those not doing anything'. And it's like oh, well, they're supposed to be, but I can't obviously leave them to do it because they...when they're working by themselves, it's not as successful.

I thought this indicated the high level of scrutiny Jim feels he faces in regard to the inclusion of children with SEND and the perceived need to defend and justify his actions, despite feeling he had little alternative because of limited adult support in class.

Colleague support

Jim spoke ardently about the need for additional adult support in class to facilitate the inclusion of children with SEND, stating *"Urm but I think it...the resource, the resource that you need is, is adults and teachers. Anything other than that is fluff."*. He stressed the importance of high adult to child ratios to facilitate progress for children with SEND, comparing his experiences of teaching in a mainstream setting to that of private tutoring to emphasise his point; *"...but he's made so much progress that, again, that's a one-to-one setting where it's just me and him…"*. Jim noted that TA support for children with SEND in school was limited and implied that this was detrimental to successful inclusive practice; *"But you then don't have the provision because you don't have the TAs. Like none of my children have one-to-ones this year. You don't have enough TAs to be able to deploy them effectively…"*. He also reported that TAs could often lack experience and expressed difficulties he had faced in managing inexperienced support staff; *"And I found myself ... having to remind the TA 'oh look, he's just hit that person. Why has he hit that person? You're supposed to be with him one-to-one'. Urm which was difficult, obviously."*. Whilst Jim clearly valued support from external professionals, he highlighted the challenge associated with accessing this support in school. For example, he told me that multi-agency meeting are *"...very few and far between…"* and noted told me *"...you're having to really fight your corner to get a child in who may or may not end up staying in school."*. I thought this really emphasised the struggle Jim associated with obtaining advice and guidance about how best to support a specific child with SEND. Jim linked this limited access to external professionals to accompanying cost implications for school and noted that consequently it was necessary to prioritise need.

5.5: Participant 4: Julie

5.5.1: Pen Portrait

Julie is a teaching assistant in Year 3 and also recently started working in the school nurture room. She told me that before working in the nurture room she was *"...just a class TA..."* which made me question how Julie perceives the relative importance of her different roles in school. Julie has three years' experience in her current position and before this worked with a child in Year 2 on a one-to-one basis. I was interested to find out that she had not originally applied to be a one-to-one TA but was offered the role after interviewing for a different position and *"... had no idea what to expect."*. Julie has a diploma in child development and has previously worked in a private day nursery for a number of years. As well as sharing her pragmatic motivations for choosing to work in a school setting (i.e. school holidays), Julie seemed to appreciate feeling that she was making a difference to children's lives, particularly when working with children who *"...don't get everything that they need at home."*.

I had not worked directly with Julie in school and was very interested to speak with her about her experiences. Given our limited personal and professional relationship, I was pleasantly surprised she volunteered to take part in the research; the three other TAs who came forward were individuals I worked with more closely in school and I reflected that they may have done so out of a sense of duty, or because our existing rapport made the interview process less daunting. I felt that Julie seemed quite nervous prior to the interview and she told me she was unsure that what she had to say would be useful. Our conversation was often quite stilted and I found this resulted in me speaking more than in other interviews and using prompts, probes and non-verbal cues regularly to encourage Julie to speak. Julie seemed to lack confidence and communicated self-doubt. I found it challenging to restrain my desire to reassure her and instead simply listen to her lived experience. When reading the transcript back, I wondered whether I may have moved Julie on too quickly at times when I perceived that she was experiencing discomfort. Upon reflection, I should have supressed my need to 'rescue' Julie when I thought she was feeling unsure or awkward and allowed her more time to expand upon her responses.

5.5.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Julie's interview transcript are summarised in Table 15.

Table 15: Julie: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate theme	**Subordinate theme**
The burden and challenge of inclusion	The problem with inclusion
	Negative perceptions of children with SEND
	Limited progress and low expectations
	Empathy and understanding for children with SEND
The challenges of the mainstream school context	School structure and environment
	A lack of access to training and guidance
	Colleague support
	Parental attitudes
Impact on self	Emotional impact
	Psychological impact

The burden and challenge of inclusion

I thought it was clear from the interview that Julie does not feel that inclusion in mainstream is always the right course of action for some children with SEND; *"I think, I think sometimes as hard as you try some children can't, they can't do everything."*. Whilst acknowledging some of the benefits of inclusion in mainstream settings (for example, Julie noted that inclusion can promote diversity and acceptance amongst peers), Julie seemed to place emphasis on what she perceived to be negative the consequences of inclusion. For example, Julie told me that she believed inclusion can disadvantage children without SEND in class and that children with SEND can burden their non-SEND peers*:*

Julie: Urm I think it puts pressure on the, the other children around them sometimes… Because I suppose the other children then feel that they have to include them…you know, if they just want to go off and play with their friends at playtime but they feel that they have to be a, a good friend to, to somebody who can't, you know play their, their kind of missing out but then...

I thought that Julie seemed to be deficit-focus when discussing children with SEND and within the interview positioned them as disruptive, trying and uncooperative ("…*that same child interrupting and causing disruptions that's really urm trying on the, on the teachers and on the TAs…"; "Sometimes they just, they just don't want to do any work. And so getting them to do work urm is a challenge in itself…").* Julie questioned the amount of progress children with SEND make in mainstream settings ("…*with a child with, with SEND, you know significant SEND is it...are they even going to make any progress?")* and I wondered if she has low expectations of children with significant SEND:

> Julie: And it's just a, a different, a different outlook for them, I suppose, than what it would be for the, the normal children…yeah it's are, are we trying to make them make progress or are we trying to, I don't know even keep them occupied. That sounds terrible doesn't it?

Having said this, I noticed that Julie acknowledged that her negative expectations of children with SEND are not always realised; *"I was expecting this child to be sort of climbing the walls and when I came he was just lovely and quiet and he was really sweet.".* Moreover, she also expressed a level of empathy and understanding for children with SEND and highlighted that she felt these pupils can be excluded in the classroom and left without a voice; "*But urm I kind of felt bad for them really that, you know, the, this child put their hand up and the teacher would always sort of swerve past them because they never knew what they were gonna say.".*

The challenges of the mainstream school context

Julie highlighted the difficulties associated with balancing the needs of children with SEND alongside those of the other children in the mainstream setting. She noted that this can have bearing on the adults working with them; *"...I think just the pressure it puts on the, on the adults around them. Urm prioritising, you know, who gets the adult's time and...Urm so it's prioritising that's, that's a, a big issue.".* When speaking about a child with SEND she had worked with directly, Julie told me:

> Julie: …he just needed that extra bit of help all time which, which was quite difficult really because there was probably other children that needed help as well but urm well obviously it was making that decision of who needed the, the help the most.

My interpretation of these comments was that Julie feels children with SEND can monopolise adult time and that their non-SEND peers can sometimes be disadvantaged as a consequence.

Julie also spoke about difficulties accessing SEND training and resources in the mainstream setting and reported that she felt her training in school has been limited; "*I didn't really get any training [laughs]. I think they just took my experiences from the nursery as, as being enough.".* She indicated that she would find further training beneficial and seemed to be uncomfortable about her perceived lack of knowledge and expertise:

> Julie: Urm but I think we was, you know, we kind of worked through it together but I didn't really know what I was...I was just kind of guessing at what, what I was supposed to be doing. So thinking back now, I probably should have had a lot more information to have been able to, you know, done that more effectively with him.

Whilst Julie clearly values support from colleagues in regards to working with children with SEND, I noticed she focused more on the negative colleague experiences she has faced in the past within the interview. She spoke about her experiences of working with a teacher who she perceived to hold negative attitudes towards pupils with SEND and noted that it was difficult to try to include children *"…if the teacher wasn't on board with them.".* Interestingly, Julie went on to share that she did not feel she had the power or position to challenge the lack of inclusive practice she had observed *("It wasn't my place to, to say anything…"*). She also reported that, when working with this colleague, she was left feeling isolated and under increased pressure as a practitioner; *"…I was kind of left to, to sort them out, whereas it was...we, we did it as a team when we, when we...in the next class.".* I also felt that Julie emphasised negative experiences of working with parents in school. She noted that parents of children with SEND can 'make life difficult' for schools and can also make the SEND into *"…a bigger thing than what it is…",* exemplifying this with an anecdote of a child with a diagnosis of ADHD:

> Julie: ...I think mum was telling him a lot about it and he was using that then to try to excuse his own behaviour….Urm it's having to challenge that child then but obviously, if that's what he's being fed at home: "you do that because you've got ADHD", then, you, you know, it's just another barrier for us then. It's just another war for us to, to battle through with that child…But I think that's a massive barrier if your parents aren't working with you.

Impact on self

I thought Julie was very open about the personal psychological and emotional experiences of working with children with significant SEND. She spoke about the emotional labour involved

and used war as a metaphor to emphasise the substantial challenge and demand she associates with her experiences:

> Julie: Urm. I think it's quite easy to, to let it get you down…Urm [pause] it's yeah, just drains you. Just kind of like wears you down, having to constantly battle with the same person just to get them to do a bit of work…

Progress seemed to be important to Julie and she shared her sense of pride when children with SEND made progress and achieved; *"Urm so when he did pick something up and he'd kind got the hang of it then it was quite 'yay' moment."*. Conversely however, I noticed that Julie indicated experiencing feelings of hopelessness and frustration when progress was limited (which I thought she perceived to be typical for children with SEND); "*And then we'd do the next lesson and we're back to square one again [laughs]."*. Julie also spoke about feeling underprepared for her position as a teaching assistant. She told me that when she began working in school she *"...went in blind [laughs]. Completely blind. I had no idea…",* which led her to feel apprehensive and doubt her capacity to succeed in the role. She told me *"...just not knowing was, was [pause] yeah made it a bit, a bit scary."*

5.6: Participant 5: Donna

5.6.1: Pen Portrait

Donna has a dual role in school: in addition to being the school SENCo, she is also regularly deployed to provide teaching cover across the year groups. Donna has over 30 years' experience as a teacher and has worked in her current school for the majority of her career. Donna shared her initial reluctance to undertake the SENCo role and noted that she did not originally apply for the post. She told me that there are many unseen and unacknowledged demands placed on the school SENCo and emphasised that the SENCo role is an isolated position; *"...it's difficult because you're on your own in a school and you've got nobody to turn to…".* Donna loves working with children and told me *"...I wish [being a SENCo] was more going into classrooms and actually being able to work with children.".* I thought this indicated Donna's dissatisfaction with the reality of the SENCo role, which she perceives to be *"...very admin heavy…".*

As a consequence of Donna's role, I recognised that her lived experiences would be unique amongst my participants, and also not solely confined to the classroom level. Before conducting the interview, I spent some time reflecting upon our respective positions in school and existing

collegial relationship, and how this could influence the interview process. I reflected that, as school SENCo, Donna may potentially feel obligated to respond to my questions in a certain way, given that her role involves promoting pupils' inclusion in the school community (Cowne, Frankl and Gerschel, 2019). Moreover, I wondered if Donna may feel unable to share her true and authentic feelings and beliefs with me due to my dual role as teacher and researcher. Before the interview commenced, Donna was very keen to discuss confidentiality measures and appeared reassured when I shared that interview responses would be presented collectively in my summary report to the senior leadership team (so that it would not possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant). I thought that this discussion about my commitment to confidentiality encouraged Donna to speak more honestly and openly. Before the interview began, I got the impression that Donna did not expect to be talking about her own experiences in detail, but rather provide SEND information and her professional opinion. I reflected that this might be because this is something she does regularly in her role as a SENCo. During discussion before the interview, I reiterated that I was interested in her personal experiences and how she made sense of these. Donna laughed and told me that she hoped she could help. I wondered if she felt uncomfortable at the thought of sharing more personal experiences. Donna was the only participant to bring notes to the interview. Whilst I was pleased that she had clearly invested time and effort to do this, I was concerned this might blunt the authenticity of the interview. Although Donna did read from her notes during the initial few questions, as the interview went on she appeared to become more comfortable with the process and did not rely heavily on her written materials.

5.6.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Donna's interview transcript are summarised in Table 16.

Table 16: Donna: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate theme	**Subordinate theme**
Surviving mainstream education	Some children will not survive in mainstream
	School structure and context
	Parents
Working with colleagues	Conflicting attitudes amongst staff members
	Colleague support
A need for empathy and understanding when working with children with SEND	Empathy and understanding
	Adapting to meet the needs of the child
	Championing children with SEND
	A need for consistency
The emotional impact	

Surviving mainstream education

Donna spoke about the challenge of balancing the needs of one child with SEND with the needs of their non-SEND peers in class, sharing *"…if I had my class teacher head on I would be saying 'no hang on a minute this is so hard to meet that child needs when I've got these other 29 to juggle'."*. She noted that smaller class sizes and additional adult support would *"…massively help in that situation…"* and made reference to financial restraints that dictate the support and provision which can be put in place in mainstream settings. Donna was adamant that some children with SEND do not belong in mainstream settings, and told me that she did not think inclusion was always the right course of action:

Donna: I think [pause] no I don't think it's a good thing. But I think if the parents want to try it it's always a good thing to be able to try it and to go through that sad journey for the nicest possible reasons. That their child isn't going to be best suited here.

Whilst she told me she believed that *"…everybody needs a chance to prove themselves in mainstream…"* she seemed to feel that inevitably some children with SEND are *"…not going to survive…"*.

Donna views specialist settings favourably. When speaking about a local specialist settings she noted *"…if I was a parent here, in this area, had a special needs child, I would be happy 110 percent happy with that school."*. She seemed to feel it is her duty to obtain specialist provision

places for children with SEND who she feels are eligible, and also to convince parents of the suitability of the setting for their child; *"...I'm the one to try and help the parent to re-understand that special school is outstandingly brilliant..."*. Moreover, Donna appeared to take personal reward from accomplishing these duties successfully *"...he's got a place in September so that was a big [pause]...I danced when that news came."*. One issue to consider when interpreting these comments is that Donna is aware that I have worked as a trainee EP in the past. Given that EPs are seen by some in the teaching profession as the 'gate keepers' to specialist provision, I wondered if she may perceive me to be in favour of special school placement for children with significant needs. This may have influenced her interview responses.

Donna shared her experiences of working with families who she perceived to be in denial about their children's SEND and the provision they required. She stated *"...when you get a family who are in denial and think mainstream is the school for their child that's difficult..."*. Donna told with me that parents tend to want their children to be educated in a mainstream setting, despite having significant needs. It seems that this perspective directly contrasts Donna's personal views:

Donna: …as a parent [pause] I would be...I would accept that my child was different. I know I would and I know I would want special school. I would think I was doing them a disservice if I thought they could manage in mainstream.

Consequently, whilst Donna acknowledged that parents have the right to have their voices heard regarding provision for their children, she told me that it can be frustrating when parental choice is at odds with what she perceives to be the best course of action for a child.

Working with colleagues

Donna spoke about the value of a supportive staff team who work together and are consistent in their approach. She shared her experiences of difficulties managing conflicting attitudes regarding the inclusion of children with significant SEND amongst staff members; "*There'll always be members of staff who think 'yeah this is brilliant. Let's include everybody'. And they'll always be members of staff who think 'no. This child should not be here from day one'. And that's very difficult."*. She noted that when there is conflict in a team *"...all the senior leaders in school* [need] *to be on the same page because if you're battling against some staff you need the support from above to come your way."*. From analysis of the interview transcript, I feel that

Donna perceives herself as inclusive and nurturing in her approach to supporting children with SEND. She told me *"...as a SENCo I think 'yes let everybody in and let's try…'"* but noted that she recognised the pragmatic implications this stance had for class teachers *("As a class teacher, you've got another 29 in there. That's what makes it very difficult.").* Donna told me that fixed mind-sets and negative staff attitudes are the biggest barriers to inclusion. She shared her dissatisfaction with more traditional perspectives regarding SEND (and in particular behavioural difficulties); *"People who think 'oh it's just a naughty child. He's just naughty [name of participant] why are we making all these...why are we making it so different for him. He's just a naughty child'. No he's not."*. Donna told me that, unlike some teaching professionals who have been in the education system for a significant amount of time, she believes she remains open to change and is *"...still ready to learn…".* As a SENCo, she values support from outside agencies and feels it is her role to help other teachers understand and interpret their advice. However, she did speak about a perceived lack of understanding regarding the individual child amongst external professionals:

Donna: We know that what they look like, we know their needs, they're not going to survive without support. How can you in one nine minute meeting…say no when none of you have ever met this child who is screaming out for help…

A need for empathy and understanding when working with children with SEND

Donna seemed to endorse empathy and understanding when working with children with SEND. She positioned these children as in need of care and protection and emphasise the importance of a flexible approach, in which educators adapt to meet the needs of the child. Having said this, she also noted the value of consistency when working with children with SEND with *"All the staff singing from the same hymn sheet."*. Donna spoke about leading by example *("But I think you have to try and lead through example. And [pause] and show that if you can be calm and inclusive and encouraging and open about that child's difficulties then why can't everybody else just try that…")* and seemed to feel it was her responsibility to encourage other staff members be more empathetic and understanding in their approach. She told me that it is necessary to *"...get over that barrier of adults thinking 'everybody's got to do what I say at the time I do it duh, duh, duh, duh. It's my rule or no rule.'"* and develop a shared understanding of the child's needs and appropriate approaches amongst staff members. She told me about school-wide

systems that she had recently put in place to try to support this, including one-page profiles which she described as *"...almost a little Bible to go off..."* when working with a particular child with significant SEND.

The emotional and psychological impact

Donna spoke about the emotional and psychological experiences of working directly with children with SEND. For example, when discussing her experiences of developing a nurture provision in school to support children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, she emphasised the struggle and challenge she anticipated; "*...we all understood what it was all about and we knew it was going to be a bit of a battle but we were ready to ride the storm in the hope that we got good results.".* She extended this war metaphor when she noted that, when working with one child in this provision, *"...it was sometimes like a bomb waiting to go off...".* I thought this comment emphasised the significant sense of trepidation and dread experienced by Donna when working with some children with SEND.

At a more systemic level, Donna spoke about feeling frustrated about the degree of SEND support she is able to offer teachers in school:

> Donna: …I would give them all a pot of money and say "let's get an extra person, let's get them some resources, let's get this and let's get that". And you, and my hands tied behind my back and it's so frustrating.

She also discussed feeling disappointed in the system when she is unable to obtain the support for a child that she feels is necessary (*"That is when you feel like a deflated balloon and you think 'what's the point?'")* and shared her feelings of frustration with external agencies and the Local Authority when her requests for additional support were rejected *("But then you equally get knockbacks on things that you've tried and tried and tried to do and you can get 'no' from the authority or from a, you know from another agency that you were relying on.").*

5.7: Participant 6: Lauren

5.7.1: Pen Portrait

Lauren is a teacher in Year 2 and also the Key Stage 1 Phase Leader. She has been a teacher for seven years, having begun her career in her current school after completing a Bachelor of

Education in Primary Education. Lauren shared her long-standing aspiration to be an educator, telling me that she *"…used to pretend to be a teacher all of the time…"* when she was a child. Lauren told me that she finds it personally rewarding to support children in their learning but also noted that teaching is *"…trickier than what you first anticipate…",* attributing this to high levels of associated paperwork and unseen workload.

I thought that Lauren seemed hesitant in the interview and had difficultly expanding upon some of her responses at times. Before the interview commenced, Lauren informed me that she had been interviewed by the leadership team for senior position in school earlier that day and told me that she had found the process extremely challenging and emotionally draining. I reflected that Lauren was likely to be fatigued by this prior encounter and also potentially more cautious and controlled in her responses, given her very recent experience of being an interviewee whose answers were being scrutinised to assess her suitability for a particular role. I reminded Lauren of her right to withdraw from the research (Lauren assured me she was eager to proceed and did not wish to postpone our interview until a later date) and also reiterated that, in this interview, there were no right or wrong answers. There were often lengthy pauses in our dialog which initially caused me concern as I interpreted them as indicating that Lauren was experiencing difficulties with the questions or feeling uncomfortable. As the interview progressed however, I recognised that Lauren appeared to be using these pauses as thinking time and I found that leaving the periods of silence uninterrupted elicited more data. I was interested to note that, unlike many of the participants I interviewed, Lauren spoke very little about how her experiences influenced her psychologically or emotionally. I wondered if this may be a consequence of her elevated position of power; perhaps Lauren did not feel that it was appropriate to discuss such issues with an individual situated beneath her in the school's hierarchical structure. Alternatively, I reflected that this could be due to Lauren's solution-focused approach and the emphasis she placed on self-development, growth and personal responsibility throughout the course of the interview. Perhaps for Lauren, rather than ruminate upon the emotional and psychological impact of her past experiences, it was more important to learn from them and move forward in the desired direction.

5.7.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Lauren's interview transcript are summarised in Table 17.

Table 17: Lauren: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate theme	**Subordinate theme**
A journey of self-development	Knowledge and expertise
	Reflective self-development
	Seeking and accepting support
	Adapting practice
	Training
Inclusion in a mainstream setting	The challenge associated with children with SEND
	The benefits of inclusion
	Comparing mainstream and specialist settings
	Inclusion and school priorities
	The school environment and curriculum
	Balancing responsibilities
	Colleague support
Creating links and helping others	Relationships with children
	Parents and families
	Helping and supporting colleagues

A journey of self-development

Lauren seemed comfortable in sharing that, at times, she feels she lacks expertise when working with children with SEND. In her interview she repeatedly told me that she can 'struggle' to know what to do to support a child with significant SEND, and linked this to the heterogeneity of children with special educational needs; *"....it's tricky to have knowledge of every different need because there's so many different needs that people might have...and you can't, you can't possibly have knowledge of everything."*. Lauren noted that, in her first year of teaching, she had been upset and frustrated that her inexperience had meant that she did not know how to meet the needs of a particular child in her class with SEND. I wondered if this early experience, and

associated feelings helplessness and inadequacy, acted as a catalyst for the development of the pro-active and problem-solving approach to including with children with significant SEND Lauren now demonstrates. Lauren believes herself to be a reflective teaching practitioner and she emphasised her strong commitment to self-development in our interview:

> Lauren: I want to know what kind of things I need to put in place to help them…Straight away really. Just like what, what is it that I can do to help?...So what do I need to do? What do I need to help them with? What can I develop in myself to then support them...?

Lauren told me *"...I love to continue learning..."* and her passion for self-growth is illustrated by her current engagement with university-based study whilst maintaining a full-time teaching position (however, I was interested to note that Lauren highlighted that her experiences of training focused upon inclusion and SEND, both during ITT and CPD, has been limited). Lauren spoke about her willingness to accept support, adapt pedagogy and incorporate new ideas to 'reshape' her practice to meet the needs of the individual child. She frequently stressed the importance of seeking out advice to support her in including children with significant SEND from colleagues, the school SENCo and external professionals; *"And if I'm stuck then I use my initiative to go and speak to other people about what I can do..."*. For example, she told me:

> Lauren: In year 2 urm a little boy er with Down's syndrome started and I was struggling to know how, what to do urm and how to support him. So I did go speak to the head teacher and the deputy and say I needed some support with this…and I'm on the SLT team so I will go to speak to SLT about...if I feel there's something as a school we're not doing enough of. That, that I've, that, that's been made apparent to me urm when I've been teaching.

I considered that Lauren's aptitude for self-reflection may facilitate her in identifying and evaluating her perceived limitations and consequently seeking out support to develop in these areas. One could argue that it takes a certain level of confidence in your ability and skill as a practitioner to disclose that you are experiencing difficulties in a particular area and ask for support. Perhaps, for a less self-assured educator, this may present more of a challenge. Indeed, Lauren herself appeared to acknowledge this in her interview; *"...I don't feel urm nervous about speaking to other people. But people might feel nervous speaking to others..."*. Moreover, given Lauren's position of relative power in school as a Phase Leader, she may feel better placed to bring about change (both in her own practice and across school) through discussion with those in

leadership roles. An educator in a different position of power within the school hierarchical structure may have a reduced sense of agency and autonomy.

Inclusion in a mainstream setting

Lauren told me that she feels the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream provision is 'definitely' positive and noted that, in some respects, inclusion can be universally advantageous for both children with SEND and their non-SEND peers. I was interested to note however, that Lauren highlighted that the inclusion of certain children (namely those with behavioural needs) can serve to exclude other children in class when additional adult support is not adequate; *"…if you're on your own in the classroom and there's some really diff...challenging behaviour...Then if you haven't got the support of another adult, then it, it's tricky because you don't want to exclude the rest of the class."*. I wondered here if Lauren was hinting that some children with significant SEND require a disproportionate amount of adult time, which may serve to disadvantage their peers. Lauren told me that additional adult support in mainstream classrooms would be helpful but seemed to perceive this as unobtainable; *"...but it's not going to happen but…[laughs]…"*.

Lauren was clear that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings presents a degree of challenge for the educators working with them. She indicated that inclusion can increase educator workload which she shared is *"…a lot to ...Manage when you're trying to do that as well as all the other things you've got to do."*. She noted that the structure and routine of the mainstream classroom compares unfavourably to specialist settings when considering the needs of children with significant SEND, and spoke about the restrictive mainstream curriculum that educators feel obligated to 'get through'. Moreover, she highlighted the pressures placed upon mainstream educators in relation to attainment and school performance and indicated that, as a result, the individual needs of children with significant SEND may be overlooked:

> Lauren: …there's a lot of pressure on performance that teachers are urm concerned with results and because we're so driven urm that then they, then they feel they haven't always got the time to spend on that child when they've got results to achieve I think that's what it is…

Consequently, I wondered if Lauren felt specialist settings were more appropriate for some children with significant SEND.

Creating links and helping others

'Creating links and helping others' emerged as a prominent theme when analysing Lauren's interview transcript. She demonstrated a strong desire to build positive relationships and be supportive to those around her including children, parents and also colleagues. Indeed, Lauren told me *"…I like helping people and urm lots of people have helped me along the way. And I, I love helping other people and supporting other people on their journey."*. From this extract it is clear that Lauren takes personal reward and gratification from this aspect of her role. Lauren spoke about the positive and long-lasting relationships she has developed with children with SEND, both in school and also in her personal life. She places value upon *"…spending quality time with that, the person and understanding them as an individual…"*. Lauren was clear that developing a good knowledge of individual children and their respective interests was crucial in helping them to learn and develop and noted *"…it's everybody finding like a, a connection to the, to the children that you're working with…"*. Lauren also advocated developing good relationships with parents and families of children with SEND. She seemed eager to work cooperatively with parents to promote the best interests of the child by exchanging information, advice and strategies. Lauren spoke with empathy, compassion and admiration when discussing parents and families of children with SEND and seemed to be very eager to support them where possible. She indicated that this was influenced by her experience of developing a relationship with a young adult with Down's syndrome and his mother outside of school, which helped her to understand the challenges faced by some parents of children with SEND. When discussing the young adult's mother she told me *"...she doesn't get much time. Like it's, it's all the time she's, she's helping him. And she's, she doesn't ever complain, ever complain and she...but she... it's nice to have some support."*.

5.8: Participant 7: Caroline

5.8.1: Pen Portrait

Caroline is a teacher in Year 1. She has six years' teaching experience and has taught Reception and Year 1 classes in the past. Throughout our interview, I thought that Caroline communicated her experiences readily and I found myself using fewer prompts and probes in comparison with other participant interviews. I wondered if our prior collegial relationship had influenced the

flow of dialog; Caroline and I have worked in partnership in the past, teaching the Reception year group in school within the same classroom. I reflected that the close working relationship we developed during this period may have helped Caroline feel more comfortable and at ease during the interview process.

Caroline has an undergraduate degree in Psychology. Before undertaking a PGCE to become a teacher, she worked as a TA in a mainstream school supporting children with SEND, and also in a residential home for children with ASC. Caroline noted that she had enjoyed her role in residential care, but highlighted that the 'violence' she encountered whilst working with these children was a contributing factor in her decision to leave this post. I wondered whether these early encounters may have influenced how Caroline makes sense of her experiences of including children with significant SEND as a teacher. Certainly, I noticed that she continued to highlight the 'danger' and 'violence' involved in working with children with significant SEND when speaking about her experiences in her current position. During our interview, Caroline told me *"…the teaching in the classroom is just tiny compared to everything else you do…"* and used metaphors to emphasis the extent to which her teaching role encompasses aspects of other jobs; *"… I feel like we're not just teachers, we're kind of social worker…We're counsellors. A...that kind of aspect is different to what I imagined."*. Caroline stressed that pastoral care is a large part of her role and told me "…*I think people wouldn't believe that we have to do that as teachers."*. I considered that Caroline may be dissatisfied by the blurred boundaries of her role, and questioned whether her comments indicated she would prefer it to be more clearly defined and focused more specifically upon teaching and learning. However, given that Caroline went on to share that she perceived children's happiness and wellbeing to be more important than their academic progress, I wondered if she was instead simply attempting to convey the large and unseen workload of those working within the teaching profession.

5.8.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Caroline's interview transcript are summarised in Table 18.

Table 18: Caroline: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	**Subordinate Themes**
The emotional and psychological impact on self	The emotional impact
	The psychological experience
	Knowledge and expertise
	Relationship with the child
	Parents
Perceptions of SEND	SEND as different
	Prioritising SEND
	Low expectations for children with SEND
	Celebrating SEND
	Perceptions of SEND
	Behaviour as a different branch of SEND
Incorporating children with SEND in the mainstream classroom	Normalising SEND
	Fitting in
	Balancing needs in the mainstream context
	Inclusion is not always the solution
	Colleague support

The emotional and psychological impact on self

During our interview, Caroline shared her initial reaction to learning that a child with significant SEND would be in her mainstream class:

> Caroline: I'll be honest, it does, it does make you think "oh, oh, no". You know, and that sounds awful. But I think, I do think, like, what, what's, what else is that going to bring? Is it going to bring behaviour?

I thought this response was very authentic and honest and provided a real insight into her experiences of the personal emotional and psychological impact of inclusion. Caroline's words highlighted her feelings of anxiety, apprehension and uncertainty associated with the inclusion of children with significant SEND, and also that she seemed to have attached some feelings of shame and guilt to these emotions. I wondered if Caroline's apprehension was related to

concerns she expressed about failing children with SEND; *"He had a lot of background issues. He ended up leaving our school. And I found that, that got to me because I felt like I failed him a little bit…".* Given that Caroline has developed strong bonds with children with SEND in the past *("He couldn't make friendships. Urm I was his only friend for the first year…"*) and that these relationships have been important to her, it is understandable that she finds it difficult when she feels she has not been able to successfully support a child with SEND. I also questioned whether Caroline's anxieties might be linked to that fact that she perceives herself to have limited SEND knowledge and expertise. For example, Caroline noted that when working with children with significant SEND *"...you're kind of learning as you're going…"* and also stated "…*I'm no professional…"* when discussing assessing a child's SEND. Furthermore, in her interview, Caroline indicated a perceived lack of control and power in her role as a teacher *("Usually it's decisions not made from us…Er nothing to do with class teachers obviously, that's made from SLT…")* and I considered that this lack of autonomy may have exacerbated her anxieties and apprehension about including children with significant SEND.

A further key source of emotional labour and stress which had real significance for Caroline was working with the parents and carers of children with SEND. She highlighted negative interactions she had experienced in the past and the toll this had taken on her emotionally; *"Parents shouting at me. Parents urm screaming at me one occasion. And I'm not a person...I don't cope well with that.".* Moreover, she spoke about being on the 'front line' when discussing her interactions with these parents; highlighting the battle and conflict she associated with these encounters. I reflected that these negative experiences were likely to have contributed to her perceptions of the emotional and psychological impact of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

Incorporating children with SEND in the mainstream classroom

Caroline expressed a desire to 'normalise' SEND and promote acceptance of difference:

> Caroline: Urm and I'll, I'll just say about it not being, not being an issue. Just being a natural part of the class. So we've got some girls in the class, some boys in the class. We've got some children with braids in their hair, some children with straight hair…We've got some children who have got SEN...And some children who haven't.

However, she also discussed the practical constraints educators face, which may serve to inhibit inclusion. She noted that large class sizes and inadequate human support in class can lead to difficulties balancing the needs of children with SEND and those of their non-SEND peers; *"So that, that felt a challenge because you're trying to meet everybody's needs and you physically you can't do it."*. In Caroline's experience, this can lead to children with SEND being excluded; *"He didn't actually access much of the curriculum."*. For Caroline, human support is crucial, not only to provide practical assistance in class, but also to share the emotional load and responsibility of supporting children with SEND*; "Er having actual people as support. Because I think as a, as a human you need a break as well. So if you've got a good team..."*.

I was interested in a particular extract in which Caroline indicated that children with SEND might not feel accepted in mainstream settings:

> Caroline: But you're the only child in school in a wheelchair. As much as you would love for them not to feel like that as a, as an individual they may be conscious of it and they may want to be around people that can understand their point of view and where they're coming from, their limitations.

I thought this very much contrasted Caroline's earlier comments about normalising difference, in that it emphasised what she perceived as the limitations and deficits of children with SEND. Moreover, she seems to suggest that children with additional needs may not be able to 'fit in' to a mainstream setting. Indeed, Caroline went on to share that she did not feel the needs of some children with SEND could be met in mainstream schools and highlighted the benefits of specialist settings for some individuals; *"They're amazing. And, you know, they're catered for specific needs."*.

Perceptions of SEND

Caroline emphasised children with SEND as different in our interview and hinted at the stigma she feels is associated with SEND; *"...we've broached the subject of possible SEN referrals and concerns and some parents completely get really defensive…I can understand that. And I think that's just panic and fear."*. I was interested here, that she could clearly empathise with parents in this respect and I wondered if her own interpretations of SEND were reflected in the parental views she perceived. I also felt some of Caroline's comments about children with significant SEND hinted at low expectations for these pupils (*"It was just getting him into coming to school,*

sitting down for the register. And then it was kind of whatever else we could get was great. But at least he's in school."). However, she did also seem to celebrate progress made by children with SEND *("But I've had big success stories like the little girl who's got the loop system now. Her speech has, it...the progress in her speech has been amazing."),* I wondered if, for Caroline, these 'success stories' were the exceptions, not the rule.

Caroline highlighted that she believed educator attitudes towards SEND were very much dependent upon the type of needs a child presents with:

> Caroline: I think behaviour, behavioural problems with SEN is a completely different sort of branch of the tree. I think there's not much understanding generally in you know...I think people do see that as a different type of thing. And dealing.., I don't think there's much sym, sympathy...Or empathetic. If a child was in a wheelchair, it's one thing. But if a child is urm, you know, running around trashing a classroom, which we know is an SEN need, I think there is very, very different opinions on those two scenarios.

Whilst she seems to be talking about educators generally here, I felt that for Caroline herself, children with behavioural difficulties were a key concern. During our interview, she seemed to position children with behavioural difficulties as violent and dangerous; "*There was one child a couple of years ago who was quite [pause] quite challenging. But there was a lot of sup...I was pregnant at the time and he, he could be violent."*. I wondered here if she was highlighting her pregnancy to emphasise her position of vulnerability in the face of danger. Caroline's interpretations of children with behavioural difficulties as dangerous were also exemplified later in the interview; *"And, you know, you have to think of the safety of him, the safety of me and safety of the other children."*.

5.9: Participant 8: Kelly

5.9.1: Pen Portrait

Kelly is a teaching assistant who works across both the Reception and Nursery year groups in school. She has extensive experience in her position as a TA and has worked in a number of different primary schools in the past. Kelly initially qualified as a nursery nurse approximately 30 years ago and experienced hospital and specialist provision placements as part of her training.

Within our interview, Kelly was able to draw upon her long career in education. I found it very interesting to speak with an individual whose experiences in educational settings spanned three decades and to gain insight into how these experiences were perceived to have changed over time. Kelly feels that staff are now more accustomed to including children with SEND in mainstream settings than they may have been in the past and noted that the diversity of need within the mainstream classroom has increased. Interestingly, Kelly also noted that she feels the level of training and support in place to help staff accommodate and include children with SEND has reduced. Within our interview, Kelly expressed empathy and understanding for children with SEND and, at times in our discussion, I thought she demonstrated a very inclusive outlook. However, Kelly also indicated that she felt restricted as a practitioner and I wondered if the practical constraints and barriers to inclusion that she identified within the mainstream context prevented her from actualising her internal core values.

Kelly spoke with ease during our discussion. At times I thought that we had deviated from the interview schedule which caused me some concern during the interview. However, upon listening to the interview audio-recording during analysis, times where I thought we had strayed slightly off topic were actually extremely useful for developing a more holistic understanding of Kelly's personal values and beliefs. For example, at one point in our interview, Kelly shared her experiences of supporting school-aged mothers during a hospital placement. Whilst this was clearly not focused upon her experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting, it allowed me deeper insight into her wider understandings and interpretations of inclusion.

5.9.2: Identified Themes

The superordinate and interrelated subordinate themes abstracted from analysis of Kelly's interview transcript are summarised in Table 19.

Table 19: Kelly: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Themes	**Subordinate Themes**
Personal perceptions of children with SEND	SEND and difference
	Understanding and empathy for the child
	Parents

Difficulties associated with inclusion	Inclusion and mainstream school priorities
	Comparing mainstream and specialist settings
	Practical constraints
	A change over time
	Doubting expertise
	Colleague support

Personal perceptions of children with SEND

Kelly's inclusive ethos became evident during the course of our interview. She discussed children with SEND with empathetic understanding and appeared to view them holistically, considering their home lives when making sense of how they presented in school *("...you don't know what that child's been through before they come in the morning."*). She emphasised the importance of building relationships with children with SEND and demonstrated a strengths-focused perspective and a desire to celebrate the individuality of children with SEND; "*You know whatever disabilities er may...you think are holding them back, everybody has a skill and you've just got to look inside that person to make it blossom.".*

For Kelly, inclusion is associated with equity (treating people differently dependent on need) rather than equality (treating everyone the same regardless of need). She contrasted her views with those of some parents of children with SEND, who she perceived to be barriers to inclusion as a consequence of their inability to acknowledge their child's differences. She noted that *"...instead of seeing their own child...",* some parents are in denial about their child's SEND and just want them to be 'normal':

Kelly: I think the mum and dad were under the impression well if she's coming to mainstream school she's going to get better…In their eyes you know it's like, this is going to fix it and then she's going to be like Joe Bloggs that sitting next to her…

Difficulties associated with inclusion

Kelly indicated she feels restricted in the support she is able to provide children with SEND in the mainstream setting; *"And [pause] you know it's like so you, you try your best with what you know…But I feel like you know you don't always reach our full potential with what we could do with children with SEN..."*. Consequently, she believes herself to be failing these children *"...if you're aware that you're taking them out because they obviously need some*

more support and then you still feel like you're not giving it…". For Kelly, these perceived constraints are linked to the priorities of mainstream education. Within her interview she indicated a degree of cynicism about the position of inclusion, and supporting children with SEND, amongst other mainstream school priorities:

> Kelly: Urm [pause] I think sometimes it's, it's a priority but only when it fits in with [pause] Ofsted results, data urm [pause] you know like I feel when you've got children that are pulling the data down because obviously they've got like educational needs and they're not [pause] they're not coming up to the, the data level of their class. To be honest I think that's when they're saying 'right what are we going to do about the SEN'.

Kelly feels that children with SEND are required to adapt to their learning environment, which she likened to a 'conveyer belt', indicating her perception of mainstream education as fast-paced, relentless and rigid; "*…so there's no adaption [pause] at all. It's like you know you're welcome to join in and we will try our best but you will fit into our [pause] our daily routine.".* She suggested that inclusion in mainstream provision could disadvantage or even exclude children with SEND, as she does not perceive them to be getting the support they need; "*I think you know they're lagging behind because they're struggling and sometimes I think then that can make them feel more of [pause] on the outskirts of what's happening in the room.*". Kelly spoke about a lack of time *"allocated in the day for that child's needs"* and a need to juggle responsibilities; *"I just remember it was you'd get a phone call 'can you just tell me what he's been like over the last half-term?'. And you were in the middle of doing the phonics session."* Indeed, for me this extract hints at the increase workload, responsibility and accountability Kelly associates with inclusion. She was also keen to highlight that her SEND training has been limited and that she relies heavily upon past experience when supporting children with significant SEND, as well as the expertise and experiences of others (including the school SENCo and external professionals).

Given the barriers she identifies in her current setting, Kelly interprets specialist settings as beneficial for some children with SEND in comparison to mainstream provision. She shared that specialist settings are better equipped to promote independence and support children with SEND to develop functional skills. Moreover, she pointed to the advantages of smaller class sizes, individualised curriculums, specialised staff and enhanced SEND resources. She noted that, in her professional life, she had encountered parents reluctant to consider specialist settings for their children and appeared to be quite critical of this; *"And they didn't want him to go because that was their own problem in their head because they thought no because you're saying there's something wrong with him, if we keep him here there nothing wrong*

with him.”. I wondered if Kelly’s perceptions were influenced by the childhood experience she shared of having a family member with SEND whose parents were reluctant to place him in a specialist setting. Kelly now views this decision as regretful and seemed to feel that, as a consequence of this action, this family member lacks the *“skills they need to survive”:*

> Kelly: And when I look at [name of cousin] now [name of cousin]'s at home and he's 54 [pause] and he's got me Uncle who's 80 and me Uncle who's 90 living in the house and they're making dinner for him…They're giving him his tablets when he needs them because he's not able, he's got no functions himself because they stopped him.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS: PART TWO

6.1: Chapter Overview

This chapter highlights patterns of convergences and commonalities, and those of divergences and nuances, across participant accounts. The group-level superordinate and subordinate themes generated through the second level of my analysis form the structure of the narrative.

6.2: Group-level Analysis

Whilst in Chapter Five I endeavoured to represent each individual participant's unique experiences, clearly there are comparisons to be drawn across the cases. Emergent themes from the eight participants were examined together and connections across the cases were sought to form group-level subordinate and superordinate themes (see Appendix 12). Given the variation in how the same themes presented across the participants, the subordinate and superordinate themes drawn together at the group-level differ from those at the individual-level. As noted by Smith et al. (2009, p. 107), doing IPA with a number of participants "constantly involves negotiating this relationship between convergence and divergence, commonality and individuality".

The four group-level superordinate themes discussed are: 'the personal and professional challenge'; 'the mainstream school context'; 'perceptions of children with SEND'; and 'being part of the human system of support'. Table 20 provides an overview of the structure of the themes identified for the group, presenting the subordinate themes that are nested within these four superordinate themes.

Table 20: Group-level Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Group-level superordinate themes	**Group-level subordinate themes**
The personal and professional challenge	The psychological and emotional impact on self
	Doubting expertise
	The importance of experience
	Adapting practice and being open to change
The mainstream school context	The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream school context
	The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting
	Juggling needs and responsibilities
Perceptions of children with SEND	Accepting and championing children with SEND
	A within-child deficit view of children with SEND
	Children with SEND are not a homogenous group
	Building relationships with children with SEND
Being part of the human system of support	Colleague support
	Attitudes of other staff members
	Working with parents

Tables 21-24 describe individual participant contributions to each of the subordinate themes. Analytical comparisons of the contributions of teacher participants and TA participants to each subordinate theme are made to facilitate the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between the two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples.

6.3: The Personal and Professional Challenge

This superordinate theme captures the personal and professional challenge experienced by participants when working with children who have significant SEND in a mainstream setting. Whilst the inclusion of these children was perceived by many as personally rewarding, it also entails a high level of emotional input and labour for participants and associated feelings of failure, frustration and hopelessness. Participants shared that they felt underprepared to work with children with significant SEND and that they lack the necessary knowledge and expertise required to support them. Participants also stressed the importance of experience, and the desire and ability to adapt practice and be open to change when working with

children with significant SEND. Table 21 presents the contributions of individual participants to each of the four subordinate themes which form this superordinate theme.

Table 21: Contributions of Participants to Subordinate Themes Incorporated in the Superordinate Theme 'The Personal and Professional Challenge'

	Julie (TA)	**Chloe (TA)**	**Lorna (TA)**	**Jim (Teacher)**	**Donna (Teacher)**	**Lauren (Teacher)**	**Caroline (Teacher)**	**Kelly (TA)**
The psychological and emotional impact on self	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Doubting expertise	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
The importance of experience	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Adapting practice and being open to change		X			X	X		X

6.3.1: The Psychological and Emotional Impact on Self

All eight of the participants involved in the research spoke about the personal psychological and emotional experiences of inclusion in some respect within their interviews. Some participants highlighted the personal reward and pride they take from seeing children with significant SEND achieve and make progress in school:

Julie: Urm so when he did pick something up and he'd kind got the hang of it then it was quite 'yay' moment.

Chloe: Um I think, I do think it's very rewarding seeing those small, little steps. Like from...when [name of child] started in September to now…And the fact that he walks into nursery and he, he just sits down and gets on with something, that, I think that's amazing because he wasn't able to do that at first.

Lorna: You think "oh yeah finally" (laughs) "it's worked, thank that, thank goodness for that it's actually worked". It's nice to see different children like different things so what's work with this child won't work with well might not work with somebody else.

Most participants, however, discussed what they perceived as the less positive emotional and psychological consequences of inclusion. Three participants (Julie, Chloe and Jim) told me they had experienced feeling underprepared and ill-equipped to support the needs of children with significant SEND. For example, one participant (Julie) noted *"I went in blind [laughs]. Completely blind. I had no idea. So I was quite, I was quite apprehensive about it…Urm so obviously, not, just not knowing was, was [pause] yeah made it a bit, a bit scary."*.

Moreover, five participants (Julie, Jim, Caroline, Chloe and Kelly) told me that they can feel restricted as practitioners, and that they lack control and power to be autonomous or implement change with regards to inclusion:

Jim: And I think obviously earlier on I've not been able to necessarily shape that inclusion because you're sort of a part of it. Urm once you go in, you've just gone in, you're not really able to make those decisions about whether or not they are included.

Caroline: …And when he left, you know, I did think, I felt like I failed him a little bit. It was out of my control.

Perhaps consequently, a number of participants highlighted concerns about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND and the feelings of failure and hopelessness they associated with attempts to include them:

Julie: And, and you're going through the motions I suppose with them with...without the same urm same prospects and outlooks for them.

Lorna: It just feels like a bit of a [pause] just disappointing. Like you're failing them a little bit but there's nothing you can do. You try your best but there's nothing you can do…Because you feel like you're failing the child as well like yeah...just feel like well I'm not doing the best for them.

Interestingly, the only participant (Lauren) who did not discuss such feelings was also the only participant to highlight her privileged position in terms of power and influence as a member of the school leadership team, leading me to consider the strength of the relationship between these two factors.

I found it very significant that four of the participants interviewed (Julie, Jim, Donna and Caroline) used war-based metaphors to describe emotional and psychological experiences associated with including children with significant SEND:

> Julie: Urm. I think it's quite easy to, to let it get you down. Urm It's it's quite...it's a very negative thing when a child's just refusing to cooperate or, or whatever. Urm so, yeah. Urm [pause] it's yeah, just drains you. Just kind of like wears you down, having to constantly battle with the same person just to get them to do a bit of work.
>
> Donna: And we all understood what it was all about and we knew it was going to be a bit of a battle but we were ready to ride the storm in the hope that we got good results.

For me, this emphasised the substantial challenge and demand participants associated with inclusion. Many participants also spoke about feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained by their experiences of including children with significant SEND, and shared feelings of frustration and dread:

> Julie: Urm very challenging. Quite draining at times. Urm emotionally draining because they're, they're full on. Urm I think even when they're being good.
>
> Chloe: And then you meet someone like [name of child] for example, and you just think 'wow, I don't even know where to start'... you initially think 'oh God, like how, how can I help them?'.
>
> Donna: So it was like, it was sometimes like a bomb waiting to go off…

I found there was little difference between the contributions of TAs and teachers to this subordinate theme, indicating that the psychological and emotional impact of inclusion is something that is universally demanding for mainstream practitioners. Whilst issues of control, power and autonomy with regards to inclusion were a concern for many participants at the whole-school level, one participant (Julie) highlighted that, for TAs, this can also exist at the individual classroom level, due to their lower position of power within the school hierarchical structure in comparison to their teacher colleagues:

> Julie: Urm and, and trying to include them. That was quite a challenge. Urm it's a difficult one. I didn't feel like I could [pause] urm I suppose say anything to the teacher about it but...
> Researcher: Yeah, yeah. Why do you feel like you, you didn't, you didn't want to say anything?

Julie: Urm because I was brand new to the role. It was all...yeah, I just didn't feel like, you know, I have that respect for the teachers anyway...It wasn't my place to, to say anything.

6.3.2: Doubting Expertise

Seven of the eight participants indicated that training around SEND or inclusion in school was limited, with two teacher participants (Caroline and Lauren) noting that such training during Initial Teacher Training (ITT) was also lacking. It is clear that such limited training is likely to be linked to the perceived lack of personal SEND knowledge and expertise highlighted by the majority of participants. Indeed, two participants (Jim and Kelly) went further, sharing that they felt that mainstream staff more generally lack the necessary knowledge and expertise required to support children with significant SEND, suggesting that staff in specialist settings are better placed to work with these children:

Jim: And again, it was another matter of it had sort of got past anyone's ability to look after him.

Kelly: And the other one which was the whole school went for that we did er autism at the local special school we went for…So it was urm obviously they were more specialised…

Most participants indicated that additional SEND training would support them in working with children with significant SEND. One participant (Caroline) highlighted that when she had experienced SEND training in the past, it had been put in place to meet the needs of a specific child. She shared that more generalised SEND training would be beneficial:

Caroline: I did go on urm I had a little boy in my class a couple years ago who wasn't diagnosed but they thought had ADHD. So I went on some really good ADHD training…Urm and that really helped me. However, at the time, I only had that child in mind. So I think it would be good to have training like that generally. Quite specific because then you're not...I was just thinking of this one child. So now if I got a child, I probably wouldn't be open to use any of the things they told me.

However, like the other participants who spoke about the desire for additional, universal SEND training, Caroline was unable to articulate what this training might entail, perhaps due to the fact that these children are by no means a homogenous group.

When drawing comparisons between teacher and TA participants I was somewhat surprised to find little divergence in how participants perceived their SEND knowledge and expertise. Given that teachers are typically subjected to a higher level of training both pre- and post-

qualification compared to their TA colleagues, I had anticipated that 'doubting expertise' would be a more potent theme across TA participants. Instead however, I found that this subordinate theme was common across the participant sub-groups with the exception of one participant (Donna), who holds the position of SENCo within school. I reflected that Donna may feel more comfortable with her own knowledge and expertise given the additional SEND training and guidance associated with her role. Alternatively, I considered that, as a consequence of her position, Donna may have been less inclined to disclose that she feels she lacks expertise within our interview.

6.3.3: The Importance of Experience

Seven of the eight participants highlighted the value of experience when working with children with significant SEND. Indeed, three participants (Julie, Chloe, and Kelly) told me that they positioned past experiences of working with children with SEND as more important than academic learning or training:

> Julie: Urm [pauses and exhales] I...I'm not sure about the training I think just my own experiences have made me feel like I kind of knew what I was doing [laughs].
>
> Chloe: Um I think to be honest, most of the training that I'd say I had was experience rather than, you know, being in, you know, lectures and things like that.
>
> Kelly: …I feel like any child that comes in now it's using any experience I've had from previous working experiences.

Three of the eight participants (Chloe, Donna and Caroline) discussed employing a 'trial and error' approach when working with children with significant SEND or engaging in practice-based learning, whilst three participants (Chloe, Lorna and Kelly) noted that they sought support from colleagues they perceived as more experienced:

> Chloe: Um sometimes I talk to people who I know have had more experience.
>
> Lorna: Just the help from people who know what they're talking about really or relying on past experiences. So there's always, there is always people that get support of and ask but...
>
> Kelly: I think urm that's the only way that you can learn really is through people and past experiences and people that are trained in the specific area of SEN requirements that you

need.

I was interested to note that the three participants who suggested they valued experience over academic learning or training, and also the three participants who told me that they sought support from more experienced colleagues, were teaching assistants. I wondered whether this could potentially be a consequence of TAs having less access to academic learning or training compared to their teacher colleagues. I also considered that these TAs might not perceive themselves as having the necessary expertise to personally assess the evidence base in order inform practice, and so instead rely upon these arguably more passive approaches to help them support children with significant SEND. It should be noted however, that all but one of the teacher participants highlighted their experiences of limited SEND training and perceived lack of personal SEND knowledge and expertise, and so it may be that these reflections point towards my own personal assumptions rather than the lived experiences of the participants interviewed.

6.3.4: Adapting Practice and Being Open to Change

Half of the participants interviewed (Donna, Kelly, Lauren and Chloe) spoke about a need to be flexible and open to change when working with children with significant SEND and discussed adapting practice to meet the needs of the child:

Donna: Make their space personal, give them this alternative box to work on if [pause] the IPC lesson on Victorians...is just not what they need that afternoon. Give them some time out.

Kelly: To me that's inclusion because you're adapting to what they need whereas sometimes I think when they say er mainstream school [pause] we're all treated the same and I don't think it is...so to me it's like inclusion is everybody's treated the same but it's adapted to what their needs are because everybody's individual needs are different.

For two participants (Lauren and Chloe), this involved a real commitment to self-growth and personal development:

Lauren: Straight away really. Just like what, what is it that I can do to help?...Like to know [pause] what does that mean really? ...Yeah what does that mean for, what does that mean? What do I need to do about it?...So what do I need to do? What do I need to help them with? What can I develop in myself to then support them...?...To move further really…

Chloe: Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it.

This theme appeared particularly meaningful for Lauren who displayed a real eagerness for continued learning and spoke at length about being a reflective practitioner and using her own initiative to develop her practice. I was interested to note that Donna, the school SENCo highlighted the need for flexibility advocated by the three other participants but indicated that, in her experience, this could be met with resistance from other staff members:

Donna: To me that's the biggest barrier to progress….People who refuse to change their outlook on how to include these children.

Donna: I think a lack of understanding. But I think it's a bit, it's a bit more. It's a bit about having been [pause] in the education system a long time…But then again I've been in it a long time. I think you have to be open to change…And I think some people through no fault of their own, maybe what they experienced at school or what they've experience with their children at home. They might have had to be very [pause] rigid I don't know. But I've been rigid with my children and I've been in education long time but I'm still ready to learn.

To me these extracts highlight the challenges Donna encounters within the SENCo role and the frustration she associates with working alongside others who are reluctant to develop and adapt their practice in order to support and include children with SEND.

I had perhaps expected the subordinate theme 'adapting practice and being open to change' to be more prevalent amongst teacher participants; my reasoning being that teachers are typically provided with more opportunities to reflect upon and develop their current practice (for example, during lesson observation feedback meetings, during performance management meetings, in multi-agency meetings with external professionals etc.). Instead, I found that an equal number of teachers and TAs contributed to this theme. However, I did notice when analysing the data that, with the exception of Donna, 'inclusion as a positive' was an emergent theme in the accounts of all of these participants. Indeed, Chloe, Lauren and Kelly were the only three participants where this emergent theme was present. This made me consider the relationship between the two themes and also question causality; did the willingness of these participants to adapt their practice and be open to change make them predisposed to be more positive towards inclusive practice? Or alternatively, was it the commitment of these participants to inclusion that made them more inclined to be flexible and accommodating in their approach?

6.4: The Mainstream School Context

This superordinate theme portrays participants' experiences of working within the mainstream school context. Participants discussed the structured and inflexible mainstream environment and indicated that they did not perceive inclusion to be a priority within the setting. Some made reference to the lack of funding, resources, equipment and physical space in school allocated to supporting children with significant SEND. Moreover, many participants spoke about experiencing difficulties balancing the needs of children with significant SEND with the needs of their non-SEND peers, and noted that the inclusion of children with SEND can lead to an increase in workload and pressure for adults working in the mainstream setting. It was also highlighted that inclusion in mainstream provision can have undesirable consequences for other children in class, as well as the children with significant SEND themselves. As a consequence, the majority of participants questioned the benefits of inclusion in mainstream settings and concluded that the needs of some children with significant SEND cannot not be met in mainstream school (in contrast, it should be noted that a minority of participants emphasised the benefits of inclusion and perceived the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings as positive). Comparisons between mainstream schools and specialist settings were drawn by a number of participants, and the advantages of specialist settings for children with significant SEND were highlighted. Table 22 presents the contributions of individual participants to each of the three subordinate themes which form this superordinate theme.

Table 22: Contributions of Participants to Subordinate Themes Incorporated in the Superordinate Theme 'The Mainstream School Context'

	Julie (TA)	**Chloe (TA)**	**Lorna (TA)**	**Jim (Teacher)**	**Donna (Teacher)**	**Lauren (Teacher)**	**Caroline (Teacher)**	**Kelly (TA)**
The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream school context	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Juggling needs and responsibilities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

6.4.1: The Unaccommodating and Inflexible Mainstream School Context

Whilst it was acknowledged that children with significant SEND require an individualised approach and differentiated curriculum to facilitate their successful inclusion in a mainstream school setting, all of the eight participants interviewed indicated that they perceive the mainstream environment they work in as unaccommodating and inflexible. For example, Lorna reported that the classroom in which she worked was 'regimented', whilst Kelly told me that she felt that mainstream schools were overly-structured and used the metaphor of a conveyor belt to communicate her experiences of the relentless and fast-paced mainstream context. I reflected that this may be a consequence of conflicting school priorities as discussed by a number of the participants interviewed:

> Lauren: …they feel they haven't always got the time to spend on that child when they've got results to achieve I think that's what it is…I think that, I think a lot of people are saying 'I've got this curriculum to get through and...These children need, need to be at this level'

[laughs]…

For these participants, the inclusion of children with significant SEND is undermined by competing pressures on educators to deliver a set curriculum, meet prescribed targets and ensure measurable pupil progress. Moreover, many other participants interviewed highlighted the lack of funding, resources, equipment and physical space in school allocated to supporting children with significant SEND, further strengthening my hypothesis that participants do not feel that inclusion is prioritised in the setting. Indeed, some participants went further, suggesting that inclusion can be overshadowed by other priorities at a macro level in government-issued education policy and legislation.

A number of participants (Chloe, Lorna, Jim, Caroline and Kelly) highlighted that in the uncompromising mainstream environment, children with SEND are expected to adapt and 'fit in':

Chloe: So if something's different he just has to cope with it being different. …And that's, you know, something that we expect of him. So, you know, today we're, we're not going outside and you can't go out because [name of member of staff] is coming in to do games so you have to stay in here. Just simple things like that. And he gets very upset and distraught by that but we expect him to cope with it…Because all the other children do if that makes sense. It's like we almost forget, you know, his needs for that second when the routine changes…And we just expect him to sort of fit into all the changes that's been going on.

Kelly: … and I'm thinking, do you know I'm thinking, so there's no adaption [pause] at all. It's like you know you're welcome to join in and we will try our best but you will fit into our [pause] our daily routine. You know we can...we'll try and bend it a little bit but it won't be much but you can just fit into our routine. And it's I feel sometimes it's the SEN child that's adapting to school to fit into [pause] the school routine rather than… I mean personally down to staff attitudes and then the school environment adapting to help a child.

Some participants drew comparisons to their experiences of working with children with significant SEND outside of the mainstream learning context to highlight the importance of the learning environment For example, Chloe shared her experience of working in an alternative provision with children with significant behavioural needs (who had been excluded from multiple mainstream schools), and emphasised the positive consequences of these children being in a more flexible and accommodating learning environment:

Chloe: Yeah, I remember what of like some the staff going through like so 'this is such a

person, you know, he's, he's been excluded from like three schools. He's, he's having a lot of trouble within like mainstream settings. He's, he's not managing with like the structure part of the day or whatnot'. And then you see them in a different environment and it's like no these children haven't got behavioural problem.

However, in contrast, some participants (Donna and Lauren) stressed that they felt that the rules, routines and structure that exist in mainstream schools are important for children with SEND and that these children require firm boundaries and consistency:

Researcher: And what do you think contributed to the, to that? Why, why do you think that went so well? You've mentioned sort of...
Donna: Consistency.
Researcher: Consistency yeah.
Donna: All the staff singing from the same hymn sheet

Lauren: Urm like when we come back at transition points in the day we do have some calm music on and we do relaxation on our, on ourselves.
Researcher: Yeah.
Lauren: And then we...they know the, they know the urm the whole routine for it. So when we get to the end, they know that they're ready to just like sit quietly and then we're ready to start.

All of the teacher and TA participants contributed to this superordinate theme and there was little variance or conflict in responses across the participant sub-groups. For me, this emphasised participants' shared perception of their mainstream setting as a structured, fast-paced and inflexible learning environment, in which inclusion can be neglected because other school priorities are given precedence.

6.4.2: The Problem with Inclusion in a Mainstream Setting

The majority of participants interviewed noted that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream provision is not always something that is possible or preferable. For example, Jim and Lorna emphasised that their advocacy of inclusion had certain caveats:

Jim: It's, it's looking at that whole idea of inclusion and I am all for inclusion as and, as and where appropriate.

Lorna: To try and include everyone. Yeah, it's a good thing but obviously in time if things

aren't working then other, other options need to be looked at.

Donna echoed the sentiment shared by these participants and went further, indicating that children with SEND should be allowed the opportunity to 'prove themselves' in mainstream provision but that inevitable some children will not 'survive' in this type of setting. Five of the participants (Julie, Chloe, Jim, Caroline and Kelly) noted that inclusion can serve to exclude some children with significant SEND. I felt the following extract from Jim's interview succinctly captures the perceptions and experiences shared by many participants:

Jim: Urm they'll start off possibly in a separate room where they've got an entirely separate task because they're just not able to access the level that every other child can access a differentiated level…And it's still a level of inclusion in inverted commas. Like you are still...they are still there. They're part of you know, they're part of the input but they go off and do their own separate thing.

The quality of teaching and learning for children with significant SEND in mainstream provision was also questioned by some participants (Julie and Lauren), with Julie sharing that, when working with these children, the goal is less about encouraging progress and more about keeping the children occupied. Furthermore, participants told me that they felt that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream school can have a detrimental effect on their non-SEND peers. Indeed, half of the participants (Julie, Lorna, Jim and Caroline) reported that they felt other children in class were disadvantaged by inclusion because children with SEND monopolise adult time and attention. In contrast, three participants (Chloe, Lauren and Kelly) also spoke about their experiences of the positive aspects of inclusion, noting that inclusion can help children to learn to respect and value diversity and also that other children in class can benefit from SEND provision put in place for a particular child.

Comparisons between mainstream and specialist schools were drawn by a number of participants, with many indicating that specialist settings may be more suitable for some children with SEND. Participants perceived such settings to have greater flexibility, to be better resourced and to have a higher level of adult support in class:

Researcher: Yeah. What does...what would be the alternative?

Caroline: A special, specialist...

Researcher: Specialist setting?

Caroline: Yeah. Yeah, And I've been...I've, I've done experience in...and they're er they're amazing. They're amazing. And, you know, they're catered for specific needs.

Researcher: Well why, why do you think that was the right thing for him?
Lauren: Yeah why, yeah urm [pause] because [pause] the...because of things like, there was, the other, the, the school that he was going to had the provision in the school. So they had urm different rooms that had...that could meet his needs. Because he's very like active and...
Researcher: Yeah.
Lauren: ...Urm they had lots of, they've got like a lot of space for different provision. Does that make sense?

I found it interesting that many participants held this shared perception, despite the fact that none had shared with me that they had practical experience of working within a specialist setting for a sustained period of time. For Donna in particular, specialist school placement was regarded as a goal to be obtained and she spoke of her sense of victory and triumph when a child with significant SEND in school secured a place in a specialist setting:

Donna: He's actually now got a place in special school.
Researcher: Right.
Donna: Starting in September which is [pause] what everybody has wanted...knew would come at some point but triggered by CAMHS urm all the professionals involved have agreed that he needs special school and he's got a place in September so that was a big [pause]…I danced when that news came.

When comparing the teacher and TA subgroups, I did not find clear division or distinction in how this theme presented, indicating that participant experiences and perceptions were generally aligned. I did note that teachers drew more direct comparisons to specialist setting and I wondered if this was simply a result of having more experiences within these environments (for example, during ITT or as part of their Continuing Professional Development), compared to their TA colleagues.

6.4.3: Juggling Needs and Responsibilities

All of the eight participants interviewed discussed balancing the needs of children with significant SEND and the needs of the other children in the mainstream classroom. The significant challenge associated with the experience of attempting 'juggle' the needs of pupils was evident in many participant accounts:

Jim: You've also then got 26, 28 other children that you're sat worrying about and you can't lose those children as well so you almost have to have them doing something related so that

you can sort of go in and check on them.

Indeed, for one participant (Caroline), this was perceived as a near impossible task:

Caroline: So that, that felt a challenge because you're trying to meet everybody's needs and you physically you can't do it. Especially if there is a big SEN need urm either the SEN child's getting your attention and everybody else is not or they are and you feel that their...you're not meeting their need.

Associated with this balancing act, participants described practical demands related to time constraints. For example, Lauren and Lorna spoke about the need for more time to differentiate work for children with significant SEND and create individualised resources, whilst Chloe and Kelly shared their experiences of questioning how to 'split' their time in order to meet the needs of children with SEND whilst also fulfilling other classroom roles and responsibilities. As noted by Lorna, *"…we don't have time in the day…It's always borrowed time from somewhere else because a day is just full of everything else we need to do."*. It seems then that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in the mainstream classroom can result in additional workload and pressure for educators. Given that almost all participants interviewed told me that their respective roles were demanding and involved high levels of work-related stress, it is little wonder that this can lead some practitioners to perceive these children as a burden or inconvenience:

Kelly: It's, it's you know I don't even need to know what the child has got or the issues. It's just like the, the meetings that are involved urm [pause] paperwork, going through setting up er strategies that you can you know like 1-1 work that, that you feel half the time it's not going to happen because it's...and then urm [SENCo's name] will be looking for you to come and fill out forms and looking for updates and then you get phone calls and [pause] called into meetings…And sometimes...and it's, it's more that side you're thinking of the pressure that you're, you're put under more than the child him or herself.

Moreover, some participants seemed to indicate that time with other children in class was often sacrificed for a child with significant SEND and hinted at a sense of injustice that other children in class were missing out on their educational entitlement. For example, Donna told me *"I think they need that [pause] pat on the back because some children might be thinking 'they're giving all their attention to him today and I've not had a look in'."*. There was little difference between the contributions of TAs and teachers to this subordinate theme. What is more, even those participants who displayed more positive attitudes towards inclusion highlighted the challenges associated with juggling needs in a mainstream classroom,

suggesting that this is something that is universally demanding for mainstream practitioners. It was evident, however, that the theme presented differently in the accounts of some of the participants who demonstrated a commitment to inclusive practice. For example, in Chloe's account she shared her experiences of striving to provide adequate time to meet the needs of children with SEND despite the constraints of the mainstream classroom, rather than positioning children with SEND as individuals who inequitably monopolise adult time and attention.

6.5: Perceptions of Children with SEND

This superordinate theme captures participants' perceptions of children with SEND. Many of the participants interviewed indicated that they valued and respected diversity in the classroom and highlighted that peers are accepting of pupils with significant SEND. Both teachers and TAs spoke about a need for empathy and understanding when working with children with significant SEND and some shared a desire to celebrate and champion these pupils. Participants also discussed the strong bonds they have built with children with significant SEND and the importance of viewing children holistically. Interestingly however, at some point in their interview, all participants also shared comments which could be interpreted as focusing the individual 'within-child' differences and/or deficits of children with significant SEND. Many highlighted the limited progress these children make and hinted at their low expectations of children with SEND. Some also shared their perceptions of children with significant SEND as unpredictable, disruptive and dangerous. The heterogeneity of children with significant SEND was emphasised, with participants indicating that some children with SEND (namely those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) are harder to include than others. Table 23 presents the contributions of individual participants to each of the four subordinate themes which form this superordinate theme.

Table 23: Contributions of Participants to Subordinate Themes Incorporated in the Superordinate Theme 'Perceptions of Children with SEND'

	Julie (TA)	**Chloe (TA)**	**Lorna (TA)**	**Jim (Teacher)**	**Donna (Teacher)**	**Lauren (Teacher)**	**Caroline (Teacher)**	**Kelly (TA)**
Accepting and championing children with SEND	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
A within-child deficit view of children with SEND	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Children with SEND are not a homogenous group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Building relationships with children with SEND	X	X			X	X	X	X

6.5.1: Accepting and Championing Children with SEND

A number of participants emphasised their feelings of pride in response to the achievements and successes of children with significant SEND and highlighted their desire to celebrate these children:

Julie: So when he did, you know, take those little steps they were, they were quite big moments.

Donna: I always try to end it with but don't ever forget the good things about your child, the amazing things they can do and what they're really good at and [pause] and make them think well I don't...I never want the meeting to end on a negative. I always want it to end on a positive, oh and she said that about my child, so take that bit away home with you.

Caroline: Oh, you feel proud. Yeah, yeah. It's lovely. It's lovely. And it's lovely to share with parents because I always think with the SEN children sometimes it's "oh this has happened today and this has hap..." especially with the behaviour of it. And it's really focusing on them positives and making a big, a big thing of it urm and telling the parents. Because sometimes I think I don't want to just be "oh can I have a word, oh can I have a word?"…It's nice to say "can I have a word, something lovely's happened today"

I wondered if one could argue that this may suggest these participants have low expectations of children with significant SEND, meaning there is cause for celebration when these expectations are surpassed. Moreover, I questioned whether this could be linked to the fact that three participants (Chloe, Julie and Donna) noted that children with SEND are vulnerable and in need of care and protection; perhaps the vulnerability of these children encouraged participants to feel obliged to champion and defend them within school:

Chloe: Like it, it kind of makes you a bit defensive because he's going to a different school in September so he's not staying with us. And when they came in to see him and talk about him, it does make you feel like really defensive. Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September.

Julie: And it was usually something irrelevant you know [laughs] it wasn't about the class discussion or whatever. But it was still quite sad that that child didn't have a voice with that person.

Donna: Because if that child's kicked off between the front door and the classroom they'll be saying ‘but [participant's name] why does he need to have his two box of things? He should be, maybe he should come in with the class and do what the class are doing’. But you haven't just experienced what he had at home this morning…from the minute he opened his eyes. Give him time to breathe and then he'll come back.

Both teacher and TA participants highlighted that a positive aspect of inclusion is that it promotes diversity and acceptance of difference in school:

Julie: So it's good for them to see, you know…That everybody's different and understand that not everybody learns the same way.

Lorna: That other children especially they see other children that are not the norm or not like

them…Being surrounded by them because of...the children did see a video of a child with Down syndrome and did laugh and say he looks, he looks different. Well then I explained and they said that they have previously seen someone like that and just because they looked a little bit different as to why they laughed but I don't think they would do that in real life…But I don't know if, how many of them have seen a child with Down's syndrome.

Donna: Well I think it's, I think it's lovely for all the other children to see that there are children who have more difficulties than them in different things. I think it might hopefully make them a little bit more respectful and understanding that everybody in the world has difficulty with some things and that this child is just a bit more apparent but they are in some ways, they're no different, they're human beings, they're here, they're the same age, they're a girl or a boy and they enjoy being with other children so you know they're not that far removed from the rest of us and they need that moment to join in with what they can.

Kelly: Urm and I think we have a, a broad spectrum of SEN in classes now. I'm not saying we didn't years ago but we're aware of more now and I think urm as staff, all staff I think try their best to make and include a child that's got [pause] different needs to another child.

Peer acceptance of children with significant SEND was noted to be high. For example, Lauren positioned children as naturally inclusive whilst Donna and Lorna noted that children with significant SEND can be supported by their non-SEND peers:

Lauren: …the relationships were [pause] really positive [pause] urm [pause]…they were really helpful and wanting to...and they were really kind and urm they were inclusive.

Donna: And you...they're like a little, a little protective nest around him because they're so understanding.

Lorna: "…other children understand that and they take them under their wing type thing so it's nice for the other, the child with needs to know that they can rely on other children whereas if they were somewhere with children all the same or with similar needs they might not be able to have that support as they do with non-SEN children.

Jim however, highlighted that he felt older children can be less understanding and forgiving of individual difference:

Jim: The children [pause] go quiet when they're younger and they go "oh, oh I'm not sure. I'll

just leave it. It's fine. It's fine. Just let the teacher take control". But as they move further up the school, the children give it back…Because they've got, they've got to the point where they've had them for seven years now and it's too much. And actually you, you're annoying me now, stop…Which is a real issue that I think, especially the older year groups face here urm.

Whilst all participants contributed to this subordinate theme in some way, I did notice that more TA participants spoke about feeling defensive of children with significant SEND, who they positioned as vulnerable and in need of protection. I reflected that TAs may have more opportunities to adopt a 'caring' role with regards to children with significant SEND, given that they often provide one-to-one or small group-level support for particular children in class. Perhaps this way of working promotes a more individualised view of children with SEND, in comparison to their teacher colleagues who may be more inclined to perceive these children as one of a number of pupils in their charge. Emergent themes relating to the vulnerability of children with SEND and the subsequent need to defend and champion these pupils were only present in one teacher participant's data (Donna). I questioned whether this could be explained by Donna's position as school SENCo, given that her role involves promoting pupils' inclusion in the school community (Cowne, Frankl and Gerschel, 2019).

6.5.2: A Within-child Deficit View of Children with SEND

At some point in their interview, all participants shared comments which could be interpreted as focusing the individual 'within-child' differences and/or deficits of children with significant SEND. A good example of this is an extract from Julie's interview in which she stated *"I think, I think sometimes as hard as you try some children can't, they can't do everything."*. Four participants indicated that they had low expectations of children with significant SEND and highlighted the limited progress these children make in school:

Caroline: He didn't actually access much of the curriculum. It was just getting him into coming to school, sitting down for the register. And then it was kind of whatever else we could get was great. But at least he's in school.

Kelly: Because I mean like you have some that adapt and if they get the, the help that they need in school then they can adapt and carry on quite normally whereas others I think you know they're lagging behind because they're struggling…

I wondered if these views were linked to the limited independence of children with significant SEND as perceived by some of these participants:

Julie: But I heard that the same thing had happened with the, the previous TA before me urm that he'd become quite reliant on her…So it was, it was I had to learn to, you know, give the, the right amount of help but also know when to distance...

Lauren: And the, the struggle was that it's things...when it came to their independent activities urm when I didn't have a teaching assistant, I wasn't working with that, that child…It was how, how can I keep them on task? What...and what are they learning on their own…That was the challenge.

Kelly: And you just felt awful because he was just an...you felt like you observing him because you still had 30 in the class to still carry on the day and get through all the factors of the day that you had to do and he was just a shadow that you kind of pulled along [pause] to, to join in.

Half of the participants interviewed shared their perceptions of children with significant SEND as unpredictable or unstable, with some going further and branding these children disruptive, defiant and dangerous:

Julie: Urm but yeah, I, I quite like working with those children but I kind of feel everybody else's frustration when you're trying to teach a class and you've got that, that same child interrupting and causing disruptions that's really urm trying on the, on the teachers and on the TAs…Yeah. Sometimes they just, they just don't want to do any work. And so getting them to do work urm is a challenge in itself [laughs].

Jim: And then there other, there are other year groups where no it would not be a good idea at all and I, I would say no, that would be a very, very bad idea [laughs] to try and get someone who would cause potentially more disruption within an already disruptive class.

Caroline: There was one child a couple of years ago who was quite [pause] quite challenging. But there was a lot of sup...I was pregnant at the time and he, he could be violent.

I questioned whether this strong focus on behavioural issues reflects the fact that children with this category of SEND present the most concern and challenge for educators and so were at the forefront of the interviewee's minds.

Whilst I found little variance between the two homogeneous-by-role subgroups of participants in terms of their contributions to this subordinate theme, I did notice that the

emergent theme 'empathy and understanding' was less prevalent in the accounts of participants who discussed their perceptions of children with significant SEND as disruptive, defiant or dangerous. I wondered if, as noted by one participant (Caroline) interviewed, this was because educators are less inclined to have empathy for children who display challenging behaviour.

6.5.3: Children with SEND are not a Homogenous Group

The majority of participants interviewed highlighted that children with SEND are not a homogeneous group:

> Julie: it's hard to sort of pinpoint urm [pause] you know a particular thing that each child needs….They're all, they're all different aren't they?
>
> Chloe: Which again, is tricky because every child is different…So it's not like you could say 'well this will work with him'. And it's just about trial and error isn't it at the end of the day.
>
> Lorna: Well on a personal level I probably would like more training. On just a general SEN...I know it's not general though is it, it's like everything's so different.
>
> Lauren: there's so many different needs as well, you, you can't...you need to have support around you because you're not always urm [pause] you're not always the...sometimes you struggle to think what you can do and how...and sometimes it's, you don't understand the need fully you've got to research it so...

From these extracts, it is evident that for many participants the homogeneity of SEND renders the development and delivery of universal support strategies impossible. Instead, an individualised approach must be put in place to meet the unique needs of each child.

Seven of the eight participants interviewed spoke specifically about children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Three of these participants (Julie, Lauren and Caroline) highlighted that children with this category of SEND are a key concern for mainstream educators, whilst Jim went further, noting that children with such needs are the most difficult to include in the mainstream classroom:

> Jim: She actually got taken to a special, specialist school urm because she was very much...she started to get aggressive and that was what had sort of halted her… It was very difficult to sort of include her within this room because it was so...she was so focused on

other people, which was almost, she was quite in tune to other people, that it would become her emotions and it would be too much…So she was...she's had a lot of time out of class to be fair.

I wondered if this is because behavioural needs present the greatest challenge for these participants as educators, and threaten their perceived professional competency and confidence in their skills as practitioners.

Some participants (Julie, Chloe, Lorna, Caroline and Kelly) also highlighted that certain children with SEND can be prioritised, whilst others can be disregarded and overlooked:

Chloe: I think it's, it's the same again. It's always the quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety that always miss out on things like that.

Caroline: But I'm just interested now with all the will in the world, there's children with other needs but when will she actually get looked at?...By a professional.

Kelly: I think behaviour seem to took priority over the underlying children that sometimes I worry more about the ones that are not making a fuss…Than the ones that are. Because I think you know [pause] mental, mental health and you know like it's what's going on up here. It's not necessarily what's coming out. Because to me the ones that are verbally [pause] expressing themselves, they're asking for help but they don't know how to do it. But they're letting people know that they're there. It's the ones that are the quiet ones like a [child's name] or a [child's name] that are not making a fuss…That, yeah, that you're thinking they're the ones that need...it's like they always say at first aid if you go to an accident go...don't go to the one that's making all the noise, go to the one that's not.

I reflected that these participants may feel a sense of injustice in response to this inequitable approach to providing support to children with significant SEND.

I found there was little variance between the two homogeneous-by-role subgroups of participants in terms of their contributions to this subordinate theme, indicating that the homogeneity of SEND was universally recognised and experienced by participants.

6.5.4: Building Relationships with Children with SEND

The importance of building relationships with children with significant SEND was discussed by the majority of participants. For example, Julie shared *"Urm [pause] it was nice just getting a, a relationship with them er building that bond with them urm…Yeah. Urm yeah I*

built a love...lovely relationship with him.". For some participants, the significance of these relationships was very much evident. Chloe, in particular, stressed the importance of her relationships with children with significant SEND, noting that *"...sometimes you're like a second parent…".* Moreover, she reflected that the opportunity her TA position affords to build strong bonds with children is one of the key reasons she enjoys her role, indicating that these relationships are mutually beneficial. In her interview, Caroline was open about her experience of the breakdown of her bond of trust with a child with significant SEND. The emotional impression this had made upon her personally was clear, again hinting at the significance of these relationships for educators:

Caroline: Urm and it just got to the point of no return then. And that relationship was broken over something quite, you know, you wouldn't think a five year old would overhear that but, but the carer...and when she said it to me, it made sense.
Researcher: Yeah.
Caroline: And she said with his attachment issues because of his background, he just...she's rejected me now that teacher. I hate her. I hate this school and I'm going to you know. That's how he expressed his feelings.
Research: And how did that feel for you?
Caroline: A...awful. I did struggle with it.

Participants emphasised the importance of developing a good knowledge and understanding of children with significant SEND, with some linking this to positive teaching and learning outcomes:

Chloe: …it's just, it's based on how well we know him.

Donna: But that's what they love doing and if you tune into what they love [pause] they're going to work harder for you before that.

Lauren: So it's trying to find...and I do think [pause] it's everybody finding like a, a connection to the, to the children that you're working with and...[pause] urm [pause].

Many also made reference to the need to consider children with significant SEND holistically. For example, Julie, Chloe and Kelly all highlighted environmental influences (i.e. home life) on children with significant SEND, whilst Caroline noted that there was a "…*bigger picture*…" to consider when looking to understand why a certain child presented as they did in the classroom, citing factors such as family background and medical diagnoses.

Moreover, a number of participants indicated a certain degree of empathetic understanding for children with significant SEND. I thought that this was particularly apparent in the case of Chloe who shared that she had *"…known what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else…".* Perhaps consequently, empathy and understanding were prominent themes in her interview, and she advocated this approach for other educators:

> Chloe: Maybe takes away like those traditional views of, you know, everyone should be punished or everyone should have consequences. I think we more need to look at you know, how, how can we be more sensitive, how can we be more understanding?

Whilst both teachers and TAs contributed to the subordinate theme 'building relationships with children with SEND', I found that contributions were skewed towards TA participants. Three of the four TA participants interviewed (Julie, Chloe and Kelly) spoke in detail about the importance of their relationships with children with SEND, highlighting this as a central aspect of their roles. This made me consider an extract from one participant's (Chloe's) interview which suggested that TAs are better placed than their teacher colleagues to develop these strong bonds with children with significant needs; *"You know, you're the one who can build relationships with the children that obviously the teacher might not have time to do.".*

6.6: Being Part of the Human System of Support

The final superordinate theme encapsulates participants' experiences of being part of a human system of support for children with significant SEND. For both teachers and TAs, human resources were perceived as vital in school to facilitate inclusive practice. Moreover, a vast majority of the participants noted that there is a lack of additional adults in class to support children with significant SEND, which presents a major barrier to inclusion. Colleague support also takes different forms; participants discussed their experiences of working alongside peers, school leaders and external professionals to promote inclusive practice. Furthermore, participants spoke about the attitudes of other staff members and noted that fixed mind-sets and an unwillingness to adapt practice can impede inclusion. 'Working with parents' was the final of the three subordinate themes within this superordinate theme. Whilst some participants acknowledged that parents of children with SEND can be supportive of school and work in partnership with educators, the majority perceived parents as barriers to inclusive practice due to their lack of cooperation with school staff and the stigma they felt parents associated with SEND. Table 24 presents the

contributions of individual participants to each of the three subordinate themes which form this superordinate theme.

Table 24: Contributions of Participants to Subordinate Themes Incorporated in the Superordinate Theme 'Being Part of the Human System of Support'

	Julie (TA)	**Chloe (TA)**	**Lorna (TA)**	**Jim (Teacher)**	**Donna (Teacher)**	**Lauren (Teacher)**	**Caroline (Teacher)**	**Kelly (TA)**
Colleague support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Attitudes of other staff members	X	X			X			X
Working with parents	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

6.6.1: Colleague Support

The importance of colleague support was highlighted by all of the eight participants. Seven of these participants spoke about the benefits of additional adults in class, including TA and one-to-one support staff. It was noted that additional staff could alleviate practical demands and provide more individualised support to children with significant SEND. For Caroline, this support was clearly invaluable; *"Urm and I think, you know, there's lots of different resources and actual things you can buy, but I think a person being one-to-one with somebody is what matters..."*. Of the participants who discussed the importance of additional adults, only one participant (Chloe) felt that the adult to child ratio was adequate in class and it was clear that she considered this to be a privileged situation; "*Um I feel like we're very lucky because there's five members of staff in nursery. I feel like um he's, he's kind of always got a constant one-one."*. The remaining six participants stressed the lack of adult support in class, and noted the effect this can have upon the inclusion of children with significant SEND:

Researcher: So what do you feel are the barriers to urm to you in teaching children with significant SEND?

Jim: I think the main, the main barrier is lack of adults…Urm but I think it...the resource, the resource that you need is, is adults and teachers. Anything other than that is fluff. You can make more resources. Here...I, I can make resources until the cows come home. I can ask for funding. I can do that bit. That's all easy stuff. But if you've not got someone to deliver it on top of delivering your quality first teaching to the rest of the children in your class, you go back to that idea about inclusion again. And is everyone included? No…

When analysing the interview transcripts I noticed that many participants often used the collective term 'we', expressing group-based togetherness when discussing the support being offered to a child with significant SEND. For some, this was associated with the opportunity to share the responsibility of a child:

Caroline: Because I think as a, as a human you need a break as well. So if you've got a good team….with urm the little boy from this school and there was the three of us, you know, if somebody was, you know, getting a lot of [participant uses on hand to 'chop' on the palm of the other repeatedly] and it was, you know, it was swearing, it was throwing things and things. You could just say "right". You know "you go and do this with the rest of the class, I'll...", you know, you, you need that to be, you know, you need a little bit of time to step away from it.

For others, colleagues were a source of knowledge and provided an opportunity to share good practice:

Julie: Urm [pause] just being able to have those conversations with, with different people and having people like [name of SENCo] on hand is absolutely invaluable. She's urm I think yeah just being able just to talk it through with somebody and get another perspective on it… Urm somebody with that experience and, and knowledge. Urm [pause] yeah. And just, just sharing each other's knowledge as well I suppose, just being able to, to talk to each other…

Chloe: Um [pause] yeah, I think it's the team in general they're, just the Early Years team, I think we just, because we understand each other so well and we understand how difficult it is, I think we, it's the support's always just there in terms of oh well I know that I can go and talk to [name of researcher] if I'm, if I'm struggling with such a thing….Or, you know, I'd, even though we don't speak to each other a lot, we all know that, that we can come and talk to each other...

From these extracts, I feel it is clear that these participants value the open and understanding relationships they have with colleagues and also express a need for the time and space to talk to others who can appreciate and empathise with their experiences. Support from external professionals (including Speech and Language professionals, Educational Psychologists and Occupational Therapists) was also discussed by five of the participants interviewed. Many participants noted that the support and advice provided by these specialists was helpful in developing support for children with significant SEND. However, I did find that some of these accounts were quite vague, making me question whether participants' access to external professional support was limited:

> Lorna: Er we've had the speech, speech and language so it's quite poor in our school speech and language so we do see the lady who does that quite often. So we've had her and we've had um the Ed Psych they come in to assess children but never trained us but the speech and language lady she does she has come in and briefed us little bit on that. I'm trying to think of anything else, if anyone else from outside has come in [pause] well not really.
>
> Kelly: Urm [pause] and then also we have er like [SALT name] at the moment. When I was doing Wellcomm she's like the speech and language lady. She was, she came in with some fantastic resources.

This hypothesis was further strengthened by an extract from Jim's interview transcript:

> Jim: …when you have your multi-agency meetings once or twice a year maximum where you ask for them. You've got Ed Psych involvement very rarely urm because obviously expensive at the same time so you're having to really fight your corner to get a child in who may or may not end up staying in school.

Only three participants (Chloe, Donna and Lauren) spoke about support from school leaders around inclusion issues.

Colleague support appeared to be vitally important for both teacher and TA participants; however, there were some interesting areas of divergence in their accounts. For example, one TA participant (Julie) stressed the importance of cohesion between teachers and TAs, noting that she had experienced a difficult relationship with a teacher colleague in the past which had influenced the support provided to a child with significant SEND in class:

> Julie: Urm [pause] the issue I said before about if the teacher wasn't on board with them. Urm and, and trying to include them. That was quite a challenge. Urm it's a difficult one. I didn't feel like I could [pause] urm I suppose say anything to the teacher about it…

I feel this extract highlights the power imbalance between teachers and TAs; Julie clearly felt constrained by her position and that she lacked the authority and influence to challenge the teacher's approach to inclusion. Furthermore, a teacher participant (Jim) was the only participant to highlight the potential challenges of managing support staff in class. Jim held a unique perspective amongst participants, in that he seemed to indicate that support from inexperienced TAs did not facilitate the inclusion of children with significant SEND in class:

> Jim: I mean he was a very inexperienced TA whose...this was their first job. It was a one-to-one. It was very difficult. And I found myself chasing the children, sort of who were urm learning and trying to get all their observations and trying to get all of those things in and also having to remind the TA 'oh look, he's just hit that person. Why has he hit that person? You're supposed to be with him one-to-one'. Urm which was difficult, obviously.

6.6.2: Attitudes of Other Staff Members

Four of the participants interviewed emphasised the importance of staff attitudes and the impact they felt this had upon the inclusion of children with significant SEND in school. For example, Donna and Julie shared:

> Donna: That would massively help children with significant need. I think it, I just think it's about attitude…And inclusion and pos...being positive and letting the child know that you are happy for them to be there and you want the best for them.
>
> Julie: Urm I just think it's really important for, for everybody to have that positive attitude. I have seen urm some teachers that have quite a negative attitude towards urm children with SEND.

Three participants (Kelly, Chloe and Donna) told me that they felt fixed mind-sets and an unwillingness to adapt practice was a major barrier to inclusion. Moreover, Chloe indicated that the attitudes of other educators had a significant influence upon her own practice and experience of support children with significant SEND:

> Chloe: Um I feel like it prevents people from maybe doing what they think would be the best thing and just sort of accepting, you know, what, what the general, general like staff think. So okay most, most of the staff thinks that there should be a consequence for that but a couple of the staff don't but we'll just go with the general.

I found it significant that three of the four participants who discussed the attitudes and perceptions of other staff members were TAs. I reflected that this may be a consequence of

their position in the school hierarchy, and a belief that individuals in their positions lack power in comparison to their teacher colleagues. Whilst teachers may feel that they have the power to shape practice and ethos in their own classrooms to some extent, perhaps TAs feel less able to influence change, meaning that the attitudes held by their colleagues is of greater import. The only teacher to discuss the attitudes of other staff members was Donna, the SENCo in school. Clearly, Donna is uniquely positioned in school to work alongside the staff team around inclusion issues and so it may be that she has a greater awareness of (and interest in) the attitudes of other staff members in comparison to her classroom teacher colleagues.

6.6.3: Working with Parents

Seven of the eight participants noted that the experience of supporting children with significant SEND involves interaction with their parents and families. Collaborative relationships were generally perceived as important to facilitate an understanding of the child and support their progress, with many participants highlighting the need for parents to be 'on board' with school and to work in partnership with educators. Whilst a number of participants indicated that they had experienced working alongside supportive parents of children with significant SEND (for example, one participant [Caroline] noted that "…*most of the time, parents are lovely. Really supportive. They want the best for the child. They're quite understanding…"*), I found that in general participants seemed to focus in on more negative experiences. Indeed, six participants shared their experiences of working with parents who they felt were not supportive of school and did not work cooperatively with them. Many of these participants expressed experiencing frustration when parents held a perception that they, as the child's educators, did not agree with.

One participant (Caroline) emphasised the significant emotional influence such difficult relationships with parents had on her experience of supporting children with significant SEND:

> Caroline: I've had some experiences where it's not been nice. Parents shouting at me. Parents urm screaming at me one occasion. And I'm not a person...I don't cope well with that….But obviously we're at the front line and a parent just screamed and shouted in front of other parents. I find that really embarrassing.

For me, this extract shows that Caroline can feel like she is battling against parents of children with SEND at times, rather than working in partnership with them. Later in the

interview, she further discussed her experiences of feeling personally persecuted by parents, simply for fulfilling her teaching roles and responsibilities:

> Caroline: It was all put on me...And then it was, it wasn't very nice...At the time. But that's something I don't think I was expecting as a teacher… some of them you, you kind of dread that child misbehaving because you've got to pass it on.

Parental acceptance of SEND, and associated intervention, was also abstracted as a theme in the data. For example, Lorna and Kelly noted that parents can find it difficult to accept that their child has SEND and told me that parents can often be in denial about their child's needs which can prevent them from accessing the best level of support:

> Lorna: ...there is the stigma and a lot of parents are saying a lot of them don't believe that there's anything wrong with their child sometimes it takes a lot for them to realise…
>
> Kelly: And [pause] his parents were like you know 'no, he's, he's going to be fine. He's going to get better'.

This was an experience shared by five of the eight participants interviewed. Moreover, it was clear that some of these participants felt it was their duty to help parents to come to terms with their child's SEND and also to consider alternative options in terms of educational setting:

> Jim: And he was just getting violent and aggressive so he eventually went to a special needs school, which took a lot of convincing with parents and stuff because obviously they wanted him to be a part of school.
>
> Donna: What else is rewarding is if you managed to get a child into a special school which is a massive step for [name of LA]. And the parents say...they've gone from being in denial that there's anything wrong to accepting that there is wrong.

I feel that these extracts highlight the clear agenda of these participants and also the sense of triumph experienced when they successfully persuade parents to align with their viewpoints. Only one participant (Lauren) spoke in detail about working with parents as partners with a solution-focused approach to support children with significant SEND in their current mainstream setting:

> Lauren: And then I do you speak to parents, like parents quite a lot. When I first, at first, when I first started I felt like until I'd got more experience I found it difficult speaking to parents. But now I speak to parents every day so I feel like…Because they know the

children better than...you know, they know the children well and...And also they might, they might be struggling, they might be doing something really good and then if they're struggling then it's like 'well I've tried this and, what, have you done this?'

When analysing Lauren's transcript, I thought that she portrayed a sincere desire to work collaboratively with parents of children with SEND and develop mutually supportive relationships to promote the best interests of the child. I was somewhat surprised to find that this seemed to be a unique stance amongst my participants.

When comparing contributions to this theme from the two participant sub-groups, I found that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the subordinate theme 'working with parents' was more prominent amongst teacher participants. For me this seemed reasonable, given that teachers typically have more face-to-face interaction with parents of children with SEND in school. Of the three TA participants who contributed to this subordinate theme, one participant (Julie) made it clear that her perceptions of parents were intertwined with her mutual role as an aunt of a child with significant SEND. I found it interesting here that Julie aligned herself with her nephew's school and seemed to perceive his parents as difficult and demanding:

Julie: Urm and they've made life very difficult for his schools. So from somebody working in a school now, it's been quite frustrating urm to see them making life difficult but obviously that is something that, that happens…when he was in primary school he went to the same school as, as two of my child...as my children. Urm and they were really good teachers there and, and they were very, very negative about the teachers. Urm as, you know, as if they just weren't doing enough.

Julie acknowledged that her experiences of working with parents in her role as a TA were limited *("...there's a couple of children that I've had in the nurture room whose parents are diff...quite difficult, but I've not really urm had much experience of work...I've not had to work with the parents as much in the nurture…"),* a sentiment echoed by Lorna, who noted that the class teacher tended to work more directly with parents. Only one TA participant (Kelly) spoke at length about her experiences of working with parents of children with significant SEND within her TA position. I considered that this may be a consequence of her extensive experience as a TA (and before this in her position as a nursery nurse).

6.7: Comparing the Contributions of Teacher and TA Participants

Analytical comparisons of the contributions of teacher participants and TA participants to each subordinate theme facilitated the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between the two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples. There were certain areas of difference between the contributions of TAs and teachers to some of the subordinate themes. For example, I found divergence between the two participant subgroups associated with issues of control and autonomy regarding inclusion, with TAs sharing their perceived lack of power at the individual classroom level. TA participants were also more concerned about the attitudes and perceptions of other staff members in comparison to their teacher colleagues, which I considered may be a consequence of their position within the school hierarchical structure: TAs might feel less able to shape practice and influence change, meaning that the attitudes held by their colleagues is of greater importance. I also found that more of the TAs interviewed indicated that they valued experience over academic learning or training and sought support from more experienced colleagues. Moreover, TAs articulated the importance of their relationships with children with significant SEND, and seemed to feel defensive and champion these children, to a greater extent than their teacher colleagues. I questioned whether this could be linked to increased opportunities for TAs to develop a more individualised view of children with SEND.

Whilst certain areas of divergence were evident, I was interested to find that differences between how the group-level themes presented between the two homogenous-by-role participant subgroups were less pronounced than I had expected. Whilst the roles of teachers and TAs within mainstream settings are certainly distinct, I considered that I had perhaps been somewhat naive to assume greater homogeneity within these participant subgroups, given that a participant's job role is only a small component amongst a myriad of educator-related and environment-related factors, which interact to influence an individual's perceptions and experiences. Reflections about the multiple contextual influences on participants, and how these interact with their individual values and norms to shape how they make sense of their experiences of inclusion, led me to consider the research findings through the lens of social systems theory.

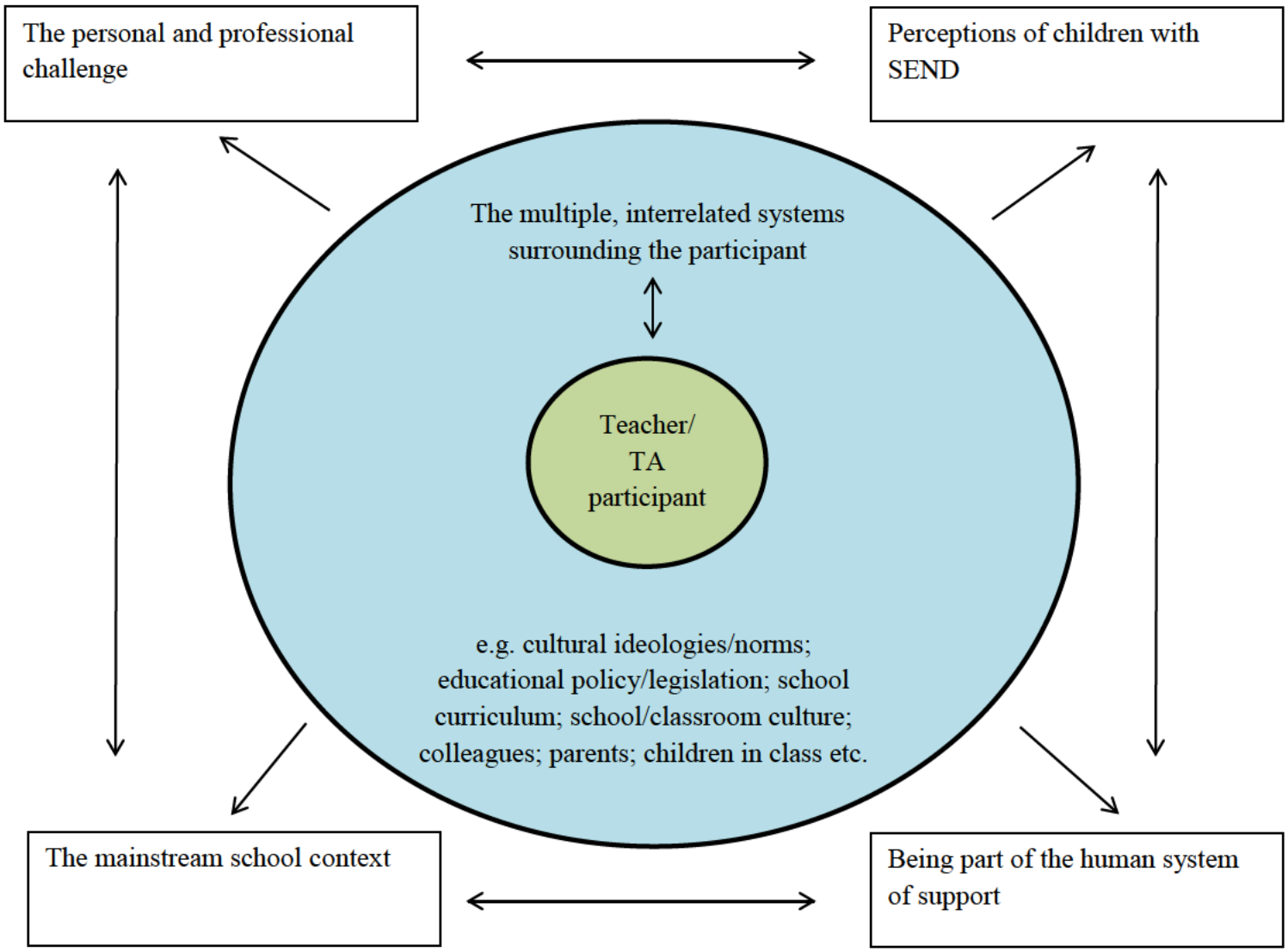
6.8: Examining the Findings Through the Lens of Social Systems Theory

Social systems theory (Luhmann, 1995) is grounded in the discipline of biology and von Bertalanffy's (1968) General System Theory which suggests that "systems cannot be reduced to a series of parts functioning in isolation, but that, in order to understand the whole, one must understand the interrelations between these parts" (Anderson, 2016, p. 593). Social systems theory maintains that individuals are both systems within their own right (influenced by their own subsystems such as their ability, beliefs, values and personality), and also part of a wider web of systems, which play a major role in individual functioning. According to Bozkus (2014), it is rational to think of schools as social systems and to consider a social systems perspective when interpreting the views, perceptions and behaviours of individuals within them. Schools can be considered open systems given that factors beyond the boundaries of the school social system affect the internal structures and processes of the organisation (Hoy and Miskel, 2013). The beliefs and perceptions of educators within a school for example, are related to the values of external society.

In regards to the current research, I have drawn upon social systems theory, at a very general level, to allow me to develop a more integrated interpretation of participants' accounts and develop an understanding of how the systems surrounding individual educators may have influenced the themes which were abstracted from the analysis of their data. Figure 1 illustrates the superordinate themes within the framework of the multiple, interrelated systems surrounding the educator. The model demonstrates the interconnected nature of the themes and also shows that how the systems around educators may have contributed to the themes abstracted.

From Figure 1, it is evident that the four superordinate themes are interdependent. For example, it is rational to assume that participants' perceptions of children with SEND would be influenced by the context of the mainstream school they work in, the human support they perceive to be available, and the degree of personal and professional challenge they believe they experience. Moreover, it can be seen that the individuals' bidirectional interactions with the multiple systems surrounding them will have contributed to each of the four interdependent themes.

Figure 1: Illustration of Superordinate Themes within the Framework of the Multiple, Interrelated Systems Surrounding the Teacher/TA Participants



CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7.1: Chapter Overview

The current study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences of primary school educators, in relation to including children with significant SEND. The research sought to address gaps in the existing literature, by providing a detailed, qualitative account of both teacher and teaching assistant participants' experiences of the inclusion of these children in a mainstream setting. Moreover, the study aimed to explore the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND experienced by these participants. Limited qualitative studies in this field have been undertaken in England, with fewer still involving both teachers and teaching assistants as participants in the research. As such, the current study offers a useful addition to the existing research base. Within this chapter, the themes abstracted from analysis are discussed in relation to my two research questions, as well as extant theory and literature. Strengths and limitations of the study, potential areas for future research, reflections on the research process and implications for educational professionals are also considered.

7.2: Answering Research Question 1: How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?

Whilst the group-level superordinate and subordinate themes abstracted from data analysis were presented individually in the previous chapter, it is evident that these themes do not exist in isolation, but are instead interrelated in nature. In this section, I examine the findings which relate to my first research question through the interpretive lens of social systems theory, allowing me to better capture the complexity and interdependency of the themes identified in participants' accounts, and also to consider how the multiple systems around educators may have contributed to the themes that were abstracted from the data. My research findings are discussed in relation to the previous research presented in my literature review, alongside additional literature which has been sought out to frame my findings after completing data analysis. As noted by Smith et al. (2009, p. 113), it is acceptable to introduce some literature for the first time in the discussion chapter of an IPA study, given that "…it is in the nature of IPA that the interview and analysis will have taken you into new and unanticipated territory."

One of the central themes to emerge from data analysis was the personal and professional challenge participants discussed, and the high levels of emotional effort and labour many associated with the experience of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting. Whilst some participants perceived their experiences of supporting these children as personally rewarding, many also associated the inclusion of children with significant SEND with feelings such as failure, frustration and hopelessness:

> Jim: I think you just feel like failing them don't you? I think that's the main issue, is that you feel like this poor child, through no fault of their own, is getting a bad deal because you've not got enough provision or staff for them.
>
> Donna: And you, and my hands tied behind my back and it's so frustrating.
>
> Kelly: And it was so nice to see because you even felt that relief when you went and I don't mean it in the case of 'oh I'm glad that he's gone' you were just thinking 'oh he's actually going to get what he needs now for his level' and it was so nice to see [pause] him blossoming…

Almost all of the participants interviewed spoke in general terms about the high level of demand and stress they experienced in their respective roles. For example, Chloe noted that she found her role "…*so stressful*…" and attributed this experience to her high workload, whilst Lauren and Donna pointed to the unanticipated and unseen demands and stresses of their respective positions. This is a finding that is broadly congruent with existing literature. High levels of role-related stress amongst educators are well-established (Phillips and Sen [2011, p. 177-178] for example, reported that "work-related stress was higher in education than across all other industries"), and it has been suggested that the pressures placed upon educators have increased in recent years (Ofsted, 2019). Research has identified numerous sources of stress within the school context including workload, lack of resources, poor professional relationships with colleagues, pupil misbehaviour, difficult relationships with parents, and a perceived lack of support from leaders (Ofsted, 2019). Interesting, educators in primary education have been found to experience higher levels of stress compared to their secondary education colleagues, as have female educators in comparison to male educators (Antoniou, Ploumpi and Ntalla, 2013).

In the context of the high levels of role-related stress experienced by participants, it is evident that any additional stress and emotional labour, brought about by the inclusion of children with significant SEND, may be perceived as adding further weight to an already heavy

burden. Clearly, the contextual influences on participants, and how these interact with their individual values and norms, play a significant role in how they make sense of their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND, and how they respond to associated personal and professional challenges.

7.2.1: Contextual Factors that may Influence Participants' Interpretations of their Experiences of the Inclusion of Children with Significant SEND

Competing Priorities within the Mainstream School Context

Schools are complex systems and each school has its own unique ethos, which is likely to have a significant impact upon participants' experiences of inclusion. A school's culture and climate are likely to be influenced by interactions between individuals within the school, as well as wider external influences (Kowalski, 2010). This school culture has a pervasive influence on the school organisation, with values, beliefs and norms being transmitted and transferred between individual members (Kowalski, 2010). This links to the fact that, in the current research, half of the participants interviewed emphasised the importance of the attitudes of other staff members and the influence they felt this had upon their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND in school. Chloe, in particular, emphasised the influence that the attitudes of other educators can have upon one's own practice and experience of supporting children with significant SEND.

It is clear that schools are not closed systems and that external forces interact with and exert pressure upon them. Schools in England face a dilemma about how they should respond to two competing demands from government; the first being a demand for higher academic standards, and the second being the call for the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings (Glazzard, 2014). These two demands are not necessarily incompatible. Indeed, it could be argued that policies and practices designed to promote inclusion could, in turn, raise academic standards for all children (Florian, Black-Hawkins, and Rouse, 2017). However, it is evident that a degree of conflict arises when educators are placed under pressure to deliver a prescribed curriculum and evidence measurable pupil progress, whilst also ensuring that the inclusion of children with significant SEND is promoted. This is particularly problematic as children with significant SEND are often working below age-related expectations, and may make smaller steps of measurable progress in their learning (Gedge, 2016). For the participants involved in the current study, the challenge associated with balancing these demands was very much evident. Across the participants interviewed, there was a shared perception of the mainstream setting as an inflexible and structured

learning environment, in which inclusion can be neglected because other school priorities. All participants discussed the psychological balancing act involved in attempting to meet the needs of children with significant SEND, whilst also providing adequate support for the other children in class: For example, Lauren noted, *"You're trying to include that child but then you don't want to exclude the rest of the class. And you've got 30 children in the room".*

There were tensions in some participants' accounts about issues of equality; whilst some participants stressed that they wanted to provide equal support opportunities for all children in class, there was recognition that children with significant SEND often require more adult time and attention:

> Julie: Urm [pause] obviously the children with the behavioural issues that monopolise a lot of the adults' time. Urm that's difficult and frustrating…
>
> Jim: No, because at this point I'm having to ignore my lower ability children because the special needs children need looking after or I'm having to ignore my higher ability children and leave those to be independent again... You're sort of constantly stuck with someone being left not getting the best deal I guess.

Such findings are aligned with extant literature, which indicates that mainstream educators have significant concerns regarding their capacity to meet the educational needs of all of the students in their classrooms adequately. For example, Horne and Timmons (2009) found that 80% of participants involved in their study were concerned or very concerned about instructing students with a wide range of needs in one class.

Associated with this for participants in the current study, was the more practical concern regarding a lack of time to support children with significant SEND. Such findings are again prevalent in existing literature (Horne and Timmons, 2009; Pearman et al, 1997). Amongst other things, the inclusion of children with SEND requires educators to undertake additional planning, attend educational meetings (such as those with parents or external professionals), and develop Individual Education Plans (Westwood, 2013). As such, it seems that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in the mainstream classroom can result in additional workload and pressure for educators, which could clearly influence their interpretations of their experiences.

Staff Training and Development

A further contextual factor discussed by participants was training and continuous professional development, focused upon including children with significant SEND. Clearly, this is likely to have a significant influence upon participants' experiences of inclusion and the personal

and professional challenge they face in including children with SEND in class. Appropriate training for educators has been shown to improved self-efficacy (one's belief about one's own capabilities to successfully perform; Sharma and Sokal, 2015), which is linked to more positive dispositions toward inclusive practices (Brouwers and Tomic, 2000; Zee and Koomen, 2016). The vast majority of participants involved in the current study highlighted a lack of training (both a lack of pre- and post-role training was discussed):

Chloe: Um [sighs] I feel like, I don't feel like I've had anything specific. Um you know that's just specifically for that. I feel like obviously we always talk about it and it's always something that's discussed in general.

Researcher: Yeah. Yeah. Can you remember anything from your PGCE around inclusion?
Caroline: I remember it not...there wasn't much.

Kelly: And as well as that I feel the difference and again I think that's down to funding as well er as a TA now urm I've been here 11 years at this present school and I think barr inset days where everybody's having basic training I think I've been out of school twice...On any form...
Researcher: On a course?
Kelly: On any course.
Researcher: And would any of those have been associated with SEND do you think or not?
Kelly: No, well, it was first aid was one of them…And the other one which was the whole school went for that we did er autism at the local special school we went for.

This is aligned with recent research which has demonstrated a lack of emphasis on training teachers to support children with SEN in both Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) frameworks (Mintz et al., 2015).

Perhaps consequently, participants often reported that they felt underprepared to work with children with significant SEND, and that they lacked the necessary knowledge and expertise required to support them. This echoes the findings of previous research in the area which highlights that teachers and teaching assistants often feel that they are inadequately prepared to educate children with SEND (Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001). As noted by Frederickson and Cline (2009), this may be attributed, in part, to the very use of the SEND label, which creates the impression that there exists a distinct group of children whose capabilities and needs are different from the majority and which, in turn, may raise doubts in educators' minds about their own expertise. According to self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985),

competence is one of the three basic psychological needs (alongside autonomy and relatedness) that must be fulfilled in order to achieve intrinsic motivation (that is, an internal, individual motivation that drives us to behave in certain way). The need for competence concerns the need for a level of mastery of performance for a given task or skill, and to perceive our behaviours and interactions as effective. Given that participants reported feeling that they lacked the expertise required to support children with significant SEND, it can be seen that, from a self-determination perspective, their intrinsic motivation to do so could be undermined.

Influence and Agency with Regards to Inclusion

It is also apparent that the high levels of emotional effort and labour experienced by participants when supporting children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting could be linked to the perceived lack of power and influence educators have with regards to inclusion, as noted by some participants in the current study. For Gibbs (2018), educators lack autonomy and agency as practitioners, given that what they do is very much determined by the environments in which they work. In the current study, in addition to discussing the demands of working towards government prescribed targets and a set curriculum within a mainstream setting, some participants also shared their experiences of feeling a lack of power and control with regards to the inclusion of children with significant SEND in school. These participants seemed to indicate the inclusion of these children in school was being 'done to them', rather than perceiving themselves as active participants in the process. Koutsouris, Anglin-Jaffe and Stentiford (2019) highlighted that a top-down approach, influenced by national policy and a rights discourse, might not be sufficient in order to achieve inclusion in education, as inclusion processes also operate at the level of everyday social interaction, where policy has less influence. Moreover, it is clear that if educators feel that they are under coercive pressure to include children with significant SEND, the need for autonomy (that is to say, the need to act through choice, in an manner congruent with one's values and interests), defined by self-determination theory as one of three nutrients that the social environment must provide for intrinsic motivation to take place (Joseph, 2015), is obstructed.

Level of Human Support

Another key contextual influence discussed by participants was the level of human support they perceived to be available at the classroom and school levels. The importance of colleague support was highlighted by all of the participants interviewed, with discussion concentrating on both internal support (for example, support from other teachers and

classroom assistants) and external support (for example, support from educational psychologists and speech and language therapists). Given that existing literature demonstrates that strong and supportive leadership is vital for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Blackmore, 2009; Salisbury 2006), I was interested to find that few participants focused upon school leaders when sharing their experiences of including children with significant SEND. Instead, many participants particularly stressed the value of additional adults in class and benefits this could bring about (for example, alleviating practical demands in the classroom and providing more individualised support to children with significant SEND). This emphasis on human support at the classroom level is consistent with existing research in the field (Rose, 2001).

The majority of the participants involved in the current research stressed that the level of human support available in school (both internal and external) was inadequate. Again, this is echoes the findings of extant research. Indeed, Glazzard (2011) noted that a lack of human resources was identified by his participants as a key barrier to inclusion. The importance of cohesion between teachers and TAs was touched upon in the current findings, and one teacher participant (Jim) emphasised the potential challenges associated with managing support staff in class. This could be linked to the work of Webster et al. (2010), who highlighted that teachers are often underprepared to work with and supervise TAs, and are not provided with adequate time to plan collaboratively with them.

As well as the practical benefits of human support, a number of participants also expressed a sense teamwork and togetherness when discussing working alongside colleagues to support children with significant SEND. Some highlighted the importance of communicating good practice, pooling skills and sharing problems with colleagues, in order to reduce isolation. Others emphasised the value they placed upon feeling contained, listen to, and empathised with, in regards to their experiences of inclusion. Similarly, peer support (both through formal networks and informal dialogue) was highlighted by Boyle et al. (2012) as a valuable component for enabling teachers to feel that they were able to successfully include children with SEND. Again, this finding can be related to Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination, which highlights relatedness (concerning the need to feel accepted, connected to, and cared for by others) as one of the three fundamental psychological needs that are critical for motivation. The theory could perhaps explain why participants place such value upon experiencing a sense of belonging and feeling connected to their colleagues.

Parental Support

Working with parents was also abstracted as a theme in the data. Two studies (Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001) included in my systematic literature review described educator perceptions of parental resistance to inclusion. Both studies highlighted that participants felt parents were concerned about the inclusion of children with SEMH needs in mainstream schools, who may potentially have a detrimental influence upon their own child's education and behaviour. In contrast, participants in the current research tended to discuss their experiences of working with parents of children with SEND (rather than those of non-SEND children in class). Some participants indicated that they had experienced working alongside supportive parents of children with significant SEND, and emphasised partnerships with parents as important for successful inclusive education:

> Julie: Urm [pause] I think if, if the parents are on board, that makes a massive difference if you're working against the parents that's a massive barrier urm…
>
> Researcher: Yeah, is there anything else you want to speak about in terms of support and facilitators?
>
> Donna: Urm other staff. It's got to be a team effort…Parents on board. The parents that want...the parents have got to want their child to improve and that always is the case.

Awareness of the need for mainstream schools to involve and work cooperatively with parents has increased in recent years. A number of studies have highlighted that teacher-parent collaboration is essential for teachers and parents to consult, undertake joint efforts and share information, in order to provide efficient and meaningful education for students with SEND (Adams, Harris and Jones, 2016).

However, other participants in the current research shared more negative experiences of working with parents, who they felt were not supportive of school or did not work co-operatively with them:

> Kelly: So urm I felt even though it was urm I think the biggest barrier that we had when we were doing that was the parents you know…
>
> Caroline: And urm a child...I had to tell a parent that child had had a stage three. And it was out of character. And he, you know, just did not like it. "What did you do? What urm what did you say"...she'd lied, she'd told a lie and it was well, "what did you say to make her lie?" It was all put on me…And then it was, it wasn't very nice...

It is clear that parents and school staff may hold different ideas and beliefs about given children, which can result in disconnected communication and relationships (Adams et al., 2016). This was apparent in the current research as many participants expressed experiencing frustration when parents held a perception that they, as the child's educators, did not agree with. For example, when discussing working with parents to determine appropriate provision placements for children with significant SEND, Donna noted:

> Donna: And it's frustrating. It's good and frustrating all at the same time that parental choice goes a long way. Because you do want the parents to have a voice and you want them to be able to say what they want best for their child but when you get a family who are in denial and think mainstream is the school for their child that's difficult and I've experienced that a couple of times.

As noted by Staples and Diliberto (2010), a child's educational experience can be affected by tensions in the partnerships between key stakeholders in their life. Moreover, it is evident that such tensions are likely to influence participants' perceptions of the inclusion of children with significant SEND. The current research demonstrates the significant challenges teachers and TAs can experience when working with parents they consider to be unsupportive, or those who hold perceptions which conflict with their own views as the child's educators.

Type of SEND

A final key contextual influence which was abstracted from the data was child-related in nature and was associated with the different types of SEND. All of the participants interviewed contributed to the theme 'children with SEND are not a homogenous group'. Many identified some children with significant SEND (namely those participants perceived to have particularly significant needs or social, emotional or behavioural difficulties) as being more difficult to include than others in the mainstream classroom. Indeed, as noted by one participant (Caroline) it seems that *"…behavioural problems with SEN is a completely different sort of branch of the tree…"*. Previous research in this area has indicated that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) were perceived by educators to cause significantly greater concern and stress than pupils with other difficulties (Avramidis et al., 2000), and has shown that teachers are less willing to include pupils with more complex needs, in comparison to those with mild disabilities or physical/sensory impairments (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Indeed, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that teachers held negative attitudes towards the implementation of inclusion when considering children with more severe learning needs and behavioural difficulties. It could be hypothesised that this is a consequence of the fact that these children present the greatest challenge for

educators, and threaten their professional competency and confidence in their skills as practitioners. Indeed, in her paper, Mackenzie (2011) highlighted that many of her (teaching assistant) participants felt that mainstream schools could not cope with children with challenging behaviour and had negative perceptions about teachers' ability to meet the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

7.2.2: Internal Core Values and Beliefs about Inclusion that may Influence Participants' Interpretations of their Experiences of the Inclusion of Children with Significant SEND

In addition to the contextual factors at play, it is apparent that participants' internal core values and beliefs about inclusion will have an influence on how they make sense of their experiences of including children with significant SEND in school. This could account, at least in part, for some of the individual differences between the educators' accounts.

Perceptions of SEND

Half of the participants interviewed discussed the need to be flexible and open to change when working with children with significant SEND, and spoke about adapting practice to meet the needs of the child. For two participants in particular (Lauren and Chloe), this involved a strong commitment to self-growth and personal development. I interpreted there to be a relationship between this perception and more positive attitudes towards inclusion. It could be hypothesised that these participants held views aligned, to a certain extent, with the social model of disability. The social model locates the difficulties encountered by individuals with SEND within the environmental, structural and attitudinal barriers that exist in society, and places the onus society to make changes to meet the needs of the individual (Johnston and Nahmad-Williams, 2009).

Conversely, it must be noted however, that 'a within-child deficit view of children with SEND' was also abstracted as a subordinate theme in the data, with the vast majority of participants (including many of the participants who expressed more positive attitudes towards inclusion) contributing to this theme, and focussing upon what they seemed to perceive as internal deficits when discussing their experiences of including children with significant SEND:

Julie: I suppose when you're working with children, you're kind of always looking at them making progress and that's what a lot of the focus is. Urm but with a child with, with SEND, you know significant SEND is it...are they even going to make any progress?

This thinking can be associated with the medical model of disability, which attributes difficulties encountered by individuals to internal impairments, and implies that it is the responsibility of the individual to fit in with society (Conner, 2016).

As noted by Terzi (2005), considering either the medical or social model of disability on its own is an overly-simplistic viewpoint. Given that both the subordinate themes 'adapting practice and being open to change' and 'a within-child deficit view of children with SEND' were abstracted from the data, it can be seen that, when the data from all participants is examined together, an interactional approach to understanding SEND emerges; that is to say, a synthesis of the medical and social models. The interactional model, advocated in current SEND policy and legislation (DfE and DoH, 2015), acknowledges within-child factors but also recognises that factors within educational settings can reduce or exacerbate problems.

Perceptions of Inclusion

Within the interviews, a number of participants spoke about a need for empathy and understanding when working with children with significant SEND in mainstream settings, and the importance celebrating these children in school and valuing diversity. Chloe, in particular, appeared to relate to children with SEND on a very personal level, sharing with me that she has *"...known what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else."*.

Some participants also spoke about their experiences of the positive aspects of inclusion, noting that inclusion can help children to learn to respect individual differences and also that other children in class can benefit from SEND provision put in place for a particular child. Despite this, it is apparent that the majority of participants interviewed questioned the appropriateness of including *all* children with significant SEND in mainstream provision, with some (Lorna and Jim) specifically stressing that their advocacy of inclusion had certain caveats. This linked with the heterogeneity of children with SEND highlighted by participants, and the fact that some children with significant SEND were identified as being more difficult to include in the mainstream setting. Such findings echo those of Avramidis and Norwich (2002), who found that educators did not advocate a 'total inclusion' approach. Moreover, comparisons can also be drawn with research conducted by Mackenzie (2011) who investigated teaching assistants' experiences of inclusive education and found that their understandings of inclusion were complex and full of tensions.

In the current study, many participants told me that they felt that the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream schools can have a detrimental impact on their non-SEND peers, and the quality of teaching and learning for children with significant SEND was also questioned by some participants. A number of participants interviewed also noted that

inclusion can serve to exclude some children with significant SEND. For example, Kelly spoke about children with SEND being *"…on the outskirts of what is happening in the room…",* whilst Chloe told me "*Um I think children like that are always...it's like they don't fit in anywhere…".* This links to the work of Michailakis and Reich (2009, p.24), who noted that inclusive education for children with SEND in mainstream schools can result in various kinds of "inclusion through selective exclusion".

Perceptions about Appropriate Provision for Children with SEND

Comparisons between mainstream and specialists schools were drawn by a number of participants in the current study, with many highlighting the benefits of specialist settings for some children with SEND:

> Donna: I'm the one to try and help the parent to re-understand that special school is outstandingly brilliant and will do the best things for the child.
>
> Kelly: And then when [pause] er one of my friends works at [name of special school] and I went down and I said 'oh' I said 'let's have a look' and I went in and I think there's something like 8 in the class XXX like 3 staff and the activities were [pause] totally more basic and not as fussy [pause] and I was thinking oh my God I thought how great would this be for him…

I found it interesting that this shared perception emerged as a theme in the data, despite the existence of evidence which counters this assumption. For example, Topping and Maloney (2005, p. 7) noted that "any differences in outcomes for children with special needs between special and mainstream schools are small". Moreover, Ofsted (2010, p. 30) emphasised that "that no one model of educational support- such as special schools, full inclusion in mainstream provision or specialist units co-located with mainstream settings- systematically worked better than any other".

7.2.3: Concluding Comments

This section has examined the findings which relate to my first research question (how do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?) through the lens of social systems theory. I have highlighted that participants' interpretations of their experiences of the inclusion of these children are likely to have been influenced by the bidirectional interaction between their individual, internal values and norms (for example, how participants conceptualise SEND and their perceptions of inclusion) and the contextual factors which surround them (for example, the level of human support they perceive to be available and the training they experience).

Overall, participants held an interactional approach to understanding SEND; whilst many participants did focus upon within-child differences and/or deficits when discussing SEND, there was also an acknowledgement that the educational environment in which the child is situated can serve to reduce or exacerbate difficulties. Participants were supportive of inclusion in principle but their advocacy of inclusion was conditional, and certain children were seen to be more difficult to include in mainstream provision than others. Participants noted that some children with significant SEND may be better suited to specialist settings. Participants shared their experiences of the personal and professional challenges involved in including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting, and the associated stress and emotional labour this can involve. They spoke about the psychological and practical balancing act involved in attempting to meet the individual needs of children with significant SEND, alongside those of other children in class. This was discussed in the context of the mainstream classroom environment, which participants perceived to be structured and inflexible, with its government-prescribed curriculum and set targets. In general, participants felt they lacked the training and expertise required to support these children adequately, and considered human resources and colleague support in school (perceived by participants as vital for successful inclusive practice) to be insufficient. Parents of children with significant SEND were highlighted as an important influence upon the experiences of educators. Participants described the value of engaging parents and shared their frustration when parents held a perception about a child that they, as the child's educators, did not agree with.

7.3: Answering Research Question 2: What facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

My second, supplementary research question focused on participants' experiences of the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND encountered when working within a mainstream setting. Within this section, I draw upon the themes abstracted from the group-level analysis, harnessing the metaphor of force-field analysis (Lewin, 1943), to allow me to visually represent and analyse the driving and restraining forces participants perceive to be at play.

7.3.1: Drawing from Force-field Analysis

Force-field analysis was first developed by Lewin (1943) as a process for diagnosing situations and initiating change within organisations and communities. It provides a

framework for identifying the driving forces (factors that promote change) and restraining forces (factors that hinder change) which need to be considered when moving towards a particular goal (Tomal, Schilling and Trybus, 2013). According to Lewin's theory, a state of equilibrium or organisational status quo is maintained when the two opposing forces are equal; to bring about organisational change, the equilibrium of the opposing force-fields must be upset or disrupted. This involves the restraining forces being weakened, the driving forces strengthened, or a combination of both. At this point, change can occur within an organisation. When conducting a force-field analysis, the first stage is to define the problem or need. This involves describing the current state and the desired future state succinctly. The second stage is to analyse the problem. During this second stage, it is necessary to identify all the opposing forces and to determine which of these forces are most powerful (this can be achieved by ranking the forces according to importance). The final stage involves devising potential actions to reduce restraining forces and strengthen driving forces. The complexity of force-field analysis should not be underplayed and it is important that I acknowledge that, in the current research, I am merely borrowing from the approach, using it as an interpretive framework, to help me to better understand and represent my findings. The driving and restraining forces outlined in Figure 2 have been distilled from the group-level subordinate themes in the data. It was necessary to unpick some of the subordinate themes as they encompassed a number of factors which could be considered driving and restraining forces (for example, the subordinate theme 'colleague support' contained factors I interpreted as both driving forces ['support from colleagues in school', support from external professionals', 'support from school leaders'] and restraining forces ['a lack of additional adults']). The driving and restraining forces, and the group-level subordinate themes in which they were identified within, are presented. Whilst clearly this process involved my own subjective interpretation, to enhance transparency and coherence Appendix 14 provides excerpts from participant interviews, which support each of the driving and restraining forces identified. In Figure 2, the opposing forces I unpicked from the group-level data are ranked in order of the number of participants who acknowledged them within the interviews. Of course, it is evident that this does not provide a good indication of the comparative strength of the different forces and the power these held for participants.

Typically, after completing a force-field analysis, potential actions to reduce restraining forces and strengthen driving forces are presented in a formal action plan, complete with timeframes, budget requirements and allocated responsibilities. In the current paper, however, I use the group-level data, examined through the interpretive lens of force-field

analysis, to inform the recommendations for educational professionals (both working within the research setting, as well as those who are external to it) presented in Section 7.4. As such, I anticipate that my interpretations of the group-level data will stimulate reflection, and contribute to positive systemic change, at a local level within the research setting. Harnessing the metaphor of force-field analysis, Figure 2 presents the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting experienced by participants.

Figure 2: Drawing from Force-field Analysis to Examine the Facilitators and Barriers to Including Children with Significant SEND in a Mainstream Setting Experienced by Participants

Current state: Educators do not always feel they are able to include children with significant SEND within a mainstream setting successfully	
Desired state: Educators feel they are able to include children with significant SEND within a mainstream setting successfully	
<u>Driving forces:</u>	**<u>Restraining forces:</u>**
Colleague support- Support from colleagues in school (8/8) →	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities**- Time restrictions (8/8)
Accepting and championing children with SEND (8/8) →	← **The psychological and emotional impact on self** - The high degree of emotional effort and labour involved (8/8)
The importance of experience (7/8) →	
Building relationships with children with SEND (6/8) →	← **Children with SEND are not a homogenous group** (8/8)
The psychological and emotional →	← **A within-child deficit view of**

impact on self- The personal reward and satisfaction involved (5/8)	**children with SEND** (8/8)
	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities** and **The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting**- The needs of the other children in class (8/8)
Colleague support- Support from external professionals (5/8) →	
Working with parents- Parents as partners (5/8) →	← **Colleague support-** A lack of additional adults (7/8)
Adapting practice and being open to change (4/8) →	← **Doubting expertise-**A lack of training (7/8)
Colleague support- Support from school leaders (3/8) →	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities-** Workload and pressure (7/8)
	← **Doubting expertise-** Perceived lack of knowledge and expertise (6/8)
	← **The psychological and emotional impact on self-** A perceived lack of power and influence upon the inclusion of children with SEND (5/8)
	← **Working with parents**- Parents as barriers (6/8)
	← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** Other priorities in school (5/8)

	← **Attitudes of other staff members** (4/8) ← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** Financial restraints (4/8) ← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** A lack of resources and equipment (4/8) ← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** A prescribed curriculum (3/8)

From examining the data in this way, it is clear that findings of the current research complement and supplement existing literature, in terms of the opposing forces educators perceive to be at play with regards to successful inclusion. In my systematic literature review, the need for additional human support at the classroom and school levels was identified by participants (Monsen et al, 2014; Avramidis et al., 2000; Rose, 2001; Glazzard, 2011), as was the need for further training and additional material support (including resources, teaching materials and restructuring of the school and classroom layout; Avramidis et al., 2000; Glazzard, 2011). A lack of time was identified as an impeding factor to successful inclusion in existing literature (both in terms of participants reporting the need for extra time to plan for children with SEND, and the difficulties associated with providing adequate time to both the children with SEND and the other pupils in class; Avramidis et al., 2000; Rose, 2001) and participants shared concerns about a lack of personal professional experience of working with children with additional needs (Avramidis et al., 2000; Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001). Parental resistance to inclusion was also highlighted as a barrier to inclusive education (Glazzard, 2011; Rose, 2001), and the difficulties associated with the

heterogeneity of children with SEND and wide range of needs present in the mainstream classroom were noted (Horne and Timmons, 2009). These findings were replicated in a number of the environment-related driving forces (for example, 'support from colleagues in school', 'the importance of experience', 'support from external professionals', 'parents as partners', 'support from school leaders') and restraining forces (for example, 'time restrictions', 'the needs of the other children in class', 'a lack of additional adults', 'a lack of training', 'perceived lack of knowledge and expertise', 'parents as barriers', 'a lack of resources and equipment', 'children with SEND are not a homogeneous group') identified by participants for the successful inclusion of children with significant SEND.

One key environment-related restraining factor to the successful inclusion of children with SEND identified by participants in the current study, which did not emerge in the systematic literature review findings, was the attitudes of other staff members in school. A number of the participants interviewed emphasised the importance of the attitudes of other staff members and the influence they felt this had upon their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND in school. Given that Kowalski (2010) highlighted that values, beliefs and norms can be transferred between members of a school system, it is perhaps unsurprising that some participants noted that other staff members' fixed mind-sets and unwillingness to adapt practice was a major barrier to inclusion. Indeed, as noted by Zollers, Ramanathan and Yu (1999), certain underlying characteristics of the school's culture (including shared values, philosophies, beliefs and underlying assumptions held by members of the organisation) can greatly contribute to the success (or, conversely, to the failure) of inclusive education in mainstream provision.

A second restraining factor highlighted by participants in the current study, but which was absent in the findings of the systematic literature review, was a perceive lack of power and control, relating to the inclusion of children with significant SEND in school. A number of the participants involved in the research indicated that they lacked agency with regards to inclusion policy and practice in the setting (but rather, that their experiences were largely determined by the environment in which they worked), which could be seen to have a detrimental influence upon the successful inclusion of children with significant SEND (Koutsouris et al., 2019).

In addition to the contextual, environment-related factors discussed, which participants identified as either facilitating or impeding influences on their successful inclusion of children with significant SEND, internal, educator-related driving and restraining forces were also acknowledged. Although educator-related variables associated with attitudes towards

inclusion were identified in my systematic literature review (including active experience of inclusion, professional development and training, age and gender), the internal, educator-related driving and restraining forces which were abstracted from the data in the current study did not present. Given that many of these opposing forces related to the psychological and emotional impact of inclusion on participants, and to their core values and beliefs about SEND and inclusive education, it is evident that this may be a consequence of the lack of qualitative, idiographic studies included for review. The restraining force of 'the high degree of emotional effort and labour involved' and the driving forces of 'building relationships with children with SEND', 'the personal reward and satisfaction involved', 'accepting and championing children with SEND' and 'adapting practice and being open to change' were highlighted as internal, educator-related factors by participants involved in the current study. It is apparent that these findings supplement existing literature by providing insight into educators' personal values, beliefs and experiences and also highlighting the import participants place upon these internal, educator-related attributes as driving or restraining forces in the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings.

7.3.2: Concluding Comments

This section has examined the findings which relate to my second research question (what facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?). The metaphor of force-field analysis was harnessed to visually present and unpick the driving and restraining forces participants perceived to facilitate or impede their inclusion of children with significant SEND. The findings of this analysis complement and supplement existing literature, in terms of the opposing forces educators perceive to be at play. These factors were environment-related and educator-related in nature. In addition to describing the current situation, this analysis informs my recommendations for educational professionals working within the research setting, as well as those who are external to it (see Section 7.4).

7.4: Implications and Recommendations for Educational Professionals

In the current study, each of the eight participants interviewed brought a complex and unique set of experiences, beliefs and values which fundamentally shaped their interpretations and perceptions of inclusive education and children with significant SEND. As such, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the wider population. However, given that the current

research supports and builds upon existing literature, it is evident that tentative recommendations for future practice can be identified.

A fundamental recommendation which can be drawn from the current study is that educational professionals should ensure that they consider the wider school ecology and how this can serve to shape teacher and teaching assistant experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND. Whilst participants did discuss within-child factors and individual differences in children with significant SEND at a biological, cognitive and behavioural level within their interviews, it is evident that situational factors (such as the school environment and cultural or socio-political context) were also acknowledged to influence participants' experiences. As such, the current research should help educators to reframe within-child conceptualisations and consider adopting a systemic approach or lens to viewing experiences of inclusion.

A further, related consideration that the current research drew attention to was that our own preconceptions may not necessarily reflect the perspectives of those working closely with children with significant SEND. The study emphasised the uniqueness of each participant's individual lived experiences and highlighted that it is not possible to separate one's subjective interpretations and sense-making from one's accounts of these experiences. As such, the research has demonstrated the importance of actively seeking out, and listening to, the views of those who work directly with children with significant SEND; as noted by Kelly (1955) cited in Reid (2006, p. 41), "if you want to know what is going on, it is always sensible to ask the people who are doing the work themselves". Moreover, it is clearly important to avoid making assumptions based on our own values, experiences and preconceptions if we wish to develop a sound understanding of the current situation and offer appropriate support.

Another underlying and core recommendation which can be made in light of the current research is that educators working closely with children with significant SEND should be provided with opportunities to share their experiences and have their voices heard. The idiographic nature of IPA is one of its strengths (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005), and the application of this methodological approach facilitated in-depth exploration of participant accounts. Participants were very open and honest in their discussions and appeared to welcome the chance to explore their thoughts, experiences and perceptions and how these may serve to influence their practice. Moreover, within the interviews, participants emphasised the value they placed upon having understanding and empathetic relationships with colleagues, and expressed a need for the time and space to talk to others who could appreciate and identify with their experiences. Given that the current research highlighted

that many participants associate the inclusion of children with significant SEND with personal and professional challenge and high levels of emotional effort and labour, it is reasonable to assume that educators need to work through their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Safe, containing spaces where educators could share and reflect upon their experiences with empathetic colleagues would support them through their journey of including children with significant SEND in mainstream settings. Of course, this would need to be skilfully managed, within the context of high-quality professional supervision, to prevent stagnation and instead provide validation, alongside restorative discussion and opportunities for exchange-based learning.

The current research highlights the practical challenges educators face in relation to the inclusion of children with SEND. School leaders within the research setting (as well as those who are external to it) could use the findings to facilitate the development of practical interventions to support teachers and teaching assistants in areas which they themselves have identified as problematic. This would include consideration of factors such as the provision of adequate human support and SEND resources in class, and additional time allocation for members of staff supporting children with significant SEND. Moreover, whole-school SEND training should be implemented to address the perceived lack of personal SEND knowledge and expertise highlighted by the majority of participants. Training could also support the development of a shared understanding of SEND and inclusion within the staff team and promote acceptance of, and respect for, diversity and difference.

Finally, the current findings reinforce the importance of educational settings supporting collaborative working between educators and the parents and families of children with significant SEND. The study demonstrates the difficulties educators associate with working with unsupportive parents, and highlights the importance they place upon developing successful home-school partnerships. As part of a whole-school approach to inclusion, educational settings should develop and implement robust systems which support home-school collaboration.

7.5: Strengths and Limitations of the Current Research

It is important to recognise the strengths and limitations of the current research and to consider these when interpreting the findings. This section evaluates my methodological choices and execution, with particular focus upon sampling issues, data collection, and my role as researcher.

7.5.1: Methodological Approach

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed to gain an in-depth, qualitative account of teachers' and teaching assistants' lived experiences of including children with significant SEND within one mainstream primary school. IPA allowed me to address my research questions and explore individual accounts in detail before examining patterns of convergences and divergences across cases. However, given that this methodological approach focuses on the idiographic rather than the nomothetic, the findings of the study may not be considered generalisable to the wider population. Generalisability is an assertion of positivism; IPA does not seek to discover universal truths but rather, aims to provide an account that attends to the words and experiences of participants (Pringle et al, 2011).

7.5.2: Research Sample

The findings of this study are based on a small sample of four teachers and four teaching assistants, recruited from a single mainstream primary school in North-West England. The small sample size allowed all participants to have a voice and presence in the findings, and facilitated sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case. A purposive sampling approach was adopted and participants volunteered to take part in the research. It is clear that this could bias the findings; it may be that certain individuals were drawn to taking part in this particular study because of self-selecting characteristics. Moreover, many of the participants who came forward to take part in the research were individuals I worked particularly closely with in my role as a Reception class teacher in school. I reflected that these participants may have volunteered out of a sense of duty or because of our existing relationship and rapport. Perhaps consequently, all but two of my participants worked in Early Year or Key Stage 1. It is important to take this into account when interpreting the research findings.

I aimed to obtain a relatively homogeneous sample (Smith et al., 2009), not in terms of sample characteristics, but rather in terms of participants' shared experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, the current study does not seek to generalise to all educators; the finding are firmly seated in the context of the individuals involved and the school (and Local Authority) where the research took place. As noted by Yardley (2000, p. 220) researchers must recognise the socio-cultural context in which the research has occurred, including "normative, ideological, historical, linguistic and socioeconomic

influences on the beliefs, objectives, expectations and talk of all participants (including those of the investigator)". Given that all participants were employed in one mainstream primary school in the North-West of England, the experiences of these teachers and teaching assistants may not be representative of the experiences of other educators in other settings. It is clear however, that findings may still inform, and interest, the wider teaching community. Whilst immediate claims of the research are bounded by the group studied, "an extension can be considered through theoretical generalisability, where the reader of the report is able to assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge" (Smith et al., 2009, p.4). To facilitate this, pen-portraits of participants, and a description of the school and Local Authority in which the research took place, were provided, to allow the reader to develop a more detailed and contextualised understanding of each individual participant's account of their experience, and to evaluate whether the findings of the study are transferable to other settings.

7.5.3: Data Collection

A single interview was conducted with each of the participants involved in the research, providing a 'snapshot' of their thoughts, feelings and reflections, within a certain context at a specific time. Whilst participants were encouraged to reflect upon experiences throughout their careers, the data collected illustrates their perceptions of these experiences on one particular day. Participants were interviewed towards the end of the academic year and, as such, it is not possible to ascertain how participants' accounts may have differed if interviews were conducted at a different point of time. A research design which explored participants' perceptions of their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND at different time points may have provided useful insight into potential variance in educators' perceptions over a period of time (for example, over the course of an academic year). It is also evident that the data gathered in the current research was obtained from a single method of data collection (semi-structured interviews) which could be considered a limitation of the study. Employing a multi-method approach and triangulating the data obtained may have strengthened the findings, and provided a deeper insight into participants' perspectives. For example, asking participants to record entries about their experiences in a diary as a data collection strategy could have complemented the interview data, and enhanced participant reflectivity. Although this was considered when initially contemplating my research design, I concluded that this method of data collection would serve to add to the workload of the educators participating in my study. Instead, I decided to attempt to enhance participant

reflectivity by ensuring that they had access to the interview schedule prior to the interview taking place. Whilst I was concerned that this may result in more 'scripted' and less authentic responses, I anticipated that this would provoke more considered responses.
A strength of this research study was the extensive piloting of the interview schedule which took place before main data collection. The self-pilot allowed me to develop my reflexivity as a researcher, and address the potential power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, whilst the two participant pilots enabled the refinement of questions, prompts and probes used within the interview schedule. One of the key considerations, after completing the participant pilots, was my use of certain terminology and jargon in my questions. In the pilot interview schedule, questions centred upon participants' experiences of children with EHCPs and I found that the use of this terminology was limiting and potentially confusing. Consequently, I decided to rephrase the questions so that they focused upon participants' experiences of children with significant SEND. Whilst this enhanced the accessibility for participants, it is evident that this phrasing is more ambiguous and subjective. In initial recruitment, my inclusion criteria ensured that all participants had previously supported, or were currently supporting, a child with an EHCP (used as an indication that the participant had experience of supporting a child I would consider to have significant SEND) and I was consciously attempted to focus interviewees' attention towards children with significant SEND within the interviews. However, I cannot be certain that the participants were referring to children I would consider to have significant SEND at all times in the interview.

7.5.4: My Role as Researcher

It is important to acknowledge my role as researcher and the subsequent influence of my position on the research findings. Throughout this work I have highlighted that, as a researcher, my own subjective interpretations and sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts. For example, it could certainly be argued that the two years I spent studying on the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate programme at The University of Birmingham contributed to my choice to draw from systems frameworks to shape my understanding of participants' accounts. Given my methodological approach, I do not consider this to be a limitation of the research; however, I have endeavoured to enhance my reflexivity and actively explore and expose my own consciousness to ensure that I have an understanding of my own assumptions. I have provided a transparent description of my systematic research process and an auditable record of my decisions, thoughts and reflections

in my research diary (see Appendix 6 for extracts from my research diary). Excerpts demonstrating the analysis process are presented in Appendices 10, 11 and 12 so that the reader can examine how data were analysed using IPA, and in Chapters Five and Six, the themes identified through IPA are presented with supporting quotes from the interview transcripts to provide evidence that analysis remained faithful to the data.

Another factor to consider here is my dual position as both a researcher and a teacher, working within the institution in which the research took place. Whilst there are numerous benefits of 'insider' research (Floyd and Linet, 2010), it seems that my dual role may also have less positive implications. For example, there is clearly a lack of detachment from my field of study, and an increased risk of making assumptions based upon my own values, experiences and preconceptions. Also, participants' accounts may have been influenced by my position; some participants may have been reluctant to share information within our interview given that I am someone that they interact with professionally on a daily basis. Although a number of steps were taken to attempt to address the potential of a power imbalance (which is often evident between interviewer and interviewee [Cocks, 2006]), it is apparent that this must be considered when interpreting the findings of the current study. Furthermore, it is apparent that my 'insider' status has posed some significant ethical challenges associated with confidentiality, which have had serious implications for knowledge transfer and the dissemination of my research findings. In addition to requesting to restrict public access to my thesis until January 2026, I also had to very carefully consider the information I included in the research summary report shared with my school's senior leaders and wider staff team after data analysis (see Appendix 5), to ensure I offered a rich account of the research conducted whilst maintaining my commitment to confidentiality (see Section 4.6).

7.6: Areas for Future Research

Given the findings and limitations of the current research, it is possible to identify several directions for future research. The current study demonstrates the successful use of IPA to explore educators' conceptualisation and experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND, contributing to the dearth of existing literature concerned with the perspectives of both teachers and teaching assistants in this area. The application of IPA as a research tool within education research is still in its infancy (Oxley, 2016) and further IPA studies within this area could be conducted to enhance the current evident base. The current

study findings are based upon a self-selecting sample of four teachers and four teaching assistant, recruited from a single mainstream primary school within one Local Authority. It would be interesting to conduct similar research in other schools with distinct SEND populations, to explore how this influences educator experiences. Moreover, it is evident that school culture is likely to play some part in creating a certain degree of homogeneity of perspectives and attitudes amongst participants, and so it would be necessary to conduct research across other institutions to further substantiate the findings of the current investigation.

The vast majority of the participants who took part in the current study were female, and most were currently working with younger children, in Early Years Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 classrooms. Whilst the findings of previous research regarding the influence of gender on educator attitudes towards inclusion is inconsistent, some studies have indicated a significant gender difference (with female teachers being more inclusive than their male colleagues; Boyle et al. [2013]). As such, future research may seek to explore the way in which male teachers and teaching assistants conceptualise and experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings. Moreover, given that all but two of the participants involved in the current study worked with children under the age of seven, it is likely that conducting a similar study involving a greater number of Key Stage 2 teachers and teaching assistants, or indeed secondary school educators, would likely offer a different perspective. For example, one direction for future investigation would be to examine whether secondary school educators discuss the same emotional responses given that pupil-educator encounters are typically more dispersed than in primary schools. Also, it would be interesting to explore the hypothesis of one of the participants involved in the current study (Jim), who ventured that the inclusion of children with significant SEND becomes more difficult for educators as pupils move into higher year groups.

Another interesting area for further research would be to examine how the nature of children's SEND influences educator conceptualisations and perceptions of inclusion. The literature review undertaken as part of the current study highlighted that pupils' type of SEND had a significant influence upon educator attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis et al, 2000; Mackenzie, 2011; Monsen et al., 2014). Moreover, many of the participants involved in the current research emphasised the heterogeneity of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings, which may have influenced the findings of the investigation; given that the term 'significant SEND' is very broad and also somewhat subjective, different participants in a population are likely to have multiple interpretations for the same label.

Future studies may wish to address this by focusing in upon educator's lived experiences of including children with specific types of SEND (for example, children with social, emotional and mental health needs, children with sensory or physical needs etc.) or specific conditions, syndromes or disabilities (for example, children with Down's syndrome, children with Autistic Spectrum Condition [ASC] etc.). Furthermore, given that so many participants highlighted difficulties associated with balancing the needs of children with SEND alongside those of their non-SEND peers, it may be interesting to consider more specifically how educators' experiences of the inclusion of children with SEND are influenced by the parallel and potentially competing demands of the other pupils in their classrooms.

A final direction for future research would be to undertake school-based action research in the area, combining theory and practice to promote problem diagnosis, intervention, and reflective learning. Whilst the core purpose of the current study has been to provide detailed exploration of the lived experience of educators, it is apparent that tentative recommendations have been made on the basis of the research findings, and that the study has provided initial steps to support the development of educational practice. Future studies may wish to make planning, implementing, and evaluating changes in practice the central focus of the research, based upon the existing research base which has been supplemented by the current investigation.

7.7: Reflecting on the Research Process

Undertaking this study has afforded me the opportunity to listen to the voices of those working on the 'front line' with children with significant SEND in mainstreams settings. As a teacher employed in a mainstream primary school, the topic of the current research is of personal interest and importance to me. Understandably then, the research process has impressed upon me, both personally and professionally.

Inevitably my reading of the literature and engagement with participants has enhanced my own knowledge and understanding about debates around the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools. I have experienced a sense of gratification in being able to share my research findings with members of the senior leadership team (in addition to the wider school staff team) in my school, and offer recommendations on the basis of my data analysis which might serve to bring about local systemic change (see Appendix 5). Moreover, I have noticed changes in my own professional practice that have come about as a direct consequence of the current study. Since starting the research, I have taken on a leadership role in school which

involves supporting educators in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to meet the needs of children with SEND effectively. My approach to this role has been informed by my research findings. For example, I have developed training packages designed to support my colleagues to enhance their knowledge and expertise about inclusion and SEND, and I have protected time to offer emotionally containing supervision sessions for both teachers and TAs to discuss issues relating to their inclusion of children with significant SEND.

On a personal level, in conducting this study, I have refined my skills as a reflective and reflexive researcher. A record of my decisions and considerations throughout the research process were documented in my research diary. In reviewing my research diary, I can recognise the feelings of anxiety and doubt I experienced in the early stages of my research and notice that gradually I began to trust in my decision-making skills, and become less cautious in my interpretations of participant accounts. Whilst at the start of my research journey, I was very anxious to conduct the study in the 'correct' manner, I have come to value my own subjective interpretations, and to appreciate that another researcher would have undoubtedly approached the investigation in a different way. Supervision has provided me with crucial opportunities to build my confidence as a researcher, and has reassured me that my work is a valuable piece of research and an important contribution to the wider research community. Given my dual role as both teacher and researcher, and also my prior relationships with participants involved in my study, I have found it challenging at times to attempt to bracket my assumptions and preconceptions. Throughout the research process, I have endeavoured to avoid assuming to know what it was like to be the participant and have taken multiple steps to enhance my reflexivity. The experience of conducting this research has enhanced my empathy and awareness of the lived experiences of my peers and colleagues in school, and has given me insight into the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with significant SEND experienced by these individuals.

7.8: Concluding Comments

The findings of the current study are broadly in line with the extant literature in the field to date, and serve to add depth to existing research findings. The investigation has demonstrated that participants' interpretations of their experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting are likely to be influenced by the interaction between multiple, interrelated systems which surround them, which can be considered educator-related and environment-related in nature. Overall, participants were

supportive of inclusion in principle, but their backing had certain caveats, and they did not advocate a 'total inclusion' approach to special educational provision. They shared the personal and professional challenges involved in including children with significant SEND in the context of the mainstream school environment. Participants discussed factors which they perceived to facilitate or impede their inclusion of children with significant SEND. Many of the contextual, environment-related opposing forces identified by participants were consistent with those described in existing literature. Perhaps as a consequence of the qualitative, idiographic nature of the current study, internal, educator-related driving and restraining forces which did not present in previous literature (such as those relating to the psychological and emotional impact of inclusion on participants, or their core values and beliefs about SEND and inclusive education) also emerged.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Application for Ethical Review

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

1. The project is to be conducted by:
    - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
    - postgraduate research (PGR) students enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the Research Ethics Team.

☒ **Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:**

- **The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx)**

- **The University's Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)**

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW	*OFFICE USE ONLY:* Application No: Date Received:

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of teaching children with Education, Health and Care Plans within a mainstream setting.

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other ☐ (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	Nick Bozic
Highest qualification & position held:	MEd (Ed Psych)/ Academic and Professional Tutor
School/Department	School of Education
Telephone:	
Email address:	

Name: Title / first name / family name	Sue Morris
Highest qualification & position held:	MEd (Ed Psych): Educational Psychology Programme Director
School/Department	School of Education
Telephone:	
Email address:	

b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of	Helen Riley	Student No:	
Course of study:	EdD Education	Email address:	
Principal	Sue Morris		

Name of		Student No:	
Course of		Email	
Principal			

4. ESTIMATED START OF PROJECT Date: March 2019

ESTIMATED END OF PROJECT Date: July 2020

5. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

Funding Body	*Approved/Pending /To be submitted*
N/A	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

Data collection is restricted to school term times. Data collection must begin in the Spring 2019 term.

6. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

Whilst historically children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have been segregated into specialist settings, in recent decades there has been a shift towards inclusion within education legislation which has emphasised the rights of pupils with SEND to be provided for within the mainstream system (Varcoe and Boyle, 2014). On the assumption that the successful implementation of inclusive legislation is largely dependent on educational professionals working on the 'front line' being positive about it, there is a wealth of research which has sought to explore and examine educators' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). However, it is evident that the findings of this existing research have been contradictory and inconclusive (Cassady, 2011). Practitioners have reported both positive views about inclusive policy and practices as well as negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEND, attributed to various barriers (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Cassady, 2011; De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011).

Given the complexities involved in understanding educators' attitudes towards inclusion, it is somewhat surprising that there is, at present, limited qualitative literature which provides an in-depth account of the lived experiences of supporting children with SEND in the mainstream classroom. Moreover, existing research has primarily focused on educators' perspectives of the general idea of inclusion (Cassady, 2011), with fewer studies focusing specifically upon practitioners' experiences and perceptions of including pupils with the most significant SEND (i.e. those who have met the criteria for an Education, Health and Care plan) in their mainstream classes. When reviewing the literature it also very quickly become apparent that many studies which focus on educator attitudes towards inclusion fail to capture the views and perceptions of those who tend to work most directly with children with significant SEND (Webster et al 2011); whilst there is a relatively large body of literature which focuses on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, an overwhelming minority of studies represent the views of teaching assistants (TAs; see for example Glazzard, 2011; Mackenzie, 2011; Sikes, Lawson and Parker, 2007). O'Brien and Garner (2001) highlight that teaching assistants are frequently marginalised in published literature and treated as passive subjects rather than active participants. Researchers talk of a 'voice vacuum' for TAs and a need for conversations with them rather than about them.

The current study aims to address these gaps in the existing research by offering a detailed exploration of the lived experience of educators supporting children with EHCPs within a mainstream primary school, thus offering new insight into this broad area of study. By involving both teachers and teaching assistants as participants in the research, the study will serve to bring the relatively unacknowledged 'voices' of TAs into the debate. The intention of the study is to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants perceive and conceptualize the presence of children with EHCPs in their classrooms, and their own capacity to meet these children's needs, alongside those of other pupils within their mainstream primary school classrooms. Moreover the study aims to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to supporting children with EHCPs in a mainstream setting.
My two research questions are as follows:

- How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream school perceive and conceptualize the presence of children with EHCPs in their classroom?
- What facilitators and barriers to supporting children with EHCPs are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

7. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

The research questions do not lend themselves to a deductive, hypothesis-driven methodology committed to generalisation and the identification of universal truths. Instead, I intend to employ Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as my methodological approach. IPA is founded upon the philosophical and theoretical traditions of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009) and is underpinned by an interpretive epistemology. IPA will provide the opportunity to analyse a small number of cases in-depth, to understand the unique experiences and perceptions of each participant in detail, whilst also allowing for data to be scrutinised for wider interpretive meaning (Smith et al., 2009). IPA acknowledges that, as a researcher, my own subjective interpretations and sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen over other approaches such as Grounded Theory because IPA is specifically "designed to gain insight into individual participants' psychological worlds" (Willig, 2013, p.99).

The project will employ face-to-face semi-structured interviews with individual participants (see Sections 9 and 10 for sampling and recruitment information). Other research methods such as questionnaires and focus groups were not considered appropriate as they are less well-placed to obtain the in-depth, individual voice of each participant. A draft interview schedule has been developed according to guidance provided by Smith et al. (2009) and in light of previous literature and my research aims and questions. Topics and associated interview questions, potential follow-up questions (prompts) and potential probes have been generated (Thomas, 2009). The interview schedule will provide a framework to guide the interview, whilst allowing me the freedom to "explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate the particular subject being explored" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Each interview is expected to last approximately one hour and will be conducted in the participants' school setting. Interviews will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed using the six main stages of IPA (reading and re-reading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes [master themes], moving to the next case, looking for patterns across the cases) suggested by Smith et al. (2009) to identify superordinate and subordinate themes. Two pilot interviews (see Section 9 for more details) will be conducted prior to the main data collection, providing the opportunity to trial the draft interview schedule and make any necessary adjustments, and to use IPA on extracts from the interview transcripts.

8. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

9. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

This qualitative research seeks to gain an insight into personal, lived experiences of approximately six-eight participants. Whilst this is a relatively large sample for an IPA study (Smith et al., 2009), it is evident that "the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 40). Having such a sample will allow for a wide range of perspectives to be drawn and will provide a sound opportunity for analytical comparisons to be made. At the same time, the amount of qualitative data gathered will not be overwhelming. Prior to the main study I intend to pilot the interview schedule (see Appendix 1). I will complete two pilot interviews, the first of these comprising a self-pilot, and the second with a volunteer teacher colleague or fellow research student who is not employed within the research schools. By self-piloting my interview schedule I hope to enhance my reflexivity as a researcher and also address power within the research process by developing my understanding of the interview process from a participant perspective, prior to interviewing a volunteer colleague/fellow student, to elicit her/his formative feedback on the interview content and process.

The study will adopt a purposive sampling approach to obtain a relatively homogeneous sample (Smith et al., 2009). All participants will be teachers or teaching assistants recruited from a single mainstream setting in the North West of England, in which I am currently employed as a full-time teacher. I intend to recruit three-four teachers and three-four teaching assistants. This should allow for two homogeneous-by-role sub-samples, so allowing for within- and between-group comparisons to be drawn.

It is evident that undertaking 'insider' research within my own institution will have certain ethical implications which are addressed in Section 19 of this document. In terms of inclusion criteria, all participants must have had direct experience of teaching a child with an EHCP in the last two years; teachers must have had a child with an EHCP in their class within the last two years whilst teaching assistants must have supported a particular pupil with an EHCP within the last two years. All participants will have a minimum of two years' teaching experience/experience as a TA.

10. RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

Given my existing working relationship with the head teacher of the school in which I plan to conduct my research, I have already had initial discussions regarding the nature of the proposed project, which has been agreed in principle I expect to receive the head teacher's permission to proceed with the study. After obtaining ethical approval for the research, I intend to request a meeting with the head teacher to further explain the project and formally invite her own and other staff members' participation. Staff will be provided with a research information sheet (see Appendix 2) during this meeting to support my explanation of the study. The information sheet contains details about the project and outlines what will be expected of participants should they agree to take part in the research.

Assuming that the head teacher confirms the school can be involved in the study, the staff team will then be informed about the nature of the project during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets (see Appendix 3) will be provided. I will invite members of staff to contact me to express their interest in participating in the project, providing that they meet the study's participant inclusion criteria.

11. CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why**.** If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any

permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

Freely-given, informed consent will be sought from prospective participants. After initial discussions with the head teacher of the school regarding the implications of the study, the staff team will be informed about the nature of the research during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets will be provided. The participant information sheet will contain details about the project and what will be expected of participants should they agree to take part in the research. Directly prior to each research interview, the aims of the research and implications for participants will be reiterated and there will be an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Consent forms (see Appendix 4) will be signed by the participants on the day of the interview.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

N/A

12. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

After completing the interviews, participants will be debriefed. During the debrief, the purpose of the interview session and how the data will be stored, analysed, stored, reported and used, will be reiterated. It will be explained to participants that the research will form the basis of my thesis (which will be available online) and could potentially be published in an academic journal. I will inform participants that the research findings will be shared with the wider school team in a summary report, but that participants' interview responses will be presented collectively, so that it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to any individual participant. Direct quotes from participants will not be included, nor will any other information that could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them. Following data analysis, a feedback report will be sent to all participants, outlining the main findings of the research. Participants will be offered the opportunity to meet with me individually, to discuss the research findings, should any so wish.

13. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

Participants' right to withdrawn from both pilot interview and the full project is stated explicitly in the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendices 3 and 4). In addition, I will orally reiterate participants' right to withdraw prior to the interviews commencing. Participants will be free to withdraw from the project before, during or (up to four weeks) after their interview takes place. Participants will be provided with a date by which to contact me if they wish to withdraw the data they provide. Withdrawal time will be limited to a maximum of four weeks from data collection (as after this time data analysis will be in progress).

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

There will be no consequence for participants (in either the pilot or the full project) if they choose to withdraw from the study. If a participant requests to withdraw from the project after the participant interview has taken place, (but within the four-week 'window' summarised above, audio recordings and any written transcripts or notes will be deleted and the data removed from any analysis.

14. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

ii) Non-financial **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

N/A

If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

b) Will all data be treated as confidential? **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

The audio-recorded data and written transcripts will be labelled with a code (pseudonym) that only the researcher will know. A record of which code applies to which participant will be stored separately to the data in a password-protected file on BEAR DataShare to ensure that data are stored securely and can be withdrawn on request. As such, the data are confidential but not anonymous. Confidentiality may need to be breeched if a disclosure were made which suggests that the participant or others are in danger of harm or which indicates illegal activity. In the event of issues around safeguarding or child protection arising from an interview, local authority and school safeguarding/whistleblowing procedures would be followed. (Note: as employees of the school, all staff will have undertaken accredited safeguarding training within the last two years, and can be expected to be fully aware of the steps that should be followed when a disclosure is made, and would have access to relevant sections of local authority and school web-sites). In the written presentation of findings the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations will not be presented (e.g. names of participants, Local Authorities, schools, staff, pupils etc.). When identifying information (e.g. the name of an individual, organisation or geographical location) is discussed by a participant in an interview it will not be included in the written transcript. Some information about the participants (e.g. gender, role, teaching experience) and their school (e.g. size, OFSTED rating, inclusion policies) will be gathered and included in the write-up to provide necessary contextual information and to allow readers to inspect the homogeneity of participants. This information will not be reported against individual participants, since doing so may serve to identify them.

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

Anonymity cannot be offered as the study involves face-to-face interviews. In the participant information sheet participants will be made aware that the research will involve this method of data collection. I will inform participants that the research findings will be shared with the wider school team in a summary report but that participants' interview responses will be presented collectively and that it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. Direct quotes from participants will not be included in this summary report, nor will any other information that could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them. Participants will also be informed that the final write-up of the research project will form the basis of my thesis for a Doctorate in Education which will be available online (I will also share that the research may be published at a later date). Participants will be made aware that their real names will not appear in the final report, nor will any other identifying information. Participants will be told that excerpts from interview transcripts will be included in the final write-up of the research project. The limits to confidentiality (see Section 15a) will be shared with participants orally and in writing (See Appendices 3 and 4).

16. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

Immediately after each participant interview, the electronically audio-recorded data will be transferred from the audio-recording device to a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare. The audio files will then be erased from the audio-recorder. Electronic transcripts and notes will also be held in a password-protected folder on BEAR DataShare. Printed transcripts, written notes and consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. In accordance with university research policy, data will be stored on BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10 year expiry date will be set for the electronic data stored on BEAR DataShare. Any paper records will also be destroyed after 10 years.

17. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

As a practising teacher, I already hold enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.

18. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

Given that teachers are often regarded as key persons in the development and implementation of inclusive education (De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011), there exists a large body of literature which focuses on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. It is evident however, that the majority of these studies and reviews have relied upon international research which, given the disparity in educational systems and policies, may limit the applicability of the findings to UK settings. As only a limited number of recent studies have been undertaken from a British perspective, it is expected that the current study will make a useful addition to the debate on inclusion and specifically to teaching professionals' attitudes to inclusion. Unlike previous studies, which have tended to reduce individuals' experiences through quantitative methods, the current study will employ IPA to elucidate the unique experiences of participants. As noted by Smith et al. (2009, p. 16) "IPA has the …. modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people". The emphasis will be on providing a rich or 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of each participant's experiences and the sense they make of these experiences. To my knowledge, this is the first study in the UK to use IPA to explore mainstream educators' experiences of teaching children with EHCPs. Moreover, by involving both teachers and teaching assistants as participants in the research, the study will serve to bring the relatively unacknowledged 'voices' of TAs into the debate.

At a more local level, it is expected that this study will have school-wide benefits by raising professional awareness of the lived experiences of teaching professionals within the setting, in relation to teaching children with EHCPs and the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of these children that are encountered. It is anticipated that in stimulating discussion and encouraging reflection upon current practice, the findings of the current research could potentially effect some positive systemic change within the setting.

19. RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

Potential risks to the researcher, research participants and other individuals not involved in the research are outlined below. Both the British Psychological Society (2018) and British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidelines were consulted when considering potential risks associated with this project. Potential risks and the measures that will be taken to minimise these risks are detailed below, with explicit reference to the ethical responsibilities outlined in the British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidelines.

Consent and Right to Withdraw

It is evident that undertaking 'insider' research within my own institution raises particular ethical challenges. For Greene (2014) insider research, with its roots in ethnographic field research, is that which is conducted within a social group, organisation or culture of which the researcher is also a member.

As Floyd and Linet (2010, p. 5) note, "although a potential minefield, insider research can also be a rich pasture, from which important data can be harvested, with appropriate boundaries to satisfy ethical concerns". There are certainly a number of benefits of insider research in terms of access, rapport and shared frames of reference with participants, and an in-depth understanding of the organisation (Floyd and Linet, 2010). Clearly however, there are challenges associated with insider research and it is important to put strategies in place to mitigate potential ethical or methodological ambiguity. Participants may potentially feel coerced into participation through social pressure (Johnson & Clarke, 2003), or over-disclosing what they would otherwise keep hidden from outsiders (McConnell-Henry et al., 2010). To address this, I will emphasise that participation is entirely voluntary, will ensure that participants are aware of, and empowered to take up their ongoing right to withdraw from the project, and will be assiduous in safeguarding confidentiality, differentiating clearly between my identities as researcher and teaching colleague.

Transparency

There is a risk of a potential power imbalance between me and the research participants which may lead to participants feeling pressured to take part in the project or feeling unable to express their true perspectives. Steps to minimize the coercive and / or distorting potential of a power imbalance will include ensuring that participants are in a position to provide (and / or decline) their fully informed consent and are aware that data will remain confidential and that they have the right to withdraw their data. Moreover, efforts will be made to establish rapport with the participants at the beginning of the interviews, and participants will be questioned in a friendly and informal manner. It is anticipated that my prior professional relationships with the research participants will promote a sense of trust and minimize the potential of the power imbalance which is often evident between interviewer and interviewee (Cocks, 2006).

There is also a danger of distortion linked to insider research, caused by the need to continue professional relationships after the project is completed. In other words, for participants "pragmatism may outweigh candour" (Mercer, 2007, p. 8) when they are responding to interview questions. It is evident that, in all research which employs interview methods, participants may attempt to please the researcher by communicating the 'desired' answer rather than relaying true beliefs. It seems that this bias may be exacerbated given that my professional relationship with participants extends well beyond the research timetable. To mitigate this I will reiterate my commitment to the confidentiality of the data provided by participants and will take a number of steps to minimise the potential power imbalance between myself and my research participants (see above and Section 9 for more details). I will also be cautious to avoid using undesirable techniques (for example suggestive questioning or the use of positive or negative reinforcement) which could increase the probability of this phenomenon occurring, and will consciously develop an ethos of respect in which all perspectives are equally appreciated and valued. As an insider researcher there is clearly a lack of detachment from my field of study. As noted by Chavez (2008), the insider researcher must face the task of managing the influence of being both the researcher and the researched. Greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity and an increased risk of making assumptions based on prior knowledge of participants or my own personal values, experiences and preconceptions. IPA tends to reject any assumption that the researcher is able to set aside prior expectations and assumptions (Barker et al., 2002) and instead places emphasis on harnessing critical self-awareness and reflexivity to identify and "bracket" any such preconceptions, requiring the researcher actively to explore and expose their own consciousness. To enhance reflexivity Van Heugten (2004) recommends that researchers engage in 'stream of consciousness' writing, interviewing oneself and talking with others about their experiences. As such, I intend to keep field notes and a personal reflections log and participate in regular supervision sessions with my research supervisor. I will also self-pilot my interview schedule.

Incentives

No incentives (e.g. payment) will be used to encourage participation in this project.

Harm arising from participation in research

Physical risk of harm to me as the researcher is minimal as the interviews will be conducted in the school setting in which I am currently employed during the school day, with other professionals in the vicinity. The potential risks to me as the researcher transcend physical risk; however, and it is evident that there are emotional/psychological risks associated with my adopting a role that is 'different' and may potentially affect power dynamics between me and my professional colleagues. In addition to taking steps to address the potential power imbalance (see above and Section 9), I am aware of the importance of support networks and reflexivity as a means of self-protection (Johnson and Macleod Clarke, 2003). I intend to consider my own position within the research process, and develop a deeper understanding of what has happened and its emotional impact on me, through regular supervision and through maintaining my personal reflective log.

A potential risk in conducting this study is that participants may find the research process stressful or upsetting (in that participants could identify or realise personal concerns regarding their teaching practice that may cause them to become upset). I intend to take steps to prevent evoking distress and will operate within an ethic of respect for all those involved throughout the course of the project. Participants will be debriefed after interviews in order to afford them the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research and to help identify any concerns. If I sense that a participant is becoming distressed, the interview will be adjourned sensitively. If the participant wished to access further support, I would signpost the participant to professional support from a colleague or senior member of staff in school, or to relevant external services and agencies. All participants will be provided with my contact details and those of my university research supervisors should they wish to ask questions or make any complaint.

Privacy and Data Storage.

I will request the sole use of a quiet room for the duration of the interviews to minimise environmental distractors for myself and the research participants and to ensure that the interviews are not overheard.

There is a risk that a participant may make a disclosure which raises safeguarding concerns. If this occurs, school procedures will be followed (See Section 15). If, during the course of the interview, an issue comes to light which suggests that either the participant or another individual is at risk of harm or any indication of illegal activity is disclosed, confidentiality may need to be breeched. I may become aware of inappropriate or unprofessional practice which may not be a safeguarding issue but is of moral or ethical concern (for example a participant may reveal information suggestive of discrimination and / or breach of the Equality Act 2010). If this occurs I will seek advice during research supervision. Participants will be made aware of the limits to confidentiality via the participant information sheet.

There is a risk that individual participants could be identified through the research, particularly in light of the small sample size. This risk will be minimised by ensuring that the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations are not reported in the written presentation of findings. Whilst information about the participants (e.g. gender, role, teaching experience) and their school (e.g. size, OFSTED rating, inclusion policies) will reported, this information will not be linked to individual participants to ensure that this information could not serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them. In the summary report that will be shared with the wider school team, participants' interview responses will be presented collectively so that it is not possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. Direct quotes from participants will not be included, nor will any other information that could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them.

There is a risk that other individuals not involved in the research (e.g. pupils, members of staff) could be identified through the research. I will minimise this risk by ensuring identifiable information is not included in the final report.

It is clear that, however anonymous data will appear to outsiders, given my dual position as both teacher and researcher, insiders (e.g. members of staff or parents of children in my school) would be able to identify the research setting and may also be able to identify particular participants from discussions recorded in interview transcripts. To minimize this risk, in addition to ensuring that the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations will not be presented in the written presentation of the findings, I also intend to apply to restrict public access to my thesis.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

There are no anticipated risks to the environment or society posed by the research.

20. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please specify

N/A

21. EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

You may be asked to nominate an expert reviewer for certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Name
Contact details (including email address)
Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability

22. CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☐
- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life) ☐
- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐
- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐
- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐
- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐
- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐
- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	☐	☒
Participant information sheet	☒	☐
Consent form	☒	☐
Questionnaire	☐	☒
Interview Schedule	☒	☐

23. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project supervisor:	Mr Nick Bozic
Date:	01/12/18

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Appendix 2: Ethical Approval Confirmation

Mon 04/03/2019 09:38
To:
Sue Morris (Department of Disability Inclusion and Special Needs);
Nicholas Bozic (Department of Disability Inclusion and Special Needs)
Cc:
Helen Riley (EdD Education PT)

Dear Nick Bozic & Sue Morris,

Re: "An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of teaching children with Education, Health and Care Plans within a mainstream setting" Application for Ethical Review ERN_19-0005

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

Kind regards,

Ms Sam Waldron
Deputy Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group
C Block Dome (room 132)
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT

Tel:
Email:

Web: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Research-Integrity-at-the-University-of-Birmingham.aspx

Please remember to submit a new Self-Assessment Form for each new project.

Click Ethical Review Process for further details regarding the University's Ethical Review process, or email ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk with any queries.

Click Research Governance for further details regarding the University's Research Governance and Clinical Trials Insurance processes, or email researchgovernance@contacts.bham.ac.uk with any queries

Notice of Confidentiality:
The contents of this email may be privileged and are confidential. It may not be disclosed to or used by anyone other than the addressee, nor copied in any way. If received in error please notify the sender and then delete it from your system. Should you communicate with me by email, you consent to the University of Birmingham monitoring and reading any such correspondence.

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (Teacher and Teaching Assistant Participants)

Title of Research Project: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

What is my role in the research?
I am currently undertaking some research for my Doctorate in Education (EdD) at The University of Birmingham.

What is the research project about?
The aim of the research is to explore the lived experience of educators supporting children with significant SEND within a mainstream primary school. The intention of the study is to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants perceive and conceptualise the presence of children with significant SEND in their classrooms. Moreover the study aims to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to supporting children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

It is hoped that the current study will be a useful addition to the debate on inclusion and specifically to teaching professionals' attitudes to inclusion. Moreover, by involving both teachers and teaching assistant as participants in the research I hope the study will serve to bring the relatively unacknowledged 'voices' of TAs into the debate. At a more local level, it is anticipated that this study will have school-wide benefits by raising professional awareness of the lived experiences of teaching professionals within the setting in relation to teaching children with significant SEND and the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of these children that are encountered. It is anticipated that in stimulating discussion and encouraging reflection upon current practice, the findings of the current research could potentially effect some positive systemic change within the setting.

Who is being asked to participate in the research?
The research will involve between six and eight participants who are teachers or teaching assistants at ***** Primary School. I intend to recruit three-four teachers and three-four teaching assistants. In terms of inclusion criteria, all participants are required to have a minimum of two years' experience in their teacher or TA positions. Moreover, participants must have had direct experience of supporting at least one child with an EHCP (used as an indication that the participant has experience of supporting a child with what I would consider to be significant SEND) in a 'typical' mainstream class (as opposed to an intervention group or provision).

Do I need to take part in the research?
It is for you to decide whether or not to take part in the research (no reason needs to be given for not taking part). If you do decide that you will participate in the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What will taking part involve?

The study will employ face-to-face semi-structured interviews with individual participants. The interview sessions are expected to last approximately one hour and will be conducted at ***** Primary School. You will be asked questions which will explore how you perceive and conceptualise the presence of children with significant SEND in your classroom and the facilitators and barriers to supporting these children you have experienced. You will not need to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. Interviews will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Prior to the main study I have piloted the interview schedule. I have completed three pilot studies, the first being a self-pilot and the second two being participant pilots. It is anticipated that data collection will take place during Spring 2 half-term.

<u>If I agree to take part, can I change my mind?</u>
Yes, you can stop taking part in the project before, during or after the interview takes place, even after you have completed the consent form. If you decide that you do not want to be involved in the research any more after the interview has taken place you will have four weeks from the interview date to ask for your data to be withdrawn. This can be done either by speaking to me in person or by contacting me using the contact details provided.

<u>What will happen to the data collected during the interview?</u>
Interview data will be treated as confidential. Your real name will not be reported, nor will any identifying information (e.g. names of individuals, organisations or geographical locations etc.). I will not discuss information shared in individual interviews with any other parties (e.g. other members of staff). Confidentiality may need to be breeched if a disclosure is made which suggests that you or others are in danger of harm or which indicates illegal activity.

Immediately after each participant interview, the electronically audio-recorded data will be transferred from the audio-recording device to a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare (a secure data storage system used by The University of Birmingham). The audio files will then be erased from the audio-recorder. Electronic transcripts and notes will also be held in a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare. Printed transcripts, written notes and consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. In accordance with university research policy, data will be stored on BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10 year expiry date will be set for the electronic data stored on BEAR DataShare. Any paper records will also be destroyed after 10 years.

<u>How will the findings be reported?</u>
Following data analysis, feedback reports will be sent to all participants, outlining the main findings of the research. You will be offered the opportunity to meet with me to further discuss the research findings. The research findings will be shared with the wider school team but participants' interview responses will be presented collectively and it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. Direct quotes from participants will not be included, nor will any other information that could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them.

The final write-up of this project will form the basis of my thesis for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) which will be available online (and may be published at a later date). The interview

transcripts will be included in the final write-up but any information which may serve to identify you or the research setting (e.g. names of individual, organisations or geographical locations) will not be presented.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?
This project has been ethically approved by the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Committee.

What if I have questions or require more information?
If you have any questions or would like to discuss this research in more detail, please contact me, either in person or using the details below. If you are unhappy about anything during the research experience please contact my researcher supervisors who will be supervising this project.

Researcher:
Helen Riley
Tel: *****
Email: *****

Supervisors:
*****/ *****
Tel: *****/*****
Email: *****/*****

Thank you for your time and consideration

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

Name of Researcher: Helen Riley

	Please initial box to confirm consent
I have read and understand the information provided in the participant information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I am able to withdraw from the project (without giving any reason) at any time before the interview, during the interview and up to four weeks after the interview takes place.	
I understand that my interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher.	
I am aware that the final write-up of the research project will form the basis of the researcher thesis for a Doctorate in Education which will be available online (and which may also be published at a later date). I understand that the interview transcripts will be included in the final write-up of the research project. I am aware that my name and any identifying details about me or the research setting will not be presented in the final write-up of the research project.	
I understand that the researcher may need to break confidentiality if a disclosure is made which suggests that I, or others, are in danger of harm or which indicates any illegal activity.	
I know who to contact if I have any questions about/issues with the research project or wish to withdraw data.	
I,_____(please insert name), agree to participate in the above project	

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date (dd/mm/yyyy):_____

Appendix 5: Research Summary Report

Title of Research Project

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

Name of Researcher

Helen Riley

Rationale of the Study

In recent decades there has been a shift towards inclusion within education legislation, which has affirmed the rights of children with SEND to be provided for within the mainstream system (Varcoe and Boyle, 2014). On the assumption that the successful implementation of inclusive policy and legislation is influenced, to a certain extent, by educational professionals working on the 'front line' being positive about it, there is a wealth of research which has sought to explore and examine educators' perceptions of the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). It is evident, however, that the findings of this research have been contradictory and inconclusive (Cassady, 2011). Educators have reported both positive views about inclusive policy and practices as well as negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEND, attributed to various barriers (for example, see Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Cassady, 2011; de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011). Despite the complexities involved in understanding educators' perceptions of inclusion, at present there is limited qualitative research which offers an in-depth account of practitioners' lived experiences of including children with SEND in mainstream settings. The current study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to address gaps in existing research, thus offering new insight into a previously studied area.

Research Aims and Questions

The intention of the study was to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND in their mainstream setting. Moreover, the study aimed to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.
My two research questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?
2. What facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology refers to assumptions about existence or being, whilst epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and considers the relationship between the researcher and reality, and

how we achieve our understanding of reality (Cohen et al., 2000). Hughes and Sharrock (2007) highlight that ontology and epistemology are closely related; what we take for the ultimate reality is inextricably linked to what we accept as knowledge or evidence. As a researcher, I have developed reflexive awareness of my assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) and hold to a relativist, subjectivist position, aligned with the constructivist paradigm. Unlike positivism, which maintains that it is possible to discover knowledge which reveals universal truths about human behaviour (Coolican, 2014), constructivism maintains that there is no one external reality that can be measured objectively. Rather, "meaningful reality …is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Realities are apprehensible in the form of "multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature… dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Within this philosophical framework, social phenomena and their meanings can only ever be viewed from an individual's perspective and can never be seen as definitive (Bryman, 2001). Moreover, the historical and cultural specificity of our understandings of the world means that research findings should not become universal laws about human nature (Burr, 2003). Thus, constructivist approaches accept the dynamic, subjective and evolving nature of social reality and seek to develop ways of understanding each participant's individual constructions. I understand that my approach could be considered 'light' constructivism. Whilst I am primarily concerned with individual lived experience, I also seek to identify and understand shared experiences in participants' accounts. Though, as a constructivist, I do not believe that the experience of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting has a single objective reality which can be measured, I do seek to discover whether there are any commonalities between the subjective and unique experiences discussed by research participants.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

My ontological and epistemological stance influenced me in selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as my methodological approach. IPA is an approach to qualitative, experiential research specifically designed to "gain insight into individual participants' psychological worlds" (Willig, 2008, p.73). The methodological approach has two primary aims: first, to examine in detail how individuals make sense of a given experience and second, to give detailed interpretation of the account in order to understand the experience. As noted by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p. 5) "IPA enables the research study to move away from the descriptive commitments and transcendental interests towards a more interpretive, and worldly position, with a specific focus on understanding the perspective of the individual's involvement in the lived world". IPA has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology focuses on studying individuals' lived experiences as they perceive them. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and focuses on how individuals interpret those experiences. IPA acknowledges that, as a researcher, my own subjective interpretations and sense-making will affect my

understanding of participants' accounts. The essence of IPA is for the researcher to attempt to make sense of the participants' attempts of making sense of their own experiences, thereby capturing the double hermeneutic process (Smith et al., 2009). Idiography is concerned with the particular, in the sense of both detail and context.

Researcher Positionality

As a teacher, currently teaching full-time in the Reception class of the mainstream primary school in which data was collected, I can be considered an 'insider researcher' (Berger, 2015). I understand and appreciate that my own interpretations and sense-making will affect my understanding of participants' accounts and that I cannot assume a position of neutrality as a researcher. Whilst I accept that research of this kind always involves a degree of subjectivity, through the practice of reflexivity I have actively explored and exposed my own consciousness to ensure that I have an understanding of my bias.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was adopted in the current research and in-depth individual interviews were conducted with all of the eight participants. Seven open-ended questions relating to the research questions under exploration were developed, with additional prompts and probes to further stimulate discussion. The interview schedule was constructed with reference to literature focused upon designing and conducting IPA research (for example, Smith et al., 2009) and the study's research questions, thorough a process of self-reflection and supervision. The schedule design was further developed following pilot interviews. I completed three pilot studies, the first being a self-pilot and the second two being participant pilots. Interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Research Sample

The findings of this study are based on a small sample of four teachers (one male, three female) and four teaching assistants (four female), recruited from a single mainstream primary school in the North West of England. The small sample size allowed all participants to have a voice and presence in the findings and facilitated sufficient in-depth engagement with each individual case. I aimed to obtain a relatively homogeneous sample (Smith et al., 2009), not in terms of sample characteristics, but rather in terms of participants' shared experience of the phenomenon under investigation (of course, it could be argued that a TA's perspective will necessarily be different to that of a teacher because of role difference). Consequently, the current study does not seek to generalise to all educators; the finding are firmly seated in the context of the individuals involved and the school (and Local Authority) where the research took place. Members of staff were invited to contact me to express their interest in participating in the project, providing that they met the study's participant inclusion criteria. To be eligible to participate in the study, participants were required to have a minimum of two years' experience in their teacher or TA positions. Moreover, participants must have had direct experience of supporting at least one child with an EHCP (used as an indication that the participant had experience of supporting a child with what I

would consider to be significant SEND) in a 'typical' mainstream class (as opposed to an intervention group or provision).

Data Analysis

IPA provides a "systematic and practical approach to analysing phenomenological data" (Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 2002, p.81). The current research adopted a step-by-step analytical process described by Smith et al. (2009):

Step 1	Transcription
Step 2	Reading and re-reading
Step 3	Initial noting
Step 4	Developing emergent themes
Step 5	Searching for connections across emergent themes
Step 6	Moving to the next case
Step 7	Looking for patterns across cases

Findings

Individual participant interview transcripts were analysed and the superordinate and subordinate themes abstracted for each participant are presented in the final write-up of this project, which will form the basis of my thesis for a Doctorate in Education (EdD). In my thesis, an idiographic portrayal of each participant is provided, allowing the uniqueness of their individual lived experiences to be depicted. In order to maintain my commitment to participant confidentiality, interview data is presented collectively in this research summary report, so that it is not possible to attribute an interview response to any individual participant. Whilst in my thesis, I endeavoured to represent each participant's unique accounts, clearly there are comparisons to be drawn across the cases. Emergent themes from the eight participants were examined together and connections across the cases were sought to form group-level subordinate and superordinate theme. Four group-level superordinate themes were abstracted: 'the personal and professional challenge'; 'the mainstream school context'; 'perceptions of children with SEND'; and 'being part of the human system of support'. The table below provides an overview of the structure of the themes identified for the group, presenting the subordinate themes that are nested within these four superordinate themes.

Group-level superordinate themes	Group-level subordinate themes
The personal and professional challenge	The psychological and emotional impact on self
	Doubting expertise
	The importance of experience
	Adapting practice and being open to change
The mainstream school context	The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream school context
	The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting
	Juggling needs and responsibilities
Perceptions of children with SEND	Accepting and championing children with SEND
	A within-child deficit view of children with SEND
	Children with SEND are not a homogenous group
	Building relationships with children with SEND
Being part of the human system of support	Colleague support
	Attitudes of other staff members
	Working with parents

The Personal and Professional Challenge

This superordinate theme captures the personal and professional challenge experienced by participants when working with children who have significant SEND in a mainstream setting. Whilst the inclusion of these children was perceived by many as personally rewarding, it also entails a high level of emotional input and labour for participants and associated feelings of failure, frustration and hopelessness. Participants shared that they felt underprepared to work with children with significant SEND and that they lack the necessary knowledge and expertise required to support them. Participants also stressed the importance of experience, and the desire and ability to adapt practice and be open to change when working with children with significant SEND.

The Mainstream School Context

This superordinate theme portrays participants' experiences of working within the mainstream school context. Participants discussed the structured and inflexible mainstream environment and indicated that they did not perceive inclusion to be a priority within the setting. Some made reference to the lack of funding, resources, equipment and physical space in school allocated to supporting children with significant SEND. Moreover, many participants spoke about experiencing difficulties balancing the needs of children with significant SEND and the needs of their non-SEND peers. They noted that the inclusion of children with SEND can lead to an increase in workload and pressure for adults working in the mainstream setting. It was also highlighted that inclusion in mainstream provision can have undesirable consequences for other children in class, as well as the children with significant SEND themselves. As a result, the majority of participants questioned the benefits of inclusion in mainstream settings and concluded that the needs of some children with significant SEND cannot not be met in mainstream school (in contrast, it should be

noted that a minority of participants emphasised the benefits of inclusion and perceived the inclusion of children with significant SEND in mainstream settings as positive). Comparisons between mainstream schools and specialist settings were drawn by a number of participants, and the advantages of specialist settings for children with significant SEND were highlighted.

Perceptions of Children with SEND

This superordinate theme captures participants' perceptions of children with SEND. Many of the participants interviewed indicated that they valued and respected diversity in the classroom and highlighted that peers are accepting of pupils with significant SEND. Both teachers and TAs spoke about a need for empathy and understanding when working with children with significant SEND and some shared a desire to celebrate and champion these pupils. Participants also discussed the strong bonds they have built with children with significant SEND and the importance of viewing children holistically. Interestingly however, at some point in their interview, all participants also shared comments which could be interpreted as focusing the individual 'within-child' differences and/or deficits of children with significant SEND. Many highlighted the limited progress these children make and hinted at their low expectations of children with SEND. Some also shared their perceptions of children with significant SEND as unpredictable, disruptive and dangerous. The heterogeneity of children with significant SEND was emphasised, with participants indicating that some children with SEND (namely those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) are harder to include than others.

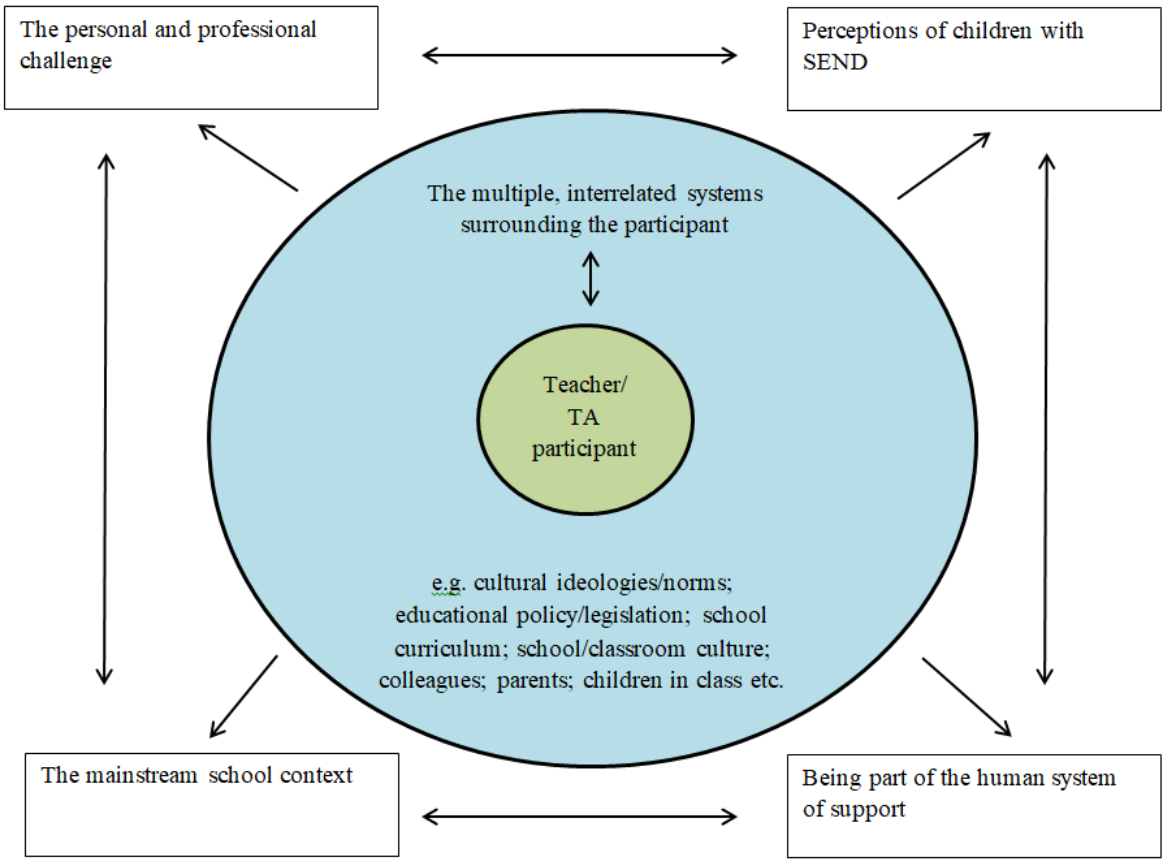
Being Part of the Human System of Support

The final superordinate theme encapsulates participants' experiences of being part of a human system of support for children with significant SEND. For both teachers and TAs, human resources were perceived as vital in school to facilitate inclusive practice. Moreover, a vast majority of the participants noted that there is a lack of additional adults in class to support children with significant SEND, which presents a major barrier to inclusion. Colleague support also takes different forms; participants discussed their experiences of working alongside peers, school leaders and external professionals to promote inclusive practice. Furthermore, participants spoke about the attitudes of other staff members and noted that fixed mind-sets and an unwillingness to adapt practice can impede inclusion. 'Working with parents' was the final of the three subordinate themes within this superordinate theme. Whilst some participants acknowledged that parents of children with SEND can be supportive of school and work in partnership with educators, the majority perceived parents as barriers to inclusive practice due to their lack of cooperation with school staff and the stigma they felt parents associated with SEND.

Examining the Findings Through the Lens of Social Systems Theory

Social systems theory (Luhmann, 1995) is grounded in the discipline of biology and von Bertalanffy's (1968) General System Theory which suggests that "systems cannot be reduced to a series of parts functioning in isolation, but that, in order to understand the whole, one

must understand the interrelations between these parts" (Anderson, 2016, p. 593). Social systems theory maintains that individuals are both systems within their own right (influenced by their own subsystems such as their ability, beliefs, values and personality), and also part of a wider web of systems, which play a major role in individual functioning.
In regards to the current research, I have drawn upon social systems theory, at a very general level, to allow me to develop a more integrated interpretation of participants' accounts and develop an understanding of how the systems surrounding individual educators may have influenced the themes which were abstracted from the analysis of their data. The figure below demonstrates the interconnected nature of the themes and also shows that how the systems around educators may have contributed to the themes abstracted.



Discussion

Answering Research Question 1: How do teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting experience the inclusion of children with significant SEND?

Participants' interpretations of their experiences of the inclusion of these children are likely to have been influenced by the bidirectional interaction between their individual, internal values and norms (for example, how participants conceptualise SEND and their perceptions of inclusion) and the contextual factors which surround them (for example, the level of human support they perceive to be available and the training they experience).

Overall, participants held an interactional approach to understanding SEND; whilst many participants did focus upon within-child differences and/or deficits when discussing SEND, there was also an acknowledgement that the educational environment in which the child is situated can serve to reduce or exacerbate difficulties. Participants were supportive of inclusion in principle but their advocacy of inclusion had certain caveats. Certain children (namely those participants perceived to have particularly significant needs and those with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties) were seen to be more difficult to include in mainstream provision than others. Participants noted that some children with significant SEND may be better suited to specialist settings. Participants shared their experiences of the personal and professional challenges involved in including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting, and the associated stress and emotional labour this can involve. They spoke about the psychological and practical balancing act involved in attempting to meet the individual needs of children with significant SEND, alongside those of other children in class. This was discussed in the context of the mainstream classroom environment, which participants perceived to be structured and inflexible, with its government-prescribed curriculum and set targets. In general, participants felt they lacked the training and expertise required to support these children adequately and considered human resources and colleague support in school to be insufficient. Parents of children with significant SEND were highlighted as an important influence upon the experiences of educators. Participants described the value of engaging parents and shared their frustration when parents held a perception about a child that they, as the child's educators, did not agree with.

Answering Research Question 2: What facilitators and barriers to including children with significant SEND are experienced by teachers and teaching assistants in a mainstream setting?

The metaphor of force-field analysis was harnessed to visually present and unpick the driving and restraining forces participants perceived to facilitate or impede their inclusion of children with significant SEND. The driving and restraining forces outlined in the figure below have been distilled from the group-level subordinate themes in the data. It was necessary to unpick some of the subordinate themes as they encompassed a number of factors which could be considered to be driving and restraining forces (for example, the subordinate theme 'colleague support' contained factors I interpreted as both driving forces ['support from colleagues in school', support from external professionals', 'support from school leaders'] and restraining forces ['a lack of additional adults']). The driving and restraining forces, and the group-level subordinate themes in which they were identified within, are presented in the figure below. The opposing forces I unpicked from the group-level data are ranked in order of the number of participants who acknowledged them within the interviews. Of course, it is evident that this does not provide a good indication of the comparative strength of the different forces and the power these held for participants.

The findings of this analysis complement and supplement existing literature in terms of the opposing forces educators perceive to be at play. Many of the contextual, environment-related opposing forces identified by participants were consistent with those described in extant literature (for example, Monsen et al, 2014; Avramidis et al., 2000; Rose, 2001;

Glazzard, 2011). Perhaps as a consequence of the qualitative, ideographic nature of the current study, internal, educator-related driving and restraining forces which did not present in previous literature (such as those relating to the psychological and emotional impact of inclusion on participants, or participants' core values and beliefs about SEND and inclusive education) also emerged. In addition to describing the current situation, this analysis informs my recommendation for educational professionals working within the research setting, in addition to those who are external to it.

Current state: Educators do not always feel they are able to include children with significant SEND within a mainstream setting successfully

Desired state: Educators feel they are able to include children with significant SEND within a mainstream setting successfully

Driving forces:	**Restraining forces:**
Colleague support- Support from colleagues in school (8/8) →	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities**- Time restrictions (8/8)
Accepting and championing children with SEND (8/8) →	← **The psychological and emotional impact on self** - The high degree of emotional effort and labour involved (8/8)
The importance of experience (7/8) →	← **Children with SEND are not a homogenous group** (8/8)
Building relationships with children with SEND (6/8) →	← **A within-child deficit view of children with SEND** (8/8)
The psychological and emotional impact on self- The personal reward and satisfaction involved (5/8) →	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities** and **The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting**- The needs of the other children in class (8/8)
Colleague support- Support from external professionals (5/8) →	← **Colleague support-** A lack of additional adults (7/8)
Working with parents- Parents as partners (5/8) →	← **Doubting expertise-**A lack of training (7/8)
Adapting practice and being open to change (4/8) →	← **Juggling needs and responsibilities-** Workload and pressure (7/8)
Colleague support- Support from school leaders (3/8) →	← **Doubting expertise-** Perceived lack of knowledge and expertise (6/8)
	← **The psychological and emotional impact on self-** A perceived lack of power and influence upon the inclusion of children with SEND (5/8)
	← **Working with parents**- Parents as barriers (6/8)
	← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** Other priorities in school (5/8)
	← **Attitudes of other staff members** (4/8)
	← **The unaccommodating and inflexible**

	mainstream environment- Financial restraints (4/8) ← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** A lack of resources and equipment (4/8) ← **The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment-** A prescribed curriculum (3/8)

Implications and Recommendations for Educational Professionals

A fundamental recommendation which can be drawn from the current study is that educational professionals should ensure that they consider the wider school ecology and how this can serve to shape teacher and teaching assistant experiences of the inclusion of children with significant SEND. Whilst participants did discuss within-child factors and individual differences in children with significant SEND at a biological, cognitive and behavioural level within their interviews, it is evident that situational factors (such as the school environment and cultural or socio-political context) were also acknowledged to influence participants' experiences. As such, the current research should help educators to reframe within-child conceptualisations and consider adopting a systemic approach or lens to viewing experiences of inclusion.

A further, related consideration that the current research drew attention to was that our own preconceptions may not necessarily reflect the perspectives of those working closely with children with significant SEND. The study emphasised the uniqueness of each participant's individual lived experiences and highlighted that it is not possible to separate one's subjective interpretations and sense-making from one's accounts of these experiences. As such, the research has demonstrated the importance of actively seeking out and listening to the views of those who work directly with children with significant SEND; as noted by Kelly (1955) cited in Reid (2006, p. 41), "if you want to know what is going on, it is always sensible to ask the people who are doing the work themselves". Moreover, it is clearly important to avoid making assumptions based on our own values, experiences and preconceptions if we wish to develop a sound understanding of the current situation and offer appropriate support.

Another underlying and core recommendation which can be made in light of the current research is that educators working closely with children with significant SEND should be provided with opportunities to share their experiences and have their voices heard. The idiographic nature of IPA is one of its strengths (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005), and the application of this methodological approach facilitated in-depth exploration of participant accounts. Participants were very open and honest in their discussions and appeared to welcome the chance to explore their thoughts, experiences and perceptions and how these may serve to influence their practice. Moreover, within the interviews, participants emphasised the value they placed upon having understanding and empathetic relationships with colleagues, and expressed a need for the time and space to talk to others who could appreciate and identify with their experiences. Given that the current research highlighted that many participants associate the inclusion of children with significant SEND with

personal and professional challenge and high levels of emotional effort and labour, it is reasonable to assume that educators need to work through their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Safe, containing spaces where educators could share and reflect upon their experiences with empathetic colleagues would support them through their journey of including children with significant SEND in mainstream settings. Of course, this would need to be skilfully managed, within the context of high-quality professional supervision, to prevent stagnation and instead provide validation, alongside restorative discussion and opportunities for exchange-based learning.

The current research highlights the practical challenges educators face in relation to the inclusion of children with SEND. School leaders within the research setting (as well as those who are external to it) could use the findings to facilitate the development of practical interventions to support teachers and teaching assistants in areas which they themselves have identified as problematic. This would include consideration of factors such as the provision of adequate human support and SEND resources in class, and additional time allocation for members of staff supporting children with significant SEND. Moreover, whole-school SEND training should be implemented to address the perceived lack of personal SEND knowledge and expertise highlighted by the majority of participants. Training could also support the development of a shared understanding of SEND and inclusion within the staff team and promote acceptance of, and respect for, diversity and difference.

Finally, the current findings reinforce the importance of educational settings supporting collaborative working between educators and the parents and families of children with significant SEND. The study demonstrates the significant challenges teachers and TAs can experience when working with parents they consider to be unsupportive, or those who hold perceptions which conflict with their views as the child's educators. Conversely, the research highlights the importance educators place upon developing successful home-school partnerships. As part of a whole-school approach to inclusion, educational settings should develop and implement robust systems which support home-school collaboration.

Appendix 6: Extracts from Reflective Diary

Completing the Application for Ethical Review- Autumn 2018

- For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality in a small sample, should I use gender neutral pseudonyms for each participant? Or are there other ways of protecting the confidentiality of participants in addition to using pseudonyms, removing identifiable information etc. (for example, restricted access?). I need to be more careful because of my dual role as researcher and teacher. Insiders (e.g. members of staff or parents of children in my school) will be able to identify the research setting and may also be able to identify particular participants from discussions recorded in interview transcripts.
- It is necessary to consider the location in which interviews should take place. Within school would be convenient for both participants and the researcher. Private, comfortable settings should be available. The drawback to this is that participants may be less inclined to speak openly about negative issues in the school setting. Also, SLT would be aware of who had participated in the research if interviews were being conducted within the school day and cover was required. Perhaps this is necessary? I am more likely to recruit participants if the interviews can take place within working hours.

Considering my ontological and epistemological stance- Spring 2019

- In feedback on the first draft of my methodology chapter one of my supervisors noted "*However, some researchers have seen IPA as compatible with a critical realist position. And in a sense might it be argued that you have identified research objects (pupils with significant SEN) which are deemed to exist independently of the participants' experience of them*". I need to revisit my ontological and epistemological underpinnings to ensure that these can be robustly defended.
- Update (Jan 2021) - revisited this. Additional information RE ontology and epistemology added to draft methodology. I now feel more secure in my stance.

Developing the interview schedule- Spring 2019

Reflections following the pilot interviews

- Self-pilot useful in terms of reflexivity. Information obtained from self-pilot will help in 'Researcher Positionality' write-up.
- I need to consider my researcher bias about including children with significant SEND in mainstream school: I am broadly in favour of inclusion; I feel disheartened when people 'give up' on children with SEND in mainstream school; I wonder if there is a tendency for educators to be negative when asked about their experiences of including children with SEND in mainstream schools. I need to be aware of these and other preconceptions. I need to bracket this researcher bias.
- One key reflection following the participant-pilot interviews was that the depth and quality of the data gathered would potentially be strengthened by providing an opportunity for participants to review the interview schedule prior to the interviews taking place. Whilst prior knowledge of the questions may blunt the spontaneity and authenticity of communication, prior knowledge of the topics to be discussed and the key interview questions is likely to elicit more considered responses.
- The pilot interviews confirmed that the identified questions were suitable as a basis for discussion within the interviews to follow, in that they would obtain data sufficient to answer the research questions.
- The need for a gentle introduction to develop rapport- complex questions may unsettle participants and have a negative impact on the reminder of the interview.

- The major changes are that I have changed the focus from 'children with EHCPs' to 'children with significant SEND'. I found that my previous focus could confuse participants and restrict discussions. I have included a section at the start of the interview which explores how participants conceptualise significant SEND
- The original rationale for participants to think about children with EHCPs was that the term significant needs is very subjective. Different participants in a population may have multiple interpretations for the same label. Can the problem of multiple interpretations be alleviated by exploring how such needs are conceptualised by respondents? Also, my participant inclusion criteria could ensure that all participants had experience of working with children with EHCPs currently/in the past.

Developing the interview schedule (post-pilot interviews)

- Semi-structured interviews to be used to allow pre-identified areas of discussion to be explored whilst allowing the flexibility to change the order of questions, length of time on each question and level of attention given to areas of interest (Robson, 2011).
- The questions were open-ended with prompts being used to explore certain areas of the conversations further if it was felt a more in-depth exploration could be gained. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009, p60) I used different types of open-ended questions such as descriptive, contrast, evaluative and narrative questions.
- Heffron and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) argue that good quality IPA requires a more open-ended interview whilst Smith et al. (2009) advise approximately 6-10 open questions, with prompts to elicit further information. The interview schedule for this study comprised seven key questions (with further questions as probes and prompts) and so complies with Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendations.
- The open-ended interview questions sought to explore some of the areas that had been previously discussed in the literature; educator perceptions of inclusion, positive/challenging experiences associated with teaching children with SEND, potential facilitators and barriers teaching children with SEND.
- Supervision highlighted the importance of light questioning about what each participant experiences as the most and least enjoyable aspects of their role. This affords opportunities for exploring their phenomenology and linking back to any core values/aspects of their identity and life story to which they may have made reference when responding to the preceding prompt/follow-up question before the focus on SEND, and so avoiding risks of leading/loaded questioning.
- Supervision also highlighted the need for me to develop more better-framed prompts/follow-up questions.

<u>Reflecting on the interviews- July 2019</u>

- Since this is not a controlled study, there is the legitimate scope to build on successive interviews, getting better and better at asking questions which elicit increasingly rich phenomenological perspectives, rather than being constrained by any need for consistent replication. I will reflect on each interview in order to inform my approach next time.

Chloe

- This participant was the first person to volunteer to take part in the research. She seemed really enthusiastic about the project and told me "I think what you're doing is just brilliant". From speaking with the participant, I got the impression that she was eager to participate and have her voice heard. I realised that I was somewhat surprised by this. I had worked relatively closely with the participant during my time at the school but had not been aware of her interest in SEND or inclusion issues.
- I liked the participant's passion and empathy for children with SEND- she really

seemed to celebrate children with SEND that she had worked with. She had quite a positive approach towards inclusion and seemed to be quite critical of what she phrased as the more "traditional" attitudes of some members of staff in school. I was aware that this somewhat reflected my own personal values and beliefs.

- She was very open about the emotional experiences (anxiety) she had faced. I wondered if this influenced her tendency to champion and feel defensive of children with SEND (particularly the *"quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety that always miss out")*
- The participant shared that she felt we should adapt to meet the needs of children rather than the other way around. Again, this is something I could relate to.
- I found that sometimes forgot to ask a follow-up question I had thought of while the participant was talking (I did not want to interrupt her to ask these)- I need to make better use of my recording sheet in future interviews.

Lorna

- I felt there was some awkwardness in this interview which I hadn't expecting because the participant was someone I worked closely with in school and had a good relationship with. I reflected that this awkwardness may be due to a shift in power and reciprocity within the interview process. Prior to the interview I felt that the participant appeared nervous. I wondered if she was concerned about giving the 'correct' response. I reiterated that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in her personal experiences. I also shared that I had self-piloted the interview to develop my understanding of the interview process from a participant perspective. I hoped that being open and honest about my 'insider' status would enhance reciprocity and level the participant/researcher power balance.
- I was aware that my 'insider' status held risks to the integrity of the interview, particularly because I worked so closely with the participant. Moreover I noted that the participant sometimes assumed that I understood a concept they were speaking about and didn't go into depth about it.
- Because of my close relationship with the participant I recognised that there was an increased danger that I may misinterpret the language of the participant and place my own meaning onto their words.
- I felt that Lorna was cautious in some of her responses.
- In the debriefing the participant thanked me and said "I quite enjoyed that!" This gave me the impression that the interview process had not been a negative experience for the participant. Perhaps my interpretation of her feeling uncomfortable and awkward was skewed due to my own feelings. I found this interview the most uncomfortable to undertake and reflected that this could be because of my prior relationship with, and knowledge of, the participant.
- The participant seemed to focus on how disruptive children with significant SEND could be in the classroom and spoke about the importance of control and discipline. I found this interesting given that the participant worked in early years.
- This was the shortest of all eight of the interviews. I found our conversation to be stilted at times and I felt I was using prompts and probes frequently. Did she find it difficult to reflect?
- Upon reflection after conducting the interview I felt there were parts I could have explored further with the participant. I felt sometimes the participant felt uncomfortable and looked for a response that would please me. This discouraged me from probing her sometimes brief responses further. Also, I was anxious to ask the 'right' questions as this was one of the first interviews I had conducted.

Jim

- Jim shared that he feels that teaching is fine for now. Committed to the teaching profession?
- Ambitions to be an EP.
- Aversion to working with children with SEND in specialist setting? "It was too much", "they were all just everywhere".
- A very candid and honest account- sometimes the frankness of his comments were slightly jarring.
- Jim was enthusiastic about the area of study and seemed eager to be part of a doctoral research project.
- He articulated confidently and presented as self-assured in his perspectives, reflecting my prior perceptions of Jim as a colleague in school.
- Jim was critical of the school he works in at times, noting that SEND support was inadequate and that inclusion 'success stories' were limited.
- My first impressions were that he held negative perceptions of the inclusion of children with significant SEND- associated inclusion with struggle and challenge. He highlighted the many problems/barriers to inclusion he perceives. He appeared to be frustrated by the lack of progress made by children with SEND.

Julie

- I had not worked directly with Julie in school- I found I was keen to hear from her.
- Given our limited personal and professional relationship I was pleasantly surprised she volunteered to take part in the research (I work/have worked closely with the other TA participants- did they commit out of a sense of duty?).
- I felt that Julie seemed quite nervous prior to the interview and she told me she was unsure that what she had to say would be useful.
- Our conversation was often quite stilted and I found this resulted in me speaking more than in other interviews and using prompts, probes and non-verbal cues regularly to encourage Julie to speak.
- Julie seemed to lack confidence and communicated self-doubt and I found it challenging to restrain my desire to reassure her and instead simply listen to her lived experience.
- When reading the transcript back, I felt I may have moved Julie on too quickly at times when I perceived that she was experiencing discomfort.
- Upon reflection, I feel I should have suppressed my need to 'rescue' Julie when I felt she was feeling unsure or awkward and allowed her more time to expand upon her responses.
- She discussed issues of power in the classroom- interesting.
- A perception of children with SEND as a burden?

Donna

- Before the interview began, I got the impression that the participant did not fully understand that we would be exploring her personal experiences in detail but rather thought her role would be to provide information/ her professional opinion. I reflected that this might be because this is something she does regularly in her role as a SENCo. During discussion before the interview I reiterated that I was interested in her personal experiences and how she made sense of these. She laughed (was she nervous, awkward?) and told me she hoped she could be helpful. I wondered if she felt uncomfortable at the thought of sharing more personal experiences.
- I was concerned about the dynamic of our relationship initially. As the participant was the school SENCo would the she feel threatened or defensive in some way within

the interview? Would she be conscious of discussing her true and authentic feelings and beliefs with me given my dual role as teacher and researcher? I found, however, that the participant seemed to feel able to talk honestly and openly. I wondered whether this was aided by the good relationship and rapport we had built as colleagues during my time at the school. Moreover, I noticed that the participant seemed to be very interested in hearing about the measures I would be putting in place to ensure confidentiality. She seemed to be relieved that interview responses would be presented collectively in my summary report to SLT so that it was not possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. I felt that this encouraged the participant to speak more openly.

- I was concerned initially that the discussion was focusing too heavily on the participant's role as school SENCo. As the interview went on, however, I was able to take her back to her experiences of supporting children with SEND in a mainstream school. I noted that her experiences were unique and not solely confined to the classroom as a consequence of her role.
- The participant had written notes for the interview and she read from her notes in quite a factual way for the first few questions. I was pleased that she had clearly invested time and effort to do this. However, I was worried this might blunt the authenticity of the interview. I was pleased when, after the initial few questions, the participant appeared to become more comfortable with the interview process and didn't feel the need to read from her notes.
- The participant was quite empathetic towards both children with SEND and the teachers who supported them (in terms of acknowledging the challenge they face). I got the impression that she would like to support teachers more but felt constraint by the school system.
- The participant spoke about the importance of adult attitudes.
- Whilst the participant celebrated children with significant SEND and felt they deserved a 'chance' in mainstream provision, I did struggle with her focus on getting children with significant SEND into specialist provision. She noted this was "rewarding" and "a massive step". I was cautious of questioning this too much because I didn't want my personal views to affect her account.
- The participant knows I have undertaken EP training. EPs are seen by some in the teaching profession as the 'gate keepers' to specialist provision. Does she think that because of this I would be in favour of specialist provision for children with significant needs?

Lauren

- Had interviewed for a leadership position in school earlier in the day.
- Sometimes hesitant. Difficulty expanding upon some of her responses at times.
- Lengthy pauses- initially caused me concern (was she having difficulties/feeling uncomfortable) however, as the interview progressed however, I recognised that Lauren appeared to be using these pauses as thinking time
- She spoke very little about how her experiences impacted her psychologically or emotionally. Could this be because Lauren did not feel that it was appropriate to discuss such issues with an individual situated beneath her in the school's hierarchical structure? Alternatively, I reflected that this could be due to Lauren's solution-focused approach

Caroline

- Caroline communicated her experiences readily and I found myself using fewer prompts and probes in comparison with other participant interviews.

- I wondered if our prior collegial relationship had influenced the flow of dialog- was she more comfortable/at ease as a result of this?
- I was interested in Caroline's work experiences before becoming a teacher- I wondered whether these early encounters may have influenced how Caroline makes sense of her experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.
- Caroline stressed that pastoral care is a large part of her role.
- She seemed concerned about the violence she associates with children with behavioural needs.

Kelly

- Kelly spoke with ease during our discussion. At times, I felt that we had deviated from the interview schedule. This caused me concern but during analysis I found that these moments elicited useful data and helped me develop a more holistic understanding of Kelly's personal values and beliefs.
- At times, the interview felt repetitive but it did produce a good amount of data.
- Kelly has had a long career in education. I found it very interesting to speak with an individual whose experiences in educational settings spanned three decades and gain insight into how these experiences were perceived to have changed over time.
- She feels that staff are now more accustomed to including children with SEND in mainstream settings than they may have been in the past and noted that the diversity of need within the mainstream classroom has increased.
- She feels the level of training and support in place to help staff accommodate and include children with SEND has reduced.
- She expressed empathy and understanding for children with SEND. However, she also indicated that she felt restricted as a practitioner.

Transcribing the interviews- September 2020

- Smith (2003)- If you do decide to tape and transcribe the interview, the normal convention is to transcribe the whole interview, including the interviewer's questions. Leave a margin wide enough on both sides to make your analytic comments. For IPA, the level of transcription is generally at the semantic level: one needs to see all the words spoken including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features are also worth recording. However, for IPA, one does not need the more detailed transcription of prosodic features of the talk which are required in conversation analysis.
- Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009)- Because analysis in IPA aims primarily to interpret the meaning of the content of the participant's accounts, it does not require a particularly detailed transcription of the prosodic aspects of the recordings. It does not require a record of the exact length of pauses, or of all non-verbal utterances as favoured by conversation analysis.

Initial noting- February 2020

- I need to consider my researcher bias about including children with significant SEND in mainstream school: I am broadly in favour of inclusion; I feel disheartened when people 'give up' on children with SEND in mainstream school; I wonder if there is a tendency for educators to be negative when asked about their experiences of including children with SEND in mainstream schools. I need to be aware of these and other preconceptions. I need to bracket this researcher bias.
- I have experienced some apprehension about beginning data analysis. I am concerned my data will not be sufficient to answer my research questioned. I am concerned I will not analyse it correctly.

- As I read more and more about analysis in IPA studies I am growing concerned that my data focuses on surface experiences of supporting children with SEND rather than more personal ones for the teachers/TAs. I am feeling anxious.
- I am worried about the amount of noting I am doing- is it too much? I don't want to miss anything that might be important/significant.
- I must remember that IPA requires much moving backwards and forwards through the stages of analysis than the simplified steps outlined Smith et al. (2009) might first indicate.

Exploratory comments- March 2020

- I took my first attempt to analyse the interview data from participant 1 (Chloe) to supervision. I had read "*This is close to being a free textual analysis. There are no rules about what is commented upon, and there is no requirement, for example, to divide the text into meaning units and assign a comment for each unit. Some parts of the interview will be richer than others and so warrant more commentary. Some of the comments are attempts at summarising or paraphrasing, some will be associations or connections that come to mind, and others may be preliminary interpretations. You may also find yourself commenting on the use of language by the participants and/or the sense of the persons themselves which is coming across. As you move through the transcript, you are likely to comment on similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying"* (Smith, 2007).
- I did not differentiated between descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments initially and felt that this demonstrated a lack of thoroughness and rigour. I revisited and differentiated between descriptive, linguistic [in italics] and conceptual [underlined] comments).
- Concern that I am not making enough conceptual comments. Smith et al. (2009) note that *"in our experience novice researchers tend to be too cautious, producing analyses that are too descriptive"*. However, this is only the first level of analysis. I am questioning whether this highlights my anxiety about moving away from the original words of the participants. I must remember that my interpretations are important. I must also ensure that these interpretation are "inspired by, and arose from, attending to the participant's words, rather than being imported from outside" (Smith et al., 2009).
- I must also remember that I cannot escape my subjective position- Smith et al. (2009) note "this type of reflexive engagement will differ from analyst to analyst and from project to project".
- I become more comfortable making conceptual comments as I become move through participant transcripts. I reflect that I may need to return to my earlier analysis and look again at my initial comments.

Developing subordinate and superordinate themes- March 2020

- I am worried that I have too many themes. I wonder if my number of themes is appropriate or whether this indicates that I have not achieved a higher level of abstraction.
- Do I need to write-up every theme? Have I rushed into superordinate themes too quickly? Could I group emergent themes according to commonality into subordinate themes and write about each of these? I could then move to a further level of grouping by creating superordinate themes.
- Can you 'code' an extract twice? e.g. "...is just not what they need that afternoon. Give them some time out. But then again that's something that not everybody [pause]

urm is happy to do" - 'coded' as 'empathy and understanding' AND 'conflicting attitudes amongst staff members'. Is this okay?

- I wonder if the titles of my themes reflect the accounts of participants closely enough. Am I encapsulating what is being said? There is a real value of hearing the particpants' voice and I need to attempt to use their words directly in my themes to help the reader enter their worlds. Have I been too vague because of concerns about my analysis/interpretations?
- I started collecting quotes initially after developing theme. I after analysing the interview from Participant 4 (Julie) I stopped doing this. I felt that it might be best to do this after organising the themes at the write-up stage as this would force me to return to the original text.
- Do I need to review and amend my emergent titles to portray the essence of what was said more?
- Some emergent themes have been given different titles when the share a similar meaning- do these need to be amended?
- I have noticed that 'impact on self' is emerging as a superordinate theme for many participants. I wonder if this is because of my bias of focusing on the psychological/emotional experiences of the teacher.

Drawing comparisons-April 2020

- I am finding it difficult begin group-level analysis where the focus is on overarching themes that appear to be shared in participant accounts. Each participant discusses their experience in their own way and I have endeavoured to represent each participant's account and uphold the individuality of these experiences (through my own interpretive lens). I recognise that there are comparisons to be drawn across the participant accounts e.g. most teachers/TAs made references to training and the need for more human support (sometimes this referred to a need to speak with others, to be listened to and have a safe space to share experiences). Colleague support- within school support seems to be more important than external professional support for participants.
- Whilst the themes discussed by several participants appear to be similar (emotional/psychological impact, parents, colleague support, school structure and environment, relationship with the child/empathy for the child etc.) the approaches they took when discussing differed. I need to find a way to reflect the individual story of each participant.
- Whilst some participants talk about the particular traits of individual children they have worked with SEND, the more important message coming through seems to be the uniqueness of each child- the heterogeneity of SEND.
- Should I search for commonality between subordinate themes or superordinate themes?
- If I compare subordinate themes/superordinate themes from individual participants- some of the recurrent emergent themes will be lost because of the different ways they were grouped at the individual-level. Smith et al. (2009) note- when working with larger samples *"it may even be the case that one identifies emergent themes at case-level but holds off the search for patterns and connections until one is examining all the cases together".* I think I should go back to my emergent themes- if they group together to form subordinate themes that are present in over half of cases- carry through.
- Must be careful not to miss the wood for the trees- following supervisors' advice- before doing this laid the tables onto a large surface and looked across them to see

which themes were most potent- compare the two.

Moving to write-up- April 2020

- My thoughts are that I should write a narrative account of the analysis in the 'results' section before moving onto the separate 'discussion' section which links back to the research questions and extant literature. In the results section, I wonder if it might be best to consider each participant separately so that their individual experiences can be upheld before moving onto the second level of analysis- focusing on the overarching themes that appeared to be shared between participants. This theme within-case approach seems to be less common but is advocated by Smith et al. (2009) *"…sometimes however it could be that one favours an idiographic presentation where the participant is prioritised and themes for each person are presented together (theme within-case)".*
- I need to think about what is important to include in the narrative. It is hard to eliminate any themes because I want to portray everything the educator said.
- I wish to present participant findings as separate sections before moving on to overarching themes (cross case comparison of themes). This would ensure that the individual account is the priority.
- Smith et al (2009) describe how IPA studies are commonly written up as narrative accounts which enable the reader to make sense of the researcher's sense-making of their data.
- Worried that I won't be able to answer the research questions! One of my supervisors asked "Were you able to make a clear separation between parts of the transcript that dealt with each question or did it work out differently in practice?" Whilst different questions in the interview schedule were designed to answer different research questions the narrative naturally blended.
- I must be careful with my use of participant quotes at the group-level write-up- ensure that the voices of all participants are heard.
- How am I going to compare between participant groups (teacher and TAs)? As a separate section in the results/ However- less variance between participant sub-groups than anticipated. Majority of group-level subordinate themes have TA and teacher contributors- theme structure would not look drastically different between TAs and teachers. Instead- comparison of TA and teacher contributed nested in the subordinate theme sub-sections
- Initially I began by directly comparing emergent themes- if they were not present in over half of the accounts they were excluded. Emergent themes that were carried through then to be grouped together. However, I realised that if I simply compared emergent themes, potent themes would be lost because lack of recurrence (e.g. dread, guilt), even though these fit well with other emergent themes (e.g. anxiety and worry)- must group emergent themes into subordinate themes initially so that data is not lost
- If I compare subordinate themes/superordinate themes from individual participants- some of the recurrent emergent themes will be lost because of the different ways they were grouped at the individual-level. Smith et al. (2009) note- when working with larger samples *"it may even be the case that one identifies emergent themes at case-level but holds off the search for patterns and connections until one is examining all the cases together".* I feel like I should go back to my emergent themes- if they group together to form subordinate themes that are present in over half of cases- carry through.

Appendix 7: Head Teacher Information Sheet (Head Teacher)

Title of Research Project: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of primary school educators' lived experiences of including children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

What is my role in the research?
I am currently undertaking some research for my Doctorate in Education (EdD) at The University of Birmingham.

What is the research project about?
The aim of the research is to explore the lived experience of educators supporting children with significant SEND within a mainstream primary school. The intention of the study is to investigate how teachers and teaching assistants perceive and conceptualise the presence of children with significant SEND in their classrooms. Moreover the study aims to explore the teachers' and teaching assistants' views of the facilitators and barriers to supporting children with significant SEND in a mainstream setting.

It is hoped that the current study will be a useful addition to the debate on inclusion and specifically to teaching professionals' attitudes to inclusion. Moreover, by involving both teachers and teaching assistant as participants in the research I hope the study will serve to bring the relatively unacknowledged 'voices' of TAs into the debate. At a more local level, it is anticipated that this study will have school-wide benefits by raising professional awareness of the lived experiences of teaching professionals within the setting in relation to teaching children with significant SEND and the facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of these children that are encountered. It is anticipated that in stimulating discussion and encouraging reflection upon current practice, the findings of the current research could potentially effect some positive systemic change within the setting.

Who is being asked to participate in the research?
The research will involve between six and eight participants who are teachers or teaching assistants at ***** Primary School. I intend to recruit three-four teachers and three-four teaching assistants. In terms of inclusion criteria, all participants are required to have a minimum of two years' experience in their teacher or TA positions. Moreover, participants must have had direct experience of supporting at least one child with an EHCP (used as an indication that the participant has experience of supporting a child with what I would consider to be significant SEND) in a 'typical' mainstream class (as opposed to an intervention group or provision).

Do members of staff need to take part in the research?
It is up to individual staff members to decide whether or not to take part in the research (no reason needs to be given for not taking part). The staff team will be informed about the nature of the study during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets will be provided. If a member of staff does decide that they will participate in the research, they will be asked to sign a consent form.

What will taking part involve?

The study will employ face-to-face semi-structured interviews with individual participants. The interview sessions are expected to last approximately one hour and will be conducted at ***** Primary School. Participants will be asked questions which will explore how they perceive and conceptualise the presence of children with significant SEND in their classroom and the facilitators and barriers to supporting these children they have experienced. The participant will not need to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer. Interviews will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Prior to the main study I have piloted the interview schedule. I have completed three pilot studies, the first being a self-pilot and the second two being participant pilots. It is anticipated that data collection will take place during Spring 2 half-term.

<u>If the participant agrees to take part, can they change their mind?</u>
Yes, the participant can stop taking part in the project before, during or after the interview takes place, even after they have completed the consent form. If they decide that they do not want to be involved in the research any more after the interview has taken place they will have four weeks from the interview date to ask for their data to be withdrawn. This can be done either by speaking to me in person or by contacting me using the contact details provided.

<u>What will happen to the data collected during the interview?</u>
Interview data will be treated as confidential. The real names of participants will not be reported, nor will any identifying information (e.g. names of individuals, organisations or geographical locations etc.). I will not discuss information shared in individual interviews with any other parties (e.g. other members of staff). Confidentiality may need to be breeched if a disclosure is made which suggests that the participant or others are in danger of harm or which indicates illegal activity.

Immediately after each participant interview, the electronically audio-recorded data will be transferred from the audio-recording device to a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare (a secure data storage system used by The University of Birmingham). The audio files will then be erased from the audio-recorder. Electronic transcripts and notes will also be held in a password protected folder on BEAR DataShare. Printed transcripts, written notes and consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. In accordance with university research policy, data will be stored on BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10 year expiry date will be set for the electronic data stored on BEAR DataShare. Any paper records will also be destroyed after 10 years.

<u>How will the findings be reported?</u>
Following data analysis, feedback reports will be sent to all participants, outlining the main findings of the research. Participants will be offered the opportunity to meet with me to further discuss the research findings. I will also inform participants that the research findings will be shared with the wider school team but that participants' interview responses will be presented collectively and that it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. Direct quotes from participants will not be included, nor will any other information that could serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them.

The final write-up of this project will form the basis of my thesis for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) which will be available online (and may be published at a later date). The interview transcripts will be included in the final write-up but any information which may serve to identify participants or the research setting (e.g. names of individual, organisations or geographical locations) will not be presented.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?
This project has been ethically approved by the University of Birmingham Ethical Review Committee.

What if I have questions or require more information?
If you have any questions or would like to discuss this research in more detail, please contact me, either in person or using the details below. If you are unhappy about anything during the research experience please contact my researcher supervisors who will be supervising this project.

Researcher:
Helen Riley
Tel: *****
Email: *****

Supervisors:
*****/ *****
Tel: *****/*****
Email: *****/*****

Thank you for your time and consideration

Appendix 8: Pilot Interview Schedule

Issue / Topic	Open-Ended Interview Questions	Potential Follow-Up Questions (Prompts)	Potential Probes
Introductions and gaining informed consent	• Thank the participant for agreeing to be interviewed. • Ensure that the participant has read the participant information sheet and has had the opportunity to ask any questions they might have. • Reiterate the expectations of the interview: o The interview should last approximately 60 minutes. o Whilst the interview questions have been developed to explore the topics I am interested in for my research purposes, the process is flexible and will be shaped by participant responses. o There are no right or wrong answers. I am simply interested in participants' lived experiences of teaching children with Education, Health and Care Plans. • Read through the consent form with the participant. The participant is to sign the consent form if they agree with the content. • Turn on the audio-recording device.		
Background and identity	Can you tell me a little bit about your current role in school?	• How long have you been in your current role? • What are the most/least enjoyable/rewarding aspects of your role? • Can you tell me a little bit about your professional experience/training prior to your current role? *Have you worked in other settings/worked in any different roles? What training did you undertake to become a teacher/teaching assistant?* • Why did you want to become a teacher/teaching assistant? *What did you think being a teacher/teaching assistant would be like?*	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
Perceptions around inclusion and teaching children with EHCPs in a mainstream	I wonder if we can start by thinking about what inclusion means to you?	• How would you describe your personal feelings towards inclusion/supporting children with EHCPs in a mainstream setting? • How do you feel inclusion/supporting children with EHCPs in a mainstream setting is viewed within the school team?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?

setting		• What were your initial thoughts when you heard you would have a child with an EHCP in your class/you would be supporting a child with an EHCP? • Is there anything you would share with other teachers/TAs about your experience of teaching a child with an EHCP?	
	Can you describe any positive experiences you have had in relation to supporting a child with an EHCP?	How did it feel when something went well?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
	Can you describe any issues or challenges that you have encountered in supporting a child with an EHCP?	How did it feel when you encountered these issues/challenges? How did you respond to these issues/challenges?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
Facilitators and barriers to supporting children with EHCPs	What support are you able to access associated with supporting children with EHCPs?	How did this support affect the experience of supporting a child with an EHCP? What more do you feel would be helpful in supporting children with EHCPs?	Anything else? Can you tell me more? Why do you think this is the case? I'm really interested in… Why is that important to you?
Concluding the interview	• Inform the participant that they have answered all of the questions I had wanted to ask them. • Ask the participant if there is anything that we have not discussed that they feel is important and would like to talk about. • Ask the participant if they would like to clarify or change anything they have said in the interview. • Ask the participant if they feel they have given a fair reflection of their perceptions in relation to teaching children with EHCPs. • Provide an opportunity for the participant to make any further comments or ask any questions. • Thank the participant for their time and end the interview.		

Appendix 9: Interview Recording Sheet

Date and Time of Interview:

Interview setting:

Participant's Role in School:

Observations/Additional Information (e.g. Non-Verbal Behaviour)

Points to Return to Later in the Interview:

Appendix 10: Example of Initial Noting and Developing Emergent Themes Stage of Analysis

Chloe

Emergent Themes	Transcript	Initial Notes (Descriptive comments, *linguistic comments*, conceptual comments)
Role as demanding and responsible Role-related stress Personal reward and job	R: So the first questions are just getting, er getting a little bit of your background if that's alright. So we'll just take about 10 minutes with that. So can you tell me a bit about your um current role in school? P: Um so I'm a teaching assistant in early years, in nursery. Um I do feel like I'm one of the teachers sometimes because obviously we have er our own key group, teach three sessions every day as well. Um but just supporting the teachers really. R: Yeah, yeah. And how long have you been doing that role? P: Um we...I've been here for three and a half years. R: And what did you do before that? P: Um I worked in private nursery. R: Right. P: So quite different, not as structured, um a bit more laid back. But still obviously the responsibility there. R: Yeah, yeah. Have you been doing...how long were you in, in the day nursery for? P: So I started in before uni it was in college, I started doing volunteering. R: Right. P: And then work experience. Um so it's been about seven, eight years maybe. R: Yeah. P: Yeah. R: And you went to...you said uni was that to do...what was that to do? P: So uni I had to do um [pause] the...it was for education, primary education. And I did placements for the last two years. So they lasted about six months each. R: Right, right fab. Um why did you want to become a teaching assistant or to work with children originally? P: Um to be honest, I just find it really rewarding. R: Yeah. P: That's one of the main things that I love about it. Um [pause] it is stressful. But I think that makes it more rewarding if that makes sense. R: Yeah. P: Um even just going home knowing that like, you know, you might have made a child smile or you might have, you know, just done something a bit nice for someone who doesn't necessarily get that. Um when I used to work in the private	Teaching assistant in Early Years. Sometimes feels she adopts teacher roles/ responsibilities 3 and a half years' experience at current school. Worked in a private nursery prior to this which was less structured. Worked in nursery for approximately 7-8 years. *'still responsibility there'*- current role as more demanding/responsible than previous role? University degree in primary education Working with children as rewarding and stressful Use of the word 'love' with regard to current role Stressful nature of the job contributes to the reward A sense of personal reward and job satisfaction A strong desire to feel

satisfaction	nurseries it's a lot different because obviously it was parents paying for like their children to go there. So I didn't feel like I was needed as much if that makes sense. R: Yeah. P: But then working here, it's so much nicer because you feel like the kids like really need you and they, I don't know, they just like that relationship don't they? R: Yeah, yeah. P: And sometimes you're like a second parent like, you know, you, you look after them, like you comfort them when they're not, you know, feeling great or yeah. I think that's one of the main reasons why I like doing it. R: Yeah. What about some of maybe the sort of....it sounds like there's lots of positives what are some of the maybe less positive things about being...about your role? P: Um [pause] I think like I said because it is so stressful. It is...I mean, it's challenging. But again, I feel like that makes it more rewarding. R: Yeah. What are the stressful parts? P: Um I think, I think just the, the workload like the amount to do. R: Yeah. P: So when you want, you want to give the children the attention and time, sometimes that's hard because you feel like you've got responsibilities as an adult to like do, you know, when you're filling in something for maybe like your performance management... R: Yeah. P: Or sil...just little things like that. And then you've got someone like who needs your attention and you think well, you know, how do I split my time? And... R: Yeah. P: …I think it is mainly workload. It's just it's really full on. R: Yeah, yeah, um thank you. Do you, do you feel like…is, is being a teaching assistant what you thought it would be like when you were initially training for it? P: um yes. But I think probably, I probably was quite naive about it. R: In what way? P: Um I probably didn't know how much like it, it actually entailed. Like how, how full on it would be. I, I don't know if that's just this school... R: Yeah. P: ...Because obviously I think, I think early years in this school is very different to a lot of schools like I've done placement on. Um but here I feel, I genuinely feel like I'm, I'm more than a teaching assistant if you know what I mean. R: Yeah. P: Which is a nice thing. It's not a bad thing. Um [pause] but yeah, very...just workload, crazy [laughs].	needed and that she has made a difference to a child's life *Comparisons drawn between mainstream setting and private nursery setting* Building relationships with children as important- '*like a second parent'*- feels her role is very important in the child's life Teaching assistant role as stressful and challenging (but this adds to the reward) *Emphasising the stressful nature of the role with the word 'so'* Large workload as a stressor in role Sees some aspects of her role as less important than spending time with the children Issues prioritising time- spending time with children or spending time attending to other teaching assistant responsibilities *'How do I split my time?'*- Feeling torn? Feels she was naïve about the teaching assistant role in the past *'crazy' workload*
Making a difference Building relationships Role as stressful and challenging Large workload Issues prioritising time Feeling torn Large workload		

Building relationships	R: Yeah, yeah. P: But I think, I do think I was really naive about that before I've started. Because one of the things that you think about when you, you know, you're a teaching assistant is right it's just to support the teacher. R: Sure. P: It's, yeah, it's to be there when the teacher needs you, it's to be there. You know, you're the one who can build relationships with the children that obviously the teacher might not have time to do. R: Yeah. P: But it, it's every...it's so much more than that. R: Yeah. P: A lot more than that. R: Thank you. So in this interview I'm going to be asking you some questions about your experience teaching children who um could be described as having significant special educational needs and disabilities in a mainstream setting like this one. Um but before we maybe move on to that I'm going to ask you about your experiences outside... P: Yeah R: ... of school [pause to rectify issue with the audio-recording equipment]. So, so how do you feel your experiences outside of work or maybe before you did your training have influenced your views on inclusion or have influenced um your views on teaching children with significant needs within a mainstream setting?	Feels she is more than a teaching assistant (this is not a bad thing). Questioning whether this could be specific to current school? Building relationships Feels her role has real importance and worth- role as more than 'just to support the teacher'
Inclusion as positive	P: Um I think parents and sort of home life often influences that. I mean, my mum and my dad have always been like really open-minded about stuff like that. There's never been like any judgment, you know, towards children with different needs or anything like that. It's always, you know, include everyone, everyone, even though they, you know, they might look a bit different or they might do something that's a bit different. Everybody's different. Everybody is special in their own way sort of thing. I think that. That's really important even when you're growing up. So the fact that you've got, you know, parents who really reinforce that. Um I have done quite...some different things when I was at uni um I did...I worked on a farm in [name of city].	Parents influenced views on teaching children with SEND. Parents open-minded, non-judgmental, accepting of diversity and difference Inclusion viewed as positive. Inclusion as a core value to the participant?
The importance of educational environment	R: Right. P: And it was for children who'd been excluded from a mainstream setting. R: Ah that's interesting. P: Um a lot of them had behavioural issues which obviously I wasn't really aware of because I was just there with them at that setting not the main...you know, the mainstream setting. Um but from what I could tell, none of them to me had behavioural issues. R: Really?	Past experience influenced views about inclusion- highlighted the importance of the educational environment Critical of a within-child approach?

	P: Yeah. R: Right. P: I remember... R: Because of the environment? P: Yeah, I remember what of like some the staff going through like so 'this is such a person, you know, he's, he's been excluded from like three schools. He's, he's having a lot of trouble within like mainstream settings. He's, he's not managing with like the structure part of the day or whatnot'.	In a non-mainstream, alternative setting, children who had been excluded from mainstream settings 'none of them to me had behavioural issues'
Valuing diversity	And then you see them in a different environment and it's like no these children haven't got behavioural problems. R: Right, right.	*'everybody's so different*- valuing diversity?
Lack of flexibility	P: Um I just feel like, that's another thing, I feel like because every....because everybody's so different and I think it's very similar to nurture because everybody so different it's just that, you know, they struggle more with sitting down at a desk and,	Children with SEND struggle with formal, structured learning
'Within-child' approach	you know, doing structured work. But I think we're very quick to say 'oh, they've got a behavioural problem' or 'oh, you know, this, this is not right'. Because it's always labelled as there's something wrong if you know what I mean? R: Yeah. Yeah no I do.	*'it's always labelled as there's something wrong'*- critical of this mind-set
	P: But it, it was very interesting working there. R: So what was your role? What... P: So I was, I was basically there as sort of a supervisor. But I also, I ended up um organising some of the activities that they did. But they, they just love it. Because obviously there was animals there, um there was lots of planting to do, we helped build like this big fence. R: And this was in when they, when they would have otherwise been at school until obviously... P: Yeah. Yeah. So they had to attend for so many hours. R: Right, right. P: Um but yeah from what I saw... R: What age were the children? P: ...They were 12-16. R: Right I see. P: From what I saw they were completely normal. R: Yeah, yeah. P: Just like just normal boys. They were all boys. R: Yeah. But they'd actually all been excluded from a mainstream setting? P: Yeah. Yeah.	*'completely normal'*- behavioural needs as abnormal?
Lack of training	R: Have you…what training or support have you received, so it might have been before um working here um or, or during, um about inclusion or about teaching children with significant SEND? P: Um [sighs] I feel like, I don't feel like I've had anything specific. Um you know that's just specifically for that. I feel like obviously we always talk about it and it's always something that's discussed in general.	Lack of specific training about inclusion/teaching children with significant SEND

	R: Sure.	Discussing particular children with colleagues informally
Support from colleagues	P: Um obviously, like with [name of child] and [name of child] this year it's been something that's been talked about a lot more. Um but I feel like, I do feel like I, I need to learn more about it.	
	R: Right yeah, yeah.	
	P: Um I do feel like we're lacking in specific training, things like that or even....	
	R: What do you mean…. specific training, what do you mean by that?	Eager to learn more and develop knowledge base
Self-growth	P: So even something, this is just an example. We've got a child starting next year and she's got um CF, she's got cystic fibrosis. Even things like that. I'd love to go on a training course even just to know more about that.	
	R: Yeah, yeah.	
	P: But that's obviously someone with different needs.	Can be hard to understand a child's needs unless you do your own research
	R: Yeah.	
	P: And sometimes it's hard to understand unless, you know, you've done your own research or you go out of your way to have a look at something. Um luckily enough one, one of my	
Lacking expertise	friends growing up had cystic fibrosis so I actually know quite a lot about it.	
	R: Right yeah, yeah.	
	P: But I feel like even a lot of the staff have said 'oh, it would make me feel so much more comfortable if we had like a little bit of training on it'. Or even if someone came in and just said 'look, this is what it is, you know, this is, this is how we work with people like that'. Just, just something really simple I guess. Um I think with the [name of child] thing as well, we, I mean, we discussed that with you a lot didn't we?	Lack of training feels uncomfortable- feelings of inadequacy, lack of expertise?
	R: Yeah, yeah.	Apart from informal colleague discussions- a lack of advice
	P: About how we could sort of give him a calming down time and things like that. Um but I feel like apart from you	
Children with SEND not a homogenous group	speaking to us about that we've not really had much advice on it or...	Specific advice is difficult as all children are different
	R: No, yeah, yeah.	
	P: Which again, is tricky because every child is different.	
Trial and error approach	R: Yeah of course.	Trial and error approach to working with children with SEND
	P: So it's not like you could say 'well this will work with him'. And it's just about trial and error isn't it at the end of the day.	
	R: What did your training look like before, before you were in um like jobs? Was it a uni, a uni course?	
	P: Um yeah. Yeah. So I've got, I've got honours.	
	R: Okay.	
	P: So I did three years at uni.	
	R: Right I see yeah, yeah.	
	P: I just didn't do my PGCE afterwards.	
	R: Right, right.	
	P: I think uni sort of, it's you, as you know you, uni's quite	

Learning through experience 'v' academic learning	hard because your opinion changes as, as you're there and obviously you going through the training and things like that. Um I think to be honest, most of the training that I'd say I had was experience rather than, you know, being in, you know, lectures and things like that. Um yeah that, that one at the farm, that was definitely like eye opening and really interesting. Um and then I worked at a mainstream setting. R: Sure. P: For a few moments as well in the year after. But in general specifically I don't, I mean, I wouldn't say I've actually got any like specific training if that make sense? R: No it does definitely. So how do you feel...do you feel um the training, what you have done, so obviously like talked about it, a lot of it being experience. Do you feel like that's influenced your views on inclusion? P: Yeah, definitely. R: In what way? P: Um like I said about the farm, that was, obviously, I wasn't in the mainstream setting, so if, you could say I'm slightly biased because I didn't see what happened at the school or I didn't know the reasons why they were excluded. So obviously I'm just a person who can judge them based on what I'm seeing at the farm. R: Sure yeah. P: Obviously their teachers might say, 'oh, well, do you know nothing like that at school no' and whatnot and I understand that completely. But from what I saw was that schools just need to adapt I guess. R: Yeah, yeah.	Opinions change at university as you go through training 'Hands-on' experiences more insightful than lectures
Schools as unaccommodating	P: Um like I guess like the nurture thing that we've been discussing um I do feel like we need to stop being so, like, structured. And if this doesn't work for a certain child that means that, you know, they need to move out of that setting it's not right for them. I feel like we should adapt more to their needs instead of the other way around. R: Yeah.	<u>Schools need to adapt to meet children's needs and be more accommodating?</u>
	P: You see, I think you do see it a lot don't you? More, more towards like well they can't cope with that so if we take them out of class and put them somewhere else. But its things like that as well, I think a lot of therapeutic stuff like gardening or like animals or things like that, we don't do that a lot at this school. And I think when you take your children to the forest you can see how different they are in the outdoor environment especially. I just, I do think that we, we do need to adapt more. Especially to the older ones as well.	Schools need to stop being as structured 'Well they can't cope with that so if we take them out of class and put them somewhere else'- <u>critical of this approach?</u>
Conflicting pressures for adults in education	R: Yeah. P: But sometimes it's impossible isn't it? Because you've got all, all the teachers have got pressure on to meet, to meet certain expectations and then, you know, sometimes there's not time to go outside or there's not time to do you know what	Children behave differently in different environments

	you consider like the fun things or the enjoyable things. R: Yeah, you just talked about pressure there to me. Where do you think that's coming from? P: Um just government I think. R: Yeah. P: [pause] I feel like a lot of people would probably have a similar opinion to me, like they, they would enjoy time with	Conflicting pressures for adults in education- meeting government expectations versus meeting the needs of children
Conflict between ideology and reality	the children that is more therapeutic but it's, it's just not possible. I do, I do think that um even speaking to people like further up the school like [name of staff member], she is of like a very open-minded opinion. But at the end of the day, she's, you know, she's got a job to do. R: Yeah.	<u>Conflict between ideology and reality?</u>- 'very open-minded…. but…she's got a job to do'
Feeling unprepared	P: And that is her role. She's, she's got to, you know, get those kids to a certain place. R: Yeah. Do you feel like what you have received in terms of training or experience of children with SEND um has that prepared you for your role now?	*Use of the word 'impossible' to highlight the difficulty of the situation*
Feeling overwhelmed	P: Um I think it has a lot of ways. Um again, I feel like every child is different. So sometimes preparing is impossible. You can only know so much, can't you? And then you meet someone like [name of child] for example, and you just think 'wow, I don't even know where to start'... R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...'Or what to do or what will work'. But I, I definitely think experiences like that, especially because it was (clears throat) out of the mainstream setting. So I've seen, you know, behaviour in a mainstream setting but then I've been able to see something that's outside of that. R: Yeah. P: I do think that's definitely, definitely influenced how I think about, you know, maybe we should adapt, adapt more to them. R: Yeah, yeah. I think, I think I've got an understanding	'Preparing is impossible', 'you can only know so much'- <u>self-justification?</u> <u>Feeling overwhelmed, out of depth?</u> *Use of second person-pronouns*- feels that others share her views? Experiences outside of mainstream education illuminating and has had a lasting impact on opinion- feels mainstream school should be more flexible
Additional adults	maybe of some of your views. But thinking about your current role, um how do you experience inclusion of children with SEND in a mainstream setting? P: Um [pause] I think at the minute the only example is [name of child] really. Um I feel like we're very lucky because there's five members of staff in nursery. I feel like um he's, he's kind of always got a constant one-one. Um and I do feel like he is...I do feel like he's included a lot in, you know, day-to-day stuff like day-to-day activities. But then again, it's the	The importance of additional adults in the classroom for inclusion of children with SEND 'lucky' that a child can have 'a constant one-one'
Children expected to adapt	structure that always gets in the way. So if something's different he just has to cope with it being different. R: Yeah. P: And that's, you know, something that we expect of him. So, you know, today we're, we're not going outside and you can't go out because [name of member of staff] is coming in to do games so you have to stay in here. Just simple things	*'it's the structure that always gets in the way'* We expect children to cope, adapt and 'fit in'

Knowledge of the child Children with SEND as vulnerable	like that. And he gets very upset and distraught by that but we expect him to cope with it. R: Yeah. P: …Because all the other children do if that makes sense. It's like we almost forget, you know, his needs for that second when the routine changes. R: Yeah, yeah. P: And we just expect him to sort of fit into all the changes that's been going on. R: Thinking about a child like um [name of child] that you mentioned or other children with significant SEND needs compared to maybe typical children... P: Yeah. R: ...In your class, obviously you've mentioned maybe those different, different times they really struggle with, when something happens that's different. What else might you see? What might their needs look like? P: Um [pause] he gets, I mean, he gets very distressed. I think it depends on obviously communication, but [name of child]'s communication isn't great. Which makes it even trickier to understand what his needs actually are. So for us at the minute, because we've got a good relationship with him it's just, it's based on how well we know him. So we know that he, he's got like a comfort thing so he carries a train around with him all the time. R: Yeah. P: And if he hasn't got that, then he's...something different's going on, he's very distressed, he's really upset. R: Yeah, yeah. P: Um a lot of the time it's very like, he just wants a hug and you know that he'll just want comforting because he'll just come up to you and touch your arm or like just touch a part of you and you think yeah he wants a hug or a cuddle or what, whatever. Um I think even [name of child] was quite he, I mean, even though he did a lot of things that we would sort of see as aggressive or you know, quite angry he'd still have that emotional need where he'd, he'd want some sort of like positive attention. R: Yeah. P: Um I know after he'd done something that obviously we've told him was not the right thing to do, he would often get upset and he would often want that attention. You know, after he'd calmed down and...the techniques that you gave us were really good because it helped him to calm down and give him time. But then it was the bit afterwards that he'd struggle with. R: Yeah. P: Because it's like, right I've had that calm down time now. So I want, I want like my emotional needs fulfilled so I want you to give me a hug. R: Yeah, yeah.	with mainstream education routines Children with SEND can have communication needs, struggle with changes in routine, become *distressed* Having a good relationship with children with SEND is important so as to understand their needs *Distressed, upset- terminology indicates empathetic approach* <u>Views children with SEND as needing comfort and emotional support?</u> Recognition of children's emotional needs

Anxiety and worry Lack of training Self-growth Lacking expertise Feeling overwhelmed Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND Lack of flexibility Inclusion and school priorities	P: Whereas it was like no you need to understand now. Yeah. R: Yeah. Um can you describe your initial thoughts when you, when you hear that you're going to have a child with really significant needs in the class and you're going to be supporting them? What are your initial, what's your initial response or reaction? P: Um I always get quite worried because...I think that's normal. Just because you feel like it's your response, responsibility to do the best that you can for that child. Um and again, I always think, like could there be something that we could have training on. Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it. Um but it's definitely worry or like 'oh what is it?' Like... R: And what's the worry about would you say? P: Um [pause] I think it is that, I think as humans we're very like, oh, it's something different. We, but we're very…in a way it is judgmental because obviously the, most of the time when these children come with different needs you think 'wow, it's not actually what I thought it was' or 'wow it's not actually as severe as people were making it out to be' R: Yeah. P: Because they, I mean they, I think they adapt very well to their environment even though they struggle if that makes sense. Um but I do feel like there, there is a lot of judgment because you initially think 'oh God, like how, how can I help them?' Like are they, are they going to come here and I'm not, I'm not going to be able to fulfill their needs, I'm not going to be able to support their needs because I don't know what their needs are. And... R: Yeah. P: ...If there's a lack of communication how, how do I understand what that child needs or, you know, what, what, what makes them sort of feel comfortable or be able to settle, especially in nursery because it's, I mean, it's quite a big deal isn't it when they first start anyway? Most of the children come in upset. So with...for a child with different needs that's always like oh God they, they're going to be so much more upset. Or they're going to be...it's going to take them so much longer to settle. Um but then it's not always like that. Sometimes, you know, they settle better than children that don't have specific needs. R: Yeah, yeah. For you what does, what does inclusion mean to you? P: Um [pause] I say it's all about adapting and being [sighs], being quite open-minded about, [pause] just about that child in, in particular. Um I feel like especially today, I mean I, I don't think it was like this when I was at school it definitely wasn't like this, but today I feel like there's a lot more structure, a lot more pressure from like teachers because	Initial response-worry, concern about the responsibility involved in doing your best for the child. A need for more training in order to feel more comfortable. <u>A lack of perceived expertise?</u> Initially we are judgmental, we worry when something is different *'oh God, how can I help them'*- <u>feeling overwhelmed, panicked?</u> Concern about how you can help children with SEND. How you can understand and fulfill their needs. <u>Lack of perceived expertise?</u> Often in reality the concerns you have regarding children with SEND are not fully realised Inclusion involves being adaptive and open-minded <u>Perceives schools as more inflexible and overly-structured in comparison to the past</u> *'Jam-packed'*

	they're under pressure. Um and I do feel like even our days	
Inclusion as positive	are more structured and everything just like jam packed like altogether. And I feel like sometimes we do forget about that inclusion. We forget that there are children that we need to, you know, maybe adapt to or we maybe need to treat a little bit differently or be a bit more sensitive around.	Teachers are under pressure Inclusion can be forgotten
Preparing for real life	R: Yeah. And do you feel like inclusion of children with those significant needs in mainstream school, do you think that's a good thing?	<u>There are always positives to take from inclusion</u>
Inclusion as not always possible	P: I think it is yeah, yeah. R: Do you think it's all, always a good thing? P: Um from my experiences I think there's always positives to take from it. Um I feel like it's good from the perspective that when they get older, this is real life if that makes sense. There's always going to be other children around, there's always going to be other people around. You're always going to have to do something that you don't necessarily want to do. Um I think, yeah, to be honest, I think it's, it is good in a way for preparing them for sort of what they're going to grow up to have to deal with. But obviously sometimes it doesn't work.	Mainstream as preparation for real life believes that 'obviously' inclusion doesn't always work
	R: Yeah. P: I think there's always positives. R: Are there any other benefits you can think of in terms of including children in, in mainstream? P: Um I think social aspects are really important. Especially, I think mental health today is, it's obviously a lot more	Importance of inclusion for socialisation- feeling part of a group, combating social anxiety
Lack of flexibility	focused on than when I was younger. There wasn't really much talk about like, you know, well this child's really anxious or they've got anxiety or whatever. R: Yeah. P: Um I feel like things like that even...there's a child in nursery at the minute and he gets anxious about being asked a	A <u>focus on anxiety in children- important to the participant</u>? Structure in mainstream
Empathy and understanding	question or put on the spot. And I always think it's quite sad to see because he shouldn't feel any sort of pressure, you know, to be asked a question at 3, 4 years old. It should just be oh yeah, that's fine. Like they're just talking to me.... R: Yeah. P: ...They're just having a conversation. But I do feel like again, that's, that's just come from how structured things are	school as detrimental to children with SEND <u>Empathetic to children with anxiety issues- resulting from personal experience?</u>
Children with SEND as excluded	and....but yeah the social side definitely. I feel like even for me personally, I think that if I was sort of given more opportunities as a child to be more social or to be involved more I feel like that probably would have changed me as an adult. R: Yeah.	
Peer acceptance	P: Because I, I mean I know, I know that most people have got like anxiety problems and even like me myself now I get nervous in some social situations. And I do feel like it's really important.	Children with SEND *'it's like they don't fit in anywhere'*
Children with	R: Yeah, yeah.	

SEND in need of protection and care	P: For them to be able to do that and interact and not only that but just feel part of a group which is always nice. Um I think children like that are always...it's like they don't fit in anywhere. Whereas in nursery it's so nice to see [name of child] just playing with everybody. And it's so nice to see that the children like completely understand that he speaks a bit differently than everybody else and he's sort of understanding is a bit slower. And they're only 3 and 4 and they completely understand that. The way that they like sort of talk to him and they'd, they, they sort of Mother him in a way, a lot of the girls. But even that's so nice to see. R: Yeah. P: I think that he, he will have benefited so much from things like that. You know, people coming up to him instead of him having to go up to other people and, you know, sort of make cues or, you know, can you play with me and do this. Instead it's, you know, those other children who were confident enough to invite him into... R: Yeah. P: ...Their play which is always nice. R: Do you think there are any cons to including those children with those significant needs in mainstream settings? P: Um I think it can be quite overwhelming for... R: The child? P: Like the child yeah. R: The child okay.	Younger children as inherently inclusive *'they sort of Mother him in a way'*- children with SEND as in need of maternal care and comfort? Importance of inclusion for socialisation Inclusion as overwhelming for the child with SEND- in need of protection and care?
School as increasingly structured	P: Um I think most of it's to do with structure again. So like today, for example, [name of child] been quite upset this morning because we've had graduation assembly um and then all of the parents came in to take pictures. But his Mum didn't. R: Right. P: So I think that was quite overwhelming for him. Just the fact that there's so many people in one space, um the noise because he doesn't like a lot of noise usually. Um and I don't think it applies to nursery because, I was going to say as well, do they sort of notice how different they are? And maybe they, they feel like they stand out a little bit. But I don't think that applies to... R: Right. P: ...Sort of early years. R: But maybe as they progress through the school that could become an issue?	Mainstreams schools as structured Inclusion becoming more difficult as you move through the school- in Early Year children don't notice difference to the same extent, accepted by peers
Children's progress as personally rewarding	P: Yeah, yeah. R: Yeah, yeah. Brilliant thank you. Can you, can you describe any um positive experiences you've had in relation to teaching or supporting children with SEND? P: Um I think this year's been really positive with [name of child]'s needs and his action plan and even, obviously, [name of child]'s not here now. R: Yeah.	

Admiration and pride	P: And even though that was, that was obviously really difficult for everybody involved. Even seeing him make small improvements. R: Yeah, yeah. P: Like when we, you know, we tried some of the techniques that you suggested to us, like even being aware of things like that. You know, sometimes all you need is for the child to calm down before they understand what they've done is not the right thing to do. R: Yeah. P: Um I think, I do think it's very rewarding seeing those small, little steps. Like from...when [name of child] started in September to now. I can't believe even though someone else would come in and say, like 'well can't speak still'. R: Right. P: And 'he can't form a sentence and he can't do this', from my perspective he's a completely different child. R: Right.	Seeing small improvements after using recommended techniques as a positive and rewarding In-depth knowledge of the child- recognising the progress others might not see '*amazing*'- <u>admiration, a sense of pride?</u>
Additional adults	P: And the fact that he walks into nursery and he, he just sits down and gets on with something, that, I think that's amazing because he wasn't able to do that at first. R: And what sort of things do you think have contributed to those small steps? P: Um I definitely think the number of staff. So him having a lot of attention. R: Yeah. P: Um at the beginning, obviously, there was less children. So he had that sort of one-one straight from the off. R: Right. Yeah, yeah. P: Um he's always had [name of staff member] there to help him. She sort of does phonics with him but just by himself.	Success attributed in part to the high adult to child ratios- less overwhelming for child with SEND
Empathy and understanding	R: Yeah. P: Um I do feel like that's important as well. Having that extra person, I know it's not possible everywhere... R: Yeah. P: ...And in all mainstream settings. But I think because of that, he's not felt as overwhelmed as he probably would if there wasn't, you know, that, that extra person to be able to support him.	Additional adult support- *'there to help him', 'that extra person to be able to support him'*
A need for emotional support	R: Yeah, yeah. P: Um it would have meant that he would have had to sit during sessions which he can't do. He physically can't do that. Um and I don't, I don't think he would have coped with it in general, three sessions a day. I mean he only does half day now and that's enough for him. R: Right.	<u>Empathetic towards needs of the child?</u> 'he physically can't do', 'I don't think he would have coped'
Feeling worthwhile	P: So he only stays till one o'clock [pause] but you can tell that that morning, that really helps him and it really benefits him because for most of the time he is happy. Um I think, I'm not sure about obviously I'm not too sure about Mum or like	Child with SEND in need of emotional support- they get this in nursery

	the family background, but I do think even that emotional...like he gets a lot of emotional attention in nursery. And I do feel like he needs that. R: Yeah, yeah. P: It's really important. R: How does it feel when you, when you, you see things do go well so you see those small steps of progress? P: Um I just feel like everything's worthwhile. Like that, that's always one of the reasons why I've wanted to work with children and in particular children who [pause] yeah especially those children who, not need your help, but you can sort of see don't, don't get those things that they might necessarily need at home. Um yeah seeing [name of child] make progress has, it's been lovely. R: Yeah. P: Like it, it kind of makes you a bit defensive because he's going to a different school in September so he's not staying with us. And when they came in to see him and talk about him, it does make you feel like really defensive. Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September. Like oh God like it's, it's the worry inside like what do we do? Like, how can we help him? How can we, you know, make the children sort of integrate with him and it's, they, it's all those feelings again because we had those in September. R: Yeah, yeah. P: But when, when the, there's his key work in September she came to see him in the environment and she was really lovely. Um but one of the other teachers was saying 'well we might not start him in September. We might wait till October when everyone else is settled'. R: Right. : But she made that judgment before even sort of seeing him or knowing anything about him um which, you know, you could say that might be the right thing but it might be the wrong thing. I guess that's just, you know, for them to decide. But yeah, I, I always feel defensive over him. Like I always want to say 'oh, look what he can do' which in someone else's eyes might be like 'oh, that's not that good'. But in our eyes it's like well yeah it is because he couldn't do anything like this in September. R: Yeah. Do you, how do you think that compares to maybe a typical child in, in your class? Do you think you're more or less defensive as you described it? P: Um I think, I think less defensive because it's...I feel like [name of child] can't defend himself or he can't prove that he is like a really amazing child. Whereas other children they can easily communicate, they can show how confident they are by doing something that they're interested in. Or even, I mean like some of the girls in nursery, they make pictures and	Personally gratifying when there are small steps of progress- 'I just feel like everything's worthwhile'. Particularly when working with children who 'don't get those things that they might necessarily need at home' Feelings of defensiveness regarding children with SEND 'the worry inside like what do we do?'- anxiety provoking, feeling unsure Adults without the same in-depth knowledge of the child as concerned about how to support the child Questioning other adults' attitudes towards inclusion Other adults as judgmental of children with SEND? 'they're like we were in September'- understanding and empathy Attitudes changing over time More defensive of children with SEND- children with SEND as defenseless? In need of a
Feeling defensive of children with SEND Anxiety and worry Attitudes of other educators Attitudes changing over time Celebrating children with SEND		

	they come and show you and you know that you can tell that they're really proud of what they've done and stuff like that. I feel like [name of child] doesn't have like the sort of ability to do that. R: Yeah, yeah. P: So it's, it's always nice but even, even when he does something small, it's always nice to make a big deal out of it and sort of...I mean, he's been repeating small things recently. Um I keep saying to him not again when the tower falls down. And he sort of makes the sound. He's sort of goes 'not again'. Like that [laughs]. R: Yeah. P: And even seeing things like that, it's that oh that's so nice. Like someone else would think 'oh wow his speech is so delayed' and, you know, 'he's, he's nothing like all the other children'. But when, obviously, when you, you build a relationship with that child you don't see them like that. R: Yeah. P: But yeah, very defensive because it's like well [name of child] can't defend himself and he can't, you know, he can't show everyone that he's amazing because he struggles to communicate. So it's always...we're always like singing his praises. R: Yeah. Can you describe any issues or challenges you encountered when you're working with children with significant SEND? P: Um I think most of the things would be towards knowledge and training. So I think that's, I mean, I think that's me personally to be honest, how I feel. I don't know if that's something that's specifically challenging but it's just me personally thinking right I need to know more about their needs or I'd like to educate myself more about, you know, what that entails or what that child might need on a, a daily basis compared to, you know, most of the other children. I do feel like if we didn't have that extra member of staff, I feel like that would be really tricky. R: Yeah. P: I feel like if it was a different setting maybe [name of child] wouldn't have thrived as well, or maybe he, he would have done better. It could have worked either way. Um but I feel like that one-one or even just someone specific to build a relationship with, I think that is really important. And obviously that won't happen everywhere. R: Yeah. Just going back to what you were saying...talking about knowledge and, and training. How do you respond? You've, you've obviously you've when you've had children that have come into the setting... P: Yeah. R: ...And you, you feel like you don't know enough about their needs. How do you...what do you do about that?	champion? 'even when he does something small, it's always nice to make a big deal out of it' Perceptions of children with SEND change as relationship develops- noticing small steps of progress Building relationships 'we're always like singing his praises', 'he's amazing'- championing the child, proud of their achievements? Lack of training as a challenge to supporting children with SEND- 'I need to know more about their needs' If the number of adults were reduced 'that would be really tricky' A specific person to build relationship with the child with SEND as important
Building relationships Lack of training Lacking of expertise Additional adults The importance of experience Support from colleagues		

	P: Um sometimes I talk to people who I know have had more experience.	Experience as central to supporting children with SEND
Support from school leaders	R: Yeah.	
	P: Um so, I mean, even obviously yourself when you gave us some ideas and suggestions. I think just talking about it.	Talking about children with colleagues- sharing ideas, sharing concerns
Inclusion and school priorities	R: Yeah.	
	P: Because even then you start to realise that it's not just you who's you know quite worried about how little you know about that condition or...	Training needs acknowledge to by some members of SLT- concerns are listened to when voiced
	R: Sure.	
	P: Um and I do feel like if I, if I do speak to someone, say, for example, [name of head of school] and I say to her 'oh I think it'd be really useful if we had this sort of training or I think it'd be useful if we did this'.	
Coping and managing	R: Yeah.	'if it can *fit in* somewhere'- inclusion training and its relative weight in the wider school agenda?
	P: I feel like that's, that's always taken on board. You know if it can fit in somewhere.	
	R: Yeah, yeah. Um is there anything else that you want to talk about in terms of challenges maybe within the classroom, anything day-to-day that you can find tricky?	
	P: [pause] I do think there's a lot of pressure on staff in general with children with different needs. Um especially in Early Years, I feel like it's sort of assumed that we just manage and get on with it. Um sometimes like when we've had that, that meeting that we had for nurture before it started. I feel like a lot of the staff were talking about children that, you know, have been to our nursery and reception and that we struggled to manage their behaviour with. But now it's sort of more recognised just because they're in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.	Pressure on staff, particularly in Early Years- 'we just *manage* and get on with it'- coping mentality?
	R: Why do you think that is?	Behavioural difficulties less acknowledged in Early Years
	P: Um [pause] I think sometimes it's almost as if, oh well they're only babies still. So it might...maybe it's an assumption that they'll change and they'll be like normal, like everybody else.	'an assumption that they'll change and they'll be like *normal*, like everybody else'
Emotional and behavioural difficulties	R: Yeah, yeah.	
	P: Um maybe it's just a phase that they're going through. Or maybe, you know, by the time that they get to year 1 they will have adapted so well that they won't stand out as much or things like that really. Um I feel like [name of child]'s an example as well.	
	R: Right.	
	P: I, when I first started in nursery he was there.	
	R: Oh okay.	Emotional difficulties ('angry or upset') 'I found his behaviour *really, really* difficult'
Coping and managing	P: And [name of member of staff] was his key worker. And I found his behaviour really, really difficult. Um he was very emotional, like whether it was angry or upset. It was either, you know, it was always an extreme. So he's either like really, really lovely or really angry or really upset.	
	R: Right.	*Repetition of the word 'really' to emphasise*

School as increasingly structured Frustration Feeling defensive of children with SEND Empathy and understanding Balancing the needs of the	P: Um and I feel like we were expected to manage that sort of on a daily basis, because maybe, maybe people think, well, there's not as much formal teaching so, you know, it's more manageable or it's more like well they're just in the environment so it's quite easy to cope with. And then when we have meetings like that it's always interesting because [name of child] crops up a lot and it's like 'well [name of child] does this and [name of child] does that'. And me and [name of member of staff] always think well [name of child] has always done that since nursery. Nothing's changed. We already had that information, we already knew that about him. It's just that obviously he's gone into a more structured class, a more formal class. R: Yeah. P: Um where he's expected to be the same as everybody. Whereas in nursery and reception, I feel like you can express yourself a bit more and, I don't know, you can be a, a bit more of an individual. Whereas, you know, you get to year 1 and it's like everyone sat down at a desk, everyone's doing, you know, the same thing. R: Yeah. P: But yeah, that's quite frustrating I think. Um it's almost as if they've, they've not realised, you know, we, we have this child and we could be doing something now to assist the needs as soon as they start in nursery. But it's sort of only recognised when they get to year 1 when, you know, the formal teaching starts and they struggle a lot more with structure. R: Yeah. How does it feel when you encounter the, some of the problems and the challenges that you've spoken about? P: Um I feel like it's one of the things that like really, really stresses me out about the job. R: Right. P: Um it's one of the things that I go home saying like 'that's really annoyed me, that's made me like really cross'. Um but again, I think it's a defensive thing because you almost...I feel like my experiences I've known what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else. So I feel like, I always think, well, why aren't we adapting to them? Why aren't we doing this for them? Um I always think, like, what more can we do? Like how can we help? How can we make it easier for them? Um I think nurture's fantastic, but I also think that there's issues with that still. I've, I've said this to [name of assistant executive Head Teacher] already, I've spoke to [name of assistant executive Head Teacher] about this. I do think it's become sort of an excuse to maybe just push children who struggle to be in class. Just like 'right, well you can go and hide in there' sort of thing. R: Right okay. P: I understand that obviously for them it's, it's maybe like a	*point* Children with SEND in Early years 'we were expected to manage'- 'easy to cope with' as there is less formal teaching- <u>frustration that issues were not addressed in the early years?</u> School as progressively more formal and inflexible Frustrating that needs are not met earlier in school 'one of the things that like *really, really* stresses me out about the job', 'made me like really cross'- <u>defensive and empathetic towards children with SEND- a consequence of personal experience of being different to others?</u> <u>Feeling like school isn't doing enough for children with SEND?</u> Nurture provision

one with the needs of the many Children with SEND not a homogenous group Some children with SEND may be overlooked Support from colleagues Attitudes of other educators	break, so they get a break out of class. But I feel like sometimes it's more of a break for the teachers. So it's not necessarily thinking about what's best for them. R: Right. P: It's more about what's best for all the other children... R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...And the class teacher. Because it's...which I completely understand because it's so difficult... R: Yeah. P: When you've got someone, you know, who's distracting the class, who you can't do, you know what you expect of them. It's so frustrating. But I do feel like nurture's, even though it's really good and it's got, you know, it's got lots of positives, I do feel like there, there needs to be sort of...we need to look at it more and think 'right, how can this not just be, OK, you've done something that we can't handle in class, so you need to go to nurture'. R: Right. So would you say that a lot of the children nurture are they...is there a certain kind of child that is accessing the nurture? P: Yeah, I think it's the more disruptive children yeah. R: Right. P: Which I sort of, when I first...what I suggested that I was interested in it, I thought, well, you know, it'd be really interesting to work with...I've had [name of child] and [name of child] in the past. And I've, I'm quite, quite close to Mum because I've had both of them in my group. And I've always thought they'd benefit so much from like just a quiet like group of children. Just being able to socialise without being, you know, too overwhelmed. I thought that's what it was going to be. R: Right. P: But instead, I think it's sort of become like for the disruptive children. R: Right. And how often do they...because how often are you doing, running nurture? P: So I do it...I only do it Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I know [name of staff member]'s in there every morning. And I think she's going to be in there permanently, isn't she, in September? R: Right, right. P: So...which I think is good because it probably means that they'll maybe develop it more or, you know, maybe work something, work something out where it's not just those children who are going in there. I think it's, it's the same again. It's always the quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety that always miss out on things like that. R: Yeah, yeah. That's really interesting. Thank you. Um what do you think exists um to support you or facilitate you in	'fantastic' but simply a way to remove children who struggle in class from the classroom? 'More of a break for the teachers… it's not necessarily thinking about what's best for them….it's more about what's best for all the other children…and the class teacher' <u>Nurture provision for disruptive children who 'we can't handle in class'?</u> Children who distract the class as frustrating Other children ('the quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety') are overlooked- <u>personal significance for the participant?</u> Having someone to speak

	teaching children with significant needs? P: Um I think there's always someone to speak to. So there's always sort of, like I said about training, there's always someone to suggest like 'maybe we could do this'. I feel like, I feel like because everyone's so open-minded, everyone just	to and who can offer advice and make suggestions as a facilitator
Flexibility of school leaders	listens to each other. So it's like 'well, I have this idea, do you think we could try this or um, you know, I have, I have an idea that might work for this child, but it might not work for, you know, someone else. But we could still try it'. You know,	Having open-minded colleagues- willing to try new approaches
Support from colleagues	if we're...if staffing's okay and it's not an issue. Um I feel like we develop our, especially in Early Years, we develop our behaviour management policy quite a lot. R: Right.	
	P: Um and I feel like we're sort of given freedom to do that. I don't think, you know, [name of executive Head Teacher] and [name of assistant executive Head Teacher] expect us to follow it to a tee. I feel like they do give us a lot of freedom with that which is good. Um [pause] yeah, I think it's the team in general they're, just the Early Years team, I think we just, because we understand each other so well and we understand how difficult it is, I think we, it's the support's always just there in terms of oh well I know that I can go and talk to [name of researcher] if I'm, if I'm struggling with such a thing. R: Yeah. P: Or, you know, I'd, even though we don't speak to each	Freedom and flexibility with behaviour management policy Early Years team supportive and understanding
Empathy and understanding	other a lot, we all know that, that we can come and talk to each other... R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...About, you know, a specific child or even if it just 'oh have you had any experience with a child who's got needs like this?'. Like it's, it's always just nice to have so many staff to	Sharing experiences and opinions within the team
Time pressures	be able to speak to and get different opinions from. R: Yeah, yeah. What about um external professionals? Do you do you speak with many professionals externally, outside of school? P: I speak to...so I've had a few counselling sessions before for my anxiety. Um apart from that, not really. Um I do have a lot of friends who were sort of working in social care and things like that. It's always nice to speak to them. R: Yeah, yeah.	<u>Personal experience of anxiety- influencing perceptions?</u> Pressure exists for other professionals-
Attitudes of other educators	P: But I feel like, again, it's highlighted that there's a lot of pressure. So when I ask sort of for, for advice maybe or, you know, what would you do about this or what would you do about...have you ever experienced a child, you know, with these needs? I feel like they're very similar to me in that	'I feel like they're *very similar to me* in that they'd, they'd like to do more but there's that much pressure that they feel like they've not got the time'
Lack of empathy and understanding in others	they'd, they'd like to do more but there's that much pressure that they feel like they've not got the time. R: Yeah, yeah. P: There's, you know, there's too much paperwork or there's	'too much paperwork'

Conflicting views amongst individual staff members	too much other stuff to do. R: Yeah. And what do you think some of the barriers are to teaching children um with significant needs? P: Um I think how, how judgmental people are sometimes is a barrier. Um I don't think that happens in Early Years a lot but I do feel like even walking through the school with [name of child] even that's difficult sometimes. R: Right. In what way? P: Um we've walked past, past [name of executive Head Teacher]'s office before and he's I think he's, he's quite loud sometimes when he, you know, he makes the noises that he does. R: Yeah. P: And she's...I thinks she's made like a passing comment, like 'shhh, you know, like, no, no talking in the hallway' R: Right P: Or whatever. Like things like that. R: Yeah, yeah. P: Um obviously we understand that that's just [name of child]. And, you know, he's not meaning any harm by it. But I think, I do think being more sensitive and being more understanding... R: Yeah. P: ...Goes a long way. And I do think we're all just a bit like 'oh do this, you know, you know be in line and be like everybody else. And, you know, make sure you're one behind the other'. I think its simple things that don't actually matter. Like it doesn't matter that they're not in a line and it doesn't matter that they're not one behind the other because you know they're just kids. R: Yeah, yeah. How do you feel inclusion, inclusion is viewed in the wider school team? P: Um [pause] I feel like there's a lot of traditional views, maybe some of the older staff see it as more behavioural rather than, you know, they actually have additional needs. R: Right okay. P: Um I feel like that, that meeting, that nurture meeting really opened my eyes to some people's opinions because I thought as, you know, as a teacher or someone who works in education you have to be open-minded because otherwise you're not really going to learn anything new. Or you're not really going to sort of develop your practice. Um I was quite surprised by some of the older members of staff saying like, you know, well if they'd done something wrong then they should be punished or they should be disciplined. I was quite surprised by that. I think that is a very traditional like view. Um and again, I always think we make it bigger than it is. So we always see what a child has done and we always sort of blow it out of proportion and think like 'wow, that's the worst thing you could have possibly done'. Whereas humans we, I	Perceives staff attitudes towards children with SEND as a potential barrier to inclusive practice Some individuals within school as judgmental (but not in the Early Years team)- an othering approach? Some members of staff not sensitive to the needs of children with SEND The need to conform in mainstream settings as unnecessary 'they're just kids' Traditional views held by older staff members- response to poor behaviour should be discipline and punishment Other members of staff not as open-minded *'I was quite surprised'*- disapproving? An attitude that is not aligned with the participant's core values? Are we overreacting to poor behaviour? Children

	mean we constantly make mistakes anyway. And adults do. It's not like it's just children. Adults are constantly making mistakes and they're constantly apologising for things whereas, you know, that, that expectation is still there with the child. But it shouldn't be because, you know, they're in a development stage. They're learning from peers and, you know, grown-ups who they look up to. Um but yeah that...I do think that whole, you know, that child should be disciplined, there should be, you know, a consequence...I'm not saying I don't agree with consequences. And I'm not saying that I don't agree with discipline but I think it become quite negative words. Um I think discipline should mean, you know, knowing what you've done wrong and maybe learning from it. Like so being able to say, look, this is what I did wrong and um I understand that now because, you know, I've been spoken to by an adult and I understand that maybe so, for example, if they hurt a child. I can see that that child's upset. R: Yeah. P: Even for me that's a punishment, knowing that, you know, they've done something wrong and they, they probably feel bad about that as children. Even that's a punishment. But I do feel like some other members of staff are like 'oh no, you know, it needs to be something specific. Like they, they need to, you know, not get a reward for something. Everyone else can have a reward but they can't or...' R: Yeah. And how do you feel that sort of barrier that you've identified affects your experience of then supporting children with significant needs? P: I think, I think that's why I had to speak out in that meeting. Because what was being said really, it did make me really angry, to be honest. Um I feel like it prevents people from maybe doing what they think would be the best thing and just sort of accepting, you know, what, what the general, general like staff think. So okay most, most of the staff thinks that there should be a consequence for that but a couple of the staff don't but we'll just go with the general. It...I think you're just expected to think like everybody else. Like you, you're sort of looked at and thought, well, you know, well, [name of staff member] thinks like this so that means that, you know, we, we're just going to go with that and we...that's what we're going to do like for all the children who have different needs. R: Yeah, yeah. P: Um I do find that hard. I think it's...I'm, I'm always surprised at how like confrontational people can be about it as well. Because I think that meeting got very confrontational. And I think a lot of people got quite upset by that meeting. Um and I understand...it's like sometimes they think 'oh, well you don't understand because you're in early years. You don't understand that we, we have formal teaching to do and you	are still learning how to behave Negative connotations associated with discipline and consequences 'it did make me really angry'- *use of emotive language* A perceived need to align with the general consensus when viewing challenging behaviour- *use of second person pronouns- feels that others share her views* Questioning her power position in school? Dealing with challenging behaviour as a contentious issue 'you don't understand because you're in early years'- them and us mind-set? School is about more than academic education
A perceived need to align with the general consensus when viewing challenging behaviour Questioning power positions in school Schools as unaccommodating		

Conflicting views amongst individual staff members Time pressures Developing a holistic view of the child Empathy and understanding	don't understand that, you know, there are things, there are standards that we have to meet'. But then at the same time I feel like they need to understand that it's, it's not just about that. It's not just about, you know, have they done, you know, this exam right? Have they done this handwriting right? I think a lot of us need to understand that, you know, it matters how we feel and it matters whether, you know, they're not, they're not able to cope in class. Like why can't they cope in class. We're always, you know, we're always thinking 'all right well we'll just solve it by doing this'. But I think we often fail to ask ourselves questions like that. R: Yeah. P: Like well what are we, what are we doing wrong and what's making them not being able to, you know, sit down and just do an activity like what's the problem? Is there a problem there or do they just learn differently? Does that mean that, you know, we can adapt something to them? Um I, yeah, I do feel like sometimes people are very negative about it and that affects people who try to be more positive. R: Yeah. So apart from maybe that sort of teacher and teaching assistant attitude or staff attitude in school, is there anything else that you feel is a, like so a barrier to supporting those children with significant needs? P: Um I feel like senior staff could be more open-minded to it definitely. Um again, I think it's, I don't think it's anything that people are ignoring on purpose. I just think everyone's time's just restricted. Everyone's, everyone is feeling the pressure. So I think that things that maybe are seen as less important are sort of just ignored until they get really severe and then you have to do something about it. Um I feel like with, you know, with [name of child]'s behaviour, sometimes I see him on the corridor and he's just sat in the corridor. And I always think to myself, well should you be sat there? What, how do I feel about him sat there? Why is he sat there? Um could, could he be doing something else, like could something else of, you know, been done for him to, to make him feel a bit more comfortable. But then there's always the flip side to it as well. R: Yeah. P: There's always well, you know, some of it is behaviour and some of it is him just refusing to do things. So it is hard. I can, I completely understand, you know, where other teachers are coming from. R: Yeah. What do you think would be more helpful um in supporting children with significant needs? P: Um I definitely think that we need more training, but maybe more training to do with mental health. R: Right. Yeah. P: Um [pause] I feel like even though we're very aware that some of our children have, you know, tough family	We often don't think about how we can adapt to meet the needs of some children <u>Perceives herself as having a positive attitude towards supporting children with SEND as opposed to some other staff members?</u> Negative attitudes can influence those with positive attitudes Senior staff could be more open-minded 'I don't think it's anything that people are ignoring on purpose. I just think everyone's time's just restricted. Everyone's, everyone is feeling the pressure' 'things are ignored until they get really severe' A need to meet the needs of children whilst not being overly-permissive A need for more training-mental health training The family backgrounds and mental health of children can be quickly forgotten in class

Changing perspectives Developing a holistic view of the child Empathy and understanding Children with SEND not a homogenous group	backgrounds, I think we very quickly forget that when we're actually in class. Um I mean we know how hard it is sometimes when we've got personal things going on and we come in class. And we have to put on a brave face, don't we? We have to act like there's nothing going on for the children. And I think we, we need to understand that sometimes, you know, we're expecting the children to do that really. Because we're expecting them to come in when they might have, you know, something might have happened at home or they might even just be in a different mood. But we're still expecting them to do everything that we want them to do. Um which is quite hard, because like I said, even as adults like, I mean I, sometimes when I'm not in the best of moods, it might even just be that I'm hungry. Like I need some food [laughs]. R: Yeah. P:And I think I can't do that until I've eaten. I think we, we really, really do like these things just slip our minds. Like, well maybe you know, maybe that child doesn't want to do that today because they don't feel in the best of moods. Um I feel like all the staff would benefit from mental health, some sort of mental health training. R: Yeah. P: Not just for children, but I feel like just personally. I think it opens you up to a lot of different things as well. Maybe takes away like those traditional views of, you know, everyone should be punished or everyone should have consequences. I think we more need to look at you know, how, how can we be more sensitive, how can we be more understanding? Um I don't think children, you know, just wake up and think 'well, do you know what, today I'm going to be horrible for my teacher and I'm going to, you know, do really horrible things and I'm going to have a really bad day'. I don't think children think like that. I think that something happens that maybe they're not happy with or that they can't function with and that's the reason why they act like they do or they react to, you know, something it can be...sometimes it can be a trigger. You know, something just triggers it and that's it they've...you can't get them back after that. R: Yeah. P: Um I feel like, I do feel like nurture could be a lot different. [Pause] But again, it's hard to say how because, you know, the children are so different in there. But I do think that nurture definitely needs to progress into something that we initially said. Because we initially talked about nurture being, you know, not just behaviour, but somewhere for children who aren't very confident to be. And, you know, just to sit and have a nice, quiet time. Um I know that [name of child] and [name of child] they sometimes get like really overwhelmed with sometimes even just how noisy like the environment is or how like fast paced it is so, you know,	Drawing comparisons between children with SEND and herself-empathy and understanding Training may help individuals to consider their traditional perspective and be more sensitive and understanding A need to understand the underlying causes and triggers of challenging behaviour Nurture provision could help but should not just be used for disruptive children School life as fast paced

	we're doing this now, we're doing this next and then it'll be dinner time and we need to do it in that order. Um I think that's quite hard for some children. So it would be nice to see nurture develop a little bit more. R: Well thank you very much for that. I think I've asked now all the questions that, that I'd wanted to ask. Is there anything else you want to add that you think really important to talk about? P: Um [Pause] Not that...no not that I can think of. R: And are you happy with everything that you said? You don't want to change anything? P: No. No. That's fine. R: Well I'll pause that there.	

Appendix 11: Example of Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes

Chloe

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes	Emergent themes	Quotes from the transcript
Personal commitment to inclusion	Personal values and beliefs about inclusion	Inclusion as positive (2)	I mean, my mum and my dad have always been like really open-minded about stuff like that. There's never been like any judgment, you know, towards children with different needs or anything like that. It's always, you know, include everyone, everyone, even though they, you know, they might look a bit different or they might do something that's a bit different. Everybody's different. Everybody is special in their own way sort of thing. I think that. That's really important even when you're growing up. So the fact that you've got, you know, parents who really reinforce that. R: Yeah. And do you feel like inclusion of children with those significant needs in mainstream school, do you think that's a good thing? P: I think it is yeah, yeah. R: Do you think it's all, always a good thing? P: Um from my experiences I think there's always positives to take from it.
		Valuing diversity	P: Um I just feel like, that's another thing, I feel like because every....because everybody's so different and I think it's very similar to nurture because everybody so different it's just that, you know, they struggle more with sitting down at a desk and, you know, doing structured work. But I think we're very quick to

			say ‘oh, they've got a behavioural problem’ or ‘oh, you know, this, this is not right’. Because it's always labelled as there's something wrong if you know what I mean?
		Preparing for real life	Um I feel like it's good from the perspective that when they get older, this is real life if that makes sense. There's always going to be other children around, there's always going to be other people around. You're always going to have to do something that you don't necessarily want to do. Um I think, yeah, to be honest, I think it's, it is good in a way for preparing them for sort of what they're going to grow up to have to deal with. But obviously sometimes it doesn't work..
		Inclusion as not always possible	But obviously sometimes it doesn't work.
	Reflecting upon own development	Lack of training (3)	P: Um [sighs] I feel like, I don't feel like I've had anything specific. Um you know that's just specifically for that. I feel like obviously we always talk about it and it's always something that's discussed in general. Um and again, I always think, like could there be something that we could have training on. Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it. R: Yeah. Can you describe any issues or challenges you encountered when you're working with children with significant SEND? P: Um I think most of the things would be towards knowledge and training. So I think that's, I mean, I think that's me personally to be honest, how I feel. I don't know if that's something that specifically challenging but it's just me personally thinking right I

			need to know more about their needs or I'd like to educate myself more about, you know, what that entails or what that child might need on a, a daily basis compared to, you know, most of the other children.
		Lacking expertise (3)	P: But I feel like even a lot of the staff have said 'oh, it would make me feel so much more comfortable if we had like a little bit of training on it'. Or even if someone came in and just said 'look, this is what it is, you know, this is, this is how we work with people like that'. I always think, like could there be something that we could have training on. Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it. Um but it's definitely worry or like 'oh what is it?' Like... R: And what's the worry about would you say? P: Um [pause] I think it is that, I think as humans we're very like, oh, it's something different. I don't know if that's something that's specifically challenging but it's just me personally thinking right I need to know more about their needs or I'd like to educate myself more about, you know, what that entails or what that child might need on a, a daily basis compared to, you know, most of the other children.
		Self-growth (2)	P: So even something, this is just an example. We've got a child starting next year and she's got um CF, she's got cystic fibrosis. Even things like that. I'd love to go on a training course even just to know more about that. Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it.

		Learning through experience ‘v’ academic learning	Um I think to be honest, most of the training that I'd say I had was experience rather than, you know, being in, you know, lectures and things like that.
		Trial and error approach	P: Which again, is tricky because every child is different. R: Yeah of course. P: So it's not like you could say ‘well this will work with him’. And it's just about trial and error isn't it at the end of the day.
		The importance of experience	R: ...And you, you feel like you don't know enough about their needs. How do you...what do you do about that? P: Um sometimes I talk to people who I know have had more experience. R: Yeah. P: Um so, I mean, even obviously yourself when you gave us some ideas and suggestions. I think just talking about it. R: Yeah.
	Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND	Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND	Um but I do feel like there, there is a lot of judgment because you initially think ‘oh God, like how, how can I help them?’. Like are they, are they going to come here and I'm not, I'm not going to be able to fulfill their needs, I'm not going to be able to support their needs because I don't know what their needs are. And... R: Yeah. P: ...If there's a lack of communication how, how do I understand what that child needs or, you know, what, what, what makes them sort of feel comfortable or be able to settle, especially in nursery because it's, I mean, it's quite a big deal isn't it when they first start anyway? Most of the children come in upset. So with...for a child with different needs that's always like oh God they, they're

			going to be so much more upset. Or they're going to be...it's going to take them so much longer to settle. Um but then it's not always like that.
		Feeling unprepared	P: Um I think it has a lot of ways. Um again, I feel like every child is different. So sometimes preparing is impossible. You can only know so much, can't you? And then you meet someone like [name of child] for example, and you just think 'wow, I don't even know where to start'... R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...'Or what to do or what will work'.
		Feeling overwhelmed (2)	So sometimes preparing is impossible. You can only know so much, can't you? And then you meet someone like [name of child] for example, and you just think 'wow, I don't even know where to start...' R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...'Or what to do or what will work'. Um but I do feel like there, there is a lot of judgment because you initially think 'oh God, like how, how can I help them?'. Like are they, are they going to come here and I'm not, I'm not going to be able to fulfill their needs, I'm not going to be able to support their needs because I don't know what their needs are.
		Anxiety and worry (2)	P: Um I always get quite worried because...I think that's normal. Just because you feel like it's your response, responsibility to do the best that you can for that child. Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September. Like oh God like it's, it's the worry inside like what do we do? Like, how can we

			help him? How can we, you know, make the children sort of integrate with him and it's, they, it's all those feelings again because we had those in September.
		Feeling torn	P: So when you want, you want to give the children the attention and time, sometimes that's hard because you feel like you've got responsibilities as an adult to like do, you know, when you're filling in something for maybe like your performance management... R: Yeah. P: Or sil...just little things like that. And then you've got someone like who needs your attention and you think well, you know, how do I split my time? And...
		Frustration	R: Yeah. How does it feel when you encounter the, some of the problems and the challenges that you've spoken about? P: Um I feel like it's one of the things that like really, really stresses me out about the job. R: Right. P: Um it's one of the things that I go home saying like 'that's really annoyed me, that's made me like really cross'.
		Feeling worthwhile	R: How does it feel when you, when you, you see things do go well so you see those small steps of progress? P: Um I just feel like everything's worthwhile. Like that, that's always one of the reasons why I've wanted to work with children and in particular children who [pause] yeah especially those children who, not need your help, but you can sort of see don't, don't get those things that they might necessarily need at home. Um yeah seeing [name of child] make progress has, it's been lovely.

Connecting with the child	Empathy and understanding	Children with SEND as vulnerable	Um a lot of the time it's very like, he just wants a hug and you know that he'll just want comforting because he'll just come up to you and touch your arm or like just touch a part of you and you think yeah he wants a hug or a cuddle or what, whatever. Um I think even [name of child] was quite he, I mean, even though he did a lot of things that we would sort of see as aggressive or you know, quite angry he'd still have that emotional need where he'd, he'd want some sort of like positive attention.
		A need for emotional support	Um I think, I'm not sure about obviously I'm not too sure about Mum or like the family background, but I do think even that emotional...like he gets a lot of emotional attention in nursery. And I do feel like he needs that. R: Yeah, yeah. P: It's really important.
		Children with SEND in need of protection and care	The way that they like sort of talk to him and they'd, they, they sort of Mother him in a way, a lot of the girls. But even that's so nice to see. R: Yeah. P: I think that he, he will have benefited so much from things like that.
		Developing a holistic view of the child (2)	P: Um [pause] I feel like even though we're very aware that some of our children have, you know, tough family backgrounds, I think we very quickly forget that when we're actually in class. Um I don't think children, you know, just wake up and think 'well, do you know what, today I'm going to be horrible for my teacher and I'm going to, you know, do really horrible things and I'm going to have a really bad day'. I don't think children think

			like that. I think that something happens that maybe they're not happy with or that they can't function with and that's the reason why they act like they do or they react to, you know, something it can be...sometimes it can be a trigger. You know, something just triggers it and that's it they've...you can't get them back after that.
		Empathy and understanding (6)	I feel like even for me personally, I think that if I was sort of given more opportunities as a child to be more social or to be involved more I feel like that probably would have changed me as an adult. R: Yeah. P: Because I, I mean I know, I know that most people have got like anxiety problems and even like me myself now I get nervous in some social situations. And I do feel like it's really important. P: Um it would have meant that he would have had to sit during sessions which he can't do. He physically can't do that. Um and I don't, I don't think he would have coped with it in general, three sessions a day. I mean he only does half day now and that's enough for him. P: Um it's one of the things that I go home saying like 'that's really annoyed me, that's made me like really cross'. Um but again, I think it's a defensive thing because you almost...I feel like my experiences I've known what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else. So I feel like, I always think, well, why aren't we adapting to them? Why aren't we doing this for them? Um I always think, like, what more can we do? Like how can we help? How can we make it easier for them? But we're still expecting them to do everything that we want them to do. Um which is quite hard, because like I said, even as adults

			like, I mean I, sometimes when I'm not in the best of moods, it might even just be that I'm hungry. Like I need some food [laughs]. R: Yeah. P:And I think I can't do that until I've eaten. I think we, we really, really do like these things just slip our minds. Maybe takes away like those traditional views of, you know, everyone should be punished or everyone should have consequences. I think we more need to look at you know, how, how can we be more sensitive, how can we be more understanding?
		Peer acceptance	P: I speak to...so I've had a few counselling sessions before for my anxiety. P: For them to be able to do that and interact and not only that but just feel part of a group which is always nice. Um I think children like that are always...it's like they don't fit in anywhere. Whereas in nursery it's so nice to see [name of child] just playing with everybody. And it's so nice to see that the children like completely understand that he speaks a bit differently than everybody else and he's sort of understanding is a bit slower. And they're only 3 and 4 and they completely understand that.
	Celebrating children with SEND	Celebrating children with SEND Feeling defensive of children with SEND (2)	P: So it's, it's always nice but even, even when he does something small, it's always nice to make a big deal out of it… P: Like it, it kind of makes you a bit defensive because he's going to a different school in September so he's not staying with us. And when they came in to see him and talk about him, it does

			make you feel like really defensive. Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September. P: Um it's one of the things that I go home saying like 'that's really annoyed me, that's made me like really cross'. Um but again, I think it's a defensive thing because you almost...I feel like my experiences I've know what it's like to be maybe like not the same as everybody else.
		Children's progress as personally rewarding	P: Um I think, I do think it's very rewarding seeing those small, little steps. Like from...when [name of child] started in September to now. I can't believe even though someone else would come in and say, like 'well can't speak still'. R: Right. P: And 'he can't form a sentence and he can't do this', from my perspective he's a completely different child. R: Right.
		Admiration and pride	P: And the fact that he walks into nursery and he, he just sits down and gets on with something, that, I think that's amazing because he wasn't able to do that at first.
		Attitudes changing over time	Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September. Like oh God like it's, it's the worry inside like what do we do? Like, how can we help him? How can we, you know, make the children sort of integrate with him and it's, they, it's all those feelings again because we had those in September.
	Relationship with the child	Building relationships(3)	P: And sometimes you're like a second parent like, you know, you, you look after them, like you comfort them when they're not, you know, feeling great or yeah. I think that's one of the main

			reasons why I like doing it. You know, you're the one who can build relationships with the children that obviously the teacher might not have time to do. Like someone else would think 'oh wow his speech is so delayed' and, you know, 'he's, he's nothing like all the other children'. But when, obviously, when you, you build a relationship with that child you don't see them like that.
		Knowledge of the child	So for us at the minute, because we've got a good relationship with him it's just, it's based on how well we know him. So we know that he, he's got like a comfort thing so he carries a train around with him all the time. R: Yeah. P: And if he hasn't got that, then he's...something different's going on, he's very distressed, he's really upset.
	Heterogeneity of children with SEND	Emotional and behavioural difficulties	And I found his behaviour really, really difficult. Um he was very emotional, like whether it was angry or upset. It was either, you know, it was always an extreme. So he's either like really, really lovely or really angry or really upset.
		Children with SEND not a homogenous group (3)	P: Which again, is tricky because every child is different. R: Yeah of course. P: So it's not like you could say 'well this will work with him'. And it's just about trial and error isn't it at the end of the day. R: Right. So would you say that a lot of the children nurture are they...is there a certain kind of child that is accessing the nurture? P: Yeah, I think it's the more disruptive children yeah. R: Right.

			P: Um I feel like, I do feel like nurture could be a lot different. [Pause] But again, it's hard to say how because, you know, the children are so different in there. But I do think that nurture definitely needs to progress into something that we initially said. Because we initially talked about nurture being, you know, not just behaviour, but somewhere for children who aren't very confident to be. And, you know, just to sit and have a nice, quiet time. Um I know that [name of child] and [name of child] they sometimes get like really overwhelmed with sometimes even just how noisy like the environment is or how like fast paced it is so, you know, we're doing this now, we're doing this next and then it'll be dinner time and we need to do it in that order. Um I think that's quite hard for some children. So it would be nice to see nurture develop a little bit more.
		Some children with SEND may be overlooked	I think it's, it's the same again. It's always the quiet children and the children who struggle socially and with anxiety that always miss out on things like that.
Working within the school system	Inclusion and school priorities	Conflict between ideology and reality	…even speaking to people like further up the school like [name of staff member], she is of like a very open-minded opinion. But at the end of the day, she's, you know, she's got a job to do.
		Conflicting pressures for adults in education	P: But sometimes it's impossible isn't it? Because you've got all, all the teachers have got pressure on to meet, to meet certain expectations and then, you know, sometimes there's not time to go outside or there's not time to do you know what you consider like the fun things or the enjoyable things. R: Yeah, you just talked about pressure there to me. Where do you think that's coming from? P: Um just government I think.

		Issues prioritising time	P: So when you want, you want to give the children the attention and time, sometimes that's hard because you feel like you've got responsibilities as an adult to like do, you know, when you're filling in something for maybe like your performance management... R: Yeah. P: Or sil...just little things like that. And then you've got someone like who needs your attention and you think well, you know, how do I split my time? And...
		Inclusion and school priorities (2)	Um and I do feel like even our days are more structured and everything just like jam packed like altogether. And I feel like sometimes we do forget about that inclusion. P: Um and I do feel like if I, if I do speak to someone, say, for example, [name of head of school] and I say to her 'oh I think it'd be really useful if we had this sort of training or I think it'd be useful if we did this'. R: Yeah. P: I feel like that's, that's always taken on board. You know if it can fit in somewhere
		Large workload (2)	R: Yeah. What are the stressful parts? P: Um I think, I think just the, the workload like the amount to do. P: Which is a nice thing. It's not a bad thing. Um [pause] but yeah, very...just workload, crazy [laughs].
		Time pressures (2)	I feel like they're very similar to me in that they'd, they'd like to do more but there's that much pressure that they feel like they've not got the time.

			R: Yeah, yeah. P: There's, you know, there's too much paperwork or there's too much other stuff to do. Um again, I think it's, I don't think it's anything that people are ignoring on purpose. I just think everyone's time's just restricted. Everyone's, everyone is feeling the pressure. So I think that things that maybe are seen as less important are sort of just ignored until they get really severe and then you have to do something about it.
		Balancing the needs of the one with the needs of the many	P: I understand that obviously for them it's, it's maybe like a break, so they get a break out of class. But I feel like sometimes it's more of a break for the teachers. So it's not necessarily thinking about what's best for them. R: Right. P: It's more about what's best for all the other children... R: Yeah, yeah. P: ...And the class teacher. Because it's...which I completely understand because it's so difficult...
		Children with SEND as excluded	Um I think children like that are always...it's like they don't fit in anywhere. Whereas in nursery it's so nice to see [name of child] just playing with everybody.
	Lack of flexibility in the mainstream classroom	The importance of educational environment	P: Um a lot of them had behavioural issues which obviously I wasn't really aware of because I was just there with them at that setting not the main...you know, the mainstream setting. Um but from what I could tell, none of them to me had behavioural issues. R: Really? P: Yeah.

			R: Right. P: I remember... R: Because of the environment? P: Yeah, I remember what of like some the staff going through like so ‘this is such a person, you know, he's, he's been excluded from like three schools. He's, he's having a lot of trouble within like mainstream settings. He's, he's not managing with like the structure part of the day or whatnot’. And then you see them in a different environment and it’s like no these children haven't got behavioural problems..
		Schools as unaccommodating (2)	P: Um like I guess like the nurture thing that we've been discussing um I do feel like we need to stop being so, like, structured. And if this doesn't work for a certain child that means that, you know, they need to move out of that setting it’s not right for them. I feel like we should adapt more to their needs instead of the other way around. I think a lot of us need to understand that, you know, it matters how we feel and it matters whether, you know, they're not, they're not able to cope in class. Like why can't they cope in class. We're always, you know, we're always thinking ‘all right well we'll just solve it by doing this’. But I think we often fail to ask ourselves questions like that. R: Yeah. P: Like well what are we, what are we doing wrong and what's making them not being able to, you know, sit down and just do an activity like what's the problem? Is there a problem there or do they just learn differently? Does that mean that, you know, we can adapt something to them?

		Lack of flexibility (3)	P: Um I just feel like, that's another thing, I feel like because every....because everybody's so different and I think it's very similar to nurture because everybody so different it's just that, you know, they struggle more with sitting down at a desk and, you know, doing structured work. But I think we're very quick to say 'oh, they've got a behavioural problem' or 'oh, you know, this, this is not right'. Um I feel like especially today, I mean I, I don't think it was like this when I was at school it definitely wasn't like this, but today I feel like there's a lot more structure, a lot more pressure from like teachers because they're under pressure. Um and I do feel like even our days are more structured and everything just like jam packed like altogether. But I do feel like again, that's, that's just come from how structured things are and....but yeah the social side definitely.
		School as increasingly structured (2)	Um and I don't think it applies to nursery because, I was going to say as well, do they sort of notice how different they are? And maybe they, they feel like they stand out a little bit. But I don't think that applies to... R: Right. P: ...Sort of early years. R: But maybe as they progress through the school that could become an issue? P: Yeah, yeah. P: Um where he's expected to be the same as everybody. Whereas in nursery and reception, I feel like you can express yourself a bit more and, I don't know, you can be a, a bit more of

			an individual. Whereas, you know, you get to year 1 and it's like everyone sat down at a desk, everyone's doing, you know, the same thing.
		Children expected to adapt	So if something's different he just has to cope with it being different. R: Yeah. P: And that's, you know, something that we expect of him. So, you know, today we're, we're not going outside and you can't go out because [name of member of staff] is coming in to do games so you have to stay in here. Just simple things like that. And he gets very upset and distraught by that but we expect him to cope with it. R: Yeah. P: …Because all the other children do if that makes sense. It's like we almost forget, you know, his needs for that second when the routine changes. R: Yeah, yeah. P: And we just expect him to sort of fit into all the changes that's been going on.
	Colleague support	Additional adults (3)	Um I feel like we're very lucky because there's five members of staff in nursery. I feel like um he's, he's kind of always got a constant one-one. Um and I do feel like he is...I do feel like he's included a lot in, you know, day to day stuff like day to day activities. R: And what sort of things do you think have contributed to those small steps? P: Um I definitely think the number of staff. So him having a lot of attention. R: Yeah.

			P: Um at the beginning, obviously, there was less children. So he had that sort of one-one straight from the off. R: Right. Yeah, yeah. P: Um he's always had [name of staff member] there to help him. She sort of does phonics with him but just by himself. R: Yeah. P: Um I do feel like that's important as well. Having that extra person, I know it's not possible everywhere... R: Yeah. P: ...And in all mainstream settings. But I think because of that, he's not felt as overwhelmed as he probably would if there wasn't, you know, that, that extra person to be able to support him. I do feel like if we didn't have that extra member of staff, I feel like that would be really tricky.
		Support from colleagues (4)	P: Um [sighs] I feel like, I don't feel like I've had anything specific. Um you know that's just specifically for that. I feel like obviously we always talk about it and it's always something that's discussed in general. R: Sure. P: Um obviously, like with [name of child] and [name of child] this year it's been something that's been talked about a lot more. R: ...And you, you feel like you don't know enough about their needs. How do you...what do you do about that? P: Um sometimes I talk to people who I know have had more experience. R: Yeah. P: Um so, I mean, even obviously yourself when you gave us some ideas and suggestions. I think just talking about it.

			R: Yeah. Um what do you think exists um to support you or facilitate you in teaching children with significant needs? P: Um I think there's always someone to speak to. So there's always sort of, like I said about training, there's always someone to suggest like 'maybe we could do this'. I feel like, I feel like because everyone's so open minded, everyone just listens to each other. Um [pause] yeah, I think it's the team in general they're, just the Early Years team, I think we just, because we understand each other so well and we understand how difficult it is, I think we, it's the support's always just there in terms of oh well I know that I can go and talk to [name of researcher] if I'm, if I'm struggling with such a thing. R: Yeah. P: Or, you know, I'd, even though we don't speak to each other a lot, we all know that, that we can come and talk to each other...
		Support from school leaders	P: Um and I do feel like if I, if I do speak to someone, say, for example, [name of head of school] and I say to her 'oh I think it'd be really useful if we had this sort of training or I think it'd be useful if we did this'. R: Yeah. P: I feel like that's, that's always taken on board. You know if it can fit in somewhere.
		Flexibility of school leaders	Um I feel like we develop our, especially in Early Years, we develop our behaviour management policy quite a lot. R: Right. P: Um and I feel like we're sort of given freedom to do that. I

			don't think, you know, [name of executive Head Teacher] and [name of assistant executive Head Teacher] expect us to follow it to a tee. I feel like they do give us a lot of freedom with that which is good.
	Attitudes of other educators	Conflicting views amongst individual staff members (2)	Um I was quite surprised by some of the older members of staff saying like, you know, well if they'd done something wrong then they should be punished or they should be disciplined. I was quite surprised by that. I think that is a very traditional like view. P: Like well what are we, what are we doing wrong and what's making them not being able to, you know, sit down and just do an activity like what's the problem? Is there a problem there or do they just learn differently? Does that mean that, you know, we can adapt something to them? Um I, yeah, I do feel like sometimes people are very negative about it and that affects people who try to be more positive.
		Changing perspectives	Um I feel like all the staff would benefit from mental health, some sort of mental health training. R: Yeah. P: Not just for children, but I feel like just personally. I think it opens you up to a lot of different things as well. Maybe takes away like those traditional views of, you know, everyone should be punished or everyone should have consequences.
		Attitudes of other educators (3)	P: But when, when the, there's his key work in September she came to see him in the environment and she was really lovely. Um but one of the other teachers was saying 'well we might not start him in September. We might wait till October when everyone else is settled'. R: Right. P: But she made that judgment before even sort of seeing him or

			knowing anything about him um which, you know, you could say that might be the right thing but it might be the wrong thing. I guess that's just, you know, for them to decide. I feel like, I feel like because everyone's so open minded, everyone just listens to each other. So it's like 'well, I have this idea, do you think we could try this or um, you know, I have, I have an idea that might work for this child, but it might not work for, you know, someone else. But we could still try it'. P: Um I think how, how judgmental people are sometimes is a barrier. Um I don't think that happens in Early Years a lot but I do feel like even walking through the school with [name of child] even that's difficult sometimes.
		A perceived need to align with the general consensus when viewing challenging behaviour	Um I feel like it prevents people from maybe doing what they think would be the best thing and just sort of accepting, you know, what, what the general, general like staff think. So okay most, most of the staff thinks that there should be a consequence for that but a couple of the staff don't but we'll just go with the general.
		Questioning power positions in school	It...I think you're just expected to think like everybody else. Like you, you're sort of looked at and thought, well, you know, well, [name of staff member] thinks like this so that means that, you know, we, we're just going to go with that and we...that's what we're going to do like for all the children who have different needs.
		Within-child approach	Because it's always labelled as there's something wrong if you know what I mean?

		Lack of empathy and understanding in others Coping and managing (2)	P: Um obviously we understand that that's just [name of child]. And, you know, he's not meaning any harm by it. But I think, I do think being more sensitive and being more understanding... R: Yeah. P: ...Goes a long way. P: [pause] I do think there's a lot of pressure on staff in general with children with different needs. Um especially in Early Years, I feel like it's sort of assumed that we just manage and get on with it. P: Um and I feel like we were expected to manage that sort of on a daily basis, because maybe, maybe people think, well, there's not as much formal teaching so, you know, it's more manageable or it's more like well they're just in the environment so it's quite easy to cope with.
Emergent themes not incorporated into superordinate themes (potentially used within pen portrait): Role as demanding and responsible Personal reward and job satisfaction Making a difference Role-related stress Role as stressful and challenging			

Superordinate themes	**Subordinate themes**
Personal commitment to inclusion	Personal values and beliefs about inclusion
	Reflecting upon own development
	Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND
Connecting with the child	Empathy and understanding
	Celebrating children with SEND
	Relationship with the child
	Heterogeneity of children with SEND
Working within the school system	Inclusion and school priorities
	Lack of flexibility in the mainstream classroom
	Colleague support
	Attitudes of other educators

Appendix 12: Looking for Patterns Across Cases Stage of Analysis

Number of participants who contributed to the overarching subordinate themes	Overarching subordinate themes across cases	Individual Participant Emergent Themes							
		Julie	**Chloe**	**Lorna**	**Jim**	**Donna**	**Lauren**	**Caroline**	**Kelly**
8/8	**The psychological and emotional impact on self**	Personal reward (3) Making a difference Hopelessness (2) Coping mentality Frustration (3) Feeling underprepared Going in 'blind' Battle A war to be fought Emotional labour (2) Perceived lack of power and influence (2) Feeling restricted Guilt	Children's progress as personally rewarding Feeling worthwhile Making a difference Concern about fulfilling the needs of children with SEND Coping and managing (2) Frustration Feeling unprepared Anxiety and worry (2) Questioning power positions in school Feeling overwhelmed (2) Feeling torn	Success with a child as personally rewarding Personal reward and job satisfaction Personal satisfaction and pride Failure, hopelessness and personal responsibility Initial response to children with SEND as fear	Having a unique impact Feeling like you are failing the child Feeling unprepared A battle Lacking power Lack of control Relentlessness (2) Chasing your tail (2)	Coping and managing Frustration and resentment Feeling frustrated and helpless A battle to win Riding the storm Emotional impact Relief Feeling disappointed in the system Living in dread	Personally rewarding Inability to help Power and influence Position in school	Failing the child (2) Feeling prepared The front line Emotional labour Anxiety and concern Emotional, negative initial response Lack of control (3) Lacking control and power Dread Guilt (2) Self-doubt	Feeling like you are failing the child (3) Relief Feeling restricted as a practitioner (2)
7/7	**Doubting expertise**	A lack of training (2) Training (2) Perceived lack of knowledge and expertise Knowledge and expertise Sharing knowledge and expertise	Lack of training (3) Lacking expertise (3)	Lack of training Additional training	Training Mainstream teachers as lacking the skills and expertise to support children with SEND		A lack of training Training (2) Lack of perceived expertise A lack of knowledge (2) Lacking expertise (2)	Limited SEND training in initial teacher training Specific training for a specific child The nature of training Training (2) Lacking expertise	Limited training (4) Training and support Training Lack of specialised staff Developing expertise Specialist provision staff as having greater expertise Doubting own expertise Knowledge and expertise of others
7/8	**The importance of experience**	Perceived lack of experience Learning through experience 'v' academic learning (2)	The importance of experience Learning through experience 'v' academic learning Trial and error approach	Past experience Lack of experience of children with SEND		Trial and error approach	The importance of experience	Learning as you go along	Past experience Training 'v' experiences
4/8	**Adapting practice and being open to change**		Self-growth (2)			A staff team willing to embrace change Traditional views 'v' being open to change Adapting to the needs of the child A flexible approach Flexibility	Accepting support and advice Willing to adapt practice and incorporate new ideas Adapting practice (7) Seeking knowledge Continued learning (2) Self-development (5) Being reflective (7) Willing to adapt practice and incorporate new ideas Problem–solving approach A pro-active approach Using own initiative (4)		Adapting to meet the needs of the child (2)

8/8	**The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream school context**	Learning environment Inclusion and school priorities School environment as structured Lack of support (4) A lack of consistency in adult approach (2)	The importance of educational environment Conflicting pressures for adults in education Inclusion and school priorities (2) Schools as unaccommodating (2) Lack of flexibility (3) School as increasingly structured (2) Children expected to adapt	The regimented mainstream classroom Physical barriers in the school setting Fitting in A lack of support in school Lack of funding SEND resources in mainstream schools	The importance of the learning context The importance of the school context (2) SEND and school priorities (2) Inclusion becoming more difficult moving up the school (2) Limited physical space Fitting in SEND support in place in school as inadequate Assessment without providing the initial support A differentiated curriculum (6)	Financial restraints The importance of consistency (5) Rules and consistency Developing a shared understanding amongst staff members	Data (3) Conflict in school priorities School performance Inclusion and school priorities (2) Pressures of a fast-paced curriculum Mainstream curriculum as restrictive (2) The pace of the school day Physical building as a barrier Lacking support A lack of funding Consistency Structure and routine Children with SEND in need of an individualised approach Children with SEND in need of additional consideration Practical adaptations Physical adaptations Additional resources Lack of resources Technological support	Fitting in (2) Catching up and fitting in	Inclusion and school priorities (5) The rigidity of the mainstream school context School as overly-structured The mainstream conveyor belt Children have to adapt Schools in the UK as academically focused Physical space Fitting in (2) A lack of support A change in level of support Accessibility of support Lack of funding (4) Children with SEND require a differentiated curriculum Lack of resources (2)
8/8	**The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting**	Inclusion as difficult Children with SEND as excluded Inclusion disadvantaging non-SEND peers Pressure and burden faced by non-SEND peers Inclusion is not always a positive Questioning the benefits of inclusion Keeping children with SEND occupied	Inclusion as not always possible Children with SEND as excluded <u>Inclusion as positive (2)</u>	Inclusion not always a viable option Inclusion disadvantaging non-SEND peers Having a go (2)	Some lessons as inappropriate for children with SEND The difficulty of working with children with significant needs Children with SEND excluded in mainstream settings Included but excluded (4) Inclusion to the exclusion of others Children with SEND can distract other children Children with SEND can have a detrimental effect on other children's engagement Inclusion in mainstream settings may be damaging for some children Some children do not belong in mainstream settings (3) Children with SEND get a bad deal (2) Some children with SEND are let down A lack of inclusion success stories in the current school A lack of positive experiences in current setting Mainstream 'v' specialist provision Inclusion with caveats Some children with SEND as easier to include than others (2) It is easier to be inclusive when teaching certain	Mainstream school is not place for all children Some children do not belong in mainstream education Inclusion is not always a good thing Surviving mainstream education Special school as a positive and significant step Specialist SEND provision as positive (2) Some children require special school education The chance to prove yourself A chance to be included in a mainstream school	<u>Inclusion as a positive SEND provision beneficial for all (3)</u> The benefits of specialist provision (2) The differences between mainstream and specialist provisions Specialist provision is right for some children Developing links with specialist provisions Questioning the quality of education for children with SEND	Included but excluded Children with SEND taking adult attention away from other children Neglecting other children The needs of some children cannot be met in mainstream school Specialist provision as a positive (2)	Inclusion can serve to exclude some children with SEND Children with SEND can be disadvantage in mainstream settings <u>Inclusion can be a good thing</u> Comparing mainstream and specialist settings (2) The benefits of specialist provision (2) Specialist provision as positive (2) Links with specialist provisions

					subjects				
8/8	**Juggling needs and responsibilities**	Balancing needs (2) Children with behavioural difficulties monopolise adult time Prioritising time (3) Time (3) Adult time and attention	Balancing the needs of the one with the needs of the many Issues prioritising time Time pressures (2) Large workload (2) Role as demanding and responsible Role-related stress Role as stressful and challenging	Balancing the needs of one with the needs of the majority Borrowing time Issues prioritising time Time Pressure and workload Work-related pressure Role expectations and responsibilities	Balancing needs (4) Difficult to meet the needs of all The wide spectrum of abilities in a mainstream classroom as problematic A lack of time Time Children with SEND as a burden Pressure feeds down from the government	Balancing the needs of one with the needs of many (2) Time Unseen aspects of the SENCo position 2Admin-heavy Unacknowledged demands of the SENCo role Massive roles and responsibilities of the SENCo	Balancing responsibilities Juggling needs Time High levels of pressure and workload Additional workload Inclusion of children with SEND increasing workload	Balancing needs (2) Difficulties balancing the needs of the class Trying to meet the needs of all children Pressure Time	Balancing needs in class Juggling responsibilities Lack of time (3) Children with SEND increase workload Additional pressure
8/8	**Accepting and championing children with SEND**	Pride Celebrating children with SEND Children with SEND as vulnerable Promoting diversity and acceptance Peer acceptance Children with SEND without a voice	Admiration and pride Children with SEND as vulnerable Children with SEND in need of protection and care Valuing diversity Equal opportunity Peer acceptance Feeling defensive of children with SEND (2)	Respecting and accepting diversity Social acceptance Children with SEND supported by non-SEND peers	Older children as less understanding and forgiving of differences (2) Peers can 'upskill' children with SEND	Celebrating children with SEND Championing children with SEND Positivity and praise Children with SEND in need of protection and care Acceptance, respect, understanding of diversity Diversity within the classroom as a positive Other children in class as inclusive and understanding High expectations of children with SEND (2) Defensive of children with SEND (2)	Children as naturally inclusive Positive peer relationships (2)	Sharing the positives Celebrating children with SEND Pride Acceptance Acceptance of diversity Valuing and normalising difference Acceptance Normalising SEND (2) Social acceptance Feeling accepted and fitting in Children as interested and inquisitive 'Exposing' other children to children with SEND (2) Children as innocently inquisitive about differences	Strengths-focused approach (2) Staff are more accustomed to working with children with SEND than in the past The need for inclusion is more recognised now than in the past
8/8	**A within-child deficit view of children with SEND**	Within-child perspective (2) Children with SEND as unpredictable Children with SEND as disruptive and trying Negative expectations Low expectations Surpassing expectations Low expectations of children with SEND Progress Limited progress (2) Dependency Children with SEND as defiant Lack of cooperation Inconsistency Children with SEND as different	Within-child approach	A within-child mind-set A focus on within-child deficits (2) Children with SEND as volatile A lack of predictability Children with SEND as unstable Children with SEND "run wild" Children with SEND as disruptive (2) Children with physical needs as less disruptive	A within-child approach (2) Children with SEND as disruptive and unsettling Low expectations for children with SEND Underestimating children Progress as rewarding Progress as positive (2) Progress Seeing progress makes teaching worthwhile Lack of progress (4) A struggle despite support Children with SEND as inconsistent Children with SEND as different	Low expectations of children with SEND	Children with SEND as unpredictable Helping people to make progress Balancing being supportive and encouraging independence A lack of independence (2) Independence	'Fixing' children Behaviour as a choice Uncertainty Lack of predictability Children with SEND as dangerous (2) Children with SEND as challenging Low expectations for children with SEND (2) Progress as positive Academic progress as less important than wellbeing Children with SEND as defiant Children with SEND as different (4)	Lagging behind and struggling Children with SEND lacking independence (2) The balance between protecting the child and developing their independence Developing independence as a positive (2) Children with SEND as different Children with SEND as distractible

8/8	**Children with SEND are not a homogenous group**	Heterogeneity of children with SEND (2) Social and emotional issues Behavioural issues Behavioural issues as a key concern	Children with SEND not a homogenous group (3) Emotional and behavioural difficulties A need for emotional support Some children with SEND may be overlooked	Heterogeneity of SEND Emotional and behaviour support Behavioural needs Some children with SEND may be overlooked	The heterogeneity of SEND The blurred boundaries of SEND (3) Behavioural needs as scary Physical behaviours as detrimental to success in a mainstream setting Children with emotional needs as difficult to include in the classroom	Emotional needs (2) Emotional and behavioural difficulties	Heterogeneity of SEND (3) Behavioural issues Behavioural issues a major concern	SEND as a dichotomy Behavioural needs as dangerous Behaviour as a key concern Violence (2) Physical behavioural issues as dangerous Behavioural issues Emotional and behavioural needs Behavioural needs A lack of empathy for children with behavioural needs Prioritising need Prioritising SEND (2)	Broad spectrum of SEND The heterogeneity of SEND A lack of focus on social skills in schools Some children with SEND can be overlooked (3) Some children with SEND are prioritised
6/8	**Building relationships with children with SEND**	Building relationships Building a holistic view of the child	Building relationships(3) Knowledge of the child Developing a holistic view of the child (2) Empathy and understanding (6)			Knowledge of the child Empathy and understanding (3) A nurturing approach	Positive relationships Mutually beneficial relationships (2) Creating links Lasting relationships Building relationships Connecting to the child Knowledge of the child (3) Empathetic	The importance of relationships with children with SEND Break down of relationships Strong bonds Broken relationship Personally and emotionally invested in the relationship with the child Emotional bond A holistic view of the child Unpicking behaviour issues	Building relationships with children (3) Knowledge of the child Considering the child holistically (3) An empathetic and nurturing approach Understanding and empathy for the child
8/8	**Colleague support**	Colleague support (2) Support from colleagues Relations between staff members Cohesion between teacher and TA	Additional adults (3) Support from colleagues (4) Support from school leaders Flexibility of school leaders	Lack of additional adults (3) Support from colleagues (2) Group sizes (2) Support from external professionals	Lack of adults TA support (2) Limited TA support (3) A lack of one-to-one support The importance of reliable additional adult support that can be planned for Additional adult support in class (2) Managing support staff The importance of experienced support staff (3) Human resources as key Restricted colleague support SENCo to support teaching Adult to child ratio Working one-to-one with children with SEND as easier Hands-on' professional support A lack of access to professional support (3) Support from professional colleagues as useful Advice tailored to the needs of the child as useful (2)	Additional adults (2) The role of TAs in supporting children's emotional wellbeing Support from senior leaders The importance of a supportive staff team Supportive leadership Colleague support Group sizes Smaller class sizes The important role of outside agencies A perceived lack of understanding regarding the child in external professionals	A lack of adult support Additional adult support (3) TA support as positive Support from the SENCo (2) Support from colleagues A supportive team (3) Sharing good practice Seeking support from colleagues Colleague support (2) Seeking advice Professional support Support from outside agencies (3)	Additional adult support (2) Fearing a lack of adult support TA support Human resources Sharing the responsibility Human resources One-to-one adult support Adult to child ratio Class sizes	Additional adult support A lack of human resources Colleague support (4) Sharing good practice External professionals
4/8	**Attitudes of other staff members**	The importance of teacher attitudes A lack of understanding in others	Conflicting views amongst individual staff members (2) Attitudes of other educators (3) A perceived need to align with the general consensus when viewing challenging behaviour			Conflicting attitudes amongst staff members (5) Fixed mind-sets as a barrier to inclusion Adult attitudes as the main barrier to inclusion The importance of educator attitudes			Staff attitudes

			Lack of empathy and understanding in others			The importance of positive educator attitude Positive attitudes Differing viewpoints			
7/8	**Working with parents**	Parent/school relationship Parental support The role of parents of children with SEND Negative parental attitudes Parental attitudes		Stigma around SEND Parental acceptance of SEND Negative response from parents (3) Cultural issues associated with acceptance of SEND	Lack of parental support as challenging Parents need convincing Parents fearful of specialist provision Stigma associated with specialist provision	Parental involvement (2) Parents of children with SEND in denial Parental acceptance of SEND Parental choice and mainstream provision	Support for parents (2) Support for families Seeking advice from parents/carers (2) Parental views about specialist provision	Conflict between parents and teachers Supportive parents Empathy for parents of children with SEND Negative interactions with parents Feeling persecuted Stigma associated with SEND	Parents as barriers Parental involvement Cultural capital of parents The benefits of supportive parents Empathy for children and families (2) Parental attitudes Parents as reluctant to consider specialist provision (3) Stigma of SEND for parents Parents in denial about SEND
		<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Limited positive experiences Challenge Comparisons drawn between mainstream setting and private nursery setting External locus of control Questioning the impact of the support she offers Positive consequences of reduced support Relative importance of different roles in school (2) Positive self-perception Motivation Control and order The importance of diagnosis	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Attitudes changing over time Conflict between ideology and reality Changing perspectives Preparing for real life	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Discipline The importance of discipline Making exceptions Hurting other children (2) Long-term impact of failure Physical 'v' non-physical SEND Boundary between teacher and teaching assistant Longstanding aspiration to work with children Control and order Relationships and social skill development	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> More success when tutoring children with SEND outside of school You want to keep children in school Specialist provision as 'too much' for the participant professionally 'Getting rid' of SEND Children with SEND as controlling and oppressing A perceived need to explain oneself (3) Being led into the teaching profession Box ticking	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Highlighting difference Lead by example The sad journey Dissatisfaction regarding the reality of the role The SENCo role as an isolated position Role as admin-heavy Conflicting pressures associated with dual roles Admin-heavy Initial reluctance to undertake the SENCo role Dissatisfaction regarding the reality of the role The SENCo role as an isolated position	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Seeking support Capacity to seek support and knowledge as important A perceived need to request support A reactive approach (2) Paperwork Helping others	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> Preparing children to cope in later life Labelled for life The unexpected and unseen aspects of the teaching role The importance of specialist resources and equipment Negative self-perception A focus on medical diagnosis Fluidity of SEND and diagnosis Ticking a box The importance of appearances	<u>Emergent themes not incorporated into the overarching subordinate themes</u> An inclusive ethos A lack of diversity in terms of SEND Consistency in support staff Responsibility of the SENCo role Pragmatically motivated Preparing for the real world The fluidity of SEND (2)

Appendix 13: Final List of Group-level Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Group-level superordinate themes	Group-level subordinate themes
The personal and professional challenge	The psychological and emotional impact on self
	Doubting expertise
	The importance of experience
	Adapting practice and being open to change
The mainstream school context	The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream school context
	The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting
	Juggling needs and responsibilities
Perceptions of children with SEND	Accepting and championing children with SEND
	A within-child deficit view of children with SEND
	Children with SEND are not a homogenous group
	Building relationships with children with SEND
Being part of the human system of support	Colleague support
	Attitudes of other staff members
	Working with parents

Appendix 14: Excerpts from Participant Interviews which Support the Driving and Restraining Forces Identified

Driving forces	**Supporting excerpts from participant interviews**
Colleague support- Support from colleagues in school (8/8)	Julie: Urm [pause] just being able to have those conversations with, with different people and having people like [name of SENco] on hand is absolutely invaluable. She's urm I think yeah just being able just to talk it through with somebody and get another perspective on it. Chloe: Um [pause] yeah, I think it's the team in general they're, just the Early Years team, I think we just, because we understand each other so well and we understand how difficult it is, I think we, it's the support's always just there in terms of oh well I know that I can go and talk to [name of researcher] if I'm, if I'm struggling with such a thing. Lorna: What exist to help support me in teaching...er not not much in school. Just the help from people who know what they're talking about really or relying on past experiences. So there's always, there is always people that get support off and ask but... Researcher: So which, which people....? Lorna: So the school SENco [pause] or the phase leader I sometimes ask and the class teacher as well. Jim: So having your TA is great but again it's going back to whether or not your TA is deployed most effectively with those children because you can't have them with those children all the time because you need to have them with other children. I need to see those children so I have an understanding of where they are. I think it's again, it's great to have them as a brilliant resource, but I don't think they're constantly used the best they could be.

	Donna: Urm I go to SENco training networks but they're quite intense and you don't, you only get a little bit of chat time but really my biggest partner is the teacher at our partner school...We have a good relationship and we ask each other questions. I'm sure she's far more helpful to me that I am to her but it's just like you can...we ask each other anything. Lauren: You'd go and speak to other members of staff... Who, who...because even just in passing. Sometimes I'll say I'm really struggling with this like, what could I do? And urm people are really supportive like around school. Caroline: People. Er having actual people as support. Because I think as a, as a human you need a break as well. So if you've got a good team...with urm the little boy from this school and there was the three of us, you know, if somebody was, you know, getting a lot of [participant uses on hand to 'chop' on the palm of the other repeatedly] and it was, you know, it was swearing, it was throwing things and things. Kelly: Because she'll try her best to find you something. Urm [pause] I think obviously other members of staff, I said all have their own skill set and experiences from the past where they might be able to help you with somebody they've had a passed pupil that's helped.
Accepting and championing children with SEND (8/8)	Caroline: Urm and I'll, I'll just say about it not being, not being an issue. Just being a natural part of the class. So we've got some girls in the class, some boys in the class. We've got some children with braids in their hair, some children with straight hair...We've got some children who have got SEN...And some children who haven't. Julie: So it's good for them to see, you know…That everybody's different and understand that not everybody learns the same way.

	Lorna: That other children especially they see other children that are not the norm or not like them…Being surrounded by them because of...the children did see a video of a child with Down syndrome and did laugh and say he looks, he looks different. Well then I explained and they said that they have previously seen someone like that and just because they looked a little bit different as to why they laughed but I don't think they would do that in real life…But I don't know if, how many of them have seen a child with Down's syndrome. Donna: Well I think it's, I think it's lovely for all the other children to see that there are children who have more difficulties than them in different things. I think it might hopefully make them a little bit more respectful and understanding that everybody in the world has difficulty with some things and that this child is just a bit more apparent but they are in some ways, they're no different, they're human beings, they're here, they're the same age, they're a girl or a boy and they enjoy being with other children so you know they're not that far removed from the rest of us and they need that moment to join in with what they can. Kelly: Urm and I think we have a, a broad spectrum of SEN in classes now. I'm not saying we didn't years ago but we're aware of more now and I think urm as staff, all staff I think try their best to make and include a child that's got [pause] different needs to another child. Chloe: Um I just feel like, that's another thing, I feel like because every....because everybody's so different and I think it's very similar to nurture because everybody so different it's just that, you know, they struggle more with sitting down at a desk and, you know, doing structured work. But I think we're very quick to say 'oh, they've got a behavioural problem' or 'oh,

	you know, this, this is not right'. Because it's always labelled as there's something wrong if you know what I mean? Jim: But in her school where they have got to year 6 and they're still flapping around and they're still making these noises, the children are a lot less understanding and forgiving because whereas I think obviously when you're younger, you've got the whole 'I'm not really sure what's happening. He's just making noises. I'll just ignore it and it's fine.', you get to year 6s and they're like "Miss he's making the noises again and he's really annoying. Be quiet. Stop it. Stop it, I'm trying to do my work". And you've got that whole separate thing. Lauren: …the relationships were [pause] really positive [pause] urm [pause]…they were really helpful and wanting to...and they were really kind and urm they were inclusive.
The importance of experience (7/8)	Julie: Urm [pauses and exhales] I...I'm not sure about the training I think just my own experiences have made me feel like I kind of knew what I was doing [laughs]. Chloe: Um I think to be honest, most of the training that I'd say I had was experience rather than, you know, being in, you know, lectures and things like that. Lorna: What exist to help support me in teaching...er not not much in school. Just the help from people who know what they're talking about really or relying on past experiences. So there's always, there is always people that get support off and ask but... Donna: You need time to try different approaches until you find what will work. And [pause] I can't give the answers to

	everybody overnight and class teachers can't work out the answers overnight. So sometimes things might look like oh actually this is making it a whole lot worse. But then we're all learning and there's no Bible on how to deal with all these individual children. Lauren: [Pause] I keep going back to that first, that one because that [pause] that was the trickiest, that was the trickiest one. And then my first year of teaching because of my experience... Researcher: Yeah. Do you feel like the training that you have received has prepared you as a class teacher? Caroline: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. But just because every year it's only one child, two children. So it's kind of, you're kind of learning as you're going. Kelly: …I feel like any child that comes in now it's using any experience I've had from previous working experiences.
Building relationships with children with SEND (6/8)	Julie: ...What you're doing and understand what, you know, what triggers there might be or understanding their home life urm then you sort of change your urm your behaviour accordingly. Chloe: I feel like even for me personally, I think that if I was sort of given more opportunities as a child to be more social or to be involved more I feel like that probably would have changed me as an adult...Because I, I mean I know, I know that most people have got like anxiety problems and even like me myself now I get nervous in some social situations. And I do feel like it's really important. Donna: To me it doesn't really matter what's getting that child through the front door as long as it's something that they think

	I'm not going into assembly that the bit I absolutely stress but feel everybody is looking at me even though we know they're not...That start to the day. Because of what's going on at home, that leaving home for whatever reason might be very difficult. Lauren: For himself. Urm but things like that I, I've probably [pause] like now reflecting on it like I shouldn't have just done it straight away but then you don't want him struggle but... Caroline: He had a lot of background issues. He ended up leaving our school. And I found that, that got to me because I felt like I failed him a little bit. Kelly: ...Now get back on the conveyor belt...Carry on with everybody else. You know I understand you're not feeling too good today or you know you don't know what that child's been through before they come in the morning. You know, it might be you know it's...when I see children that, not so much SEN, I've seen it in the past and I'm thinking 'oh my God'.
The psychological and emotional impact on self- The personal reward and satisfaction involved (5/8)	Julie: Urm so when he did pick something up and he'd kind got the hang of it then it was quite 'yay' moment. Chloe: Um I think, I do think it's very rewarding seeing those small, little steps. Like from...when [name of child] started in September to now…And the fact that he walks into nursery and he, he just sits down and gets on with something, that, I think that's amazing because he wasn't able to do that at first. Lorna: You think "oh yeah finally" (laughs) "it's worked, thank that, thank goodness for that it's actually worked". It's nice to see different children like different things so what's work with this child won't work with well might not work with

	somebody else. Lauren: Urm and I like helping people and urm lots of people have helped me along the way. And I, I love helping other people and supporting other people on their journey. And I love to continue learning. I feel like you learn something new every day here and I love seeing the children's faces when they've done something new and they enjoy it. Jim: And I actually saw him. He's....so how old is he now? He's about 15 now. So I saw him two years ago when he was twelve. I went to go and see him in secondary school and he was...it was really nice to go and see him and see how much he's progressed.
Colleague support- Support from external professionals (5/8)	Lorna: Er we've had the speech, speech and language so it's quite poor in our school speech and language so we do see the lady who does that quite often. So we've had her and we've had um the Ed Psych they come in to assess children but never trained us but the speech and language lady she does she has come in and briefed us little bit on that. I'm trying to think of anything else, if anyone else from outside has come in [pause] well not really. Kelly: Urm [pause] and then also we have er like [SALT name] at the moment. When I was doing Wellcomm she's like the speech and language lady. She was, she came in with some fantastic resources. Jim: Urm whilst I've been here, I've been included in lots of multi-agency meetings which have given me ideas and stuff. Donna: The, the outside agencies are helpful to me…As a SENco. I'm not sure if class teachers think...there's a mixture really. I share reports that come from outside agencies and I try to talk about them with staff and look at the points that, that

	have been highlighted that we need to work on. Urm so I think outside agencies are extremely important and the majority of class teachers are happy when an outside agency comes in…And I think also having a different pair of eyes on that child. Urm [pause] that's very interesting as well…Having the EP's eyes or the SALT's eyes on that child. Or CAMHS's, CAMHS opinion of that child. It does make you think 'oh so what about that' or sometimes the parents will reveal things to the EP and SALT that they won't reveal to a teacher. And the EP will always check that they've got permission to share the whole report with, with us and they generally do always give permission. But they're very, I find, they're very trusting of the EP and they're very welcoming and they're very glad that somebody has come in because I think they realise school's trying their best but we do need extra help. Yeah, so I, I really value the outside agencies that can get in touch with. Lauren: [Pause] yeah I say staff. Like other, you can speak to staff who then guide you to speak to the outside agencies…Or urm who are more knowledgeable about certain urm certain things that you...
Working with parents- Parents as partners (5/8)	Julie: Urm [pause] I think if, if the parents are on board, that makes a massive difference if you're working against the parents that's a massive barrier urm… Researcher: Yeah, is there anything else you want to speak about in terms of support and facilitators? Donna: Urm other staff. It's got to be a team effort…Parents on board. The parents that want...the parents have got to want their child to improve and that always is the case. Lauren: And then I do you speak to parents, like parents quite a lot…Because they know the children better than...you know, they know the children well and...And also they might, they might be struggling, they might be doing something really good and then if they're struggling then it's like 'well I've tried this and, what, have you done this?'

	Caroline: And most of the time, parents are lovely. Really supportive. They want the best for the child. They're quite understanding, you know, if you do...it's never nice hearing things, you know, that your child done if it's not following the rules…But some of them really take on board but some of them you, you kind of dread that child misbehaving because you've got to pass it on. Researcher: And how do you think influenced...what do you think really important for children with significant need. What do you, what do you think contributed to those two boys having... Kelly: I think it was [pause] I think it was the structure of the background…And I think it was the parents it was, it was the backing of the parents and the involvement of the parents.
Adapting practice and being open to change (4/8)	Donna: I think a lack of understanding. But I think it's a bit, it's a bit more. It's a bit about having been [pause] in the education system a long time…But then again I've been in it a long time. I think you have to be open to change…And I think some people through no fault of their own, maybe what they experienced at school or what they've experience with their children at home. They might have had to be very [pause] rigid I don't know. But I've been rigid with my children and I've been in education long time but I'm still ready to learn. Kelly: To me that's inclusion because you're adapting to what they need whereas sometimes I think when they say er mainstream school [pause] we're all treated the same and I don't think it is...so to me it's like inclusion is everybody's treated the same but it's adapted to what their needs are because everybody's individual needs are different. Lauren: Straight away really. Just like what, what is it that I can do to help?...Like to know [pause] what does that mean

	really? ...Yeah what does that mean for, what does that mean? What do I need to do about it?...So what do I need to do? What do I need to help them with? What can I develop in myself to then support them...?...To move further really… Chloe: Like could, could there be something that I could look up myself and maybe feel a bit more comfortable about it.
Colleague support- Support from school leaders (3/8)	Donna: and [head of school's name] is very, very urm understanding with that and does give me that time. Chloe: Um and I do feel like if I, if I do speak to someone, say, for example, [name of head of school] and I say to her 'oh I think it'd be really useful if we had this sort of training or I think it'd be useful if we did this'…I feel like that's, that's always taken on board. You know if it can fit in somewhere. Lauren: : Urm [pause] and I'm on the SLT team so I will go to speak to SLT about...if I feel there's something as a school we're not doing enough of. That, that I've, that, that's been made apparent to me urm when I've been teaching.

Restraining forces	**Supporting excerpts from participant interviews**
Juggling needs and responsibilities- Time restrictions (8/8)	Lorna: …we don't have time in the day…It's always borrowed time from somewhere else because a day is just full of everything else we need to do. Chloe: And then you've got someone like who needs your attention and you think well, you know, how do I split my time?

	Kelly: I just remember it was you'd get a phone call ‘can you just tell me what he's been like over the last half-term?’. And you were in the middle of doing the phonics session. Well I remember getting called over and I'd roughly wrote something down and I think it was like five minutes before I went in. Then I went in and they just saying ‘right’ and they had a social worker there, the health visitor there, urm two other people I can't remember who they were and they were just like ‘well what's he like with this? What's he like with that? You're his key worker, what's he like?’…And sometimes...and it's, it's more that side you're thinking of the pressure that you're, you're put under more than the child him or herself. Julie: Urm [pause] I think just the pressure it puts on the, on the adults around them. Urm prioritising, you know, who gets the adult's time and...Urm so it's prioritising that's, that's a, a big issue. Jim: Or time because you've only got so many hours in the day and it's got to ten to three and you're thinking ‘oh, I've not fit in my one-to-one reading intervention for that child’. Oh God you better, better go and do that now. And this poor child is getting a five minute deal at the end of the day because of the other things that have gone on. Donna: But yes I, I am given time to do the SENco role and I really appreciate that because it is a very admin heavy job. Caroline: Urm and I think, you know, there's lots of different resources and actual things you can buy, but I think a person being one-to-one with somebody is what matters... Researcher: Right. Caroline: ...Because I find that, you know, you feel like even now, my SEN need isn't that great in year 1, but I find I spend a lot of time with my purple group. And yellow and orange, my tops, if I, if I am ever working with them they go "wheyyyy" and

	they get all excited and it's like then I know that they're not getting my attention because I automatically...but if you had, you know, a general TA and somebody else... Lauren: Urm and more time. Time... Researcher: What for? Lauren: For making resources and making the things that will support people. Like those, all those folders I made with Velcro and...Took hours but and then like I've shared them with other staff just to help them. And then they've seen how I've made them so some people...other teachers have made them. But then it, it's just, it's a lot to…Manage when you're trying to do that as well as all the other things you've got to do…So time as well.
Juggling needs and responsibilities and The problem with inclusion in a mainstream setting- The needs of the other children in class (8/8)	Lauren: You're trying to include that child but then you don't want to exclude the rest of the class. And you've got 30 children in the room. Donna: I think they need that [pause] pat on the back because some children might be thinking 'they're giving all their attention to him today and I've not had a look in'. Julie: Urm [pause] obviously the children with the behavioural issues that monopolise a lot of the adults' time. Urm that's difficult and frustrating… Jim: No, because at this point I'm having to ignore my lower ability children because the special needs children need looking after or I'm having to ignore my higher ability children and leave those to be independent again... You're sort of constantly stuck with someone being left not getting the best deal I guess.

	Lorna: Well it could it a lot of adult's time is took away trying to oversee other children. So adult time's took away... Kelly: And you just felt awful because he was just an...you felt like you observing him because you still had 30 in the class to still carry on the day and get through all the factors of the day that you had to do and he was just a shadow that you kind of pulled along [pause] to, to join in. Caroline: Especially if there is a big SEN need urm either the SEN child's getting your attention and everybody else is not or they are and you feel that their...you're not meeting their need. Chloe: I understand that obviously for them it's, it's maybe like a break, so they get a break out of class. But I feel like sometimes it's more of a break for the teachers. So it's not necessarily thinking about what's best for them...It's more about what's best for all the other children...And the class teacher. Because it's...which I completely understand because it's so difficult...
The psychological and emotional impact on self - The high degree of emotional effort and labour involved (8/8)	Lorna: It just feels like a bit of a [pause] just disappointing. Like you're failing them a little bit but there's nothing you can do. You try your best but there's nothing you can do…Because you feel like you're failing the child as well like yeah...just feel like well I'm not doing the best for them. Jim: I think you just feel like failing them don't you? I think that's the main issue, is that you feel like this poor child, through no fault of their own, is getting a bad deal because you've not got enough provision or staff for them.

	Donna: And you, and my hands tied behind my back and it's so frustrating. Caroline: He ended up leaving our school. And I found that, that got to me because I felt like I failed him a little bit. Chloe: Like you, you want, you almost want to defend how amazing he is because they're like we were in September. Like oh God like it's, it's the worry inside like what do we do? Like, how can we help him? How can we, you know, make the children sort of integrate with him and it's, they, it's all those feelings again because we had those in September. Julie: Urm. I think it's quite easy to, to let it get you down…Urm [pause] it's yeah, just drains you. Just kind of like wears you down, having to constantly battle with the same person just to get them to do a bit of work….So yeah, I think it just urm [pause] you, you can let it get you down or you can just keep pushing through [laughs]. Kelly: And he was [pause] little things like even sitting with people and sharing a toy you know like he wasn't verbally communicating with them but he was doing his own way of contacting and seeing how he was blossoming with the help he was getting for his needs. And it was so nice to see because you even felt that relief when you went and I don't mean it in the case of 'oh I'm glad that he's gone' you were just thinking 'oh he's actually going to get what he needs now for his level' and it was so nice to see [pause] him blossoming and his parents realising 'oh my God look how much he's changed with the support he was getting'. So that was nice. Lauren: Urm but also because it's your first year of teaching I needed like a lot of help with, with what to do. And I found it quite frustrating not knowing why is that, why is that not worked? At first thinking why has that not worked? And I really want

	to help him and his family and... Researcher: Yeah, yeah. So how did that make you feel? Lauren: Upset really because I was like oh I don't, I feel like I can't help him.
Children with SEND are not a homogenous group (8/8)	Julie: it's hard to sort of pinpoint urm [pause] you know a particular thing that each child needs….They're all, they're all different aren't they? Chloe: Which again, is tricky because every child is different…So it's not like you could say 'well this will work with him'. And it's just about trial and error isn't it at the end of the day. Lorna: Well on a personal level I probably would like more training. On just a general SEN...I know it's not general though is it, it's like everything's so different. Jim: I think the difficulty with special needs is that it's a very broad topic and there are obviously lots of different types of special needs. So when you're looking at specific children with specific needs, that's obviously, that needs to be taken into account. Lauren: there's so many different needs as well, you, you can't...you need to have support around you because you're not always urm [pause] you're not always the...sometimes you struggle to think what you can do and how...and sometimes it's, you don't understand the need fully you've got to research it so... Kelly: … I mean like SEN doesn't necessarily mean you know [pause] educationally you know emotionally as well…

	Caroline: I think behaviour, behavioural problems with SEN is a completely different sort of branch of the tree. I think there's not much understanding generally in you know...I think people do see that as a different type of thing. And dealing... Researcher: And what do you think the thoughts are around that? Caroline: I don't think there's much sym, sympathy...Or empathetic. If a child was in a wheelchair, it's one thing. But if a child is urm, you know, running around trashing a classroom, which we know is an SEN need, I think there is very, very different opinions on those two scenarios. Donna: …they all had similar needs in terms of emotional support…
A within-child deficit view of children with SEND (8/8)	Lorna: …you think "oh goodness how are they going to...is it going be a child who's just going to run wild in the classroom, are they not going to be able to control themselves?". Jim: So I think almost you get it in your head straightaway, someone who comes in and you've got someone with special needs you're like oh no I'm going to have a really tough year because I'm going to spend the year creating loads of extra documents that you have no idea whether or not it's going to be successful, you're going to be having to explain why this child isn't making the adequate progress alongside your other children. Caroline: There was one child a couple of years ago who was quite [pause] quite challenging. But there was a lot of sup...I was pregnant at the time and he, he could be violent. Lauren: And the, the struggle was that it's things...when it came to their independent activities urm when I didn't have a teaching

	assistant, I wasn't working with that, that child…It was how, how can I keep them on task? What...and what are they learning on their own…That was the challenge. Julie: I suppose when you're working with children, you're kind of always looking at them making progress and that's what a lot of the focus is. Urm but with a child with, with SEND, you know significant SEND is it...are they even going to make any progress? Kelly: Because I mean like you have some that adapt and if they get the, the help that they need in school then they can adapt and carry on quite normally whereas others I think you know they're lagging behind because they're struggling… Donna: And it's not easy to be the one that has to drip feed that message [pause] 'there is something very special and different about your child and they're not going to survive mainstream schools so please work with us. Chloe: Because it's always labelled as there's something wrong if you know what I mean?
Colleague support- A lack of additional adults (7/8)	Lorna: …there's not much er help. There's only usually me and the class teacher with this child so there's not much other help for them. Lauren: …if you're on your own in the classroom and there's some really diff...challenging behaviour...Then if you haven't got the support of another adult, then it, it's tricky because you don't want to exclude the rest of the class. Chloe: I do feel like if we didn't have that extra member of staff, I feel like that would be really tricky.

	Jim: I think the main, the main barrier is lack of adults. I think if you know you have got someone to work with that child or a group of children, you can be really successful in doing that because you can set up an activity that can be done to a high level. Donna: I would give them all a pot of money and say 'let's get an extra person, let's get them some resources, let's get this and let's get that'. Caroline: Am I going to have the support in class to deal with, you know, if, if a TA is being pulled out for intervention, you're teaching twenty-five children with, two with SEN and something happens, how can you meet their needs when you've got all the rest of the children?...So it does, it brings up some anxieties...Urm [pause] and concerns. Kelly: I think it was just again down to staffing [pause] I'm not necessarily saying funding with that because [pause] urm [pause] the room was there, you know we'd done the basics for the children that were going in. But obviously with covering classes for child...for staff to go out I never had any time where I wasn't covering.
Doubting expertise-A lack of training (7/8)	Julie: I didn't really get any training [laughs]. I think they just took my experiences from the nursery as, as being enough. Chloe: Um [sighs] I feel like, I don't feel like I've had anything specific. Um you know that's just specifically for that. I feel like obviously we always talk about it and it's always something that's discussed in general. Lorna: No not really. Like they could have at college quite a while ago you see there's pockets of it in like all units that you did but there wasn't a specific like SEN area and there wasn't in school as well. There hasn't been. There's been pockets here and

	there but then there's people who you go to if you need advice so I've never really had any sort of training. You just sort of [pause] it just goes on. Jim: Yeah currently urm the only specific training I've had on inclusion and special needs has been in autism. Researcher: Yeah. Yeah. Can you remember anything from your PGCE around inclusion? Caroline: I remember it not...there wasn't much. Kelly: And as well as that I feel the difference and again I think that's down to funding as well er as a TA now urm I've been here 11 years at this present school and I think barr inset days where everybody's having basic training I think I've been out of school twice..On any form... Researcher: On a course? Kelly: On any course. Researcher: And would any of those have been associated with SEND do you think or not? Kelly: No, well, it was first aid was one of them…And the other one which was the whole school went for that we did er autism at the local special school we went for. Lauren: Urm [pause] I think having the experience of, having the experience of urm [pause] of in...I don't think, I don't know what everybody else's training looks like and we haven't had much training within school.
Juggling needs and	Lorna: Not necessarily but I'd, I'd never become a teacher. Not now, it's just too much...Now I know I've got a family at home and I know what it entails especially as you go further up through the school it gets a lot more work to take home...So I would

responsibilities- Workload and pressure (7/8)	rather not put that pressure on myself. Caroline: The government feeded down to the SLT and then...they're only doing their job passing it on. But then, you know, you're feeling the pressure and it's like, is that making you the best teacher because you're doing it under pressure? Or you know...I feel er yeah I think it is a bad time of year. This time of year always, I think feel...you feel quite pressured. Urm but yeah. And don't...you know, you do know through your, through your teacher training that that's come...you know there's going to be pressures. But I don't think I knew how...I don't think any teacher knows until you're in it how…But that's you know the government want the children to do their best. Lauren: I didn't agree with that but that's like the flip side. And then the teacher was walking out on the playground at the end of the day, dismissing the children. Then off, going home. I was like, there's no follow on work…Whereas we seem to be here [laughs] very late. Chloe: …I think it is mainly workload. It's just it's really full on. Researcher: Yeah, yeah, um thank you. Do you, do you feel like…is, is being a teaching assistant what you thought it would be like when you were initially training for it? Chloe: um yes. But I think probably, I probably was quite naive about it. Researcher: In what way? Chloe: Um I probably didn't know how much like it, it actually entailed. Like how, how full on it would be. I, I don't know if that's just this school...

	Donna: That's the only bit you see the SENco do. So that's the only bit I knew but that's about [pause]10 percent of the whole job...It was massive. Kelly: It's, it's you know I don't even need to know what the child has got or the issues. It's just like the, the meetings that are involved urm [pause] paperwork, going through setting up er strategies that you can you know like 1-1 work that, that you feel half the time it's not going to happen because it's...and then urm [SENco's name] will be looking for you to come and fill out forms and looking for updates and then you get phone calls and [pause] called into meetings. Jim: Er it's, it's obvious it's pressure from above, isn't it? So it's not something that you can say 'oh, well they're being mean because they're asking all these questions'. Obviously, it comes down from government and they're all looking for every child to make adequate and better progress throughout the year. And obviously, your sat there having to explain why this child who's been absent 50 percent of the time or some other child who's urm not understanding or has got a bad home background. And you're having to explain without using those words why this child hasn't achieved.
Doubting expertise- Perceived lack of knowledge and expertise (6/8)	Jim: And again, it was another matter of it had sort of got past anyone's ability to look after him. Kelly: And the other one which was the whole school went for that we did er autism at the local special school we went for. Urm that was very good 'cause it was basically doing an autism spectrum. So it was urm obviously they were more specialised… Julie: Urm but I think we was, you know, we kind of worked through it together but I didn't really know what I was...I was just kind of guessing at what, what I was supposed to be doing. So thinking back now, I probably should have had a lot more

	information to have been able to, you know, done that more effectively with him. Chloe: But I feel like even a lot of the staff have said 'oh, it would make me feel so much more comfortable if we had like a little bit of training on it'. Or even if someone came in and just said 'look, this is what it is, you know, this is, this is how we work with people like that'. Researcher: Do you mean, what do you mean by that knowledge? Lauren: Like your, like your knowledge because you can't have...it's tricky to have knowledge of every different need because there's so many different needs that people might have. Caroline: And there was a few little triggers. And I'm no professional, but dyslexia jumped out to me. So I've, I've put her on urm the SE, the SEN coordinator's list.
Working with parents- Parents as barriers (6/8)	Kelly: So urm I felt even though it was urm I think the biggest barrier that we had when we were doing that was the parents you know because they were bringing the child in and urm they weren't really interested [pause] I'm not saying in the hearing side of it but they wanted...they were checking that they were normal to the children in the class…Do you know like instead of seeing their own child and er I think that's what was harder because you know they were, I think they were [pause] like this little girl she had great support but I think the mum and dad were under the impression well if she's coming to mainstream school she's going to get better. Julie: Urm and they've made life very difficult for his schools. So from somebody working in a school now, it's been quite frustrating urm to see them making life difficult but obviously that is something that, that happens.

	Lorna: Well there's always a lot stigma and like we've had parents in the past saying that they don't want the children to go to er an SEN school because they said that they don't think it's best for them but they've come back they've got other children in this school and they said that actually it's the best place for them and they're doing, they're doing really well but it's all...there is the stigma and a lot of parents are saying a lot of them don't believe that there's anything wrong with their child sometimes it takes a lot for them to realise and sometimes the different backgrounds like I know a lot of Asian backgrounds they don't like to believe that there's something wrong with their child or people that have had another child and their bright as a button but then they don't like to believe that something is wrong. Jim: And he was just getting violent and aggressive so he eventually went to a special needs school, which took a lot of convincing with parents and stuff because obviously they wanted him to be a part of school. But it was obviously difficult to try and include him based on the fact that he was very aggressive towards the other children. Donna: And it's frustrating. It's good and frustrating all at the same time that parental choice goes a long way. Because you do want the parents to have a voice and you want them to be able to say what they want best for their child but when you get a family who are in denial and think mainstream is the school for their child that's difficult and I've experienced that a couple of times. Caroline: And urm a child...I had to tell a parent that child had had a stage three. And it was out of character. And he, you know, just did not like it. "What did you do? What urm what did you say"...she'd lied, she'd told a lie and it was well, "what did you say to make her lie?" It was all put on me…And then it was, it wasn't very nice...

The psychological and emotional impact on self- A perceived lack of power and influence upon the inclusion of children with SEND (5/8)	Jim: And I think obviously earlier on I've not been able to necessarily shape that inclusion because you're sort of a part of it. Urm once you go in, you've just gone in, you're not really able to make those decisions about whether or not they are included. Julie: Urm and, and trying to include them. That was quite a challenge. Urm it's a difficult one. I didn't feel like I could [pause] urm I suppose say anything to the teacher about it but... Researcher: Yeah, yeah. Why do you feel like you, you didn't, you didn't want to say anything? Julie: Urm because I was brand new to the role. It was all...yeah, I just didn't feel like, you know, I have that respect for the teachers anyway...It wasn't my place to, to say anything. Caroline: …And when he left, you know, I did think, I felt like I failed him a little bit. It was out of my control. Kelly: And [pause] you know it's like so you, you try your best with what you know…But I feel like you know you don't always reach our full potential with what we could do with children with SEN because I don't feel [pause] funding and time that we're given. Chloe: It...I think you're just expected to think like everybody else. Like you, you're sort of looked at and thought, well, you know, well, [name of staff member] thinks like this so that means that, you know, we, we're just going to go with that and we...that's what we're going to do like for all the children who have different needs.
The unaccommodating and inflexible	Chloe: Um and I do feel like even our days are more structured and everything just like jam packed like altogether. And I feel like sometimes we do forget about that inclusion. We forget that there are children that we need to, you know, maybe adapt to or we maybe need to treat a little bit differently or be a bit more sensitive around.

mainstream environment- Other priorities in school (5/8)	Julie: Urm [pause] yeah and I, I find, I find it's really difficult for the, the teachers urm the whole idea of inclusion when it's a child, you know, who...I suppose when you're working with children, you're kind of always looking at them making progress and that's what a lot of the focus is. Urm but with a child with, with SEND, you know significant SEND is it...are they even going to make any progress? Jim: Urm and setting as well it's as a school we have very few places for those children to go. Urm so there are rooms but they're being used or this is on or that's on. And corridors aren't an appropriate place to sit them. So you sort of left urm linked to that staffing. We don't have many staff that are one-to-one with these children. Lauren: That kind of thing. Because I think that, I think a lot of people are saying 'I've got this curriculum to get through and...These children need, need to be at this level' [laughs] and then urm and don't want anybody to, everybody has a right to education. So why, er, why should anybody be left? Everybody should be included...But people find it, that a challenge, like a barrier because there's conflict between... Kelly: I think a majority of it is funding, I think it's down to you know like [pause] trying to pick and choose what's prioritised at the moment you know like what money can go into what it can't go into and then of course it affects the staffing [pause] because obviously going back to when I first started we had staff that came in that were just urm as they were called then section 11 staff.
Attitudes of other staff members	Donna: That would massively help children with significant need. I think it, I just think it's about attitude…And inclusion and pos...being positive and letting the child know that you are happy for them to be there and you want the best for them.

(4/8)	Julie: Urm I just think it's really important for, for everybody to have that positive attitude. I have seen urm some teachers that have quite a negative attitude towards urm children with SEND. Chloe: Um I feel like it prevents people from maybe doing what they think would be the best thing and just sort of accepting, you know, what, what the general, general like staff think. So okay most, most of the staff thinks that there should be a consequence for that but a couple of the staff don't but we'll just go with the general. Kelly: And it's I feel sometimes it's the SEN child that's adapting to school to fit into [pause] the school routine rather than… I mean personally down to staff attitudes and then the school environment adapting to help a child.
The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment- Financial restraints (4/8)	Lorna: And so on so I'd like extra training on, on that er on a wider level it would be nice...like I know there's huge schools been being built for SEN needs so it's nice to see them but is there enough and I know funding from the government isn't enough but it would just be nice to see them and maybe more people specifically trained. Donna: And then from a SENco point of view [laughs] financial restraints because I would give every child who teachers are shouting 'I need some help for this child', I would give them all a pot of money… Lauren: Like funding really for like, for like the provision [pause]. Researcher: What about urm some of the barriers to teaching children with significant SEND. Kelly: Again I think it's like we said funding, lack of resources, urm lack of urm [pause] environment that, that a certain child

	needs. Er time is a big issue.
The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment- A lack of resources and equipment (4/8)	Lorna: But then I suppose in a main school it would be nice to have sensory rooms, calm down rooms we've like got...space is minimal in school so it would be nice to maybe have a calm down space, have a go to. Jim: So you're faced almost with that. Urm and setting as well it's as a school we have very few places for those children to go. Urm so there are rooms but they're being used or this is on or that's on. And corridors aren't an appropriate place to sit them. Researcher: Yeah, yeah. What about barriers? So what do you feel are the barriers to teaching children with significant SEND? Things that get in the way? Lauren: Urm the like the provision that you've got. Like the building, like the urm [pause] the building, like the building. The urm [pause] like the resources [interview interrupted briefly by a member of staff entering the interview room]. Urm the resources. Researcher: What about urm some of the barriers to teaching children with significant SEND? Kelly: Again I think it's like we said funding, lack of resources, urm lack of urm [pause] environment that, that a certain child needs. Er time is a big issue.
The unaccommodating and inflexible mainstream environment- A	Jim: Working like that, in my experience with special needs children is a lot more successful than going "right we're all looking at urm multiplication today. How am I going to get this child to do multiplication?" Because actually that child doesn't need multiplication, they need this. But you then don't have the provision because you don't have the TAs. Lauren: They did like long music sessions where they had loads of instruments and they did...like we've got instruments which

prescribed curriculum (3/8)	we can do with the class, but we're timetabled for 20 minutes…A week. But then I try to link it...I'm linking it into other learning. So I'll be linking it into geography! We're going to do a song but we're going to get the instruments in…But...and, the, and try and think how I can engage in everything but they, they kind of had urm different spaces to go to. So it wasn't just like a music...there's loads of different spaces and lots of adults to support it…Urm and they have a lot more...they don't, the curriculum is like a constraint really. Kelly: Time allocated in the day for that child's needs urm you know like when I, when I were going to some of the special schools you know and they'll, they'll have time in the morning you know where they do a little activity until everybody's ready and then they'll sit down and they'll just have a, a general chat and then they'll see how that child's feeling to...that day and then they'll work towards...you know they'll have set er activities but you know they might have a child that's got you know totally different out, outlay that day and they work with that child but...you know because it's a smaller class whereas here it's just oh you know a bit of comfort and then it's like well... Researcher: Yeah, quite fast paced maybe? Kelly: ...Now get back on the conveyor belt.